

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

OCTOBER 2012

PRICE: Rs. 30.00

SUBSCRIPTIONS

INLAND

Annual: Rs. 200.00

For 10 years: Rs. 1,800.00

Price per Single Copy: Rs. 30.00

OVERSEAS

Sea Mail:

Annual: \$35 or Rs. 1,400.00

For 10 years: \$350 or Rs. 14,000.00

Air Mail:

Annual: \$70 or Rs. 2,800.00

For 10 years: \$700 or Rs. 28,000.00

All payments to be made in favour of *Mother India*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. For outstation cheques kindly add Rs. 15 for annual membership and Rs. 50 for 10-year subscription.

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



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Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

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Published by: MANOJ DAS GUPTA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST

PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY 605 002

Printed by: SWADHIN CHATTERJEE

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No. R.N. 8667/63

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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXV

No. 10

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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AN ARYAN CITY

(Translation of a passage from the Ramayana in Sanskrit)

1

Coshala by the Soroyou, a land
Smiling at heaven, of riches measureless
And corn abounding glad; in that great country
Ayodhya was, the city world-renowned,
Ayodhya by King Manou built, immense.
Twelve yojans long the mighty city lay
Grandiose and wide three yojans. Grandly-spaced
Ayodhya's streets were and the long high-road
Ran through it spaciouly with sweet cool flowers
Hourly new-paved and hourly watered wide.
Dussaruth in Ayodhya, as in heaven
Its natural lord, abode, those massive walls
Ruling, and a great people in his name
Felt greater, — door and wall and ponderous arch
And market-places huge. Of every craft
Engines mechanical and tools there thronged
And craftsmen of each guild and manner. High rang
With heralds and sonorous eulogists
The beautiful bright city imperial.
High were her bannered edifices reared,
With theatres and dancing-halls for joy
Of her bright daughters, and sweet-scented parks
Were round and gardens cool. High circling all
The city with disastrous engines stored
In hundreds, the great ramparts like a zone
Of iron spanned in her moated girth immense
Threatening with forts the ancient sky. Defiant
Ayodhya stood, armèd, impregnable,
Inviolable in her virgin walls.
And in her streets was ever large turmoil,
Passing of elephants, the steed and ox,
Mules and rich-laden camels. And through them drove
The powerful barons of the land, great wardens

Of taxes, and from countries near and far
The splendid merchants came much marvelling
To see those orgulous high-built homes
With jewels curiously fretted, topped
With summer-houses for the joy of girls,
Like some proud city in heaven. Without a gap
On either side as far as eye could reach
Mass upon serried mass the houses rose,
Seven-storied architectures metrical
Upon a level base and made sublime
Splendid Ayodhya octagonally built,
The mother of beautiful women and of gems
A world. Large granaries of rice unhusked
She had and husked rice for the fire, and sweet
Her water, like the cane's delightful juice,
Cool down the throat. And a great voice throbbed of drums,
The tabour and the tambourine, while ever
The lyre with softer rumours intervened.
Nor only was she grandiosely built,
A city without earthly peer, — her sons
Were noble, warriors whose arrows scorned to pierce
The isolated man from friends cut off
Or guided by a sound to smite the alarmed
And crouching fugitive; but with sharp steel
Sought out the lion in his den or grappling
Unarmed they murdered with their mighty hands
The tiger roaring in his trackless woods
Or the mad tuskèd boar. Even such strong arms
Of heroes kept that city and in her midst
Regnant King Dussaruth the nations ruled.

2

(Prose)

Coshala named, a mighty country there was, swollen and glad; seated on the banks of the Sarayu it abounded in wealth & grain; and there was the city Ayodhya famed throughout the triple world, built by Manu himself, lord of men. Twelve leagues was the beautiful mighty city in its length, three in its breadth; large & clear cut were its streets, and a vast clear cut highroad adorned it that ever was sprinkled with water and strewn freely with flowers. Dasaratha increasing a mighty nation peopled that city, like a king of the gods in his heavens; a town of arched gateways he made it, and wide were the spaces between its shops; full was it of all machines and implements and inhabited by all kinds of craftsmen and frequented by herald and bard, a city beautiful of unsurpassed splendours; lofty were its bannered mansions, crowded was it with hundreds of hundred-slaying engines of war, and in all quarters of the city there were theatres for women and there were gardens and mango-groves and the ramparts formed a girdle round its spacious might; hard was it for the foe to enter, hard to assail, for difficult and deep was the city's moat; filled it was of horses & elephants, cows and camels and asses, crowded with its tributary kings arrived for sacrifice to the gods, rich with merchants from many lands and glorious with palaces built of precious stone high-piled like hills & on the house-tops pleasure-rooms; like Indra's Amarāvati Ayodhya seemed.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translations, CWSA, Vol. 5, pp. 7-9; p. 23)

Sri Aurobindo translated this passage sometime around 1900 under the heading "Pieces from the Ramaian". The prose version was translated around 1912.

The Sanskrit source of the passage is Bala Kanda, Sarga 5.5 – 22.

THE PROBLEM OF LIFE

LIFE is, we have seen, the putting forth, under certain cosmic circumstances, of a Conscious-Force which is in its own nature infinite, absolute, untrammelled, inalienably possessed of its own unity and bliss, the Conscious-Force of Sachchidananda. The central circumstance of this cosmic process, in so far as it differs in its appearances from the purity of the infinite Existence and the self-possession of the undivided Energy, is the dividing faculty of the Mind obscured by ignorance. There results from this divided action of an undivided Force the apparition of dualities, oppositions, seeming denials of the nature of Sachchidananda which exist as an abiding reality for the mind, but only as a phenomenon misrepresenting a manifold Reality for the divine cosmic Consciousness concealed behind the veil of mind. Hence the world takes on the appearance of a clash of opposing truths each seeking to fulfil itself, each having the right to fulfilment, and therefore of a mass of problems and mysteries which have to be solved because behind all this confusion there is the hidden Truth and unity pressing for the solution and by the solution for its own unveiled manifestation in the world.

This solution has to be sought by the mind, but not by the mind alone; it has to be a solution in Life, in act of being as well as in consciousness of being. Consciousness as Force has created the world-movement and its problems; consciousness as Force has to solve the problems it has created and carry the world-movement to the inevitable fulfilment of its secret sense and evolving Truth. But this Life has taken successively three appearances. The first is material, — a submerged consciousness is concealed in its own superficial expressive action and representative forms of force; for the consciousness itself disappears from view in the act and is lost in the form. The second is vital, — an emerging consciousness is half-apparent as power of life and process of the growth, activity and decay of form, it is half-delivered out of its original imprisonment, it has become vibrant in power, as vital craving and satisfaction or repulsion, but at first not at all and then only imperfectly vibrant in light as knowledge of its own self-existence and its environment. The third is mental, — an emerged consciousness reflects fact of life as mental sense and responsive perception and idea while as new idea it tries to become fact of life, modifies the internal and attempts to modify conformably the external existence of the being. Here, in mind, consciousness is delivered out of its imprisonment in the act and form of its own force; but it is not yet master of the act and form because it has emerged as an individual consciousness and is aware therefore only of a fragmentary movement of its own total activities.

The whole crux and difficulty of human life lies here. Man is this mental being, this mental consciousness working as mental force, aware in a way of the universal

force and life of which he is part but, because he has not knowledge of its universality or even of the totality of his own being, unable to deal either with life in general or with his own life in a really effective and victorious movement of mastery. He seeks to know Matter in order to be master of the material environment, to know Life in order to be master of the vital existence, to know Mind in order to be master of the great obscure movement of mentality in which he is not only a jet of light of self-consciousness like the animal, but also more and more a flame of growing knowledge. Thus he seeks to know himself in order to be master of himself, to know the world in order to be master of the world. This is the urge of Existence in him, the necessity of the Consciousness he is, the impulsion of the Force that is his life, the secret will of Sachchidananda appearing as the individual in a world in which He expresses and yet seems to deny Himself. To find the conditions under which this inner impulsion is satisfied is the problem man must strive always to resolve and to that he is compelled by the very nature of his own existence and by the Deity seated within him; and until the problem is solved, the impulse satisfied, the human race cannot rest from its labour. Either man must fulfil himself by satisfying the Divine within him or he must produce out of himself a new and greater being who will be more capable of satisfying it. He must either himself become a divine humanity or give place to Superman.

This results from the very logic of things because, the mental consciousness of man not being the completely illumined consciousness entirely emerged out of the obscuration of Matter but only a progressive term in the great emergence, the line of evolutionary creation in which he has appeared cannot stop where he now is, but must go either beyond its present term in him or else beyond him if he himself has not the force to go forward. Mental idea trying to become fact of life must pass on till it becomes the whole Truth of existence delivering itself out of its successive wrappings, revealed and progressively fulfilled in light of consciousness and joyously fulfilled in power; for in and through these two terms of power and light Existence manifests itself, because existence is in its nature Consciousness and Force: but the third term in which these, its two constituents, meet, become one and are ultimately fulfilled, is satisfied Delight of self-existence. For an evolving life like ours this inevitable culmination must necessarily mean the finding of the self that was contained in the seed of its own birth and, with that self-finding, the complete working out of the potentialities deposited in the movement of Conscious-Force from which this life took its rise. The potentiality thus contained in our human existence is Sachchidananda realising Himself in a certain harmony and unification of the individual life and the universal so that mankind shall express in a common consciousness, common movement of power, common delight the transcendent Something which has cast itself into this form of things.

All life depends for its nature on the fundamental poise of its own constituting consciousness; for as the Consciousness is, so will the Force be. Where the Conscious-

ness is infinite, one, transcendent of its acts and forms even while embracing and informing, organising and executing them, as is the consciousness of Sachchidananda, so will be the Force, infinite in its scope, one in its works, transcendent in its power and self-knowledge. Where the Consciousness is like that of material Nature, submerged, self-oblivious, driving along in the drift of its own Force without seeming to know it, even though by the very nature of the eternal relation between the two terms it really determines the drift which drives it, so will be the Force: it will be a monstrous movement of the Inert and Inconscient, unaware of what it contains, seeming mechanically to fulfil itself by a sort of inexorable accident, an inevitably happy chance, even while all the while it really obeys faultlessly the law of the Right and Truth fixed for it by the will of the supernal Conscious-Being concealed within its movement. Where the Consciousness is divided in itself, as in Mind, limiting itself in various centres, setting each to fulfil itself without knowledge of what is in other centres and of its relation to others, aware of things and forces in their apparent division and opposition to each other but not in their real unity, such will be the Force: it will be a life like that we are and see around us; it will be a clash and intertwining of individual lives seeking each its own fulfilment without knowing its relation to others, a conflict and difficult accommodation of divided and opposing or differing forces and, in the mentality, a mixing, a shock and wrestle and insecure combination of divided and opposing or divergent ideas which cannot arrive at the knowledge of their necessity to each other or grasp their place as elements of that Unity behind which is expressing itself through them and in which their discords must cease. But where the Consciousness is in possession of both the diversity and the unity and the latter contains and governs the former, where it is aware at once of the Law, Truth and Right of the All and the Law, Truth and Right of the individual and the two become consciously harmonised in a mutual unity, where the whole nature of the consciousness is the One knowing itself as the Many and the Many knowing themselves as the One, there the Force also will be of the same nature: it will be a Life that consciously obeys the law of Unity and yet fulfils each thing in the diversity according to its proper rule and function; it will be a life in which all the individuals live at once in themselves and in each other as one conscious Being in many souls, one power of Consciousness in many minds, one joy of Force working in many lives, one reality of Delight fulfilling itself in many hearts and bodies.

The first of these four positions, the source of all this progressive relation between Consciousness and Force, is their poise in the being of Sachchidananda where they are one; for there the Force is consciousness of being working itself out without ever ceasing to be consciousness and the Consciousness is similarly luminous Force of being eternally aware of itself and of its own Delight and never ceasing to be this power of utter light and self-possession. The second relation is that of material Nature; it is the poise of being in the material universe which is the great denial of Sachchidananda by Himself: for here there is the utter apparent separation of Force

from Consciousness, the specious miracle of the all-governing and infallible Inconscient which is only the mask but which modern knowledge has mistaken for the real face of the cosmic Deity. The third relation is the poise of being in Mind and in the Life which we see emerging out of this denial, bewildered by it, struggling — without any possibility of cessation by submission, but also without any clear knowledge or instinct of a victorious solution — against the thousand and one problems involved in this perplexing apparition of man the half-potent conscient being out of the omnipotent Inconscience of the material universe. The fourth relation is the poise of being in Supermind: it is the fulfilled existence which will eventually solve all this complex problem created by the partial affirmation emerging out of the total denial; and it must needs solve it in the only possible way, by the complete affirmation fulfilling all that was secretly there contained in potentiality and intended in fact of evolution behind the mask of the great denial. That is the real life of the real Man towards which this partial life and partial unfulfilled manhood is striving forward with a perfect knowledge and guidance in the so-called Inconscient within us, but in our conscient parts with only a dim and struggling prevision, with fragments of realisation, with glimpses of the ideal, with flashes of revelation and inspiration in the poet and the prophet, the seer and the transcendentalist, the mystic and the thinker, the great intellects and the great souls of humanity.

From the data we have now before us we can see that the difficulties which arise from the imperfect poise of Consciousness and Force in man in his present status of mind and life are principally three. First, he is aware only of a small part of his own being: his surface mentality, his surface life, his surface physical being is all that he knows and he does not know even all of that; below is the occult surge of his subconscious and his subliminal mind, his subconscious and his subliminal life-impulses, his subconscious corporeality, all that large part of himself which he does not know and cannot govern, but which rather knows and governs him. For, existence and consciousness and force being one, we can only have some real power over so much of our existence as we are identified with by self-awareness; the rest must be governed by its own consciousness which is subliminal to our surface mind and life and body. And yet, the two being one movement and not two separate movements, the larger and more potent part of ourselves must govern and determine in the mass the smaller and less powerful; therefore we are governed by the subconscious and subliminal even in our conscious existence and in our very self-mastery and self-direction we are only instruments of what seems to us the Inconscient within us.

This is what the old wisdom meant when it said that man imagines himself to be the doer of the work by his free will, but in reality Nature determines all his works and even the wise are compelled to follow their own Nature. But since Nature is the creative force of consciousness of the Being within us who is masked by His own inverse movement and apparent denial of Himself, they called that inverse

creative movement of His consciousness the Maya or Illusion-Power of the Lord and said that all existences are turned as upon a machine through His Maya by the Lord seated within the heart of all existences. It is evident then that only by man so far exceeding mind as to become one in self-awareness with the Lord can he become master of his own being. And since this is not possible in the inconscience or in the subconscious itself, since profit cannot come by plunging down into our depths back towards the Inconscient, it can only be by going inward where the Lord is seated and by ascending into that which is still superconscious to us, into the Supermind, that this unity can be wholly established. For there in the higher and divine Maya is the conscious knowledge, in its law and truth, of that which works in the subconscious by the lower Maya under the conditions of the Denial which seeks to become the Affirmation. For this lower Nature works out what is willed and known in that higher Nature. The Illusion-Power of the divine knowledge in the world which creates appearances is governed by the Truth-Power of the same knowledge which knows the truth behind the appearances and keeps ready for us the Affirmation towards which they are working. The partial and apparent Man here will find there the perfect and real Man capable of an entirely self-aware being by his full unity with that Self-existent who is the omniscient lord of His own cosmic evolution and procession.

The second difficulty is that man is separated in his mind, his life, his body from the universal and therefore, even as he does not know himself, is equally and even more incapable of knowing his fellow-creatures. He forms by inferences, theories, observations and a certain imperfect capacity of sympathy a rough mental construction about them; but this is not knowledge. Knowledge can only come by conscious identity, for that is the only true knowledge, — existence aware of itself. We know what we are so far as we are consciously aware of ourself, the rest is hidden; so also we can come really to know that with which we become one in our consciousness, but only so far as we can become one with it. If the means of knowledge are indirect and imperfect, the knowledge attained will also be indirect and imperfect. It will enable us to work out with a certain precarious clumsiness but still perfectly enough from our mental standpoint certain limited practical aims, necessities, conveniences, a certain imperfect and insecure harmony of our relations with that which we know; but only by a conscious unity with it can we arrive at a perfect relation. Therefore we must arrive at a conscious unity with our fellow-beings and not merely at the sympathy created by love or the understanding created by mental knowledge, which will always be the knowledge of their superficial existence and therefore imperfect in itself and subject to denial and frustration by the uprush of the unknown and unmastered from the subconscious or the subliminal in them and us. But this conscious oneness can only be established by entering into that in which we are one with them, the universal; and the fullness of the universal exists consciently only in that which is superconscious to us, in the Supermind: for

here in our normal being the greater part of it is subconscious and therefore in this normal poise of mind, life and body it cannot be possessed. The lower conscious nature is bound down to ego in all its activities, chained triply to the stake of differentiated individuality. The Supermind alone commands unity in diversity.

The third difficulty is the division between force and consciousness in the evolutionary existence. There is, first, the division which has been created by the evolution itself in its three successive formations of Matter, Life and Mind, each with its own law of working. The Life is at war with the body; it attempts to force it to satisfy life's desires, impulses, satisfactions and demands from its limited capacity what could only be possible to an immortal and divine body; and the body, enslaved and tyrannised over, suffers and is in constant dumb revolt against the demands made upon it by the Life. The Mind is at war with both: sometimes it helps the Life against the Body, sometimes restrains the vital urge and seeks to protect the corporeal frame from life's desires, passions and over-driving energies; it also seeks to possess the Life and turn its energy to the mind's own ends, to the utmost joys of the mind's own activity, to the satisfaction of mental, aesthetic, emotional aims and their fulfilment in human existence; and the Life too finds itself enslaved and misused and is in frequent insurrection against the ignorant, half-wise tyrant seated above it. This is the war of our members which the mind cannot satisfactorily resolve because it has to deal with a problem insoluble to it, the aspiration of an immortal being in a mortal life and body. It can only arrive at a long succession of compromises or end in an abandonment of the problem either by submission with the materialist to the mortality of our apparent being or with the ascetic and the religionist by the rejection and condemnation of the earthly life and withdrawal to happier and easier fields of existence. But the true solution lies in finding the principle beyond Mind of which Immortality is the law and in conquering by it the mortality of our existence.

But there is also that fundamental division within between force of Nature and the conscious being which is the original cause of this incapacity. Not only is there a division between the mental, the vital and the physical being, but each of them is also divided against itself. The capacity of the body is less than the capacity of the instinctive soul or conscious being, the physical Purusha within it, the capacity of the vital force less than the capacity of the impulsive soul, the vital conscious being or Purusha within it, the capacity of the mental energy less than the capacity of the intellectual and emotional soul, the mental Purusha within it. For the soul is the inner consciousness which aspires to its own complete self-realisation and therefore always exceeds the individual formation of the moment, and the Force which has taken its poise in the formation is always pushed by its soul to that which is abnormal to the poise, transcendent of it; thus constantly pushed it has much trouble in answering, more in evolving from the present to a greater capacity. In trying to fulfil the demands of this triple soul it is distracted and driven to set instinct against instinct, impulse against impulse, emotion against emotion, idea against idea,

satisfying this, denying that, then repenting and returning on what it has done, adjusting, compensating, readjusting *ad infinitum*, but not arriving at any principle of unity. And in the mind again the conscious power that should harmonise and unite is not only limited in its knowledge and in its will, but the knowledge and the will are disparate and often at discord. The principle of unity is above in the supermind: for there alone is the conscious unity of all diversities; there alone will and knowledge are equal and in perfect harmony; there alone Consciousness and Force arrive at their divine equation.

Man, in proportion as he develops into a self-conscious and truly thinking being, becomes acutely aware of all this discord and disparateness in his parts and he seeks to arrive at a harmony of his mind, life and body, a harmony of his knowledge and will and emotion, a harmony of all his members. Sometimes this desire stops short at the attainment of a workable compromise which will bring with it a relative peace; but compromise can only be a halt on the way, since the Deity within will not be satisfied eventually with less than a perfect harmony combining in itself the integral development of our many-sided potentialities. Less than this would be an evasion of the problem, not its solution, or else only a temporary solution provided as a resting-place for the soul in its continual self-enlargement and ascension. Such a perfect harmony would demand as essential terms a perfect mentality, a perfect play of vital force, a perfect physical existence. But where in the radically imperfect shall we find the principle and power of perfection? Mind rooted in division and limitation cannot provide it to us, nor can life and the body which are the energy and the frame of dividing and limiting mind. The principle and power of perfection are there in the subconscious but wrapped up in the tegument or veil of the lower Maya, a mute premonition emerging as an unrealised ideal; in the superconscious they await, open, eternally realised, but still separated from us by the veil of our self-ignorance. It is above, then, and not either in our present poise nor below it that we must seek for the reconciling power and knowledge.

