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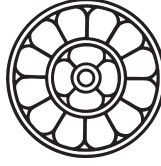
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXV

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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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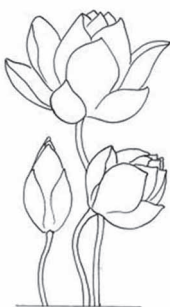
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SEER DEEP-HEARTED

Seer deep-hearted, divine king of the secrecies,
Occult fountain of love sprung from the heart of God,
Ways thou knewest no feet ever in Time had trod.
Words leaped flashing, the flame-billows of wisdom's seas.
Vast thy soul was a tide washing the coasts of heaven.
Thoughts broke burning and bare crossing the human night,
White star-scripts of the gods born from the book of Light
Page by page to the dim children of earth were given.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 677)



THE THREE FORMS OF DASYAM

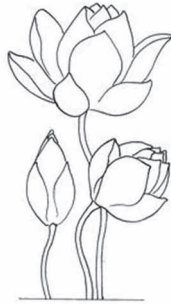
THE simple dasyam is that obedience to the divine impulsion which is self-chosen & depends on the individual's intelligence of God's will and his consent, his readiness to obey. The Purusha is still karta & anumanta, a servant of God, not His slave. The great step bridging the transition from the simple to the double dasyam is the renouncement of the kartritwa abhimana, by which we perceive that Prakriti is the only doer of all our actions voluntary or involuntary from the most deliberately concerted endeavour even to the simplest trifle and, in consciousness, are aware of the impulse of Prakriti in every movement physical or mental. At first the consciousness tends to make a false division claiming the movement itself to be our own although the determining impulse is felt as a driving or a pressure proceeding from infinite Nature above or around us. The wearing away of this division marks a farther attenuation of servanthood and deepening towards the divine servitude. But so long as the anumanta keeps his abhimana and reserves his right of individual lordship (Ishwara) over Prakriti, we have not passed the stage of simple dasyam. For between the various impulses of Prakriti, we have the sense of choosing, of an active & constant freedom, & although we choose what we understand to be God's will, it is still our choice that determines the action in the adhara & not His direct and imperative Will. In the double dasyam on the contrary there is no active & constant freedom, but only a general & ultimate freedom which is used little or only exceptionally. We are aware of ourselves as Ishwara & anumanta, the individual ruling & sanctioning authority, but, although we still have the power of refusing our sanction to any particular impulse of Prakriti if we choose, we do not choose; we make no choice, we do not determine what is God's will and act thereby or order Prakriti to act thereby, but leave everything to God to determine; the whole responsibility is His & a given impulse of Prakriti fulfils itself or not as He chooses without our interference. If the will is used, it is used by Prakriti. We are aware of it as being not our will, but the will in the adhar used by Prakriti. In the triple dasyam, even this potential freedom disappears. Whatever impulse of infinite Nature comes, we could not interfere with it if we wished, any more than the drifting leaf can deny itself to the storm or the engine to the force that works it. We are aware of our body as a whole & in its various parts being moved not by will in the body but by a will or force outside the body; our thoughts, feelings, will-power similarly. Each of these stands perfectly apart from the others & is worked separately by Nature. The will wills & has done; it does not try to determine action but leaves the action to happen or not as Nature pleases; the thought thinks & is done, it does not try to determine either the movement of the will or the movement of the action; the feelings equally live for themselves, atmatripta, not striving to compel action & emotion or

thought & feeling to agree. What harmony is necessary is determined by the Para Shakti that drives us, which we feel always as a Force driving us. But this Force is itself only an instrument of a conscious Will driving it, the Will or Anumati of the Purushottama, who is Parameshwara & universal Anumanta.

SRI AUROBINDO

(From the entry dated 1st July 1912 in the 'Journal of Yoga')

(*Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, pp. 75-76)



OCCULT KNOWLEDGE AND THE HINDU SCRIPTURES

Are any of the following queries touched in Sanatan Dharma books of philosophy?

- 1) The nature and formation of animal souls.
- 2) The shape, size, formations, nature and colour of subtle bodies.
- 3) The difference between the subtle bodies of saints and ordinary people and the process of developing one into the other.
- 4) The rationale of the reincarnation theory.
- 5) The nature, constituents and situation of invisible worlds.

THE first three questions are of a curious interest, the last two cover a very wide field. All except the fourth belong more or less to a kind of knowledge pursued with eager interest by a growing number of inquirers, but still looked on askance by the human mind in general, — the occult sciences. The Hindu Scriptures and books of philosophy do not as a rule handle such questions very directly or in any systematic fashion. They are concerned either with the great and central questions which have always occupied the human mind, the origin and nature of the universe, the why, whence and whither of life, the highest good and the means of attaining it, the nature of man and the destiny of the human soul and its relation with the Supreme, or else they deal with the regulation of ethics, society and the conduct of daily life. Occult knowledge has been left to be acquired by occult teaching. Nevertheless it was possessed by the ancient sages and our correspondent will find a great deal of more or less scattered information on these and cognate questions in the Veda, Upanishads and Puranas. But it is doubtful whether he would obtain a satisfactory answer to his queries in the form in which he has put them. He will find for instance a long description of invisible worlds, — invisible, that is to say, to our physical senses, — in the Vishnu Purana, but it is picturesque rather than precise. We do not think he will find much about the constituents of the worlds or the size of subtle bodies.

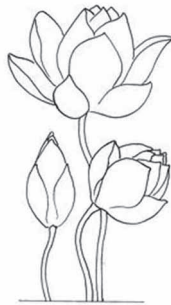
The form of the third question lends itself to misconception. Obviously the method for an ordinary man to develop his subtle body into that of a saint, is to cease to be an ordinary man and to become a saint. There can be no other means. The subtle body is the mental case and reflects the changes of the mentality which is housed in it or the influence exercised on it by the activities and experiences of our physical existence.

Reincarnation is much more prominent and the ideas about it more systematised

in Buddhist than in Hindu books. But most of the Hindu philosophies took some kind of reincarnation for granted. It was part of the ancient teaching which had come down to them from the earliest times. They are more concerned with its causes and the method of escape from the obligation of rebirth; the thing itself was for them a fact beyond question. But the nature of reincarnation is not the same for all the old thinkers. The Upanishads, for instance, seem to teach that the physical self is dissolved at death into its principle, ether; it is the mental being that appears to be born and reborn, but in reality birth and death are merely semblances and operations of Nature, — of Aditi full of the gods, *Aditi devatāmayī*; the spirit is really one in all bodies and is neither born nor dies. Nachiketas in the Katha Upanishad raises the question whether the man as we know and conceive him really survives death and this seems to be the sense of the answer that he receives.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 451-52)



‘THY ACTION HAS MADE ITSELF FELT . . .’

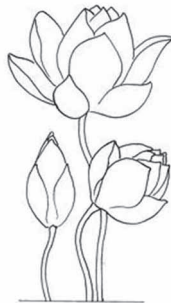
March 25, 1914

SILENT and unseen as always, but all-powerful, Thy action has made itself felt and, in these souls that seemed to be so closed, a perception of Thy divine light is awake. I knew well that none could invoke Thy presence in vain and if in the sincerity of our hearts we commune with Thee through no matter what organism, body or human collectivity, this organism in spite of its ignorance finds its unconsciousness wholly transformed. But when in one or several elements there is the conscious transformation, when the flame that smoulders under the ashes leaps out suddenly illuminating all the being, then with joy we salute Thy sovereign action, testify once more to Thy invincible puissance and can hope that a new possibility of true happiness has been added to the others in mankind.

O Lord, an ardent thanksgiving mounts from me towards Thee expressing the gratitude of this sorrowing humanity which Thou illuminest, transformest and glorifiest and givest to it the peace of Knowledge.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed. Vol. 1, p. 110)



COMMENTARY ON ‘THOUGHTS AND APHORISMS’

(Continued from the issue of November 2012)

The north-country Indian herdsman, attacked by fever, sits in the chill stream of a river for an hour or more and rises up free and healthy. If the educated man did the same, he would perish, not because the same remedy in its nature kills one and cures another, but because our bodies have been fatally indoctrinated by the mind into false habits.

* * *

It is not the medicine that cures so much as the patient's faith in the doctor and the medicine. Both are a clumsy substitute for the natural faith in one's own self-power which they have themselves destroyed.

* * *

The healthiest ages of mankind were those in which there were the fewest material remedies.

* * *

The most robust and healthy race left on earth were the African savages; but how long can they so remain after their physical consciousness has been contaminated by the mental aberrations of the civilised?

As always Sri Aurobindo's words are prophetic. For only when humanity is cured of its mental aberrations will it be able to manifest the supramental consciousness and recover the natural health which the mind has lost for it.

14 March 1970

(CWM 10: 322-23)

*

Medicine is necessary for our bodies in disease only because our bodies have learned the art of not getting well without medicines. Even so, one sees often that the moment Nature chooses for recovery is that in which the life is abandoned as hopeless by the doctors.

* * *

Distrust of the curative power within us was our physical fall from Paradise. Medical Science and a bad heredity are the two angels of God who stand at the gates to forbid our return and re-entry.

* * *

Medical Science to the human body is like a great Power which enfeebles a smaller State by its protection or like a benevolent robber who knocks his victim flat and riddles him with wounds in order that he may devote his life to healing and serving the shattered body.

* * *

Drugs often cure the body when they do not merely trouble or poison it, but only if their physical attack on the disease is supported by the force of the spirit; if that force can be made to work freely, drugs are superfluous.

Sri Aurobindo gives us a striking description of the nightmare in which we live, in order to awaken within us an unwearying aspiration towards the salvation that comes from the true consciousness and an exclusive faith in the Divine's omnipotence.

18 March 1970

(CWM 10: 325-26)

*

I am not a Bhakta, for I have not renounced the world for God. How can I renounce what He took from me by force and gave back to me against my will? These things are too hard for me.