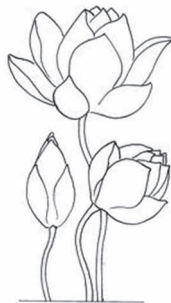
Equally, man, as he develops, becomes acutely aware of the discord and ignorance that governs his relations with the world, acutely intolerant of it, more and more set upon finding a principle of harmony, peace, joy and unity. This too can only come to him from above. For only by developing a mind which shall have knowledge of the mind of others as of itself, free from our mutual ignorance and misunderstanding, a will that feels and makes itself one with the will of others, an emotional heart that contains the emotions of others as its own, a life-force that senses the energies of others and accepts them for its own and seeks to fulfil them as its own, and a body that is not a wall of imprisonment and defence against the world, — but all this under the law of a Light and Truth that shall transcend the aberrations and errors, the much sin and falsehood of our and others' minds, wills, emotions, life-energies, — only so can the life of man spiritually and practically become one with that of his fellow-beings and the individual recover his own

universal self. The subconscious has this life of the All and the superconscious has it, but under conditions which necessitate our motion upwards. For not towards the Godhead concealed in the “inconscious ocean where darkness is wrapped within darkness”,¹ but towards the Godhead seated in the sea of eternal light,² in the highest ether of our being, is the original impetus which has carried upward the evolving soul to the type of our humanity.

Unless therefore the race is to fall by the wayside and leave the victory to other and new creations of the eager travailing Mother, it must aspire to this ascent, conducted indeed through love, mental illumination and the vital urge to possession and self-giving, but leading beyond to the supramental unity which transcends and fulfils them; in the founding of human life upon the supramental realisation of conscious unity with the One and with all in our being and in all its members humanity must seek its final good and salvation. And this is what we have described as the fourth status of Life in its ascent towards the Godhead.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol. 21, pp. 220-30)



1. *Rig Veda*, X. 129. 3.

2. The Waters which are in the realm of light above the Sun and those which abide below. — *Rig Veda*, III. 22. 3.

‘ONLY ONE RECOURSE’

March 23, 1914

As I see it, the ideal state is that in which, constantly conscious with Thy Consciousness, one knows at every moment, spontaneously, without any reflection being necessary, exactly what should be done to best express Thy law. That state I know, for I have experienced it at certain moments, but very often the knowledge of the “how” is veiled by a mist of ignorance and one must call in reflection which is not always a good counsellor — let alone all that one does at every instant without having any time for reflection, on the spur of the moment. How far does it conform with or oppose Thy law? That depends upon the state of the subconscious, on what is active in it at that time. Once the deed is done, if it has any importance, if one can look at it, analyse it, understand it, it serves as a lesson, enables one to become aware of one’s motive of action and hence of something in the subconscious which still governs the being and has to be mastered.

Every action on earth is bound to have a good and a bad side. Even the actions which best express the most divine law of Love carry in them something of the disorder and darkness inherent in the world as it is today. Some people, those who are called pessimists, perceive almost exclusively the dark side of everything. The optimists, on the other hand, see only the side of beauty and harmony. And if it is foolish and ignorant to be an unwitting optimist, is it not making a happy conquest to become a willing optimist? In the eyes of pessimists, whatever one does will always be bad, ignorant or egoistic; how could one satisfy them? It is an impossible task.

There is only one recourse; to unite as perfectly as possible with the highest and purest light that one can conceive, to identify one’s consciousness as completely as possible with the absolute Consciousness, to strive to receive all inspirations from that Consciousness alone so as to foster as best one can its manifestation upon earth, and, trusting in its power, to regard all events with serenity.

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

And yet how ardently must we always aspire for that inaccessible perfection! . . .

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, pp. 107-08)

COMMENTARY ON ‘THOUGHTS AND APHORISMS’

If when thou art doing great actions and moving giant results, thou canst perceive that *thou* art doing nothing, then know that God has removed His seal from thy eyelids.

. . . Sri Aurobindo certainly meant that it is this Power, this Force which does everything — which does everything. When one sees it or is one with it, one knows at the same time, one knows that *That* is really the only thing that acts and creates; everything else is the result of the domain or the world or the material or the substance in which it acts — the result of the resistance, but not the Action. And to unite with *That* means to unite with the Action; to unite with what is below means to unite with the resistance.

And so because it wriggles and tosses and turns, wants and thinks and makes plans . . . it imagines that it is doing something — it is resisting.

6 July 1966

(CWM 10: 229, 232)

*

The Titans are stronger than the gods because they have agreed with God to front and bear the burden of His wrath and enmity; the gods were able to accept only the pleasant burden of His love and kindlier rapture.

To understand rightly what Sri Aurobindo truly means, one must know the wonderful sense of humour in his way of thinking.

16 August 1969

What Sri Aurobindo writes here is a paradox to awaken sluggish minds. But one must understand all the irony these phrases contain and above all the intention he puts behind the words. Besides, cowardly or not, I see no need for us to worship the gods, great or small. Our worship must go to the Supreme Lord alone, one in all things and beings.

6 November 1961¹

(CWM 10: 243-44)

*

1. This question was asked on an earlier occasion.

When our minds are involved in matter, they think matter the only reality; when we draw back into immaterial consciousness, then we see matter a mask and feel existence in consciousness alone as having the touch of reality. Which then of these two is the truth? Nay, God knoweth; but he who has had both experiences, can easily tell which condition is the more fertile in knowledge, the mightier and more blissful.

* * *

I believe immaterial consciousness to be truer than material consciousness, because I know in the first what in the second is hidden from me and also can command what the mind knows in matter.

Sri Aurobindo does not mention here the consciousness that is higher than either of the two consciousnesses in question (material and immaterial), that is, the supramental consciousness which contains all the other consciousnesses in itself and can thus know everything on all planes of being. This is the consciousness we should aspire for, this is the consciousness which can teach us the total Truth.

18 September 1969

(CWM 10: 251-52)

*

Thus said Ramakrishna and thus said Vivekananda. Yes, but let me know also the truths which the Avatar cast not forth into speech and the prophet has omitted from his teachings. There will always be more in God than the thought of man has ever conceived or the tongue of man has ever uttered.

* * *

What was Ramakrishna? God manifest in a human being; but behind there is God in His infinite impersonality and His universal Personality. And what was Vivekananda? A radiant glance from the eye of Shiva; but behind him is the divine gaze from which he came and Shiva himself and Brahma and Vishnu and OM all-exceeding.

I had always heard that Sri Aurobindo was “the last Avatar”; but he is probably the last Avatar in a human body — afterwards, we do not know. . . .

23 September 1969

(CWM 10: 253)

*

He who recognises not Krishna, the God in man, knows not God entirely; he who knows Krishna only, knows not even Krishna. Yet is the opposite truth also wholly true that if thou canst see all God in a little pale unsightly and scentless flower, then hast thou hold of His supreme reality.

One who truly follows the path given by Sri Aurobindo, as soon as he begins to have the experience of this path, will find it impossible to confine his consciousness to the worship of any god or goddess or even of all of them together.

26 September 1969

(CWM 10: 253-54)

*

The double law of sin and virtue is imposed on us because we have not that ideal life and knowledge within which guides the soul spontaneously and infallibly to its self-fulfilment. The law of sin and virtue ceases for us when the sun of God shines upon the soul in truth and love with its unveiled splendour. Moses is replaced by Christ, the Shastra by the Veda.

As Sri Aurobindo says, the law of sin and virtue was certainly necessary for the progress of humanity when it was given several thousand years ago. But today it no longer has any meaning or usefulness and should no longer be heeded.

It belongs to a past which should no longer have any authority.

But for this to be possible, it must be replaced by a more luminous and truer law and not by disorder and corruption.

4 October 1969

(CWM 10: 256-57)

*

Even Vivekananda once in the stress of emotion admitted the fallacy that a personal God would be too immoral to be suffered and it would be the duty of all good men to resist Him. But if an omnipotent supra-moral Will and Intelligence governs the world, it is surely impossible to resist Him; our resistance would only serve His ends and really be dictated by Him. Is it not better then, instead of condemning or denying, to study and understand Him?

* * *

If we would understand God, we must renounce our egoistic and ignorant human standards or else ennoble and universalise them.

To the human way of understanding, the world is terribly immoral, full of suffering and ugliness, especially since the appearance of the human race. So it is difficult for the human consciousness to accept that this world could be the work of a personal God, because for man it seems to be the work of an omnipotent monster.

But Sri Aurobindo adds that it is better to try to understand instead of condemning.

And surely the best way to understand is to unite with this Supreme Consciousness so as to see as It sees and understand as It understands. This is certainly the only true wisdom.

And Yoga is the true way of uniting with the Supreme.

15 October 1969

(CWM 10: 260-261)

*

Pity may be reserved, so long as thy soul makes distinctions, for the suffering animals; but humanity deserves from thee something nobler, it asks for love, for understanding, for comradeship, for the help of the equal and brother.

* * *

The contributions of evil to the good of the world and the harm sometimes done by the virtuous are distressing to the soul enamoured of good. Nevertheless be not distressed nor confounded, but study rather and calmly understand God's ways with humanity.

Sri Aurobindo means that there is a height in the consciousness where the ordinary notions of good and bad lose all their value.²

And he advises us, instead of being affected by the way things happen on earth, to rise in consciousness to communion with the Divine; then we shall understand why things are as they are.

29 October 1969

(CWM 10: 265)

*

Live within; be not shaken by outward happenings.

* * *

Fling not thy alms abroad everywhere in an ostentation of charity; understand and love where thou helpst. Let thy soul grow within thee.

* * *

Help the poor while the poor are with thee; but study also and strive that there may be no poor for thy assistance.

2. This sentence was in English in the original.

To live within in a constant aspiration for the Divine enables us to look at life with a smile and to remain peaceful whatever the outer circumstances may be.

As for the poor, Sri Aurobindo says that to come to their help is good, provided that it is not a vain ostentation of charity, but that it is far nobler to seek a remedy for poverty so that there may be no poor left on earth.

31 October 1969

(CWM 10: 266)

*

Will a day come when there will be no more poor people and no more suffering in the world?

That is absolutely certain for all those who understand Sri Aurobindo's teaching and have faith in him.

It is with the intention of creating a place where this can come about that we want to establish Auroville.

But for this realisation to be possible, each one of us must make an effort to transform himself, for most of the sufferings of men are the result of their own mistakes, both physical and moral.

8 November 1969

(CWM 10: 268)

*

Religion and philosophy seek to rescue man from his ego; then the kingdom of heaven within will be spontaneously reflected in an external divine city.

Sri Aurobindo used the words philosophy and religion so that everyone could understand. But he knew very well that the effective remedy for human egoism lies beyond philosophy and religion, in a true spiritual life accepted and lived on earth by the physical consciousness itself — this makes it truly capable of getting rid of the ego once and for all.

15 November 1969

(CWM 10: 270)

*

Mediaeval Christianity said to the race, "Man, thou art in thy earthly life an evil thing and a worm before God; renounce then egoism, live for a future state and submit thyself to God and His priest." The results were not over-good for humanity. Modern knowledge says to the race, "Man, thou art an ephemeral animal and no more to Nature than the ant and the earthworm, a transitory speck only in the universe. Live then for the State and submit thyself antlike to the trained administrator and the scientific expert." Will this gospel succeed any better than the other?

* * *

Vedanta says rather, "Man, thou art of one nature and substance with God, one soul with thy fellowmen. Awake and progress then to thy utter divinity, live for God in thyself and in others." This gospel which was given only to the few, must now be offered to all mankind for its deliverance.

There is nothing to add. Sri Aurobindo has clearly and masterfully stated first the evil and then its remedy. All we have to do is to put into practice what he has taught us.

16 November 1969

(CWM 10: 270-71)

*

Hate not the oppressor, for, if he is strong, thy hate increases his force of resistance; if he is weak, thy hate was needless.

* * *

Hatred is a sword of power, but its edge is always double. It is like the *Kritya*³ of the ancient magicians which, if baulked of its prey, returned in fury to devour its sender.

* * *

Love God in thy opponent, even while thou strikest him; so shall neither have hell for his portion.

* * *

Men talk of enemies, but where are they? I only see wrestlers of one party or the other in the great arena of the universe.

All this is written to awaken mankind to the sense of its own unity. When one has become conscious of this Unity and when one sees the Divine in all beings, it is easy to feel as Sri Aurobindo recommends.

9 December 1969

(CWM 10: 279)

THE MOTHER

(*On Thoughts and Aphorisms*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 10)

3. Magic process.

“SUPER-SCIENTIST”

A Letter

My diphtheria suddenly developed on Thursday the 5th, though still anonymously. With fever and throat pain I went to the air-conditioned Empire Theatre. Physically I felt very uncomfortable, but I argued to myself: “Air-conditioning means turning Bombay climate to Matheran climate. Surely, Matheran should improve my health. I must be reacting improperly.” My reaction improved and I thoroughly enjoyed the picture, but I came home a furnace inside. All night, the fever remained nearly 102½. No sleep, but once a spell of mental absorption in which my “Omni-realism” theory tried to work itself out from the Vedantic basis: “Consciousness = Existence. When Consciousness varies, Existence must vary. On the highest level of Identity, subjective knowledge and objective fact cannot but correspond exactly. When the Identity is veiled, not only a new diminished knowledge comes about, but also a new diminished fact and the two are exactly proportionate to each other. On every level, whatever is in perception is also in existence. *Percipi est esse.*”

The next morning the doctor was called. He examined my throat and said: “Follicular tonsillitis.” Penicillin was given in a large dose. The fever wouldn’t budge appreciably. That night was again awful. Again a spell of mental absorption, this time a bout with Raja Rao. I asked him to make a philosophical statement of his position. He just said: “Adwaita.” I at once countered: “Let me put you a fundamental question: Is yours the Adwaita of numerical oneness or the Adwaita of essential oneness?” Rao gave a silly smile and remarked: “I wasn’t aware there could be any difference. Aren’t they the same?” I explained: “Certainly not. You, Raja Rao, sitting there and smiling, are an example of numerical oneness. That is why all of us are other than you. If you were an example of essential oneness, all of us would be at bottom Raja Raos. Whether that would be mighty good fortune for us or pretty hard lines, I shan’t discuss now. But the difference is absolutely clear between the two species of oneness. Numerical oneness excludes the manyness of that which is numerically one. Essential oneness can include any amount and any kind of manyness of what is essentially one. The former begins with a limitation, the latter with omnipotence. The former must by its exclusiveness lead, when the ultimate Reality is said to be one, to the conclusion that the world is an illusion. The latter must lead to the theory that there are various levels of Reality. Shankara’s mistake lies in confounding essential oneness with numerical oneness. And therefore it is no use pretending that his is not illusionism. He cannot but be an illusionist.”

The debate went on. One other snatch of it I remember. I said: “If the ultimate Reality is a featureless Absolute, have you any ground for even asking us to realise

it?" Raja Rao exclaimed: "Isn't that common sense? What else is there to realise except this Highest?" I replied: "Look here, you are making a Value-judgment when you say that we *should* realise the Highest. You are proposing an Ideal. But what authority can there be in any Ideal, what imperative in any Value-judgment if the ultimate Reality is featureless? Ideals and Values derive their sanction from a supreme directive Truth, a supreme normative Right. A featureless Absolute is devoid of either. In itself it holds no directive for us, gives no norm to us. It is only we who can make it our norm and direct ourselves to it. But our norms and directives can be quite arbitrary. There is no inherent compulsion in them. So we have no satisfactory ground for even asking ourselves or anybody to realise the featureless Absolute!"

Well, don't you think there is interesting material for development in these half-sleep philosophisings? I may attempt to make use of it in the future.

Revenons à nos moutons! On Saturday morning the doctor came again and looked at my throat. He was astonished to find that in spite of the huge penicillin shot the throat had gone from bad to worse and now presented a most formidable appearance. I took a look myself. The thing was ghastly. The doctor said: "It has a diphtherial look. Better have a swab taken at once." The pulse-rate of 115 also made him suspect complications. A pathologist was summoned. He promised his verdict in the afternoon. My doctor had gone picnicking to Bandra, so he couldn't be given the verdict. I asked grandpa's secretary to put a call through to the pathologist at five in the evening. When I was told his verdict — that it was definitely diphtheria — I sent an express wire to the Mother: "Got diphtheria. Make me okay soon. Doctor giving serum shortly. Love." By the time the doctor returned from his jaunt at Land's End, the wire must have reached the Mother who is not only a doctor of divinity but also a divinity of doctoring. My doctor was quite in a panic when he got the news at about six that his worst fears had been justified. Panic because it was late Saturday evening and it would be hard to get the necessary serum. By the Mother's grace, not only was the serum secured: the best possible stuff was got. Here I may add that even my wire-sending was helped by her grace. I was wondering how to send it, when Yogendra's chauffeur suddenly materialised to return some proofs. I asked him where Yogendra was. He said: "At the Hanging Gardens." This meant just next door to the Malabar Hill P.O. I handed the chauffeur my wire and wrote Yogendra a note. At about seven Yogendra called and the doctor too blew in. The serum was got ready. But it could not immediately be administered. The procedure is not so simple. The patient has first to be given a sensitivity test. Otherwise, if the serum is injected rapidly, the patient may have a terrible reaction on the spot. The sensitivity test consists in giving a small quantity subcutaneously and waiting for 20 minutes to see if a bright red circle appears around the puncture. I, being an Anti-red, produced no such circle. So the serum could be injected pretty fast. But while it was being pushed in, another syringe with Adrenalin ready in it stood on the table. For, at any moment, in the half-hour after the injection, the

patient may start saying *anityam asukham lokam* and decide to bid adieu. But I, being as little of a World-pessimist as of a Red-raggist, remained full of beans, and the disappointed doctor had to throw away his precious Adrenalin.

Before going to sleep I told Sehra: “Tomorrow morning the doctor will be simply amazed to see the improvement in my throat. Mother will be at it all night.” The night was hardly comfortable, but the throat kept improving and when morning came I felt an immense relief in it. When the doctor did look at it, his eyes popped out. Here are his words: “Never in my whole medical experience have I seen a diphtherial throat clear up so much in so short a time. It is a miracle.”

I have never looked back from that moment. Every day has marked leaps and bounds of progress. And today I am fit as a fiddle — and a Stradivarius at that. The throat is completely clear. But we have to take note of the medical saying: “Diphtheria licks the throat but bites the heart.” My doctor insists on my staying in bed for four weeks. If I disobey him, I would be running the risk of heart-failure any time. I did not believe him, so I made Sehra ring up Rusi Vakil. The blighter let me down horribly. He went one better and said that a fellow with my heart (that is, with a past history of gigantic poisoning and considerable strain) should be in bed for six weeks if possible! An ordinary patient can do with two or three weeks. Among other things I have written to the Mother asking whether I should obey the doctors or snap my fingers at their warnings.

In the meantime I am laid up, proof-reading, dummy-making, writing, all in the position of a “horizontal champion” (to quote the phrase applied to an English boxer who used to get knocked out at the very first opportunity in order to escape pounding). Of course I sit up half the time so that I may practise better the “Force one with unimaginable rest”.

The idea of being in bed is not in itself a happy one. But I am discovering that somehow it is isolating my consciousness more and more and sending me inward. The Mother is more heart-warmingly present and Sri Aurobindo less heart-breakingly absent. This is indeed a great gain and diphtheria is a very small price to pay for it.

Please tell the Mother that I am anxiously waiting for some word from her.

Bombay, 10 June 1952

P.S. You must remember my poem, rather heavily titled “Sri Aurobindo, Super-Scientist”. I have now called it simply “Super-Scientist” and recast the first half completely. I was satisfied with the last ten lines but the opening portion had struck me as not sufficiently inspired and also not holding quite together with the rest. The new version done just yesterday leaves me at ease and, with the new title which does not specifically bring Sri Aurobindo in, I am putting it into the June number [of *Mother India*]. Now it is only about “curved space” — and the three parts of the poem present three mysticised aspects of the curvature idea, with the connections between left more or less to the reader’s intuition activated by some of my phrases.

Here is the piece:

SUPER-SCIENTIST

Einstein of the super-science of the soul,
 He found the Immutable's space of trance a field
 Grooved with almighty thought-transcending arcs —
 Figures of a single Truth bent everywhere
 On linking the ultimate Suns to our mortal sod. . . .
 A rapt geometer in the deepest heart
 Saw the long line of human hungering
 Towards infinite freedom from the drag of clay
 As no straight movement on and ever on,
 Leaving the body a vanishing cry of woe,
 But a huge curve that reaches farthest light
 And comes back kindled to the darkling dust. . . .
 O mystic energy of re-entrant love,
 Springing immense into the Immortal's bliss
 Yet keeping earth's small poignancy your goal!

AMAL KIRAN
 (K. D. SETHNA)

Notes

1. "Omni-Realism — Suggestions towards a Key to the Problem of Perception" was serialised in the September 1998 to January 1999 and April 1999 issues of *Mother India*.
2. Yogendra Rastogi, the right-hand man to the Managing Editor of *Mother India* at the time, i.e., K. R. Poddar (Navajata).