* * *

I am not a Bhakta, I am not a Jnani, I am not a worker for the Lord. What am I then? A tool in the hands of my Master, a flute blown upon by the divine Herd-Boy, a leaf driven by the breath of the Lord.

* * *

Devotion is not utterly fulfilled till it becomes action and knowledge. If thou pursuest after God and canst overtake Him, let Him not go till thou hast His reality. If thou hast hold of His reality, insist on having also His totality. The first will give thee divine knowledge, the second will give thee divine works and a free and perfect joy in the universe.

* * *

Others boast of their love for God. My boast is that I did not love God; it was He who loved me and sought me out and forced me to belong to Him.

* * *

After I knew that God was a woman, I learned something from far-off about love; but it was only when I became a woman and served my Master and Paramour that I knew love utterly.

Sri Aurobindo had a genius for humour and all we can do is admire and remain silent.

20 March 1970

(CWM 10: 329-30)

*

To commit adultery with God is the perfect experience for which the world was created.

I do not understand this aphorism.

This is the most perfect way in which Sri Aurobindo, with his marvellous sense of humour, could ridicule human morality. This sentence is a whole satire in itself.

21 March 1970

(CWM 10: 330)

*

To fear God really is to remove oneself to a distance from Him, but to fear Him in play gives an edge to utter delightfulness.

* * *

The Jew invented the God-fearing man; India the God-knower and God-lover.

* * *

The servant of God was born in Judaea, but he came to maturity among the Arabs. India's joy is in the servant-lover.

* * *

Perfect love casts out fear; but still keep thou some tender shadow and memory of the exile and it will make the perfection more perfect.

* * *

Thy soul has not tasted God's entire delight, if it has never had the joy of being His enemy, opposing His designs and engaging with Him in mortal combat.

* * *

If you cannot make God love you, make Him fight you. If He will not give you the embrace of the lover, compel Him to give you the embrace of the wrestler.

* * *

My soul is the captive of God, taken by Him in battle; it still remembers the war, though so far from it, with delight and alarm and wonder.

What does Sri Aurobindo mean by "the joy of being His enemy"?

Here too I have to say that I do not know exactly, because he never told me.

But I can tell you about my own experience. Until the age of about twenty-five, all I knew was the God of religions, God as men have created him, and I did not want him at any price. I denied his existence but with the certitude that if such a God did exist, I detested him.

When I was about twenty-five I discovered the inner God and at the same time I learned that the God described by most Western religions is none other than the Great Adversary.

When I came to India, in 1914, and became acquainted with Sri Aurobindo's teaching, everything became very clear.

24 March 1970

(CWM 10: 330-32)

*

Most of all things on earth I hated pain till God hurt and tortured me; then it was revealed to me that pain is only a perverse and recalcitrant shape of excessive delight.

* * *

There are four stages in the pain God gives to us; when it is only pain; when it is pain that causes pleasure; when it is pain that is pleasure; and when it is purely a fiercer form of delight.

* * *

Even when one has climbed up into those levels of bliss where pain vanishes, it still survives disguised as intolerable ecstasy.

* * *

When I was mounting upon ever higher crests of His joy, I asked myself whether there was no limit to the increase of bliss and almost I grew afraid of God's embraces.

I would like You to explain to me "the four stages of pain" which Sri Aurobindo speaks of here.

If Sri Aurobindo is speaking of moral pain, of any kind, I can say from experience that the four stages he mentions correspond to four states of consciousness which are the result of inner development and the degree of union with the divine consciousness which the individual consciousness has achieved. When the union is perfect, there only remains "a fiercer form of delight".

If it is the physical pain endured by the body, the experience does not follow such a clearly defined order; especially because union with the Divine most often causes the pain to disappear.

25 March 1970

(CWM 10: 332-33)

*

I did not know for some time whether I loved Krishna best or Kali; when I loved Kali, it was loving myself, but when I loved Krishna, I loved another, and still it was myself with whom I was in love. Therefore I came to love Krishna better even than Kali.

Sri Aurobindo always had his own way of saying things, always original and always unexpected.

29 March 1970

(CWM 10: 333)

*

The philosophers who reject the world as Maya, are very wise and austere and holy; but I cannot help thinking sometimes that they are also just a little stupid and allow God to cheat them too easily.

* * *

For my part, I think I have a right to insist on God giving Himself to me in the world as well as out of it. Why did He make it at all, if He wanted to escape that obligation?

* * *

The Mayavadin talks of my Personal God as a dream and prefers to dream of Impersonal Being; the Buddhist puts that aside too as a fiction and prefers to dream of Nirvana and the bliss of nothingness. Thus all the dreamers are busy reviling each other's visions and parading their own as the panacea. What the soul utterly rejoices in, is for thought the ultimate reality.

* * *

Beyond Personality the Mayavadin sees indefinable Existence; I followed him there and found my Krishna beyond in indefinable Personality.