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of September 2012)

Chapter XVI

“The First Effective Protest”

The commonplace that India is in transition has of late been strongly impressed on us by certain English empiricists; they have devoted whole articles and pamphlets to marshal proofs and enumerate instances in support of this proposition

It is time that an Indian who has devoted his best thoughts and aspirations to the service of his country, should have in his turn a patient hearing

India is indeed a snake who has rejected her outworn winter weeds

*Jottings from a notebook used by
Sri Aurobindo at Cambridge in 1891 and 1892.¹*

WE have seen that Sri Aurobindo was aware, before landing in India, of the humiliations inflicted on his country by the colonial power. It was also natural for him to have gathered ample knowledge of the political situation in the U.K.; but the very first political article written by him and published in the fourth month after he had settled down at Vadodara reveals the uncanny speed and accuracy with which he had been able to comprehend the state of affairs in and feel the pulse of the native leadership of the time.

The article entitled “India and the British Parliament” was written at the request of Keshavrao G. Deshpande who edited the English section of the *Indu Prakash*, a journal published from Mumbai. Sri Aurobindo and Deshpande had been friends from their Cambridge days and the latter must have been confident of Sri Aurobindo’s grasp of contemporary affairs and his competence to comment on them. (Later, in 1898, Deshpande joined the Baroda Service.)

It seems the leadership of the National Congress eagerly looked forward to the slightest gesture of kindness on the part of the rulers to feel justified in its policy of supplication towards them. Hence a proposal to hold the much exalted I.C.S. examination, always held in England, simultaneously in India found an accidental

and illusory support in the British Parliament and was hailed by the Press in India and by a leader in the forefront (later knighted) Surendranath Banerji (1848-1925) as a proof of benevolence on the part of the rulers and an enlightened attitude of the British public towards their largest colony.

Wrote Sri Aurobindo:

On this occasion a chorus of jubilant paeans arose from the Press, nothing so much as the joyful chorus of the ducks when the monsoon arrives. Had then some political monsoon arrived raining down justice and happiness on this parched and perishing country? . . . Was it a solemn and deliberate pronouncement by the assembled representatives of the English nation that the time was now come to do justice to India? Was it a resolution gravely arrived at in full House, that the cruel burden of taxation which has exhausted our strength, must be alleviated without delay? . . . No, it was simply a chance vote snatched by a dexterous minority from a meagre and listless House. As a fine tactical success it reflects every credit on the acuteness and *savoir faire* of our friends in Parliament, but no more expresses the real feeling of the English people than a decree of the Chinese emperor would express it.²

Journals and magazines were not many in those days and articles on national and international issues were taken note of by the élite. If the language of this article must have amazed the readers of *Indu Prakash*, its conclusion must have stunned many:

If we are indeed to renovate our country, we must no longer hold our supplicating hands to the English Parliament, like an infant crying to its nurse for a toy, but must recognise the hard truth that every nation must beat out its own path to salvation with pain and difficulty, and not rely on the tutelage of another.³

Such a combination of sense, sarcasm and courage was unknown to political journalism in India. But many may have rubbed their eyes with disbelief when, about a month later, this was followed by the now famous series of nine articles entitled “New Lamps for Old”. All these, of course, were written anonymously.

But we can appreciate the substance and the tone of the series — and its uniqueness — only if we look back at the political condition prevailing at the time and understand the role the Indian National Congress was playing in it.

The Congress was still a protégé, if not of the ruling class in general, of some of its notable members. Mr. Allan Octavian Hume who in 1884 “conceived the idea that it would be of great advantage to the country if leading Indian politicians could be brought together once a year to discuss social matters and be upon friendly

footing with one another"⁴ was in the forefront, but the primary set of ideals with which it was launched was not this well-meaning gentleman's, but of the supremacy of the British India government. This revelation comes from W. C. Bonnerjee, the 1st as well as the 8th President of the Indian National Congress, in his 1898 publication, *Introduction to Indian Politics*:

It will probably be news to many that the Indian National Congress, as it was originally started and as it has since been carried on, is in reality the work of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava when that nobleman was the Governor-General of India. . . . He said (to Hume) there was no body or persons in this country who performed the functions which Her Majesty's Opposition did in England. The newspapers, even if they really represented the views of the people, were not reliable and as the English were necessarily ignorant of what was thought of them and their policy in native circles, it would be very desirable in their interest as well as the interests of the ruled that Indian politicians should meet yearly and point out to the Government in what respects the administration was defective and how it could be improved, and he added that an assembly such as he proposed should not be presided over by the Local Governor, for in his presence the people might not like to speak out their minds. . . . Lord Dufferin had made it a condition with Mr. Hume that his name in connection with the scheme of the Congress should not be divulged so long as he remained in the country, and his condition was faithfully maintained and none but the men consulted by Mr. Hume knew anything about the matter.⁵

Till a year and a half before the publication of Sri Aurobindo's series of articles, the presidentship of the Congress would go to a man chosen by its founder. *The Statesman* reported in its issue of 6 March 1892:

Finding it impossible to visit India yearly in connection with the work of National Congress, Mr. A. O. Hume has inducted Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, the well-known barrister of Calcutta, to accept the leadership of the movement. Although the Congress party deeply regret that Mr. Hume is compelled to sever active connection with them, they are said to cordially approve of the successor whom he has nominated, for Mr. Bonnerjee's interest in all that concerns the best interests of the people of this country is well known.

For most of us it would not be easy to believe today that the élite of the country, including the leaders who professed their patriotism most volubly, could not even dream of the British ever relinquishing their hold on India. That was the psychological climate at the time. The highest the leaders could think of was obtaining from the masters more indulgence and more favours; there was no question of recovering

any right. Hence proof of allegiance must be presented along with any prayer for allowance. One of the most prominent nationalists and for a while looked upon as the paramount leader of undivided Bengal, Sir Surendranath Banerji must name the college he founded after a Governor-General, Lord Ripon. (Now known as Surendranath College.) What may appear even more unbelievable is the fact that none other than Bipin Chandra Pal did not find anything awkward in writing and himself publishing a 353-page biography of Queen Victoria, *Bharatesvari Maharani Victoria* (Bengali)! He said in his autobiography, *My Life and Times* (Part 11):

1887 was the Jubilee Year of Queen Victoria's reign, and I was moved to take advantage of it to write a biography of Her Majesty. The life of Victoria made a strong appeal to me on account of her character far more than because of her high position as the head of the British Empire. In writing this book I had to read up a good deal of literature of her times. . . . I published it myself and though it cost me nearly a thousand rupees I was not a loser by this venture.⁶

The book required two more reprints! And let us look at the situation when the Queen's Diamond Jubilee was celebrated in 1897:

Victoria's Diamond Jubilee was designed to demonstrate the strength and diversity of the British Empire. The festivities . . . occurred under the Mercurial June skies featured representatives across the colonies, ranging from Dayaks from Borneo to Hausas from Western Africa. Over forty thousand soldiers from all parts of the Empire descended on London. Within India, British administrators sought to recreate a microcosm of this pomp and splendour. They invited delegations to present addresses of loyalty and thanks to the Viceroy in the summer capital of Shimla. From across the sub-continent streamed in official representatives of the Hindus of Lahore, Khojas of Bombay, Awadhi *talukdars*, and Muslim Bengali women.

Other Indians lost no opportunity for lavish and often times servile demonstrations of their loyalty to the crown. Princes held *durbars*, fed thousands of people, and laid foundation stones for new hospitals and schools to be named after the queen. Prayer meetings were organised in temples and mosques across the country. Residents of Lahore argued over how best to erect a statue of Victoria. Two hundred Parsi priests packed into the confines of Bombay's Wadia Atash Behram in order to deliver a special *jashan* prayer for the monarch. In Ajmer, dargah custodians pitched in to organise a large fare, while the Bene Israelis of Ahmedabad decided to collectively illuminate their houses. The Jains of Calcutta made what was perhaps the best use of an obligatory message of congratulation: they appealed to Victoria to ban all animal slaughter on her Jubilee day. These memorials, *durbars*, festivals, and prayers were readily picked

up by the British press, as well as by European papers in India, in order to reinforce the common belief that loyalty to British rule, alone, united India's diverse and teeming multitudes.⁷

Notwithstanding the harsh realities of a ruined national economy, the barbaric conduct of the British indigo and tea planters towards the native labourers, the blatant partiality of the judicial system against the natives in any conflict with the ruling race, the Congress sent a congratulatory message to the queen — a gesture that irritated even some progressive politicians in England.⁸

But that was the reality! That the dawn of a new era was about to break out, that the inviolable law of evolutionary progress was about to take a step forward — such writings on a distant wall could be read by the rarest of rare visionaries.

This is the backdrop against which the significance of Sri Aurobindo's exhortations to the National Congress, as articulated in a passage like the one that follows, can be objectively understood:

If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into a ditch? So or nearly so runs the apophthegm of the Galilean prophet, whose name has run over the four quarters of the globe.⁹ Of all those pithy comments on human life, which more than anything else made his teaching effective, this is perhaps the one which goes home deepest and admits of the most frequent use. But very few Indians will be found to admit — certainly I myself two years ago would not have admitted, — that it can truthfully be applied to the National Congress. Yet that it can be so applied, — nay, that no judicious mind can honestly pronounce any other verdict on its action, — is the first thing I must prove, if these articles are to have any *raison d'être*. I am quite aware that in doing this my motive and my prudence may be called into question. I am not ignorant that I am about to censure a body which to many of my countrymen seems the mightiest outcome of our new national life; to some a precious urn in which are guarded our brightest and noblest hopes; to others a guiding star which shall lead us through the encircling gloom to a far distant paradise: and if I were not fully confident that this fixed idea of ours is a snare and a delusion, likely to have the most pernicious effect, I should simply have suppressed my own doubts and remained silent. As it is, I am fully confident, and even hope to bring over one or two of my countrymen to my own way of thinking, or, if that is not possible, at any rate to induce them to think a little more deeply than they have done.¹⁰

No wonder that the series created a sensation in the general readership of the journal and ring an alarm among the leaders. Mahadev Govind Ranade who, before becoming a High Court judge, was editorially associated with the journal warned its

proprietor of the ominous consequences of going ahead with such publications — that he may be accused of promoting sedition. At the proprietor's insistence a reluctant Deshpande requested the author to make a moderate approach to the issues — a proposition that did not find favour with Sri Aurobindo. He lost interest in the exercise.

Sri Aurobindo happened to see Ranade at this time. Ranade advised him to take up some special subject for treatment. "He recommended Jail Reform, perhaps thinking that this writer would soon have personal experience of jails and thus become an expert on his subject!"¹¹

Records the renowned historian, R. C. Majumdar:

It was a son of Bengal who first entered an effective protest against the Indian National Congress. Arabinda Ghosh, destined to attain immortal fame, but as yet unknown in political life, planned to write a series of articles under the title "New Lamps for Old" in the *Indu Prakash* of Bombay, in order to voice the new sentiment.¹²

(To be continued)

MANOJ DAS

References and Notes

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2. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
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4. W. C. Bonnerjee: "Introduction to Indian Politics", quoted in *The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. 1 (1885-1935)* by Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Padma Publications Ltd., Bombay, 1935.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Pulinbihari Sen: "Works of Bipinchandra Pal: A Bibliography" in *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance* edited by Atulchandra Gupta, published in Commemoration of the Birth Centenary of Bipinchandra Pal. The National Council of Education, Bengal; Jadavpur, 1958.
- A subsequent edition of Bipinchandra Pal's autobiography, a copy of which the present author possesses, seems to have edited out the passage quoted.
7. Dinyar Patel: "India and the last Jubilee Queen"; *The Hindu*, 16 June 2012.
8. "Congratulations for what?" Henry M. Hyandman, the pioneer British labour leader asked his friend Dadabhai Naoroji in January 1897. "For having ruined India for two or three generations to come? It is pitiful." *Ibid.*
9. "They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch," said Jesus according to St. Matthew, in the King James Version of the *Bible*.
10. Sri Aurobindo: *Bande Mataram*; CWSA, Vol. 6, p. 11.
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12. R. C. Majumdar: "The Genesis of Extremism" in *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance*.

THE PLACE OF BHAKTI (LOVE AND DEVOTION) IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

[Translator's Remarks: This article was written by my late father Sri Shyama Charan Chatterji in Bengali, and it was published in August 1975 in a journal called Sri Aurobindo Smarak Grantha issued by Sri Aurobindo Bhavan Trust Committee of Bardhaman, West Bengal, India. Sri Saila Kumar Mitra, General Secretary of the Trust Committee, kindly gave permission to publish the article in English in Mother India. When translating the article I have paid attention to every word of the original article and tried not to leave out any word from the translation; however, in a few cases I reworded the sentences slightly and in that process either left out an original word and/or added a new word to make the meaning of the sentences clearer. Also, in a few cases where my father presented Sri Aurobindo's views in his own words in Bengali and I could identify Sri Aurobindo's original statements from The Synthesis of Yoga or Letters on Yoga, I have used Sri Aurobindo's words as quotations. I have abbreviated these two main sources of reference as SY and LY respectively. The book Essays on the Gita, from which I have used a few quotations, is abbreviated as EG. The original article did not have any subtitles, but in order to make the article easier to understand I have added a few subtitles and also short introductory statements to the different sections. In a few cases I have added explanatory words and quotations from Sri Aurobindo's writings and in one case from Swami Vivekananda's. The Sanskrit words used in the article are in italics, and I have presented their English synonyms in parenthesis when these words are used for the first time in the article. A list of many of these words and their English synonyms are given at the end of the article.]

Introduction

[There is a wrong perception among many persons that Sri Aurobindo's yoga emphasises jñāna (knowledge) and karma (work), and that bhakti (love and devotion) does not have a significant role. In fact, bhakti plays a key role in his yoga. However, Sri Aurobindo did not favour unpurified emotions, which sometimes are thought of as expressions of true bhakti. He emphasised the need to establish quiet and peace in the mind and vital being to provide a firm foundation for true bhakti.]

SRI AUROBINDO was a great erudite person and possessed vast wisdom. He had exceptional command of several Western and Indian languages. He was involved with India's independence movement for some time; however he spent a large part of his life in Pondicherry practising yoga in solitude. Most of his books are written in English and his style of writing is a little difficult to follow. However, many of his writings in English have been translated and published in Bengali and other languages, and some of his and the Mother's advice and guidance also have been published in Bengali and other languages by Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Sri Aurobindo Society; but those are not typical religious and spiritual books. For these reasons their messages are not known very widely. Those who visit the Ashram at Pondicherry from other places observe that *sādhaks* and *sādhikās* (male and female practitioners of yoga) are busy in their respective pursuits and that various works of the Ashram are performed in silence. Moreover, it is seen, especially in the morning and evening, that some *sādhaks* and *sādhikās* are meditating near the Samadhi or in the Meditation Hall. Sometimes there are group meditations too. There are study circles outside the Ashram where discussions are held on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga. However, one will not hear any chanting of holy names or any singing of devotional songs. Due to these reasons there are many who believe that Sri Aurobindo's yoga is comprised primarily of the yoga of knowledge and the yoga of works, and that there is no place for *bhakti* in it.

But this notion (that *bhakti* has no place in Sri Aurobindo's yoga) is wrong. In Sri Aurobindo's own words,

It is a misunderstanding to suppose that I am against Bhakti or against emotional Bhakti — which comes to the same thing, since without emotion there can be no Bhakti. It is rather the fact that in my writings on yoga I have given Bhakti the highest place. All that I have said at any time which could account for this misunderstanding was against an *unpurified* emotionalism which, according to my experience, leads to want of balance, agitated and disharmonious expression or even contrary reactions and, at its extreme, nervous disorder. . . . On the contrary, the deeper the emotion, the more intense the Bhakti, the greater is the force for realisation and transformation. . . .

It is no part of this yoga to dry up the heart; but the emotions must be turned towards the Divine. . . .

The very basis of this yoga is bhakti and if one kills one's emotional being, there can be no bhakti. So there can be no possibility of emotion being excluded from the yoga.

Turn your emotions towards the Divine, aspire for their purification; they will then become a help on the way and no longer a cause of suffering. . . . Awake by your aspiration the psychic fire in the heart that burns steadily towards the Divine — that is one way to liberate and fulfill the emotional nature.

. . . psychic emotion is one of the most powerful helps to the sadhana [spiritual practice].

(*Letters on Yoga, Part Two*, pp. 779-81)

In the same book Sri Aurobindo also said:

The very object of yoga is a change of consciousness — it is by getting a new consciousness or by unveiling the hidden consciousness of the true being within and progressively manifesting and perfecting it that one gets first the contact and then the union with the Divine. Ananda and Bhakti are part of that deeper consciousness, and it is only when one lives in it and grows in it that Ananda and Bhakti can be permanent. (*LY, Part Two*, p. 785)

Thus it should be clear that the status of *bhakti* in Sri Aurobindo's yoga is very high; but what is needed at first for yoga is a quiet mind and, secondly, settled silence. Deep spiritual peace indeed is the firm foundation for lasting love and delight. That is why Sri Aurobindo did not look favourably on uncontrolled emotions. Sri Aurobindo said,

To bring the Divine Love and Beauty and Ananda into the world is, indeed, the whole crown and essence of our yoga. But it has always seemed to me impossible unless there comes as its support and foundation and guard the Divine Truth — what I call the supramental — and its Divine Power.

(*LY, Part Two*, p. 753)

[It may be noted that Swami Vivekananda's views about *bhakti* are similar to Sri Aurobindo's. He wrote,

The one great advantage of bhakti is that it is the easiest and the most natural way to reach the great divine end in view. Its great disadvantage is that in its lower forms it oftentimes degenerates into hideous fanaticism. . . . But this danger exists only in that stage of bhakti which is called the preparatory (Gauṇī). When bhakti has become ripe and has passed into that form which is called the supreme (Parā), no more is there any fear of these hideous manifestations of fanaticism.

(The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. III, pp. 32, 33)]

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga

[The goals of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga include the realisation of both static and dynamic aspects of Brahman. The Divine is not only the impersonal immutable

Brahman aloof from the world, He also is Ishwara, the Lord of this world, and He is immanent in the world.

The object of the yoga is to enter into and be possessed by the Divine Presence and Consciousness, to love the Divine for the Divine's sake alone, to be tuned in our nature into the nature of the Divine, and in our will and works and life to be the instrument of the Divine. (LY, Part Two, p. 503)]

Sri Aurobindo's yoga is called integral yoga; it strives for union with Brahman fully in all its aspects, and, therefore, its process of practice too is integral and comprehensive. In the traditional types of yoga only one aspect of God is emphasised and accordingly a single faculty of human consciousness, one power of being, — mind, heart, or will — is used as the means for attaining union with God. But God represents not only existence (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*) and force (*śakti*), he is full of delight (*ānanda*) too; and so he is called '*saccidānanda*' (*sat-cit-ānanda*). According to Taittiriya Upanishad the highest realisation of Brahman is as delight (*ānanda*). Brahman — the essence of existence — is described as: "*raso vai saḥ*" — "verily it is no other than delight" (*Taittiriya*, Verse II.7). Therefore, the question of ignoring Brahman's aspect of delight does not even arise. Existence, consciousness, and delight are not entirely separate principles; these three are intimately connected with each other. Each of these includes the other two. Although our mental process treats them separately, they are essentially same. Our basic consciousness (*cittavṛtti*) also is not made up exclusively by mind, or heart, or will alone. Therefore, none of these can be ignored. According to the Gita we have to find God in all his aspects. Therefore, if we want to find Brahman fully we need to approach him not only through knowledge (*jñāna*) and works (*karma*) but also through love and devotion (*bhakti*). Every portion and every aspect of our being, our thought, action and all other movements have to be dedicated to God. Meditation, or chanting of the holy name, alone is not sufficient; we must offer Him every aspect of our being and everything we do. We have to remain fully absorbed in Him. In the words of the Gita (IX-27),

*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat
yattapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam.*

"Whatever you do, whatever you enjoy, whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give, whatever *tapasyā* (spiritual austerities) you practise, make it, Kaunteya (Arjuna), an offering to Me." This is a continuous *sādhana* (practice); it requires the remembrance of and offering to God at all times — while awake, while working, while sleeping and while dreaming. As the Gita (VIII-7) says,

tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu māmanusmara yudhya ca

“Therefore, remember Me at all times, and fight.” The Mother too said, “Remember and offer.” It is only then that His golden light will descend in every portion of our being, our entire consciousness — physical, vital, and mental — and purify and then transform them into God’s divine consciousness, divine being, divine power, and divine love. In the words of Rig Veda (Hymn IX, 83-1),

ataptatanūrna tadāmo aśnute

which means that he whose body has not been burnt (purified by the fire of spiritual austerities) is not able to enjoy that divine *ānanda* (delight). The verse continues to say,

śṛtāsa id vahantastat samāśata

which means that only those who have become firm by being burnt in fire (of spiritual austerities) are able to contain and enjoy that *ānanda*. Therefore, one should be in yoga continuously, and it is necessary to constantly remember God and offer everything to Him; this cannot be done without *bhakti*.

The Psychic Being and Its Role

[*The psychic being according to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is the inmost part of our consciousness and it is our true soul (puruṣa), which evolves from birth to birth. The psychic being is full of love and devotion for the Divine, and it plays a very important role in Sri Aurobindo’s yoga.*]

Sri Aurobindo said that work, devotion, and meditation — all these three — are needed for his yoga, and that the easy way to reach God is through love, devotion, surrender and by the opening of one’s psychic being; this indeed involves devotion. According to the *Katha Upanishad* (II. 1. 1),

*Parāñci khāni vyatrñat svambhustasmāt parāñ paśyati nāntāratman:
Kaścid dhīraḥ pratyag-ātmānaṁ aikṣad āvṛtta-caḥṣur amṛtatvaṁ icchan.*

“The Self-born has pierced the openings (of the senses) to face outward; therefore, one looks outward and not at the inner self. It is rarely that a wise man, desiring immortality, turns his eyes inward and sees the self within him.” The seeking of pleasure by running after outside sources is not necessary. The inner self, which

is the eternal source of delight, is within us, and we will possess true delight only when we find it. In *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo wrote,

O Bliss who ever dwelst deep-hid within
While men seek thee outside and never find, (p. 345)

The true individual self (*jīvātman*), which transcends nature, develops its own representative in the nature part of our being, and this inmost *puruṣa* is what Sri Aurobindo calls the psychic being (*caitya puruṣa*). What is needed first is the opening of and coming in contact with the psychic being, and we need to let it be the leader of our life. There are three tasks that are emphasised in the integral yoga and these are:

the development of the true soul or psychic being to take the place of the false soul of desire, the sublimation of human into divine love, [and] the elevation of consciousness from its mental to its spiritual and supramental plane . . .
(*SY*, p. 144)

The Upanishads say that our inner being is hidden in the cave of our heart. According to the *Katha Upanishad*, Verse II. 3. 17,

anguşṭhamātraḥ puruṣo'antarātmā sadā janānām hrdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ,

“the *puruṣa* who is no larger than the thumb is seated always in the hearts of men”. This heart, however, is not our desire-filled, polluted, and emotional false heart. The true inner being resides

in the true invisible heart hidden in some luminous cave of the nature: there under some infiltration of the divine Light is our soul, a silent inmost being of which few are even aware . . . There dwells the little spark of the Divine . . . and around it grows the psychic being . . . (*SY*, p. 141)

This psychic being should be brought out to the front with care and patience. In the *Katha Upanishad*, Verse II. 3. 17, it is said that “one must separate him (this *puruṣa*) with patience from one’s body as one separates from a blade of grass its main fibre”. This *puruṣa* has been derived from the delight (*ānanda*) aspect of God — *saccidānanda*. That is why as the sunflower always looks at the sun, so the psychic being always turns towards the Divine:

. . . the most intimate character of the psychic is its pressure towards the Divine through a sacred love, joy and oneness. It is the divine Love that it seeks most,

it is the love of the Divine that is its spur, its goal . . . It lifts the being towards a transcendent Ecstasy and is ready to shed all the downward pull of the world from its wings in its uprising to reach the One Highest; but it calls down also this transcendent Love and Beatitude to deliver and transform this world of hatred and strife and division and darkness and jarring Ignorance.

(*SY*, pp. 146-147)

For these reasons it is the cave of our spiritual heart where we need to concentrate and keep in contact with the psychic being at all times. Thus it can be seen that devotion and love constitute a major limb of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga.

Synthesis of Different Paths

[*Sri Aurobindo's yoga represents a synthesis of different spiritual paths including the yoga of works, yoga of knowledge, and yoga of devotion and love. This approach has similarities with that of the Gita. Sri Aurobindo explained how these paths are not mutually exclusive; in fact they are interrelated and each complements the others. In Sri Aurobindo's yoga these paths work together and help transform all aspects of one's being — will, mind and heart.*]

In Sri Aurobindo's yoga there is no conflict among work, knowledge, and devotion, and this is similar to the view presented in the Gita. In the very beginning of the section on The Yoga of Divine Love of his book, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo said that "Will, knowledge and love are the three divine powers in human nature and the life of man" and that "The integrality of them, the union of man with God in all the three, must . . . be the foundation of an Integral Yoga." (p. 521) Life begins with force and its works, and naturally one may choose to follow the path of works, and turn all actions towards God; then one's life begins to become divine. The path of works leads also to knowledge. The Gita (IV-33) says,

sarvaṁ karmā khilam pāṛtha jñāne parisamāpyate

"all work in its totality finds its culmination and completeness in knowledge".

Sri Aurobindo explains further that in the case of a follower of the path of works,

When the will in him is made one with the divine will and the whole action of the being proceeds from the Divine and is directed towards the Divine, the union in works is perfectly accomplished. (*SY*, p. 521)

However, “the crown of this union is love; for love is the delight of conscious union with the Being in whom we live, act and move, by whom we exist . . .”. (SY, p. 521) Thus the path of works leads one to know the Divine and also to love and adore Him.

Some persons may choose to follow the path of knowledge to arrive at oneness with God. “Knowledge is the foundation of a constant living in the Divine.” (SY, p. 521) “But knowledge is not complete without works; for the Will in being also is God and not the being or its self-aware silent existence alone, and if works find their culmination in knowledge, knowledge also finds its fulfilment in works.” (SY, p. 522)

Knowledge also leads to love. Actually the crown of knowledge is love.

The vision of God brings infallibly the adoration and passionate seeking of the Divine . . . (EG, p. 310)

It is through complete knowledge that complete love arrives. In the words of the Gita (XV-19),

*yo mām evaṁ asammūḍho jānāti puruṣottamaṁ;
sa sarvavid bhajati mām sarvabhāvena bhārata.*

“He who, undeluded, thus knows Me as *Purushottama* (the Highest Person) is the knower of all and worships Me with his whole being, Bhārata (Arjuna).” The Gita also said, “*jñānī nityayukta ekabhaktir viśiṣyate*” — “the man of wisdom who is in constant union (with the Divine), whose *bhakti* is single-minded, excels”.

Some may prefer to approach God through love. The path of love has its unique appeal. Sri Aurobindo said that knowledge is the most expansive power of consciousness, and its role is to liberate and illuminate us; but love and devotion represent the deepest and most intense principle and it indeed is the key to reach the deepest and most secret recesses of divine mystery. The Mother too said that devotion is the key for liberation. Love does not exclude knowledge. Sri Aurobindo explained further that the apparent conflict between knowledge and devotion is attributable to the limitations of lower mental and vital principles. According to the vital part of our nature (which includes emotions) mental knowledge is dry and uninteresting, whereas mental knowledge considers devotion to be merely blind emotion. But once we come in touch with our psychic being this conflict is resolved.

It is only through complete love that one can attain complete knowledge. Intellect helps us know the outer aspects of Reality, but through love we can understand the inner and deeper aspects. Paramahansa Sri Ramakrishna said that the reach of knowledge is limited to the outer quarters of the house (of God), but devotion can reach the inner quarters. In the Gita (XI-54) it has been said,

*bhaktyā tvananyayā sākya ahamevamvidho'arjuna;
jñātum draṣṭum ca tattvena praveṣṭum ca parantapa.*

“By undistracted devotion only, Arjuna, can I be truly known and seen in this way, and be entered into, ‘Oppressor of the Foe’ (Arjuna).” Thus love brings true knowledge, and it also does not exclude works. Sri Aurobindo wrote that the adoration for God

is no isolated seeking of the heart, but an offering of the whole existence. Therefore it must take also the form of a sacrifice; there is a giving of all our works to the Ishwara, there is a surrender of all our active inward and outward nature to the Godhead of our adoration in its every subjective and in its every objective movement. (EG, p. 311)

Spiritual Evolution and Divine Grace

[According to Sri Aurobindo it is the consciousness and bliss of Saccidānanda that descended and became this material world, and the hidden consciousness is slowly evolving. Life (vital force) emerged from matter, and then mind evolved from life. This spiritual evolution is continuing and human consciousness is slowly ascending toward its higher supramental state. The Divine's Grace from above is ready to help an aspiring soul to ascend faster, but in order to receive the help one must surrender completely to the Divine Shakti (power). Bhakti is the driving force of this self-surrender.]

A believer in the path of knowledge usually does not give any importance to the path of devotion considering it to be inferior; and on the other hand a devotee considers the path of knowledge to be dry and uninteresting. According to Sri Aurobindo, however, the more one knows about God, the more one's love for Him grows. Further, when love and devotion for God emerge, doing works dedicated to God becomes indispensable. Doing works for Him whom one loves is indeed an expression of love. Usually a believer of the path of knowledge considers the phenomenal world to be illusory and unreal, and so he rejects the world and seeks to merge with quality-less (*nirguṇa*) and impersonal Brahman. On the other hand, a devotee too rejects the world although he does not consider it to be illusory; he prefers to live in *Brindavan* (the abode of Lord Krishna), which is outside the phenomenal world, where he can remain absorbed in the delight of dwelling near God (*samīpya mukti*). But Sri Aurobindo pointed out that there is a significance of the manifestation of this world. This world is not illusory Maya. In the Gita (IV-8) Lord Krishna said, “*dharmasansthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge*” — “I appear (in this world) from age to age for the sake of establishing righteousness”.

The true meaning of this establishment of righteousness is to found divine consciousness, power and delight in the world, to transform man into a divine being, and to fully express the Divine in this world. The significance of Vedantic symbol of Brahman-Wheel (*Brahman-Chakra*) is similar. The upper portion of the wheel comes down from above and enters the lower realm before it goes up again. This signifies that this world has descended from Brahman, and to ascend and return to Brahman is its destiny. According to the theory of evolution developed in the Western world, life has evolved from matter and mind has appeared from life. Sri Aurobindo's view goes farther and adds that the mind of human beings cannot be the last stage of evolution. The human mind is progressing, and we can see how much more advanced the mind of a modern educated person is than the mind of a wild uncivilised person (of old time). The mind of a highly spiritual person — an ascetic holy person, or a devotee of God, or a 'yogi' — is even more advanced. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* mentions a level of consciousness higher than mind and calls it *Vijñāna* (or Gnosis). Sri Aurobindo too said that mind's culmination will be in supermind, which is the mind of God. Life could emerge from matter and mind from life because they were hidden in what they emerged from. The divine consciousness with delight came down and became inconscient matter, and following the evolutionary process it is gradually emerging. Lord Krishna said in the Gita (X-39), "*sarvabhūtānāṃ bījaṃ ahaṃ*" — "I am the seed of all existences". That this seed will gradually grow and become a large tree is its divine destiny. Human mind, life and body are limited and incomplete, and they have to be transformed into their supramental counterparts, which lie in the higher realm. That indeed is the significance of the divine creation (manifestation), and to accomplish this task mankind has to surrender to God completely and become the channel of His power, consciousness and delight. According to the Gita (XVIII-61), "*Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṃ ḥṛddese' rjuna tiṣṭhati*" — "The Lord abides in the heart of all beings, Arjuna". God is dwelling in our hearts and guiding us. So when the Divine himself is our guide, our ascent to the higher realm of divine nature is certain.

Sri Aurobindo said at the very beginning of his book titled *The Mother*,

There are two powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers. (p. 1)

To aspire for the Divine and to receive His Grace certainly involve devotion and love. In the Upanishads it is said,

*Nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā na bahunā śrutena
Yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyastasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūm svān.*

“This self can be attained neither by instruction, nor by intellectual power, nor even by much learning. Self is to be attained only by the one whom it chooses. To such a one the self reveals its own body.” (*Katha* I. 2. 23 and *Mundaka* III. 2. 3) (This refers to Divine Grace.) We already have seen that Sri Aurobindo puts considerable emphasis on Divine Grace.

Self-surrender is a major part of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. When a *sādhak* surrenders himself to God, He on His own comes to him. The aspirant then receives His Light, Power, Knowledge, and the ocean of Delight. Therefore, what is needed is complete self-surrender. There should be no demand of any kind, and we must offer to Him every aspect of our being without any reservation. This attitude and approach represent true devotion (*bhakti*).

Nature of True Love and Devotion

[True love for God is free of any demand and claim. It leads to unconditional self-giving and surrender to God. It is different from human love, which makes selfish demands on the beloved.]

What is the meaning of devotion for God, or love for God? Our concept of love is based on how we love another human being. But human love is tainted; its primary goal is to fulfil selfish desire, and it is a deformed and polluted form of divine love. Human love is filled with jealousy, *abhimān* (feeling of hurt), and anger; but there is no place for these feelings in this yoga, and these are not a part of true love also. In yoga all love is directed toward God, and one should love human beings as representatives of God (who dwells in them). When one can love God with his entire being, then only is it possible for one to love a human being in the right manner. The love for the Divine is not merely a higher version of human love; it involves a different consciousness and its quality, character and movement are of another type. Sri Aurobindo made a distinction between devotion and love. He said,

The nature of Bhakti is adoration, worship, self-offering to what is greater than oneself; the nature of love is a feeling or a seeking for closeness and union. Self-giving is the character of both; both are necessary in the yoga and each gets its full force when supported by the other. (*LY, Part Two*, p. 776)

Sri Aurobindo also said,

The true love for the Divine is a self-giving, free of demand, full of submission and surrender; it makes no claim, imposes no condition, strikes no bargain, indulges in no violences of jealousy or pride or anger — for these things are

not in its composition. In return the Divine Mother also gives herself, but freely — and this represents itself in an inner giving — her presence in your mind, your vital, your physical consciousness, her power re-creating you in the divine nature, taking up all the movements of your being and directing them towards perfection and fulfilment, her love enveloping you and carrying you in its arms Godwards. (*LY, Part Two*, p. 757)

Reconciliation of Personal and Impersonal Aspects of the Divine

[*One philosophical issue that should be examined before concluding this article involves God as a Personal Being. There has been much debate among philosophers regarding the nature of the supreme Reality as to whether it is personal or impersonal, and there is a trend in modern philosophy to view Reality as being impersonal. There are also some philosophers who recognise both impersonal and personal aspects but consider the personal aspect to be lower in status than the impersonal aspect, and they choose the impersonal Brahman as the goal to reach. Sri Aurobindo explained that one does not have to choose one aspect or the other since both aspects are contained in the Divine. Personality and impersonality “are one thing which we see from two opposite sides and into which we enter by two gates.” (SY, p. 553) Sri Aurobindo fully accepted the Gita’s concept of Purushottama. In Sri Aurobindo’s yoga a sadhaka has to surrender with love to the Divine personality — Ishwara and His Shakti — since the goal of transforming every aspect of one’s being and rising to the supramental level is too difficult to accomplish by one’s own effort.*]

A common believer of the path of knowledge will say that devotion and love call for an object of love, the beloved, in a personal form, and he would question if God can be limited to a human-like personality. God is not like a finite and incomplete human being with limited consciousness and polluted life. Sri Aurobindo considers Him to be an infinite Person (*Puruṣa*). We are overwhelmed by the impersonal vastness of the natural world, and we think that man is merely an insignificant particle of dust. But in the evolutionary process what appears later is greater than what came earlier. Life emerged from matter and mind appeared from life. But life and mind are more powerful than matter. Similarly man with personality emerged from the impersonal world, and, thus personality is greater than impersonality. However, man’s personality still is limited and incomplete, but this personality will be complete since man essentially is the son of immortal Spirit (*Amṛtasya Putrāḥ*). To become immortal and infinite is his destiny, and for fulfilling this destiny man must make a conscious effort. God has been described as an infinite Being, and an infinite Person. The Upanishads refer to Brahman as ‘That’ (*Tat*), and also as ‘He’ (*Saḥ*) and ‘Person’ (*Puruṣa*). In the Gita God has been described as *Purushottama* (Supreme Person) who surpasses the perishable (*kṣara*) *Puruṣa* and is higher even

than the imperishable (*akṣara*) *Puruṣa*.

Sri Aurobindo addressed the issue of personality and impersonality of God in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part Three, Chapter V (p. 553). He wrote:

. . . personality and impersonality . . . are only aspects of the Divine and both are contained in his being; they are one thing which we see from two opposite sides and into which we enter by two gates.

Thus according to his view impersonality is a quality, and is merely an aspect of God's nature, as courage is a quality of man. The existence of courage implies that there is a courageous person. Similarly if there is love, there must be a person who loves and a person who receives the love.

In the Upanishads Brahman has been referred to as *Nirguṇoguṇī*, "qualified who is without qualities". The expression *Nirguṇa* (without qualities) does not imply that He is devoid of qualities; it really means that He is not limited by qualities. The Divine "is the *Ananta-guṇa*, the infinite quality and the infinite divine Personality which manifests itself through it." (*SY*, p. 561) In the Gita too the Supreme Person has been described as "*nirguṇam guṇabhokṭṛ ca*" — "free from qualities yet enjoyer of qualities" (Verse XIII-14). Sri Aurobindo wrote,

As we ourselves are not merely a number of qualities or powers or a psychological quantity, but a being, a person who so expresses his nature, so is the Divine a Person, a conscious Being who thus expresses his nature to us. And we can adore him through different forms of this nature, a God of righteousness, a God of love and mercy, a God of peace and purity . . .

(*SY*, p. 560)

When God is described as 'formless', it is not meant that he is incapable of taking any form since that will limit his power. The meaning of 'formless' is that He is not limited by any form and that He can take any form, or He can also decide to take no forms. The *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* (Verse IV-3) describes Brahman as:

You are woman. You are man. You are the youth and the maiden too.

You, as an old man, walk bent with a staff. You become born and the world is full of thy faces.

In the *Katha Upanishad* (Verse I. 2. 23) too it is said that Self reveals his own body only to the one whom he chooses. Therefore, when Brahman is described as a Person (*Puruṣa*), no limit is imposed on Him. He is an infinite Person, and His knowledge, power, love, and all other forms of his nature are infinite and unlimited. Sri Aurobindo explained that,

None of these are all the Divinity . . . He is each separately and all together. He is Vishnu, Krishna, Kali; he reveals himself to us in humanity as the Christ personality or the Buddha personality. . . . Again he seems to withdraw into a pure spiritual impersonality . . . he becomes to the mind of man an indefinable, *anirdeśyam*. But out of this unknowable the conscious Being, the divine Person, who has manifested himself here, still speaks, “This too is I; even here beyond the view of mind, I am He, the Purushottama.” (SY, pp. 560-61)

[In conclusion it should be reiterated that bhakti plays a major role in Sri Aurobindo’s yoga. In Sri Aurobindo’s words, “. . . I have given Bhakti the highest place.” (LY, p. 780) But he also pointed out that this bhakti is not restless and “unpurified emotionalism”, and that there must be settled peace in the mental and vital parts of one’s being to support the emotions contained in bhakti. Aspiration, which is the first and foremost requirement for succeeding in Sri Aurobindo’s yoga, represents love seeking for the Divine Mother. According to Sri Aurobindo the source of divine love for God in a person is his psychic being and the opening of this true soul hidden in his spiritual heart is of immense importance for his yoga. Further, it is through unconditional love for and complete self-surrender to the Mother, the Divine Shakti, that one is able to accomplish the goals of integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo.]

SHYAMA CHARAN CHATTERJI

(Translated from Bengali by Arun Chatterjee)

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Sanskrit Terms and Their Meaning

Bhakti — devotion and love; *Guṇa* — qualities, or dispositions, of the nature part of one's being; *Īśvara* — the Divine as a person; *Jñāna* — knowledge; *Karma* — works, action; *Puruṣa* — person, conscious being; *Puruṣottama* — supreme person; *Sādhak* and *Sādhikā* — male and female practitioners of yoga; *Sāadhanā* — spiritual practice; *Self* — atman; *Śakti* — power

To bring the Divine Love and Beauty and Ananda into the world is, indeed, the whole crown and essence of our yoga. But it has always seemed to me impossible unless there comes as its support and foundation and guard the Divine Truth — what I call the supramental — and its Divine Power. Otherwise Love itself blinded by the confusions of this present consciousness may stumble in its human receptacles and, even otherwise, may find itself unrecognised, rejected or rapidly degenerating and lost in the frailty of man's inferior nature. But when it comes in the divine truth and power, Divine Love descends first as something transcendent and universal and out of that transcendence and universality it applies itself to persons according to the Divine Truth and Will, creating a vaster, greater, purer personal love than any the human mind or heart can now imagine. It is when one has felt this descent that one can be really an instrument for the birth and action of the Divine Love in the world.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 753)

LABOUR OF LOVE

(Continued from the issue of September 2012)

Part 2 — Preparation and Sadhana

THE MOTHER is fully aware of her work and mission, and she declares:

O my Lord . . . for the accomplishment of Thy Work I have sunk down into the unfathomable depths of Matter, I have touched with my finger the horror of the falsehood and inconscience, I have reached the seat of oblivion and a supreme obscurity. . . . Lord, wilt Thou permit Thy enemies to prevail, falsehood and ugliness and suffering to triumph? Lord, give the command to conquer and victory will be there. (November 24, 1931)

The Lord has assured her:

I have appointed thee from all eternity to be my exceptional representative upon the earth, not only invisibly, in a hidden way, but also openly before the eyes of all men. And what thou were created to be thou wilt be.