As always, this is Sri Aurobindo's wonderful way of making clear to us the inanity of human assertions by which each one arrogantly denies anything that is not his own discovery or his own personal experience.

Wisdom begins with the capacity to admit all theories, even the most contradictory.

1 April 1970

(CWM 10: 334-35)

*

When I first met Krishna, I loved Him as a friend and playmate till He deceived me; then I was indignant and could not forgive Him. Afterwards I loved Him as a lover and He still deceived me; I was again and much more indignant, but this time I had to pardon.

* * *

After offending, He forced me to pardon Him not by reparation, but by committing fresh offences.

* * *

So long as God tried to repair His offences against me, we went on periodically quarrelling; but when He found out His mistake, the quarrelling stopped, for I had to submit to Him entirely.

* * *

When I saw others than Krishna and myself in the world, I kept secret God's doings with me; but since I began to see Him and myself everywhere, I have become shameless and garrulous.

In his writings, Sri Aurobindo had a genius for expressing the most extraordinary experiences in the most ordinary words, thus giving the impression that his experiences are simple and obvious.

2 April 1970

(CWM 10: 335-36)

THE MOTHER

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

THE PASSING OF SRI AUROBINDO:

Its Inner Significance and Consequence

I

“No one can write about my life because it is not on the surface for men to see” — this is what Sri Aurobindo said when the idea of a definitive biography was mooted. There is no doubt that, except perhaps for his brilliant academic career in England and the early phases of his fiery political period in India, his life was too deeply inward for its utmost sense and motive and achievement to be unravelled by a narration of external events supplemented by a psychological commentary. To arrive at some vision of it one would have to catch an inkling of not only the vast mysteries of traditional spiritual realisation but also the dazzling immensities of the new earth-transforming light which he called the Supermind and which he endeavoured for forty years to bring down *in toto* for suffering humanity. As with his life, so too with the phenomenon which the world has reported to be his death. Sri Aurobindo “dying” cannot but be as inward, as profound as Sri Aurobindo living.

No Yogi dies in the ordinary meaning of the word: his consciousness always exceeds the formula of the physical body, he is beyond and greater than his material sheath even while he inhabits it, and his action on mankind is essentially through his free and ample spirit to which both life and death are small masks of a fully aware immortality in the limitless being of the Divine and the Eternal. All the more inapplicable is the term “death” to the passing of a Master of Yoga like Sri Aurobindo. For, it is well known that the transformative power of the Supermind was at work in the very cells of his body and that it commanded an efficacy physical no less than psychological, to which hundreds of his disciples can testify because of the wonderful curative impact of it on their own ailments. This efficacy was not confined to his Ashram: telegraphic offices all over India will bear witness to the daily flashing of appeals for help in various illnesses, including those that often defeat medical science, and then messages of thanksgiving for relief and remedy by spiritual means. No, Sri Aurobindo, the Yogi of the Supermind descending into the outer as well as the inner being and bringing a divine life on earth in addition to the infinite immortality of the Beyond, cannot be looked upon as passing away on account of old age and physical causes. Whatever the purely clinical picture, it must have behind it a significance integral with his highly significant and immeasurably more-than-physical life of spiritual attainment.

That there should be a clinical picture instead of a miraculous vanishing trick is exactly in keeping with Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga. His Yoga was meant to be a

process and a progression of the evolutionary method: it aimed not at a bewildering superimposition of divine qualities which still left the grain of human nature unchanged, but at a spiritually organic luminous growth, an assimilation by nature of supernature, a marvellous and yet no freakish transfiguration, an intense working out within a lifetime of what is not foreign to the purpose of terrestrial evolution but its inmost meaning whose unfoldment is in the very logic of things, though that unfoldment may ordinarily take aeons. The evolutionary was always fused with the revolutionary in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga of the Supermind and, just as his life's audacities, like those of his art of poetry and prose, were always felicitous, full of ease and aptness, gloriously adapting nature rather than violating it, so too the adventure of his death would be no utter supernormality but carry for all its profound import and exceptional mode some semblance of the common passage to the stillness and the shadow.

What medical science would try to describe as physical causes are, therefore, far indeed from being any contradiction of the thesis that Sri Aurobindo did not pass away as a result of them. And this thesis, we may now add, is based not only on Sri Aurobindo's special spiritual status but also on a number of remarkable physical facts. Doctors have declared, on the strength of typical non-response to stimuli, that he entered into deep coma in consequence of an extreme uraemic condition following upon a failure of all treatment. As every medical tyro knows, such a state of uraemic coma admits of no return to consciousness. Yet to the surprise of the doctors attending on him, Sri Aurobindo opened his eyes at frequent intervals and asked for a drink or inquired what the time was! This repeated occurrence of the scientifically impossible leads one to believe that the deep uraemic coma was intermixed, as it were, with a very conscious Yogic self-withdrawal from an instrument which was too damaged to be kept for common use but which yet could not quite bar the uncommon will of its master. Here was no brain of mere carbon and iron and phosphorus: here was the subtilised servitor of a mind that had sat on the peaks of God and from there could command response in the midst of all material determinism. Even half an hour before the breathing ceased and the heart stopped beating, Sri Aurobindo looked out from his calm compassionate eyes, spoke the name of the doctor by his side and drank some water. This was the strangest uraemic coma in medical history.