(December 8, 1916)

And the Mother prays:

Grant that I may be an efficient and clear-sighted collaborator and that everything within me may foster the plenitude of Thy manifestation.

(February 23, 1914)

She knows very well that the Master greatly relies on her willing help to carry out His Work efficiently:

And if I always live up to what Thou expectest of me, a day will come, O Lord, when Thou wilt be upon earth, and . . . Thou wilt take the earth in Thy arms and the earth will be transformed. (January 17, 1915)

She is aware of the fact that she is “the representative of the great terrestrial struggle” and she has accepted to enter the battlefield and fight till the end, and to prepare herself to make

a constant and heroic effort against everything which in the world opposes the accomplishment of Thy law in its purest and highest present expression . . . (*Ibid.*)

The Supreme Mother has accepted the human form to show mankind as to how to march towards the ‘eternal splendour’:

O Lord, cutting me off from all religious joy and all spiritual ecstasy, depriving me of all freedom to concentrate exclusively upon Thee, Thou saidst to me, “Work like an ordinary man in the midst of ordinary people; learn to be nothing more than they in everything that manifests; participate in all their ways of life; for beyond all that they know, all that they are, thou carriest within thee the torch of the eternal splendour which does not flicker, and by associating with them this is what Thou wilt bring in their midst. (January 11, 1915)

In fact, the Mother’s sadhana and her mission go hand in hand. She is doing the Sadhana for the fulfilment of her Mission.

*

a. A Perfect Instrument

Nothing short of perfect perfection can satisfy her:

. . . the way Thou art fashioning this being which was “I” can be roughly represented by a great diamond cut with regular geometrical facets, a diamond in its cohesion, firmness, pure limpidity, transparency, but a brilliant and radiant flame in its intense ever-progressive life. (November 26, 1912)

She aspires to be as the Lord wants to fashion her, to become a perfect instrument shorn of all distortions and imperfection of the lower nature, and to obey spontaneously His Will alone:

Oh, to be the pure flawless crystal which lets Thy divine ray pass without obscuring, colouring or distorting it! — not from a desire for perfection but so that Thy work may be done as perfectly as possible. (May 25, 1914)

This image of a diamond or a crystal is echoed in a couple of her prayers:

Before Thee may my heart be pure as a pure crystal, so that wholly it may reflect Thee. (November 22, 1913)

Or,

. . . my intelligence, all illumined with Thy Presence, shines like the purest diamond. (March 19, 1914)

Or,

. . . aspiring to be this pure diamond, a perfect reflector of Thy supreme light.
(May 25, 1914)

Man is submerged in the vast ocean of the subconscious. His lower nature is trapped in its dark murky waters; he cannot think clearly, feel purely and act correctly. He is drowned in darkness. What is the subconscious? It is an 'immense sea' of 'thousand little nothings', full of 'useless noises' and a ceaseless 'wearisome train of images' which disturb and agitate our triple lower nature, and

. . . this multitude of little subconscious notations surging up from every side and often drowning us under their overwhelming flood. . . . A considerable labour is needed to silence all these useless noises . . . And it is so much time uselessly lost; it is a terrible wastage. (November 25, 1913)

So long as man is drowned in this dark, muddy subconscious sea, he cannot possibly see the Light or breathe the fresh Air:

Out of the depths of this abysm of darkness the whole being of the earth cries to Thee that Thou mayst give it air and light; it is stifling, wilt Thou not come to its aid? (August 21, 1914)

To feel Thee and aspire to Thee one should have emerged from the immense sea of the subconscious, one should have begun to crystallise, to grow distinct so as to know oneself and then give oneself as that alone which is its own master can do. And what effort and struggle it takes to attain this crystallisation, to emerge from the amorphous state of the environment; and how much more effort and struggle yet to give oneself, to surrender once the individuality has been formed. (March 20, 1914)

Man is still in a fluid state. He is a plaything in the hands of his lower being. Though at present he is the highest product of Nature in her slow and tardy evolution from the Inconscient to Matter, then Life and finally Mind, he carries within him these several aeons of Nature's evolutionary chains of habits. His body (Matter), vital (Life), and mind (Mind) are still trapped in her strong grip. These solid roots of senseless habits are hard to root out from man's triple lower nature. There is a complete chaotic disorder in him. First of all, he must bring some kind of order and harmony in his unruly

nature. To a certain extent mind can exert some control over it, but that is not sufficient. If he wants a sustained and lasting harmonious order in his otherwise riotous nature man must turn his attention to his inner Leader, who alone has the inherent capacity to calm and silence the turbulent sea of the subconscious and make it crystal clear. Then and only then can He do His Work of transformation unhindered.

The Mother is ever ready to help mankind to come out of this dark subconscious and she prays:

O Lord, Eternal Master, Thou shalt be the Teacher, the Inspirer; Thou wilt teach me what should be done, so that after an indispensable application of it to myself, I may make others also benefit from what Thou hast taught me.

(November 25, 1913)

But until she finds a breakthrough in her effort to conquer the subconscious, the Mother cites two ways to control it, "Regular introspection in the Buddhist manner and a methodical analysis of one's dreams — formed almost always from this subconscious registration. . ." (*Ibid.*)

The first way: To be ever vigilant not to allow the mind to be assailed by uncontrollable and undesirable thoughts —

Lord, grant that I may become master of my vagabond thought . . .

(February 23, 1914)

— and for that, to put a strict brake over the useless mental activities; to watch and examine one's thoughts meticulously and reject all the base and negative thoughts and to try to calm down the restless and agitated waves of physico-vital-mental desires and feelings and emotions. One must keep a vibrant positive frame of mind during the waking hours; to see and hear and speak only that which will take us closer to the Supreme. Reading trash and vulgar books and gloating over all sorts of filthy photographic magazines and cheap T.V. programmes and films make the mind polluted and murky. All these dark, ugly and perverted thoughts, feelings and images enter into our subconscious and lie there dormant, and they come up on the surface in our dreams or when we are off our guard.

The second way: To have a conscious sleep; to analyse one's dreams methodically and scrupulously. Our dreams, in fact, show us where we stand. In sleep, when the mind's control over the subconscious is let loose all sorts of silly nothings, useless noises and vile thoughts and feelings come up in our dreams. It is these dreams that we must study systematically, analyse them closely and try to search and find out the lurking weaknesses and loopholes in our nature, and try to rectify them and bring about a radical change in it. The Lord's Grace from above and a sincere persistent call and effort from our side can make the miracle happen. The

Mother prays:

All that is conscious within me belongs unreservedly to Thee, and gradually I shall strive always harder to conquer the subconscious, the yet dark bedrock.
(January 30, 1914)

*

b. To Live Exclusively in the Divine Consciousness:
No Preferences, No Desires, No Attachments

O divine Master of love, eternal Teacher, Thou guidest our lives. It is in Thee alone and for Thee alone that we want to live; enlighten our consciousness, guide our steps, and grant that we may do the utmost we can, using all our energies solely to serve Thee. (January 30, 1914)

A man who lives in the ordinary consciousness will always be influenced by his mental preferences and vital desires. To be above all desires and preferences he must constantly live in the divine Consciousness, so that no influence other than the Supreme can direct him. Then and only then can he make the right choice and take the perfect decision. The Mother prays:

. . . at every moment may our attitude be such that Thy divine Will may determine our choice and that thus it may be Thou who directest our entire life. . . . O Lord, Divine Master of love, we want to be conscious of Thee and Thee alone, be identified with Thy supreme law each time we take a decision, each time we choose, so that it may be Thy Will which moves us, and that our life be thus effectively and integrally consecrated to Thee.

In Thy Light we shall see, in Thy Knowledge we shall know, in Thy Will we shall realise. (January 31, 1914)

And she prays for all humanity:

They can become Thy sovereign Will which chooses without preference, executes without desire. (November 10, 1914)

Let all earthly desires come together in me, O Lord, so that Thou mayst consider them, and Thy will be able to work precisely, clearly, definitively upon the smallest detail as upon the whole. (December 22, 1914)

O Divine Master of love and purity, grant that in its least stages, its smallest activities, this instrument which wants to serve Thee worthily may be purified

of all egoism, all error, all obscurity, so that nothing in it may impair, deform or stop Thy action. How many little recesses lie yet in shadow, far from the full light of Thy illumination: for these I ask the supreme happiness of this illumination. (May 25, 1914)

I know that the veil is formed of a whole mass of small imperfections, of attachments without number. . . . (December 11, 1912)

So long as man is not fully oriented towards the Divine, as long as he does not act according to His Will, he cannot get rid of the small and big imperfections that he possesses. Man is a bundle of imperfections; he thinks wrongly, feels wrongly and acts wrongly. Nothing he does is perfect. A perfect perfection can come only by stages, by the development and growth of consciousness. The more conscious a man is, his thoughts, feelings and acts too will be more and more refined and perfect. The Mother prays:

May all escape from the ordinary consciousness and be delivered from the attachment for material things . . . (February 14, 1914)

The other negative quality in man that hampers his progress towards perfection is attachment. The load of attachments pulls him down into the abyss — attachments for worldly possessions and things. His mind is glued to particular thoughts and ideas, his feelings and emotions are polluted by lower passions and desires, and he acts according to the dictates of lower thoughts and feelings. It is a vicious circle. In order to come out of this giddy round of obscurity man must contact the Divine within him and identify with Him, for He alone has the power to pull man out of this dark worldly rut. The Mother warns us:

. . . nothing should be treated lightly and with indifference, the least circumstances, the smallest acts have a great importance and should be seriously considered; for we must try at every movement to do that which will make the identification of our consciousness with the eternal consciousness easy, and avoid carefully all that could be an obstacle to this identification.

(February 12, 1914)

Oh, to do everything seeing only Thee everywhere and thus soar above the act that has been carried out, without letting any chain that holds us prisoners to the earth burden our flight. . . . (February 25-26, 1914)

. . . to act while remaining outside the action . . . (May 4, 1914)

(To be continued)

KANAILAL DUTT — A GREAT REVOLUTIONARY

(Continued from the issue of September 2012)

KALI CHARAN GHOSH, in his book, *The Roll Of Honour*, has given a detailed account of the events after Naren turned an approver. Naren was granted pardon on 23 July, 1908. Kali Charan Ghosh writes:

. . . Narendra was examined on June 24, 25, 29 and July 3. He would say before the Court what the police had taught him the previous night. Several political leaders were named who had nothing to do with the conspiracy. Stories were told about the accused which had never occurred . . .

In the Court and in Alipore Central Jail, where the accused were quartered, Naren was allowed a certain amount of liberty . . . He was separated from the other accused and put in the European Ward.

A tense situation indeed! Naren's evidence admissible under the law would spell disaster, it was realised, not only to the person concerned but to the cause itself. (*The Roll Of Honour*, Kali Charan Ghosh, p. 181)

As we have seen, the revolutionaries had begun to collect arms for their escape from jail. By July some revolvers had been acquired. To bring arms into the jail was a most hazardous undertaking. But the helpers of the revolutionaries were ready to take any risk to help them. . . .

When Barin's scheme of escaping from the jail was not approved, Satyen and Kanai had decided to kill Naren. Their scheme was shrouded in utmost secrecy.

Events moved fast. Kali Charan Ghosh writes:

. . . Satyen, a sickly fellow, attending the court in a prisoner's costume, was absent on July 26, 27, 28, 1908. He was first removed to the hospital for illness on July 17, and discharged on the same date. He came back to the hospital on July 27. On August 30, he had two interviews with outsiders. Kanai complained of severe colic on August 30 and was admitted in the hospital on the same date . . .

On August 29, 1908, Naren went to the Superintendent of the jail and told him that he had received a message from one of the undertrial bomb case prisoners in the hospital to the effect that he wanted to make a confession. With the Superintendent's approval Naren saw Satyen the same evening as also the very next day. A further interview was arranged on the succeeding day, August 31, in the morning.

On August 31, a convict watchman came and informed the man in charge of the European Ward that Satyen wanted to see Naren. Accompanied by Higgins, the convict overseer, Naren started on the fateful journey. When they came near the hospital they saw Satyen waiting on the first floor near the netting of the verandah. He went away towards Ward No.1 as Naren and Higgins climbed up the stairs. They entered the dispensary room at about seven in the morning. Naren asked Higgins to call Satyen for discussion.

Kanai had been occupying a different ward and was not expected to be present there at the time. He was seen coming from the direction of Ward No. 1. Both entered the dispensary and came very close to Naren. Then the three together went out to the verandah. Higgins was kept waiting in the dispensary.

Before ten minutes, the sound of pistol shots was heard. Naren was hurt in one hand and came running towards the dispensary shouting, "For God's sake, save me, they will kill me!" He was closely followed by Kanai and Satyen. Higgins pushed Naren inside the dispensary and got between Naren and his pursuers. He grappled with Kanai and in raising his arm to knock the revolver of Kanai upwards was shot in the back of the right hand, the bullet passing through the ball of his thumb. Higgins fell on the floor but almost immediately got up. Naren was standing at the corner of the dispensary and Satyen pointed his revolver at him.

Naren had by this time picked up sufficient wits to run out of the dispensary and run down the steps where he was followed by Kanai and Satyen, both firing while running down. One of the bullets struck Naren on the hip.

Naren and Higgins managed to get out of the hospital . . . They were determinedly followed first by Kanai and then by Satyen who fired a few more shots while chasing their prey. Another convict overseer, Linton, came hurriedly to their aid and caught Satyen almost unawares who fell on the ground. Kanai had been keeping his eyes fixed on his victim when Linton came and caught hold of him. Kanai hit Linton on the forehead with the muzzle of his pistol but could not free himself. Then with a supreme effort he freed his hand and fired his last shot at Naren from a very close range. Naren fell as if spinning round with half his body in the drain and the other half on the pathway.

Both Kanai and Satyen made no further efforts to injure anybody else or to secure their freedom.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 181-183)

The next day the whole country was electrified upon reading of the brave deed of Kanai and Satyen. There was widespread jubilation. Indians felt that by their brave act, Kanai and Satyen had washed away the disgrace of Naren's betrayal. Hundreds of people danced in the streets.

The *Indu Prakash* made the following caustic remark on September 5, 1908:

The Bengali anarchists may be considered to be the most romantic lot in the whole anarchist world, and in point of bravery, rascality and cunning they simply cast in shade Russian and Spanish desperadoes, quick in action, quick in revenge, smart in overpowering powerful European warders, and smart in getting rid of an approver.

Both the accused were committed to the Sessions Court, where Kanai refused any aid from lawyers. He admitted his guilt. The trial opened on 7 September 1908. . . .

On October 21, 1908, the High Court pronounced its judgment awarding capital punishment to both the accused.

The sentence of death fell flat on Kanai. He seemed to be absolutely unperturbed over the event. His countenance disclosed blissful composure of his mind. There was no tinge of sorrow or distress. It looked like a charming lotus in full bloom with its inherent joy in self-fulfilment. He looked at death with the same equanimity as he viewed life. It was plain that he had realised the eternal Truth and to him the prison, the guard, the gallows had merged into Nothingness. He gained sixteen pounds in weight (about 7 kilos, in the 20 days between the sentencing on 21 October and the hanging on November 10) which was a proof positive of the inner strength of controlling thoughts and being steeped as if in Heaven's Grace.

(*Ibid.*, p. 184)

After the judgment Kanai refused to see any of his friends. Only on the day before his hanging he met his brother. That same day his co-accused in the Alipore Case were allowed to see him.

Upendra Nath Banerjee found his face as peaceful as a saint's, without "a line of care or shadow of despondency." Serene in his final days, the frail, ailing youth had managed to put on several kilos of weight . . . (*Sri Aurobindo and the Freedom of India*, Compiled and Edited by Chanda Poddar, Mona Sarkar and Bob Zwicker, p. 248)

A fellow revolutionary asked Kanai why he was not afraid of death — how he could be so cheerful and even put on weight. He answered,

I have faith in the spirit of the Gita. I shall depart with the name of the Lord on my lips, thinking of Him with whom I wish to be united after death, and I shall be reborn with part of His knowledge and force. (*Ibid.*, p. 180)

10 November 1908 — the Martyrdom

Kanai refused to meet any priest before his death. On the night before his execution Kanai slept so soundly that the warders had to awaken him to get ready. He attended to his morning routine and became ready for the grand finale. He stepped forward with a serene smile on his face. At five minutes past six he was pinioned. He walked briskly to the gallows in a procession which was led by Police Commissioner Halliday and the District Magistrate. Four warders escorted him to the gallows. His steps were firm and he ascended the steps without any aid. The black cap was pulled over his face and the noose was adjusted around his neck. On the morning of 10 November 1908, the lever was pulled and 20-year-old Kanai hung from the rope. After being kept suspended for one hour Kanai's body was cut down.

The Last Journey

A day before the hanging, Kanai had requested his brother that his funeral be celebrated on a grand scale, in order to awaken his countrymen against the British. On 10 November when Kanai's elder brother, Ashutosh Dutt, together with Motilal Roy and three relatives, came to take Kanai's body, their feet were unsteady and tears flowed from their eyes. They requested the jail authorities to hand over the body. Five persons were allowed in to bring the body out.

A warder took them to the cell where Kanai's body lay, covered with a blanket from head to foot. They brought out the body to the courtyard but none of them could muster courage to uncover the face. Tears blurred their vision. Then an English warder came near them and said,

“Why do you weep? Blessed is the country where such brave youth take birth. One day all those who are born have to die. But how many die so bravely?” His words surprised Ashutosh and his friends. Then the English warder said, “Yesterday evening I was surprised to see Kanai serene and cheerful. I asked him how could he be so cheerful? We had a long talk. Kanai's happiness had increased after he was awarded the death sentence. Yesterday in the evening, his face was alight with a sweet smile, which I will never forget. I said, ‘Kanai, today you are smiling, but tomorrow after death your lips will become black.’ But at the time of hanging Kanai was so calm and happy that when we escorted him to the gallows and his eyes were covered and the noose was about to tighten around his neck, he turned in my direction and pointing towards me said, ‘Sahib, how do I look to you today?’ To embrace death so fearlessly is not possible for anyone except one who has conquered death.”

(*Viplava Yajnya Ki Ahutiyan, Balvir Kanailal, Motilal Roy, p. 234*)

These words of the English warder gave courage to Kanai's relatives to remove the blanket from Kanai's body. Motilal Roy writes,

It is beyond my power to express in words the divine beauty of Kanai. His broad forehead was covered by his long hair. A nectarous light was flowing out of his half closed eyes. The firmly pressed lips showed the light of firm determination. His fists were clenched. We could not see on any limb of Kanai any sign of deformation caused by death. Only both his shoulders were bent a little by the rubbing of the rope. We dressed Kanai in a dhoti and put a chaddar on his shoulders. Then we placed the body on a decorated charpoy and put a tilak of sandal paste on his forehead. Garlands were put around the charpoy. It seemed as if brave Kanailal was sleeping. He seemed to be smiling. (*Ibid.*, p. 237)

When they picked up the charpoy, the jail superintendent ordered them to cover the body. To avoid needless controversy they covered the body with a sheet. Only then were they allowed to take the sacred body through a back passage. . . .

The emotionally charged crowd picked up and carried the body of Kanai on their shoulders. Countless garlands were offered. As if in deference of Kanai's last wish, the Almighty Himself had arranged this stupendous farewell. The Gods were watching this indescribable scene from Heaven. Some volunteers cleaved a way through the dense crowd for the bier. Again and again people stopped the bier to offer their pranams and to touch Kanai's feet. Hundreds of copies of the sacred Gita, flowers, sandal paste and bilva leaves were offered at the bier. It seemed as if a God was being worshipped.

In the afternoon the exhausted crowd sat down. Some of the people requested Ashutosh to speak. In the end Motilal Roy gave a speech. He climbed a mound and saw all around him a sea of humanity. After his speech, without any pre-planning the public made donations and bought sandalwood logs for the cremation. The bier was prepared with big sandalwood pieces. It was decorated with flowers and garlands. The flower vendors gave away their flowers without charging anything. The body was placed on the bier for cremation. People poured pots full of ghee (clarified butter) and offered incense and scented things.

Kanai's brother Ashutosh applied the sacramental fire to his mouth and others scrambled up to light the pyre. Soon the flames burnt the body. People poured so many pots of Ganga water on the embers that even the ashes were washed away. There was a mad scramble to get a bit of the sacred ashes. People took away a pinch of the sacred ashes in gold, silver, ivory or wooden boxes for worship. Numerous paper packets were made to be sent to the districts and villages. With difficulty a handful of ashes were saved to be immersed in the Ganga. The crowd sat down totally exhausted.

In the afternoon a procession was formed at College Square to march through the streets with the song:

*Jae jabe jiban chole,
Jagat majhe tomar kaje 'Bande Mataram' bole;
Bet mere ki ma bholabi, amra ki mayer sei chhele . . .*

(Let life depart if it will in carrying out your work uttering 'Bande Mataram'. Would you make us forget our Mother by flogging? Never think that such sons of the Mother we are.)