Nor did the extraordinary character of the passing of this Yogi of Yogis end there. In a case certified to be one of complete pervasion of the system by the accumulation in the blood of body poisons which should be thrown off by the kidneys, the system gets discoloured in a short time, a blackening grows apace and then decomposition sets in. But when there was a consultation of doctors, both, French and Indian, two and a half days after the death-certificate had been signed, Sri Aurobindo's body was found to have retained the beautiful white-gold colour that had distinguished it during his life and there was not the slightest trace of

decomposition. It was just as it had been at the moment of his passing — 1.26 a.m. on December 5 — and also just as it had been 41 hours later when instead of the scheduled burial the famous announcement was made by the Mother, indefinitely postponing it: “The funeral of Sri Aurobindo has not taken place today. His body is charged with such a concentration of supramental light that there is no sign of decomposition and the body will be kept lying on his bed so long as it remains intact.” It lay intact for several days in a grandeur of victorious quiet, with thousands upon thousands having *darshan* of it. Only at 5 p.m. on December 9, in a rose-wood case lined with silver and satin, it was buried most simply and without any sectarian religious ceremony in a vault specially prepared in the centre of the Ashram courtyard. Even when the body was put into the case, there was neither actual decay nor the odour of death, though marks were present to indicate that the miraculous preservative light had begun to depart. The light may be said to have remained in full for over 90 hours — a period more than double the record time which Lyons’ *Medical Jurisprudence* gives of a body keeping undecayed in the climatic conditions of the East.

When during the transition to life’s close and even after, in the very thick of death, a challenging lordship is manifested over Matter and the transformative power of the Supermind that was ever increasingly Sri Aurobindo’s is not denied but paradoxically proved, it is — to say the least — reasonable to see the whole event of his passing as the culmination of a momentous deliberate fight whose implications can be read only by understanding a little of what the supramental light means. But here the question arises: If the fight was deliberate, did he give any signs of its coming? The answer is: Yes. It is indeed true that, though the great illuminating letters to his disciples had not quite ceased nor had the fine humour forgotten altogether its leap and flash nor yet the wide look on the world’s movement turned away, he had been for the last couple of years rather reticent about his plans for the future and more and more absorbed in his own inner spiritual work and in literary creation, especially his epic poem *Savitri: a Legend and a Symbol*. But through the reticence and the absorption a few hints did glimmer out of a strange and dire possibility he might have to confront in the course of his mission.

Some time in November the predictions of a Gujarati astrologer were read out to him. Their focal points were the years 1950 and 1964. The astrologer wrote: “In 1950, as the sun and the moon are in conjunction and the moon is the master of the twelfth house, there is a chance of Sri Aurobindo’s self-undoing.” About 1964 he opined: “In that year some mighty miracle of Sri Aurobindo’s power will be witnessed. Aged 93, he will withdraw from the world at his own will after completing his mission.” On hearing this, Sri Aurobindo raised his hand and half-jocularly said: “Oh, ninety-three!” as if he had found that age too far away for his mission’s achievement. With regard to 1950 a disciple remarked that it must be a year of importance, since important things had happened in Sri Aurobindo’s life at intervals

of 12 years. 1914 made a most meaningful new starting-point for him in creative spirituality: he first met the Mother and the ostensible result of their meeting was the publication of the philosophical monthly, *Arya*, which ran for nearly 7 years thereafter. 1926 was another outstanding landmark in Sri Aurobindo's spiritual career: it is called the year of assurance of victory and marks practically the beginning of the Ashram with the Mother radiantly presiding over it. In 1938 — 12 years after that landmark — Sri Aurobindo passed through a physical crisis by falling and fracturing his right thighbone. 1950 — with its indication of a possibility of "self-undoing" — makes again a 12 years' lapse. And, though the astrologer took only his forecast of a memorable ninety-third year in Sri Aurobindo's life very seriously, Sri Aurobindo seemed to regard his statements as not quite fantastic. He said: "The man has got hold of some truth." Then he was asked: "Isn't the prediction about your 'self-undoing' this year nonsensical? Surely, you are going to stay with us?" In his grand unhurrying way came the calm counter-query of just one mysterious word: "Why?"

A most surprising word, this, to all who had expected that an unusual longevity as a result of the Supermind's increasing descent was part of Sri Aurobindo's programme. Another surprise was fraught with a strange foreboding joy. To those who looked after him or worked in his room he gave a sign of sudden personal tenderness. Sri Aurobindo was not exactly a demonstrative nature: he had the subtle kindness as of an all-enveloping ether and though his extreme compassion is evident both in the labour he undertook and in the many letters written to his disciples in difficulty, physical expressions of his great paternal attitude were rare. But now for a brief moment there went out to his attendants — to each in a different way and on a different occasion — a distinct outward gesture of affection, as if he had wished them to know before it might be too late his appreciation of their service. The gesture, exceedingly sweet and welcome though it was, appeared to hold vaguely in it the poignancy of a possible leave-taking.

A third surprise may be recorded: a remark which fell oddly on the ear of the disciple whose job it was to take down whatever Sri Aurobindo dictated by way of letter or book. The Master had been busy with his *Savitri* for several years, revising the text he had composed earlier and constantly adding to it, amplifying the significances, enriching the story, extending the symbolism, catching more and more intensely the vision of the superhuman planes of existence and consciousness to which he had access, breathing with an ever-truer thrill the vast rhythms of the movements of the Gods with which he had grown familiar. Out of some unfathomable silence he would draw out golden phrase and apocalyptic line — wait as if he had eternities to throw away — proceed with splendid bursts of occult imagery and revealing description — hark back to expand or amend, with an eye to the tiniest detail of punctuation or sequence, and again press forward with a comprehensive yet meticulous inspiration. A lordly, a leisurely labour was *Savitri*, conceived with

something of the antique temperament which rejoiced in massive structures — especially the temperament of the makers of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* which take all human life and human thought in their spacious scope and blend the workings of the hidden worlds of Gods and Titans and Demons with the activities of earth. A kind of cosmic sweep was Sri Aurobindo's and he wanted his poem to be a many-sided multi-coloured carving out, in word-music, of the gigantic secrets of the supramental Yoga. At least twenty-four thousand lines were thought necessary to house the unique vision and the unparalleled experience. A patience as vast as that vision and that experience characterised always Sri Aurobindo's dealings with this epic. Even the version on which he was engaged was the eleventh or the twelfth. Time without end appeared to be at his disposal when he sat dictating lines like those about the central figure of the poem:

*As in a mystic and dynamic dance
A priestess of immaculate ecstasies
Inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault
Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods,
A heart of silence in the hands of joy
Inhabited with rich creative beats
A body like a parable of dawn
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
Or golden temple door to things beyond.*

But all of a sudden a couple of months before the fateful December 5 Sri Aurobindo startled his scribe by saying: "I must finish *Savitri* soon."

Of course, all this does not fix the very date of his passing nor does it show any desire to depart, but, clearly, the grim struggle in which he got involved and which came to a close on that date had loomed already as a likelihood in the near future. And a certain fact about *Savitri* fits in here with the aptest symbolism. Though he strove to finish his epic soon, it just fell short of completion. It had been projected in twelve Books, with an epilogue, but while even the epilogue got written — at least as a general first draft — and the Book of Beginnings, the Book of the Traveller of the Worlds, the Book of the Divine Mother, the Book of Birth and Quest, the Book of Life, the Book of Love, the Book of Fate and several other Books are available for enthusiasts of spiritual poetry, the one single Book which does not exist in any form at all — except for a short piece written a long time ago and meant to be revised and included in a much larger whole — is the Book of Death. Most suggestive is this fact, as if that Book could not be composed until the Grim Spectre had been grappled with in actuality and as if Sri Aurobindo had been waiting for some mighty crisis of his own bodily existence before he could launch on this part of his *Legend and Symbol*.

Everything goes to prove that what happened in the small hours of that December day was no purely physical casualty, no fell accident to the seeker of the life divine on earth, but a dreadful gamble freely accepted, an awesome trial undergone for a set purpose, a battle faced in every wounding detail with open eyes and joined with the explicit possibility threatening him of losing in it the most gifted and glorious bodily instrument forged by the manifesting Spirit that is for ever. But the question still stands to be answered: What could be the reason of the perilous experiment? It is doubtful whether any answer expressible by the mere mind can be entirely satisfying. Perhaps none ought to be attempted and we might rest, with the conviction that Sri Aurobindo of his own will did what he deemed most necessary for the advancement of his work and we might leave it to the Mother — Sri Aurobindo's partner in that work — to unroll the supreme rationale of the Master's will in the actual developments of the Integral Yoga in the future. However, the Master himself never completely discouraged the effort of the mind to comprehend the Spirit's manifold action. Intellectual formulation of direct inner knowledge or else of intuitive seizures of the Unknown was a thing he fostered, and if by some rapport with his own luminous philosophy we could arrive at a mental glimmer of the Aurobindonian Supermind's intention we should be doing what he himself from beyond our gross senses would perhaps not refuse to sanction.