While women had been producing tremendous blasts on their conch shells. An old man sang:

Forget the love of all that's dear,
Forgo the world's worry and care,
Close in sleep thy shining eyes!
Where no darkness prevails or no tear
Where glory decks the hero's bier,
Up! Kanai, up to Paradise!

(The Roll Of Honour, Kali Charan Ghosh, p. 185)

The day faded. Dark shadows gathered. At home Kanai's widowed mother Brojeshwari Devi lay on the ground immersed in grief. Motilal Roy bowed down at her feet many a time saying, 'Bande Mataram!'

(Viplava Yajnya Ki Ahutiyani, Balivir Kanailal, Motilal Roy, p. 234)

(Concluded)

SHYAM KUMARI

Whatever adverse things present themselves you must meet them with courage and they will disappear and the help come. Faith and courage are the true attitude to keep in life and work always and in the spiritual experience also.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 584)

THE MOTHER'S FLAG HOISTED ON THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT EVEREST

(This write-up is based on the personal experiences of a mountaineer and a child of the Mother, Yogavyāsa Bhoi. He recalled and narrated them vividly to camp members and trainees at the Kaptipada Integral Centre of Education, in Mayurbhanj District of Odisha, during 'Rivero Spirit: An adventure with Spiritual Camp for the Youth' held on 29th December, 2011.)

EVEN though I had no inborn instinct to become someone very great, I had a propensity from my childhood days to take recourse to dare-devil adventures. I don't know why I used to be so excited about the unthinkable experiences flowing down when I immersed myself in those extraordinary thoughts; my heart was filled with the thoughts of glorious mountaineering. Not only this, the flights of my imagination sometimes made me fall from the peaks of achievement to the base-level fetters and that made me breathless! Then I could hardly think that those were mere inanities . . . failure is nothing but the alarm and striking assertion of success.

Such are the many strands of thought and umpteen dreams which had been mixed up with my childhood precociousness. It takes me back to the year 2001, when I was camping at the Sri Aurobindo Centre of Yoga at Titlagarh, in the district of Bolangir in Odisha. One day while participating in the Sri Aurobindo Study Circle, and more particularly, when the chapter, 'Dare-Devil Adventures' from the Odiya book *Chirantane* was being read out, a very bold outburst of thought-current suddenly rushed forcefully into my being. I followed the thought-stream like a blind person. The framed photos of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were in front of us; I felt that the Divine Mother herself was present there personally. My mind shot the following question, "O Mother! Mt. Everest is the highest peak and any attempt to scale it is surely the most daring expedition. Can't I participate in that expedition? With your kind blessings and protection, I shall surely hoist your victory-flag on the highest summit, on Mt. Everest. So tell me, sweet Mother! Won't you protect and guide me for this great adventure?"

My mind was filled by these incessantly invading thoughts. I collected all necessary data and relevant facts which a mountaineer would require. Not only this, I practised regularly some special exercises which are essential for physical preparedness and fitness. Of course, I knew for certain that my mental expectations were far more daring than the expedition itself! This was precisely because of the heavy expenses involved for which I was quite unprepared. Even then, I had never given up my faith. During my daily recitations (more than once) of Sri Aurobindo's 'Durga Stotra' the portion that used to inspire me most was the following:

Mother, give to our heart and mind a titan's strength, a titan's energy, to our soul and intelligence a god's character and knowledge.

It was indeed Mother-Bhavani's incarnation that manifested before me, as I kept gazing at the photographs of the sweet Mother; simultaneously all my hopes and trust took a flight to the summit of Everest and touched the peak!

By the infinite Grace of the Mother, I got the rare opportunity of my being included in the Mt. Everest Expedition Team for the year 2011. Naturally it was a matter of great surprise for me. At once, the grand spectacle of the Divine Mother's victory-flag fluttering on the summit of Mt. Everest flashed across my mental horizon . . . snow-flakes gradually falling down from the sky above . . . ah! What a great delight indeed! Victory, countless victory to our sweet Mother!

I was camping at Bhubaneshwar when the Himalayan expedition was to be launched in fifteen days. I approached many for help going from door to door, not only by meeting individuals but also through some institutions. While some persons ridiculed the proposition, many others withdrew and turned their backs on hearing of the idea. Whenever somebody responded with a few words of consolation, there appeared to be some rekindling of hope in my downcast mind. However, there was no outcome at all, and all my efforts to arrange funds for the expedition were frustrated. I felt as if I had dumped several heaps of shattered confidence on the Divine Mother!

I clearly remember the date; it was the 1st April of the year 2011, when I received the floral blessing-packets from the Ashram in Pondicherry. I couldn't tolerate the exasperation welling up in the depths of my mind. That night while looking at the photo of the Mother I carried in a pocket of my dress, I asked her, "What kind of ordeal is this, O Mother! Will you not grant me the opportunity to hoist your flag on the summit of Mt. Everest? If you do not want it, why did you select me for the job?" Thereafter, I fell asleep. While preparing myself next morning to return home, I received a phone-call from an unknown person saying, "Your money is likely to be arranged," and I was stunned to hear this! Even if the voice of the caller was unknown to me, it seemed to me a familiar one.

Truly speaking, with a great deal of effort, the required sum of money (about 30 lakhs) could be arranged. Tear drops of gratitude rolled down my cheeks. I surrendered everything at the lotus-feet of the Divine Mother. Even then my mind went on questioning again and again . . . is this a sample of causeless Grace of the sweet Mother? Thereafter, all essential arrangements would be completed without much hassle. I started for Kathmandu from Odisha on April 15, 2011.

The altitude of the highest mountain-peak in the world is about 8,848 metres or 29, 084 feet. The snow-clad mountain-path is full of dangers. The temperature varies between 40 degrees to 50 degrees Centigrade, below zero. Normally, one month before the commencement of the Expedition, all mountaineers of the team stay at the Base-camp to acclimatise themselves with sub-normal temperatures and

the environment. Due to the unavoidable delay in my joining, I was deprived of this opportunity.

To climb to the summit of Everest, the expeditioners normally use four-stage camps en route, . . . for example, Camp no. 1 (5,900 metres), Camp no. 2 (6,400 metres), Camp no. 3 (7,200 metres) and the last, Camp no. 4 (8,000 metres) which is also referred to as 'Death-Zone'. After a gap of one month's delay, I reached the Base-camp. The weather prevailing at that time was highly inclement and hostile and a few mountaineers had already laid down their lives. On the 2nd May of 2011 at 6 p.m. I arrived at the Base-camp. As soon as I reached the Base-camp I shouted spontaneously, "Victory to the Divine Mother!" It was like the 'Ananda'-Volcano of my mind spewing holy 'Lava' around. My guide, Passang Sherpa was Nepalese. He had a sturdy countenance and he was an astute mountaineer. On witnessing the fountain of my delight, he too became overwhelmed with joy. However, on having some doubt about my slogan-type utterance, he suddenly put this question to me, "Whose victory are you celebrating?" I replied promptly, "It is the victory of my Mother who has brought me here." The Sherpa-guide said "very well" thrice and patted my shoulders affectionately.

The Base-camp is located at a height of 5,564 metres. Generally, some mountaineers show signs of fatigue and exhaustion while arriving at the Base-camp. But I didn't have any symptom of 'high-altitude sickness' at all. I knew already by heart Sri Aurobindo's 'Durga Stotra' and the 3rd chapter of his book, *Maa (The Mother)*. While trekking ahead I was reciting repeatedly from 'Durga Stotra' and the 3rd chapter of the book, *Maa*. The inhospitable mountain-path was as precipitous as slippery. Calamity was chasing us along with its awesome gaping mouth like that of a python. Who could say anything about the future events? In spite of all these, I remained fearless and calm. The chosen lines from the 3rd chapter of the book, *Maa*, flashed intermittently — "Its [the Mother's] touch can turn difficulties into opportunities, failure into success and weakness into unfaltering strength." Thus our expedition marched ahead steadily.

Our Expedition Camp's name was 'Spiritual Mount Everest Expedition — 2011'. There were seven expeditioners in all, including myself . . . one woman and six men. According to the culture and traditions of the Sherpas, Lord Buddha is worshipped one day before starting off from the Base-camp. On that specified day, when the Buddhist priest started his ceremonial worship, I showed him the Mother's flag and requested him to worship the spiritual flag too. At this juncture, the priest started discussion among the Buddhists and asked where could he place the flag? At that time I intervened to say that the flag could be placed anywhere, but certainly not on the floor. Then the priest asked me, "Whose flag is this?" I replied, "It is the Mother's flag, the spiritual flag of India."

After a few moments of silence, the priest gave the ruling with the following words: "Lord Buddha had his mother and because the flag is the Mother's flag it

should be placed on Lord Buddha's statue." Then the flag was decorated and placed accordingly. At that sacred moment I could feel the Mother's force emanating from the spiritual flag, and my head was gently bending down with profound gratitude at the glorious lotus-feet of the Divine Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

When we started off from the Base-camp to Camp no. 1 (5,900 metres), we had a tough encounter with the most dangerous 'Khumbu Icefall'. After staying at Camp no. 1 for one night, I returned to our Base-camp for the purpose of acclimatising my body. Unfortunately, my floral blessings-packet containing the Mother's photo had been misplaced somewhere in Camp no. 1 and this caused me great repentance and sorrow. On return to the Base-camp, my mind was burdened with these thoughts. I concentrated on the Mother and while reading the book, *Maa*, inside the tent, I fell asleep. During my sleep I witnessed an unusual vision: One ice-column of Light was moving ahead of the road in front of me . . . and I was following that Light. Ultimately that column of Light reached the summit of Everest and I too scaled the summit of Everest, being a part and parcel of that profile of Light. At that moment I heard my guide's distinct wake-up call . . . "Sir! Please get ready; we have to start our journey immediately."

On hearing this call at 2 a.m. in the night, I suddenly woke up and I was startled. That scenario of my dream was still dancing before my eyes . . . and thereby I could have a vivid glimpse of the mountain-paths leading to our expedition camps, the places of our stay, where and how to proceed further . . . and all those thrilling details which I had seen in my dreams. When I narrated my recent experiences of those dream-sequences to the Sherpa and other members of the Expedition, they became somewhat wonder-struck and they asked me about the source from whom I had heard all these? After exchanging some thoughts, I had the burning faith and confidence in me that all these revelations were nothing but the Powers of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, the most adorable twin Avatars of my heart. Since their Spiritual Force had already hewn the path and reached the summit of Everest, there was absolutely no doubt about my conquest of the summit, because the Shakti of the twin Avatars was active in my whole Being.

On May 18, 2011, early in the morning at 4 a.m., we commenced our journey from Camp no. 3 (7,200 metres) to Camp no. 4 (8,000 metres) towards the 'Death-Zone', which was highly arduous. During this particular journey we had to fight through many snow-storms. I was reciting aloud from Sri Aurobindo's 'Durga-Stotra' and the 3rd chapter of the book *Maa* again and again; simultaneously I was visualising the graceful countenance of the Divine Mother in my heart in order to proceed on the challenging path. Of all our experiences in the expedition, this one was the most dangerous. It appeared as though everything was turning repeatedly topsy-turvy, but the Divine Mother was wonderfully restoring all those situations into perfect order. On that day the weather too was very inclement. I told all the members of the Expedition, — "The Divine Mother is present amongst us, and

everything will be all right.” At that critical moment Passang laughed heartily and said, “Let Yogavyāsa’s Mother be victorious!” Truly, I was realising in the depth of my heart that the Mother’s Power was working directly and I sincerely felt the following — It was not I . . . but the sweet Mother, who was enthroned within myself, was actually leading and ushering all of us onto the adventurous path ahead.

That evening at about 5 p.m. we reached Camp no. 4, which is also known as the ‘Death-Zone’; it would mean ‘Certain Death’. It is located at an altitude of 8,000 metres above the mean sea-level. The prevailing temperature there was the barest minimum. It was indeed difficult to prevent trembling and shivering in the body due to the biting cold casting its freezing temperature everywhere . . . even the bone-marrow seemed to freeze! After reaching there, all of us snuggled up close to each other inside the tent and drank some hot soup and warm juice.

While camping inside that tent, one Sherpa of the cleaning-team came up and joined us. At that time a miraculous event took place. He became very intimate and friendly with me especially after he came to know that my adventure to the top of Mt. Everest was a spiritual expedition; he raised the question about the correct significance of the words ‘Spiritual Expedition’ and also to whom was it dedicated! So I got the opportunity to explain. I took out the sachet containing Mother’s photo and floral blessing from my pocket; after showing it to him, I told him, “The Mother and Sri Aurobindo are my spiritual Gurus and also the creators of my destiny. That day is likely to dawn soon when the entire humanity would be permeated with the glorious Ideals of both the Gurus and India shall become the centre-field of that spiritual inundation everywhere.”

The Sherpa at once took out one blessing-packet from his pocket and heartily announced, “I have also got one such blessing-packet with me . . . while cleaning the camp, I suddenly found it entrapped beneath the surface of snow there. I thought some mountaineer who loves his mother very deeply, must have brought her photo along with him for scaling Mt. Everest. Be that as it may, a mother is the mother in respect of every child and she is full of infinite love and eternal compassion . . . and all children universally belong to her motherhood.”

“Sherpajee! This blessing-packet belongs to me . . . I had lost it in the camp due to my carelessness.” As soon as I uttered these words, Sherpajee handed over the blessing-packet to me and said — “Look! How your mother has come back to you; actually you are the true child of your real mother . . . may your expedition be successful and victorious!” I placed the blessing-packet on my head with intense devotion and gratitude, kissed it and pressed it on my bosom with great delight. At that propitious moment, I was reminded of the significant words below:

And when the grace and the 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; . . .



At that time, I had become completely fearless. My eyes were full of tears of gratitude, while my body had become the repository of boundless spiritual strength of the Mother. I announced to my friends with an emphatic voice — “No one on earth can prevent us from scaling the summit of Everest . . . Victory is certain; — let us march ahead, Victory to the Divine Mother! Victory to the Divine Mother!” And truly speaking, it appeared as if all adventurers put on the armour of my fearlessness . . . The last phase attempt of our mountaineering expedition began.

On May 18, 2011 at 9.30 p.m., we started our night-long journey from the ‘Death-Zone’ heading towards the summit of Everest. While traversing the mountain-path, we witnessed many dead human bodies, which created an impression of a large number of fishes lying hardened up due to the ice-box packings. The journey of dare-devilry, which was crisis-ridden, and thrilling all the time, took us across ‘Balcony’, ‘Rock Elven’ and the finishing touch at ‘Hillary Step’. After climbing all these, we could at last put our victorious steps on the highest spot of the peak of Mt. Everest at 9.25 a.m. of May 19, 2011. At the very outset, we hoisted the spiritual flag of the Divine Mother on the summit of Mt. Everest. While offering our salutations we shouted the slogan — “Victory to the Divine Mother!” It was a Spiritual Victory over the material world for which the serried Himalayan peaks were waiting with great thirst and aspiration. On that auspicious day, the world witnessed the unique power of triumph of the Victory-Flag of the Divine Mother.

Our beings cheerfully cried with tears of joy, but those tear-drops were being instantly converted into snow-flakes. We hoisted simultaneously the tri-colour flag of the Republic of India. On that eventful day, the temperature atop Mt. Everest was minus 42 degrees Centigrade. We spent about 45 minutes in the summit region of Everest. Truly it appeared to me that I was witnessing the living presence of the Divine Mother on the Himalayan region’s Heavenly territory. I was also having the glorious ‘Darshan’ of the complete manifestation of Mother India, who is the widely acclaimed Queen of the whole world. That day the summit-region of Mt. Everest had blessed reasons for a sense of fulfilment . . . The distant horizon of the Himalayan landscape had complete reasons for its sense of Beatitude. Thus I offered my prayerful chant: “This Expedition is truly the Victory-March of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo . . . a grand unison of the Power of the Holy Spirit and the Universal Nature.”

SANTOSH RATH

(Translated by Suresh Dey from an Odiya article in *Navaprakash*, March 2012)

A FEW WORDS ABOUT MANIBHAI*

WHEN in 1941 I first saw Manibhai he was a well-built man in his prime and a bit stylish. I saw him wearing silk shirts and fine dhotis. The Mother put him in charge of keys. If there were any trouble in any of the Ashram houses it was Manibhai who was called to help. When I came here it was quite difficult to hold in my hand a gate key some 8 inches long. Quite foreseeably I lost the key on the second day. It was evening and the key department was closed for the day. But I was advised by an elderly Sadhak to try my luck by knocking at the door of Manibhai. His office was then the present day Ashram Post Office. Luck was in my favour. Grim looking he stared at me. However, he agreed to help me. Our Chettiar House main gate was opened. Manibhai, after doing his work, did not wait for any thanksgiving. He never cared for praise.

I had gone back to Calcutta. And after a year when I came back in 1942 Manibhai had left the Ashram and gone to his native place in Gujarat. There Manibhai was like a fish out of water. His native village was no longer the same nor was he the same person. He came back. Here too things were not the same. Instead of resuming his old job, he was asked to work as a guard in one of our distant gardens, 'Le Faucheur'. It was a desolate place infested with snakes and local ruffians. But Manibhai fought his battle and won. Till his death he stood on the desolate spot adjacent to the cremation ground and insecure in every way, accompanied by a band of faithful pariah dogs.

He passed with high marks as a soldier of the Mother, never expressing a word of complaint about his ordeals.

SAMIR KANTA GUPTA

* This reminiscence was prompted by an article in the June 2012 issue of *Mother India*.

A CAPTIVE OF HER LOVE*

Pondicherry 18.12.1957

THERE is a great peace in me and I have inwardly asked the Mother to write this letter too, to help me. Her living and pulsating consciousness is just simply doing everything here and I experience it that there is just no place for my own action. I have only to step aside and hold with ardent aspiration my mind, life and body imploring Her to do Her Will with them. There can be no doubt that the Divine has directly come into the human life in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Anyway there is no doubt in me and for this Truth I am continuously giving thanks.

I arrived in Pondicherry yesterday, 17.12, early in the morning. The brother of the sadhak who met me in the port of Bombay came to the train — another brother for me. The Radiation works through them. He brought me with all my luggage (which has during all the journey never been opened by the customs!) to a house which is supposed to be my home now and soon the place too of my work. It is a house newly purchased by the Ashram for a kind of nursing home for patients after operations. Nahar has told me that Mother wants to put me in charge of this home. The pressure of Her Force is so immense that it is clear that only She will be doing Her work in the house and I am only praying that I may never forget it and learn more and more to be a channel only. This house is in the middle of houses which do not belong to the Ashram. The Ashram forms a third of Pondicherry,¹ it means that Ashram dots cover, in some places more condensed, in others less, or even sparsely — but cover *all* of Pondicherry like a fantastic creature spreading Her limbs to swallow the human by the supramental. In practice it means that a noisy Indian restaurant is just beside the dining hall, that loud ugly music sounds from a café near our playground, that black pigs with their small ones and naked, unspeakably dirty children raise clouds of dust and dirt on the street where my house stands. And there is something so great in it, in this stream of Love spreading, that I cannot express it.

Yesterday was a day when Mother was giving sweets to Her children, to all the members of the Ashram. She does not give flowers now and does not usually give sweets or nuts either as Her work with the spreading of the Ashram is growing. So I was very happy that She was exceptionally doing it on that day. Pavitra (Monsieur Saint Hilaire) brought me to Her and I only know that I was Her child and that two

* Michèle Lupsa's introduction to Janina's letters appeared in the September 2012 issue of *Mother India*.

1. In fact, Sri Aurobindo Ashram forms much less than a third of the town of Pondicherry, but the manner in which it is spread out makes it seem larger than it actually is.

streams of vibrating Force of Her Grace penetrated into my eyes, to my soul, from Her eyes. So Her Grace is acting in Her children. Now I know that there is no other way for the human being but only to be, really — in just this sense of the word — a child. And many of these most wonderful people here, who help Her in Her work, have really this attitude to Her, to the Divine. It cannot be a different attitude. It is impossible. Yes, She makes an impression of being ageless, as you said you feel it, and Her smile and face just create an indescribable happiness.

This morning I went (as the members and many people from the town do every day) to the street on which Her balcony is built and where She gives Her darshan every day. Usually it is at 6.15, today it was some minutes later. One would be doing harm to oneself if one did not become a child again. And the great adoration in the eyes of the sadhaks is only the most natural thing. This is very far from sentimentality. The balcony is not high, we stood very near to Her. She smiled for some time looking us over and then looked at the houses around, the town and the sky. She was as if blessing all the world — so I felt — and She was doing it for quite a long time, maybe ten minutes, but I could not tell. I could not look at Her all the time, I shut my eyes and prayed that I learn to open to the Descent and to adore Her.

The evening meditation is about at 8 or later and the duration differs between a few minutes and twenty minutes. I think one has to learn to be able to be near Her, anyway so I feel; it is the process of being able to be near Her as She is in the human body. Until now I approached Her only as the Divine in my prayer.

Now, it is interesting that Nahar told me first thing that there are also bad people in the Ashram and that I have to be careful. Mother is keeping them as they belong to life and their bad will cannot oppose Her.

About Pavitra and about Sri Aurobindo's Force working in the Ashram I shall write next time.

* * *

20.12.1957

Mother is creating me anew and as I am here living in the Presence of the Divine continuously, the process is so deep that I need some days before I shall be able to write about Mother. She will also let me know how to write, I know it. Now I know that a certain kind of writing cannot be done by a human being. Sri Aurobindo could do it and has done it in *Savitri* and other books.

Yesterday in the evening we had a long meditation. It was 8.30 when it started and past 9 when it finished. Such longer meditations are on Thursdays and Saturdays.

Until now Mother lets me live without work. I get up early to be ready for the Balcony Darshan. Today it started at 6.30. Before, I enter for a few minutes into the

main building to pray to Sri Aurobindo's Living Presence at the large stone² in the courtyard. I also go to the balcony a few minutes early, before Mother appears, to be inwardly ready for Her. She is the Divine and my real Mother. People are gathered and Her silent appearance brings such glory that nothing else matters. To meet Her gaze means to meet Grace, Power and Happiness. So I experience it. And all this is simply real. This sometimes so frail and delicate-looking body, is the Infinite.

After the darshan I go a few streets farther to our dining hall for breakfast. First we take off our shoes or rather sandals. Then we take a nice round tray (which looks like silver but isn't of course). This tray will be also during lunch-time a plate for rice. So on this round tray which I hold in my hands I get from a few people, one after the other: a big wonderfully tasty bun, a banana, milk or cocoa, sugar in a tiny tin and a nice spoon. Everything looks so clean. All the people are smiling and in the eyes of some, one sees Mother looking at you. Then I go with my tray to one of the four large rooms of the dining hall, I sit on the floor on a mat and put my tray on one of the tiny tables you know from the pictures. It is covered with a white piece of cotton, very clean. Then I meditate quietly, nobody starts talking to me, very seldom people talk loudly, but this is not disturbing when it happens. Not many meditate so that you can see it, but there are many faces that are a proof of a very deep yoga. There are also some who just seem to live — but one can never judge so I try not to do it. The eating is an intensive prayer in my case as the body wanted to create difficulties. I eat the normal Indian Ashram food knowing that Mother is giving it to me. It is not so spicy as on the ship. I am very grateful that it suits me. I did not want to have special food as many Europeans have. I felt that I have to throw off completely many things, straight from the beginning.

* * *

21.12.1957

Here I am again with a description of how life flows during the day. As I am not working yet I go home after breakfast. After I have finished eating I always first meditate, then bring my tray outside in the yard where sadhaks are washing up. I wash my hands and teeth with water, put on my slippers and go. It is glorious to accept everything as the Divine's — everything that comes.

Mother has a lot of humour. Yesterday we were supposed to attend an evening class She gives for the children on Fridays and we were sitting, some on mats, some on towels, jerseys (but no carpets!) waiting for Mother to come. It was in the playground and She was in a special room nearby where She gives blessings every

2. The Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo.

day to sadhaks who have their birthday or just sees different people whom She calls beforehand. She was inside and we outside and it was raining a bit, first a warm, pleasant rain, but then more and more. Everything was prepared for Her: you know, in front of the map of India on the wall of the playground under a small roof, the chair, the lamp and even the microphone for people who sit farther away. And then She came. The children had grown noisy and complained that it was raining and She was like an ordinary mother. She said: “Oh! Why didn’t you tell me that it was raining?” and then She made a few jokes about the sky that was so unbalanced and about the text She wanted to read and all the time She looked at us. And now I know what I can write about Her and what not. I can describe what I see and hear, but never interpret — maybe this will be allowed when the integral purity of my whole being will be reached. She looked and smiled and said, “Everyone can meditate at home.” And so this group of people sitting in the rain was sent home by the Divine without the lesson and without the meditation which was to follow.

But I have to go on with the description of the day in the Ashram. So after breakfast during these first days I just went on opening myself to Mother. I just live in it. There is no other way. Everything must be cut with a decisive cut, all kinds of hypnosis, years and years, long-established ways of behaviour, there cannot be — so I felt — a compromise between surrender and one’s own ways of living.

Did you get the last *Advent* already? There is an article about what Sri Aurobindo says about the Divine Mother. She comes at crucial points in the life of the world, Herself, to work without delegated Powers.

* * *

22.12.1957

Now I want to tell how it is with this difference here — the substantial difference. When I was outside the Ashram I had faith — now I *know*. Every day the vibration from Mother’s eyes enters my eyes when She gives darshan and it spreads all over the body. Now I understand that when one is outside one has no idea in a way of what is going on here. Yes, theoretically one knows — but coming here proves that it is just a complete revolution. In my case it might be the decisive action as well of the psychic, but I feel as if I who have been walking on my feet, am now walking on my head. It is also a continuous hunger and thirst — although a hunger filled with peace — for this vibration. Do you feel what I want to say? In the morning I could fly and be there quicker and wait, but it has nothing to do with Her physical nearness — as some people here still do, just trying to see Her whenever they can. My life is completely changed, I am just possessed. But this cannot be expressed. I only know that it is a glory to be Her servant and instrument. Why am I writing about this

difference? Because I know many questions we were asking ourselves outside. Now there is no use asking and answering questions. God came on earth and is living here in a human body. It is clear that I cannot yet grasp it, although I am here, but all eternity is before me.

I attended a lesson of Mother for the youth. Among other things She said that probably the dominant aspect in the supramental manifestation in the coming age will be that of Power, for the new race will need to be protected and that is why the Divine Power will have to protect it from destructive powers. Naturally, she said, that does not mean that the other aspects, Love, Joy, Knowledge will not be present. I have written this sentence for you because I persist in showing you what a difference here the direct Love means, Hers for us and ours for Her. I shall never forget *how* She said it, although before, when I was in Europe I could never have felt it like now, if I had only read such a sentence. At the end of the lesson She said She wanted to give us an important recommendation: never to want to *take* it but always to try only to open oneself, to give oneself, to surrender with as much ardent aspiration as is possible to us. And she repeated several times that there is a danger in each movement of *wanting to take*.³

What I have learned during these first days is — but I shall write about it another time. Now I want to tell you that yesterday I was accepted by Mother to attend a class of older youths and sadhaks during which Mother translates *The Synthesis of Yoga* into French. Before She came I had to wait near the table, just like a child in school (Oh! I tell you, this freedom here and this being a child is a glory) and when She came She handed me a book and a nice copybook with Her indescribable smile. I can look at Her only when I stand under the balcony. When She is so near me I cannot. Maybe because first I adored Mother as the Highest and I cannot even move in such moments, when She is near. But it will come. She will create it. She creates everything. Pavitra kneeling at the great stone of Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi, a girl of 16 with a face of almost a pure spirit, the work of hundreds of sadhaks who pray working. There are awful faces too. My helper is not easy either, but I feel it like a benediction today. I started my work. The house has a ground floor and the first floor with a gallery and pillars — wonderful. So this refugee is in charge and has a helper nurse, two men to do the work (cleaning, etc.) and . . . one patient! There is hardly a possibility that there will be more patients as it is seldom that operations are performed. The helping nurse is a sadhika too and the men are just Indian workers. Oh, there is a nightman too for the nights that patients are here!

* * *

3. This refers to the Mother's talk of 18 December 1957. Janina wrote this paragraph partly in French. Her recollection of the Mother's words was not exact.

24.12.1957

Today is Christmas Eve. I have given to Pavitra, to hand it to Mother for Christmas, the small Polish Madonna in the dark wooden triptych and your photo. I included inside a letter: “Ma Mère Divine, cette statuette a été faite en Pologne. Permets que je Te donne aujourd’hui la photo de Riek, Riek par laquelle Tu m’as menée à Toi. Janina.”⁴ A few minutes later your letter arrived and I knew that the Divine Power was working with you too. You must forgive my letters and understand why it is. They are not so constructed as Heinz would want it, but other things will come later. What I wanted to tell you is this. Yesterday Mother has settled down in me in a way. After a few days of opening me and enlarging She just came and is in me. This does not mean that no waves, suggestions, movements arise, but it means — as I feel — becoming an instrument and being continuously transformed. Great inner difficulties may come, but all becomes different. Today I could even be natural in Her nearness. And I learned at today’s Darshan that these last days since I came have been Her direct Grace at work in me. Today I was prepared that this would go on, but nothing happened and I felt only that now She wants to work through me, with me becoming Her in *all* my movements and seeing Her in *everybody* and *everything*. In my patient when I wash him, I wash Mother — in my helper, I feel Mother’s love streaming through me to her (she is not easy). The difference between this and what was before, in Europe, is that I just simply feel Her in me. Her hands in mine, Her head in mine, Her heart in mine. And so I am becoming wider and wider and Love is streaming around in me. Mother gave me this wonder of a nursing home just for me to create and it will be something wonderfully individual as I am also a portion of Her. I am sorry I cannot write normal letters when I write to you, but this is right.

Now I go to help Michèle, who is a nurse, to make a few angels(!) for Christmas.

My only patient lies in bed like a king. Probably the only patient in all the world who is alone in a nursing home!

* * *

29.12.1957

It is such a great happiness, such an unspeakable glory and at the same time just businesslike or like the working of a power station. Every morning during the Balcony Darshan we are filled with as much as each can bear of Force, Love, Light. It is quite clear that it is Her work on each individually — and, for the day, we are

4. “My Divine Mother, this statuette was made in Poland. Let me give You today the photo of Riek through whom You brought me to Yourself. Janina.”

dismissed to do the work. It is like a conference of the manager-director (understand me well) with his workers. I have experienced so much during these few days, as if ages had passed since I left Karlsruhe. I have come in a period where She has more often contacts with sadhaks and they say I am lucky. But this is the childish aspect of many sadhaks here which probably often prevents them from going faster in their yoga. This is not like being a child — about which attitude I wrote to you in my first letter. Pavitra is a wonderful example of this most mature attitude of a real child. I understood this problem of an infantile — not right — attitude when I asked Pavitra if I could offer Mother for Christmas the Polish Madonna; he kindly smiled and said he will help me to hand it over to Mother. I then said that it was not necessary that I do it personally: he looked at me in a certain way and then again smiled at me in a different way than before, with such appreciation that I understood much. With me it is so, that during the darshan I give myself to Her and She gives so much that I see all the other contacts with Her as if I did not deserve them and as if it would be too much of Grace. And I have an inner contact with Her that is very deep. I have not spoken yet to Her, I only love Her and surrender as much as I can, from all my heart and with all my strength; and now I begin to learn, persistently, during the day, only to open myself and only to give myself and then She is there, She is in me, pouring Herself through me on whatever or whomever I am at that moment in contact with. It is not all the time and there are so many suggestions and waves which try to prevent it, but I am quite fanatical in my inner discipline now. And you see, there is a tremendous difference between that awful strain in the atmosphere of Europe and the atmosphere here. Sri Aurobindo said it clearly, that there is a value in Her physical nearness.

So I wanted to tell you that on Christmas day She just sat in an armchair under the Christmas tree in the playground and not only we, the sadhaks, but other people too could come and get some sweets from Her, which, of course, meant the contact with Grace. We, the sadhaks got more (I got a kind of diary with Her words), and when She gave it to me and looked at me, I just became again a different being. I even did not know how I passed farther and I stood for a time in a corner of the playground filled with something that cannot be described. And my everyday life is not easy. She gave me as helper a woman whom I shall not describe here but who is, humanly speaking, very difficult. But although no word was spoken, I know that Mother gave her to me that She might love her through me. And so I try and learn every day and bring to Darshan all the Nursing Home, with my helper, my workers, the furniture, the walls, the ceilings — everything I bring and give it to Her in my heart. And She gives me Force again. What I am sure of is that what I am experiencing is possible when the self-giving is very strong. Then the life becomes so intensive that nothing matters but She. But She is in everything. During the *Synthesis* class I give my mind to Her and I feel the Power at work. I try very hard never to approach Her or be in Her nearness without intense concentration and meditation which for

me also means self-giving. All this shouting and noise and agitated people and the Divine in the middle!!! So was the Christmas ceremony (after the organised part) and so are often the children in the playground. But I am in this respect a fanatic and when I have once in my hunting for my God got a glimpse of Him I shall not allow anything to deprive me of this.

Now it is 6.45 p.m. and I shall go to the marching in the playground (it is just Divinising the body, the process She does during the sadhaks' march). After it and after half an hour's exercises of the adult group (I do not take part yet) there will be the evening half-hour meditation. I have noticed that the evening meditations are not at 8.15, but usually later (8.30).

* * *

30.12.1957

During Darshan this morning She showed me what is a kind of knack in the process of surrender. I have nothing to give, ever. But every time my act of self-giving is sufficiently strong She gives and acts in me and through me. It is like a rhythm: a movement in me to Her — a movement of Her in me. And the moment I think of giving or want to give, the contact is lost. It is a real school exercise — a school of Divine Living it is here. I often feel it so. "Here, my child, now this has to be learned, go on and report tomorrow." I am practising it now too. Giving myself as completely as I can to Her and I feel Her Love flowing through me to you. She told me also this morning that the way is just to go on and on with more and more self-giving — nothing else. Just more and more. Oh, there is such a great gratitude in me — how can I express it?

Soon my helper will come, so now I want to prepare myself inwardly. After a time I shall probably be able to write about it with humour.

In the afternoon

A few guests came to see our Nursing Home today. Among them Françoise, the granddaughter of Mother. I have seen Pavitra too, just now, after my lunch when I went to Sri Aurobindo to thank Him for everything and ask for help, that my surrender may grow. Pavitra's eyes are possessed by Mother, so I feel it. It was a wonderful moment to recognise Her in him. He is so very, very good to me in such a kind way and so delicate. But in a way I do not have any problems and I do not need anything. I told him that I feel like I have come home and he said, "At last!" in such a way that all his soul was in his eyes. And he said that I seem to have adapted very quickly. Of course, it is always the same with me: I love and nothing else has any importance then, so I eat everything, I do not think of all sorts of little things. I

have just thrown them away.

Tomorrow on 31.12 Mother will again distribute sweets in the playground. And on the first She will play the organ in the morning, about 10 o'clock. My! What days are these, as if the Heavens had opened and are pouring their treasures on us.

(To be continued)

JANINA STROKA

*(A Captive of Her Love by Janina Stroka edited by Michèle Lupsa,
Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1998)*

There is an ideal organisation which, if fully realised, could create a kind of very powerful unity, composed of elements all having the same aim and the same will and with enough inner development to be able to give a very coherent body to this inner oneness of purpose, motive, aspiration and action.

At all times centres of initiation have tried this, more or less successfully, and this is always mentioned in all occult traditions as an extremely powerful means of action.

If the collective unit could attain the same cohesion as the individual unit, it would multiply the strength and action of the individual.

Usually, if several individuals are brought together, the collective quality of the group is much lower than the individual value of each person taken separately, but with a sufficiently conscious and coordinated organisation, it would be possible, on the contrary, to multiply the power of individual action.

The Mother

(Questions and Answers 1957-58, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 9, p. 370)

VISITS RELIVED

(Reminiscences of the Mother and the Ashram based on personal notes and letters)

(Continued from the issue of September 2012)

THE next year, on the 21st February 1974, we were at Pondy for the Mother's birthday darshan. Hundreds of visitors had come for the function. We went inside the Mother's room in a long queue. We stayed as usual in the crowded Park Guest House. After the darshan, we returned to Mysore, my official place of service, with my elder brother Babuanna, on the 22nd night. We were tired after a whole day's tedious bus journey of over 12 continuous hours. I attended to my normal home and official duties on the 23rd. For the next two days, I lived in the 'darshan' milieu and engaged myself in reading articles appearing in the January 1974 issue of *Mother India* related to the Mother's withdrawal. The articles by Sethna, Udar, Pandit were interesting and informative and contained revealing insights on the Mother's unexpected withdrawal from her body on the 17th November 1973. I was in a relaxed mood for the next two days.

I was staying in a rented house in Mysore. On the morning of the 25th February 1974, at about 9.05 a.m. I went for my bath in the country-tiled bathroom situated at the backyard of the house. I was pouring water from a mug on my head. Through the crevices of the joints of the country tiles over the roof, the sun's rays were falling on my face and eyes, and the deflected rays were playing and passing through the water on my face. I was enjoying my bath, and was in a relaxed mood, i.e. I was not praying or meditating. At this juncture, all of a sudden, a most marvellous phenomenon started happening! An unearthly, tremendous, and marvellous force began to flow into my body through the head, without my asking or aspiring for it! The force was most powerful and tremendous, the like of which I had not experienced earlier at any time in my life, nor had I read or heard about it. With its flow, my physical body started becoming lighter and lighter, and its colour was changing to a golden hue. The flow of this wonderful and tremendous force into my body through the head was continuing as I continued taking my bath, wondering what it was!

This force made me feel myself as if I were most powerful and omnipotent — a strange experience but real feeling. I was not limited by my earthly body's limits and had grown into a giant stature, bigger in size than the earth, I saw the earth as a big football under my feet! I felt, with this force in my body, I could shatter the earth to pieces with one stroke of my powerful fists. This tremendous force had taken me over, and made me feel most powerful and omnipotent. I also felt that I had no

physical limits! I knew no bounds! I could do anything! The descending force was so strong and vibrant!

Later, however, after a while, I slowly started having an earthly feeling that my poor body may not be able to bear and contain this descending powerful force, and that it may break and shatter the body and the heart to pieces. This thought of the weakness of the body frightened me, and I gradually commenced to mentally check further inflow of the force. Even against all this sort of odd mental doubts and wrong feelings that crossed my mind, the force did not stop its flow into the body. My foolish efforts failed to check its flow! The force was so powerful, that it continued to flow in my physical body for some more time!

Even with the force descending into my body, I finished my bath, came out of the bathroom, went inside the house to my dressing room, took out my diary, sat at a table and commenced jotting down this experience in black and white, lest I should forget it later. During all this physical activity the force was still flowing, and its presence in my body was still there even after noting down the experience in my diary. After some time it slowly and steadily started withdrawing, without any haste.

This tremendous force, which had started flowing into my body in the outside bathroom while I was bathing at about 9 a.m. slowly withdrew at about 9.14 a. m. in the inside dressing room. The experience of the force was so concrete, material and real that I was experiencing its flow and its omnipotent power in my body even while I was engaged in taking my bath, applying soap, rubbing myself dry, walking into the dressing room, changing the clothes and noting down the experience in my diary etc. The force was not disturbed or ruffled by all these physical activities of mine. In a sense the force was working independent of the bodily activities. I did not know what that force was! Nor has it recurred since then. I am narrating the experience as noted down in my diary dated 25th February 1974, to serve as a spiritual record.

What was remarkable about this force was that it came to me on its own, without asking or aspiring for it. It was a sheer touch and grace of the Mother! It is stated somewhere by the Mother that the spiritual experiences need not necessarily come while one is meditating or concentrating, or while in favourable situations, milieu etc, they may come on their own under any circumstances.

I kept this experience to myself, without revealing it, except to a few, as I was given to understand that spiritual experiences should not be made public. Later, after rather a very long lapse of time, in 1993, I sent this experience for publication in *Mother India* to Sri K. D. Sethna, the editor. It was published in its September 1993 issue under the title 'What was this omnipotent force?' Sethna commented on it saying,

I am reminded of a stanza in Sri Aurobindo's poem 'Jivanmukta',

“A Power descends no Fate can perturb or vanquish,
Calmer than mountains, wider than marching waters. . . .”

He further said that A. B. Purani, in a verbal communication, had told him that “At times I used to feel a force coming to me, which gave me the sense that with it I could shatter even mountains.”

(To be continued)

S. G. NEGINHAL

The vital started in its evolution with obedience to impulse and no reason — as for strategy, the only strategy it understands is some tactics by which it can compass its desires. It does not like the voice of knowledge and wisdom — but curiously enough by the necessity which has grown up in man of justifying action by reason, the vital mind has developed a strategy of its own which is to get the reason to find out reasons for justifying its own feelings and impulses. When the reason is too clear to lend itself to this game, the vital falls back on its native habit of shutting its ears and going on its course. In these attacks, the plan of unfitness, “Since you are not pleased with my impulses and I can’t change them, that shows I am unfit, so I had better go” is the counter strategy it adopts. But even if one counters that, the impulse itself is sufficient, coming strongly as it does from universal Nature, to restore to the vital for a short time its old blind irrational instinct to obey the push that has come.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 24, p. 1329)

THE LUMINOUS PAST

(Continued from the issue of September 2012)

IN March 1962, one afternoon, just after twelve, I was standing near the Samadhi and looking at the flower decoration. Indu-di came up to me, looking upset and said, “Your brother (Nolini-da) has not eaten today.” I was very surprised on getting this news and was somewhat worried too. For a while the Mother had not been keeping well at all. Nolini-da had lost his appetite altogether. He was deeply worried. I went and told all this to Jatin-da. He said, “If Nolini-da has stopped eating then something really terrible is happening. But Mother is going to be with us for a long time.”