II

The core of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and Yoga is the dynamic Truth-consciousness that is the Supermind. By "Truth-consciousness" is meant that status and force of the Divine which brings out of the Divine's absolute Transcendence into a perfect manifestation of Self-being and Self-becoming the potentialities of the play of the One who is at the same time the Many. This manifestation is a complete harmony in which exist and function the creative truths, the flawless originals, the golden archetypes of all that is in our imperfect cosmos in which the Divine has posited a difficult evolution of matter, life-force and mind — with a soul supporting them — out of a vast Inconscience, a primal darkness set by Him as the nether pole to the transcendent Absolute. Between the two poles and above the evolving earth and below the archetypal Supermind are various occult planes — Subtle Matter, Vitality, Mind, Overmind and, at the back of the first trio, Psyche — with their beings and movements and there is a complex interaction in the whole system of cosmos on cosmos. All this was known in general to the ancient seers and they saw in man who is the microcosm a threefold reality concretised into what they termed three sheaths or *shariras* — the gross outer, the subtle inner, the causal higher. The last is the substance of the Supermind, compacted of its creative light of total knowledge, infinite power, immortal bliss. But the ancients did not realise that the earthly evolution is not meant only to release the being into the Cosmic Self and into ever more deep,

ever more high poises of consciousness and into some eternity beyond birth and death but also to bring into earth-terms the dynamic modes of the widths, the depths and the heights and ultimately the supreme perfection of the Truth-plane — the *karana sharira*, the causal body — so that earth-terms themselves may be fulfilled and not merely serve as bright points of departure into the wide and the deep and the high. In short, the ancients lacked a full and organised possession of the Supermind's purpose and power: the fusion of the supramental light with the inmost soul and the descent of it into mind and life-energy and even the physical body, transforming and divinising them in entirety, are Sri Aurobindo's special discovery and Yoga. With the supramental descent Sri Aurobindo aimed at creating a new humanity enjoying true self-consummation and living divinely in every field, and it is with this aim that he sought to form an initiating double centre for the new humanity by his own supramentalisation and the Mother's.

Supramentalisation involves, among its final elements, freedom from disease, duration of life at will and a change in the functionings of the body — all, of course, as a material expression of the divine nature emerging in the human and not as an outer aggrandisement of an expanding inner egoism. But to compass these final elements which alone would found with utter security a supramental earth-existence the Yogi has to tackle at last the bedrock of the Inconscience, the dark basis of the submerged Divine from which evolution seems to issue. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, taking upon themselves as representative pioneers the agelong difficulties of all human nature, have been striking against this bedrock for the last decade and a half. "No, it is not with the Empyrean that I am busy," wrote Sri Aurobindo in 1936 to a disciple and added: "I wish it were. It is rather with the opposite end of things; it is in the Abyss that I have to plunge to build a bridge between the two. But that too is necessary for my work and one has to face it." In the course of this plunge, as layer after layer of the occult Inconscient is torn open and the supramental light sought to be called down into it, various dreadful possibilities rise up and great inner wounds as well as severe bodily tensions have to be endured. But throughout the fight the Master of the Supermind carries the talisman, as it were, that can ward off the fatal blow. Immense, in spite of the sublimest light within his very body, are his trials and yet he has also the capacity to emerge finally the victor and blaze a path of ultimate triumph for the men who follow him. Thus to emerge had been Sri Aurobindo's plan, so far as the plan can be read through his philosophical writings and his personal letters. Both the plan and the non-egoistic world-wide attitude of an Avatar find voice in a letter of 1935: "I am not doing anything for myself, as I have no personal need of anything, neither of salvation (*Moksha*) nor supramentalisation. If I am seeking after supramentalisation it is because it is a thing that has to be done for the earth-consciousness and if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others."

Yes, Sri Aurobindo, in his published pronouncements, appears to have envi-

saged the need and therefore the prospect of himself constituting together with the Mother the starting-point of supramental humanity. But in the same pronouncements he leaves also a small margin for a different *dénouement*. A letter of 1934 speaks in general about the ways of a vessel of God: “The Divinity acts according to the consciousness of the Truth above and the *Lila* below and It acts according to the need of the *Lila* not according to men’s ideas of what It should do or should not do.” A clearer hint of unexpected turns in the Divine’s dealings is contained in a letter of 1935: “Why should the Divine be tied down to succeed in all his operations? What if failure suits him better and serves better the ultimate purpose? What rigid primitive notions are these about the Divine!” This suggests that apparent defeat of the Divine’s grandest goal could even be a concealed victory, a way precisely to reach that goal with greater swiftness by means of a paradoxical strategy. And, all conditions considered, it is truly such a strategy that seems to have been employed by Sri Aurobindo when to the superficial gaze he succumbed to a renal disorder.