I asked him, “How do you know this?”

Jatin-da replied, “On 5th December 1950 I entered into a deep meditation and called Sri Aurobindo in a great despair. He had assured me, ‘The Mother will prolong.’¹”

That evening, after much effort, Jatin-da managed to see Pranab-da, who had just come downstairs. On seeing Jatin-da he said, “Jatin-da, the Mother fought hard and is now better. She was in a very serious condition today. She suffered a lot. Suddenly, I don’t know how, the Mother got well and after having a meal is resting now.

*

I left Shiva-bhai House and moved to a house next to the Laundry. The Mother took this house for a special reason. I was requested by some people to darn and put patches on the torn clothes of the elderly sadhaks. I agreed and then wrote to the Mother. The Mother immediately gave me the permission. The house next to the Laundry belonged to a gentleman called Ramaswamy. No one wanted to take his house on rent because he wanted to charge for water and electricity. There was even a notice in the Ashram asking everyone not to take that house on rent. Such was the situation and yet the intelligent daughter-in-law of the house-owner wrote to the Mother to accept her as a devotee. The lady went up to the Mother with a big plate on which she had put a banana, a coconut, betel leaves and nuts, and having made her *pranam* received the Mother’s blessings. The Mother then announced that she would pay for electricity and water. When the Mother raised the subject of the notice Amrita-da objected to it. The Mother told him to remove the notice from

1. In English in the original.

the board and to explain to everyone that she was not so heartless. Her work was to teach, not to punish.

Amrita-da asked, "Do you think that the house-owner, after receiving the money for electricity and water, will behave properly?"

In answer the Mother said, "I am not giving the money to buy his good behaviour. If you give free electricity and water it will be good for you. Can you understand that, my child?" Amrita-da, with a sweet smile, told us this story of Mother's scolding.

I moved into this house on the morning of 1st January. I was very happy to get this beautiful house, full of light and air.

After living in this new house for six months I had to move to Jhunjhun Home within that year. The only person who supported this decision of my moving was Nolini-da. Pavitra-da and Amrita-da were of the opinion that I was not capable of looking after a boarding. Dr. Sanyal pointed out that I was suffering from asthma. In spite of this the Mother insisted and asked Nolini-da to take the responsibility of explaining to me how I should look after Jhunjhun Home.

It was the month of June. I was in the middle of my teaching schedule. The pupils had drawn pictures, and written descriptions, then bound them in a beautiful notebook, which had a golden cover, and sent it to the Mother for her to look at it. The Mother was happy when she saw this notebook and she had written in dark golden ink on the cover, "Very beautiful drawings and writings. My blessings for doing even better next time." The pupils were looking at that notebook, engrossed.

All of a sudden, Robi Bhaduri came and stood at the door of the classroom. He said that Nolini-da was calling me. I had come to know from Rama-di (the one who was in charge then) while entering the school that she was going to be away for three months and that the Mother was going to give me the responsibility of looking after Jhunjhun Home. I told him to tell Nolini-da that I had already come to know about this from Rama-di. Whatever the Mother and Nolini-da were asking me to do I would accept it humbly and that as soon as the class was over I would go to see Nolini-da.

At ten o'clock, when the class finished, I went straight to Jatin-da. I told him everything. He did not agree with my decision. He was unwell. Mohan, his helper, had gone away on holiday. I had worked for twenty years in the laundry and I knew everything about this work. He went to have a word with Amrita-da who told him, "The Mother does not want to hear any objections, she has given this responsibility to Nolini." At this point Jatin-da understood that there was some special reason behind this change in my life. When he came back he told me to go and see Nolini-da.

That evening I went to see Nolini-da. I was a bit embarrassed because it was late. Nolini-da could understand that I was feeling guilty. He was sitting in his chair, resting. On seeing me he asked, in a tone mixed with affection and authority, "Why is it that you had to be called so many times today? Someone went to call you after

nine o'clock. He went once again at ten o'clock and not finding you there, he came back."

I replied, "Nolini-da, I had come at four o'clock. You were upstairs at that time."

"How did you know that?" Nolini-da asked.

"When I saw your shoes at the door I understood that you had gone upstairs to see the Mother," I answered.

"This pair of shoes belonged to Sri Aurobindo," said Nolini-da with a sweet smile, looking down at his feet.

Lowering my head I looked at those *nagras*² and said, "They are very beautiful."

Nolini-da stood up. He placed both his hands on his own head and told me, "This morning the Mother gave blessing with both her hands and said 'Tell Pramila that I am blessing her like this for taking charge of Jhunjhun Home.' Had the Mother been well, she would have called you. Now, I cannot bless you like the Mother by placing my hands on your head, can I? That blessing is equal to ambrosia. Now tell me what you think."

"I have already said that whatever the Mother and you decide I will accept it in all humility. There is no question of my having an opinion on this," I said.

"In that case I shall inform the Mother about this tomorrow," Nolini-da said.

"There is a small hitch and that is why it took me so long to come to you," I said.

"What is the difficulty?" asked Nolini-da.

I told him, "Jatin-da isn't very well these days. He has been eating the Ashram food for the last thirty-two years and has got used to it. Last February the doctor asked him to change his diet. I cook and give him what the doctor has advised him to eat. When he heard about my new work today from Amrita-da, he said that the work of cooking can be done by a maid servant."

"I know about his illness," said Nolini-da. "The Mother asked my nephew to get his tests done. My nephew has explained everything to Sanyal and has left. This is not a problem at all. Jatindranath will be the first boarder of Jhunjhun Home. He will have all his three meals of the day there. If he finds it difficult to go there you will send his food to him. The Mother has asked me to see to it that this work is done by you. Now you may leave."

Before starting my new life I wanted Nolini-da to advise me on how I was to carry out this work. He was pleased and said, "Rely on the Mother and start your work. You have already been working with little children in school anyway. Every morning before going to the school take the children to the Samadhi. Twice a week, on Sundays and Thursdays, take them to the meditation at the Playground. Recount to them the stories written by the Mother. Allow them to grow up freely. See to it

2. Translator's note: Nagras — a kind of shoes which are open at the back.

that they acquire the habit of telling the truth. Keep this in mind as you bring them up, that they should never hide anything or lie out of fear.

“This school, this education, they are not ordinary. The ideals of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are there in them. The Mother is working tirelessly so that our children grow up with these ideals. They must live in joy. One cannot force them to study and learn. They have to be brought up with true love and affection. We have to see to it they follow the path of simplicity and openness. They will all be worshippers of Truth. When they receive love, children become confident and they grow up to be truthful. Many students will come. Some will stay here and some will go away. But everyone will be touched by the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s light, that light which will show them the way to the Truth. They are the ones who will in future show the path to the others. They will spread the word about the ideals of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. You will see many different kinds of boys and girls. You have to find out where each one’s weakness lies. One mustn’t do anything forcefully. You have to only pray to the Mother so that his or her weakness is removed. My love, affection and good wishes are with you as you start the work. The Mother will do the rest.” That day I came back home, my heart filled with joy and gratitude. Of course, later, I had to go back to Nolini-da again and again.

*

The next day, I met Pavitra-da at the gate of the Ashram. He asked me to see him in the evening. I went around a quarter past seven to see Pavitra-da. At that time Pavitra-da was sitting on the floor in his office and meditating. I sat down on a chair in that dark room. In the light which shone into the room from outside, I could distinguish tables and chairs. The room was infused with an atmosphere of meditateness. About ten minutes later Pavitra-da got up and went into his bedroom. He came out wearing a kimono. He switched on the light and sat down on the chair. He started by saying, “You have to do both the work of the School and the hostel. The cooking must be done in a short time. You will receive, rice, dal, milk, bread, and fruits, already prepared. You have to boil eggs, potato and beetroot and make a salad. In the evening the children will have a dish with cooked vegetables, bread and butter and milk. In the morning give them milk, bread and fruits. Everything will come from the Dining Room. You only have to serve. Devote more attention to the children’s study time. Keep the rooms clean. I am going to bring some educated visitors to show them the hostel. Make a garden so that the house is beautiful. Don’t make sweets. If they eat sweets the children will grow fat. Keep the clothes clean.”

“Pavitra-da, the children are going to get cakes and biscuits,” I said.

“How?”

“I had written jokingly to the Mother that I will have to leave my work of twenty years where I was surrounded by cakes and biscuits and that I will have to

also leave the habit of wearing ironed clothes everyday. The Mother has written to Jatin-da, asking him to give cakes and biscuits to Jhunjhun Home twice a week. Also, everyday he will have to get all the clothes from there washed and ironed.”

Pavitra-da was very happy. He said, “Three years ago you had lovingly accepted some naughty boys in your class. On seeing the behaviour of those same children now and their beautiful manners the Mother said that she wanted to give you a work with greater responsibility.”

“It was because I have received so much help from you that I could do the work of the School properly. Of course, the main reason for that is the Mother’s blessing,” I said.

“The Mother is there, of course, but I too will help you in running your hostel.”

(To be continued)

PRAMILA DEVI

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

Dispersion and sadhana are two things that cannot go together. In sadhana one has to have a control over the mind and all its actions; in dispersion one is on the contrary controlled and run away with by the mind and unable to keep it to its subject. If the mind is to be always dispersed, then you cannot concentrate on reading either or any other occupation, you will be fit for nothing except perhaps talking, mixing, flirting with women and similar occupations.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 836)

COMPILATIONS IN SRI AUROBINDO STUDIES — A REVIEW ARTICLE

[1. *Sri Aurobindo: His Political Life and Activities*, Kolkata. Price: Rs. 490, Pages 445.

2. *The Alipore Bomb Case: The Trial Judgment*, Kolkata. Price: Rs.190, Pages 144.

3. *Sri Aurobindo on Ethics*, Kolkata. Price: Rs. 20, Pages 53.

All three compiled and edited by Anurag Banerjee, Overman Foundation, Kolkata.]

COMPILATIONS, anthologies and edited volumes constitute a significant genre in literary studies. Contrary to popular perceptions, a good compilation is not just a matter of a copy and paste work. It follows a set of rigorous norms and standards and is as hard to achieve as a so-called original work. Compilation and editing go hand in hand.

How does one select a text for a given compilation when there are so many texts and extracts to choose from? Many such texts vie for our attention in terms of content, style and the language used. A good compilation, in the first instance, must have an element of self-referentiality whereby the choices of the extracts could be self-validated. Next, each compilation must address a set of questions such as the need for newness in approach, the rationale for the choice of texts, the logical sequence in which they are presented before a reader, the need for a theoretical framework and finally, a critical introduction that situates a body of extracts before a discerning readership.

The three compilations before us are all worthy of consideration. The task has been carried out with love and dedication by a young author.

Anurag Banerjee introduces himself as a Kolkata-based “poet, essayist, researcher, biographer and translator.” Readers of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are doubtlessly familiar with the work of the Overman Foundation that Anurag heads. Its activities are carried out primarily through a web portal under the same name. The Foundation’s salutary work includes services rendered for the scholarly community at a nominal cost.

In his introduction to *Sri Aurobindo: His Political Life and Activities*, Anurag maintains that Sri Aurobindo’s political life encompasses a relatively brief but significant period of four years, namely from 1906 to 1910. His compilation of this aspect of the Master’s life brings in a study of British government documents, press coverage of his activities of that era and memoirs of his political colleagues as well as his own.

While Anurag’s approach is basically sound, his description of the period of Sri Aurobindo’s political life may not be entirely accurate. This fact is borne out

both by Sri Aurobindo's own remarks on the subject as well as his role, as others see it, in the unfolding of events, national and global, that were political in nature. The aspect has been well underlined by Professor Kittu Reddy in his concise and apt introduction where he divides the Master's political life into three distinct phases: 1893-1905; 1906-1910, and the last one from 1910 to 1950. Sri Aurobindo, Professor Reddy adds correctly, 'never retired from politics or life.' What Anurag primarily focuses is his middle period related to the days in Bengal.

According to Professor Reddy in his Preface, Sri Aurobindo makes two major contributions to the political life of India in the 20th century. He helped shape fundamentally a nationalist movement which succeeded in creating a powerful sentiment among the masses. Secondly, the subsequent movement of the Congress from 1920 onward was guided and inspired by the principal ideas and programs of the Nationalist movement! 'Unfortunately', that movement, Professor Reddy points out, 'deviated in its spirit and force from the sublime and daring vision of the early Nationalists.'

With this fine preface serving as a head note, Anurag begins his chronicle of Sri Aurobindo's political thoughts and activities in the first decade of the last century. He brings in many extracts authored by Sri Aurobindo himself. These were largely written in response to misconceptions, half truths and complete falsehood contained in press items, statements by erstwhile colleagues and comments by historians and lay persons. Many of the extracts quoted in Anurag's collection have been published in volumes like *Sri Aurobindo on Himself* and a more expanded publication, *Autobiographical Notes and Writings of Historical Interest*. It is remarkable to see that despite the passage in time, the strength and originality of Sri Aurobindo's notes, and the clarity with which they are expressed, have not lost their relevance and freshness. Each passage is supremely memorable and is matchless. It is amazing to see how many misconceptions and untruths existed about Sri Aurobindo. For instance, on page 5, Sri Aurobindo states that he was not a pacifist; the reference to 'Bhawani Mandir' on page 12 shows that although written by Sri Aurobindo, the attempted working of a plan to create a religious/spiritual order of a revolutionary kind was that of Barin Ghose: 'The works and rules of the order', given in the form of an appendix, make it clear that the emphasis was on building a sound ethical base for national liberation. It was not designed to be an activity carried out by an elite band of Sannyasins with financial backing; for 'those who undertake the life of Brahmacharya for the Mother will have to vow themselves to her service for four years'; they will also work with wealthy classes so that inequality in society is reduced. The basic goal was 'to promote sympathy between the Zamindars and the peasants and heal all discords' (p. 20). Was a suitable place for founding such a religious order found? Not so, says Sri Aurobindo on page 21. 'He [Barin] had travelled among the hills trying to find a suitable place but caught hill-fever and had to abandon his search and return to Baroda. Subsequently he went back to Bengal,

but Sri Aurobindo did not hear of any discovery of a suitable place.'

Other details are soon brought in. We see the extraordinary spectacle when Sri Aurobindo as the principal of the National College is given a touching farewell on 2 August 1907. The account of the event is captured beautifully in the pages of the *Dawn Society's Magazine* in the September 1907 issue. We also learn that Sri Aurobindo had resigned voluntarily from the post of the Principalship on account of his pressing political engagements in the public domain. We hear the wonderful refrains from poets like Rabindranath Tagore in the memorable composition: 'Aurobindo, accept the salutation of Rabindra'. We see the details of the Alipore Bomb trial reported under the title: 'In the court of the Presidency Magistrate, Calcutta, Case No. 3627 of 1907. Emperor vs Arabinda Ghosh and others'.

The events of the period are many and all very fascinating. In all these, Sri Aurobindo emerges taller in stature. Thus we see the meeting held in College Square to request Rash Behari Ghose to retire in favour of Lajpat Rai. (p. 128) Similarly, Press reports chronicle vividly Sri Aurobindo's meetings held at Nasik, Dhulia and elsewhere.

Several extracts from *Tales of Prison Life* are quoted from page 204 onward. We have glimpses of The Alipore Bomb Trial; Sri Aurobindo's sister Sarojini's appeal for funds on page 263 and C. R. Das's famous address on page 264. His powerful interventions in the court as evidenced in pages 264-289 show the great role he played in the acquittal of the Master. Similarly, we admire the fair-mindedness of the judge Beachcroft.

Another set of very interesting extracts in the compilation capture the essence of the speeches delivered by Sri Aurobindo. These include the ones given at Beadon Square (p. 319), Jhalakati (p. 322), Bakarganj (p. 328), Kumartuli (p. 336), College Square (p. 337), Birthday Talk (p. 337), and Bhawanipore (p. 338). Other extracts worthy of our attention are the following: 'An Open Letter to my Countrymen' in the *Karmayogin* dated 31 July 1909 (p. 342); 'To My Countrymen' in the same journal dated 25 December 1909 as well as 'Retirement from Politics: A conversation with Sriman Aravinda Ghosh' (p. 380). The latter article appeared in the Tamil weekly *India*, 18 September 1909. Similarly, the extract 'Sri Aurobindo retired yet the most dangerous individual' is found on page 408.

The Appendix to Anurag's volume contains two memorable pieces: 'Sri Aurobindo as I knew him' by Suresh Chandra Deb on page 429 and 'A Reminiscence of Sri Aurobindo' by S. R. Das, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of India, delivered at the opening ceremony of the *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Library* on 16 October 1958 at Delhi. The latter piece was published in *Mother India* January 1959 issue and the one by Deb in the same journal dated 15 August 1950.

Sri Aurobindo: His Political Life and Activities, contains an invaluable set of writings, commentary and documents that are of great historical and textual significance. These will be of interest to the students of the history of the Indian

freedom struggle and more importantly, they chart the evolution in Sri Aurobindo's political thinking.

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The next compilation comprises three sections, aside from the preface. They include 'The Alipore Bomb Trial Judgement', 'Declaration of Press', and 'Declaration of Papers'.

In the preface to this collection, Anurag highlights what he considers as the significant features that underline the political life of this period. They include a number of journals like the *Sandhya* edited by Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, *Yugantar* edited by Bhupendranath Dutt and *Bande Mataram* edited by Bipin Chandra Pal. Secondly, there was the emergence of a number of secret societies such as the *Maniktola Secret Society* headed by Barindra Kumar Ghose. A part of the *Alipore Bomb Trial* found place in the book *The Alipore Bomb Trial* edited by Bijoy Krishna Bose and published by Butterworth and Co. India Ltd. in 1922. Anurag's compilation constitutes a more comprehensive account and therefore would be of interest to a wide readership. The volume contains many rare details that pertain to the famous case and the reader has the rare opportunity to have a blow by blow account of the drama.

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The third compilation, *Sri Aurobindo on Ethics* is divided into three sections. Section one brings in answers to several important aspects such as 'Ethics in the ordinary view', 'Ethical Impulses', 'Instincts and Activities', 'Ethical Good and Evil and Hedonistic Values', 'Ethics and Karma', 'The Roots of Ethical Ideals', and finally, 'Insufficiency of Ethics'. Similarly, section two focuses on five key aspects, namely 'Ethics in the Primitive Society', 'Indian Ethics', 'On Ethics of Other Civilisations', 'A comparison between Aesthetic and Ethical Man and their cultures' and 'Ethics in Society and Practical Life'. Section three brings in issues that centre on the following: the 'Ethical Being and Reason', 'Ethics, Morality and the Dharma', 'Ethics and the Goals of Life' and finally, 'Ethical Being and the Divine'. All the extracts are illuminating and would serve as a source of guidance to seekers in the path of progress.

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We live in an age that witnesses a great efflorescence of man's rational and intellectual capabilities, manifest in a wide arena of thought and action. From space sciences to digital technology, from scientific experiments to architectural innova-

tions, human ingenuity has reached unprecedented heights. At the same time, human depravity, greed and desire for self-destruction has never been stronger.

Behind all these contradictions lies the question of morality and ethics. How do we govern ourselves and control the warring selves of our being? How do the constituents of units like the family, community, nation and the world govern themselves so as to maximise harmony and happiness? Clearly, traditional approaches of religion and morality have failed us. It is here that ethics of a spiritual kind, based on deeper foundations, can give us a direction.

Anurag has done well to indicate that we must move from man-made morality to divine ethics. That is important. But before we begin to aspire for the superhuman, as the Mother has rightly cautioned us, we must try and establish in our life, the best that the human Mind, open to higher influences, can establish. We must be good human beings first.

The three compilations under review represent a commendable effort by a young scholar. The collections are well documented and presented. They can perhaps benefit in future by bringing in comparative perspective along with a critical introduction.

The compilations are likely to appeal to a wide cross-section of readers; they are welcome additions to Sri Aurobindo Studies.

SACHIDANANDA MOHANTY

All renunciation is for a greater joy yet ungrasped. Some renounce for the joy of duty done, some for the joy of peace, some for the joy of God and some for the joy of self-torture, but renounce rather as a passage to the freedom and untroubled rapture beyond.

Sri Aurobindo

(Essays Divine and Human, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 433)

The Divine is the Supreme Truth because it is the Supreme Being from whom all have come and in whom all are.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, CWSA Vol. 28, p. 5)

The Divine is that from which all comes, in which all lives, and to return to the truth of the Divine now clouded over by Ignorance is the soul's aim in life. In its supreme Truth, the Divine is absolute and infinite peace, consciousness, existence, power and Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, CWSA Vol. 28, p. 5)

The Divine is everywhere on all the planes of consciousness seen by us in different ways and aspects of his being. But there is a Supreme which is above all these planes and ways and aspects and from which they come.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 28, p. 5)

With Compliments from Well-wishers

The Divine is neither personal nor impersonal, formless nor formed. He is the Divine. You talk of these distinctions as if they separated the Divine into so many separate Divines which have nothing to do with each other.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 28, p. 5)

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