The whole supramental Yoga was indeed like a great general’s campaign against forces that had never been combated before by any spiritual figure. In the teeth of every common experience, every posture of human living down the ages, even every articulate spiritual tradition, this Yoga hoped to change the very foundations of Matter and proceeded into an embattled darkness: only a fearless fighter like Sri Aurobindo, only a genius like him of the Spirit militant could have intuited the mighty secret of the epiphany in evolution and planned the transformative onslaught on established nature and moved ahead in the frame of mind that is disclosed in yet another letter of 1935: “It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the Supermind. I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense . . . If human reason regards me as a fool for trying to do what Krishna did not try, I do not in the least care. There is no question of X or Y or anybody else in that. It is a question between the Divine and myself — whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way to its descent or at least make it more possible or not. Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall upon me if it will for my presumption — I go on till I conquer or perish. This is the spirit in which I seek the Supermind, no hunting for greatness for myself or others.” A splendid heroism of selflessness is here, the vividest picture of a warrior Yogi who would take any risk, if thereby he could press closer to his objective and though the formula is “I conquer or perish” the frame of mind is one that might easily avail itself of a yet more audacious formula: “I perish to conquer.” To embrace this formula what would be required is simply the sense that, by sacrificing in a final grapple with the black powers of the Inconscient a wonderful body tinged with supramental light, those powers would be terribly exhausted and the golden godhead above tremendously pulled towards earth and into this body’s partner in the Yoga of the Supermind. As soon as the momentous sense would dawn, Sri Aurobindo would be ready — supreme general that he was — to alter his entire scheme of battle, relinquish his whole line of

previously prepared forts, abandon the old method of advance, change suddenly his well-plotted direction and, instead of attempting to supramentalise his physical existence in every detail, move imperturbably towards some titanic ambush, cast away the very guard given him by the Supermind and go down fighting to win all in secret, while losing all on the surface.

Nothing except a colossal strategic sacrifice of this kind in order that the physical transformation of the Mother may be immeasurably hastened and rendered absolutely secure and, through it, a divine life on earth for humanity may soon get rooted and be set aflower — nothing less can explain the passing of Sri Aurobindo. There would also be implied in the holocaust a world-saving action by the sweet power of which Sri Aurobindo speaks in a letter as far back as 1934: “It is only divine Love which can bear the burden I have to bear, that all have to bear who have sacrificed everything else to the one aim of uplifting earth out of its darkness to the Divine.” We may say that some undreamt-of calamity would have afflicted the world if the vast poison had not been drawn away into the body of this one man whose spiritual consciousness, armed with divine Love, had made him a universalised individual incarnating the Transcendent’s Will. And here we may refer again to the fact that the obstacles confronting Sri Aurobindo in his Yoga were not really personal. They were representative of the race and he gladly accepted their retarding perilous load in spite of or perhaps because of his own exceptional gifts and abilities. Apropos a query about some temporary complaint in the Mother’s body many years ago, he wrote: “We have not sought perfection for our own separate sake, but as part of a general change creating a possibility of perfection for others. That could not have been done without our accepting and facing the difficulties of the realisation and the transformation and overcoming them for ourselves. It has been done to a sufficient degree on the other planes — but not yet on the most material part of the physical plane. Till it is done, the fight there continues . . . The Mother’s difficulties are not her own; she bears the difficulties of others and those that are inherent in the general action and work for the transformation. If it had been otherwise, it would be a very different matter.” Obviously, then, whatever sacrifice is made by Sri Aurobindo or the Mother cannot be one imposed on them by personal defects. Theirs the unique *adhars* or vehicles of Yoga which could, if left to themselves, surmount every obstacle. This, in the present context of Sri Aurobindo’s departure, means that death is not anything he was obliged to undergo on account of some lack in himself. It is some stupendous crisis of the evolving earth-nature — some rebellious clouding upsurge of the divinely attacked Inconscient against a mankind poorly receptive to the descending Truth-Consciousness — that has been diverted to his own life, concentrated in the mortal risk of the uraemic coma and utilised by the master strategist for an occult advantage to the work he had assumed — the work which was always more important than direct personal consummation.

But it would be of the essence of the sacrifice and the strategy, as well as

typically Aurobindonian, that a keenly struggling resistance should be there together with the large and tranquil acceptance. That is why we have said that Sri Aurobindo has gone down fighting. Never to acquiesce in any shortcoming of earth-nature was his motto, for he saw the very secret of evolution to be the manifestation in earth-nature of what superficially looks impossible — the quivering forth of vitality and sensation in seemingly lifeless Matter, the glimmering out of mind and reason in apparently instinctive animality, the all-perfecting revelation of Supermind in ostensibly groping intelligence, stumbling life-force and mortal body. So there never could be for Sri Aurobindo either a surrender to ordinary world-conditions or a flight into peace away from the world. An inviolable timeless peace he had always known ever since those three grand days in Baroda in 1908 when through a complete silencing of the mind the absolute experience of Nirvana, which has been the terminus of so many other Yogas, became his — not as a terminus but only as a base for further conquests. As for surrender, he could surrender to nothing except the Divine. Consequently, he battled for the Supermind's descent till his last breath — calling the immortal Sun of the Spirit down, passionately packing his earthly envelope with the supramental light so much so indeed that he could keep for several days that envelope free from the taint of discoloration and decay. To battle thus in the very moments of the sacrifice was in tune with his whole life-endeavour. Has he not himself expounded in a letter the technique of triumph in the midst of seeming downfall? "Even if I foresee an adverse result I must work for the one that I consider should be; for it keeps alive the force, the principle of Truth which I serve and gives it a possibility to triumph hereafter so that it becomes part of the working of the future favourable fate even if the fate of the hour is adverse."

With these far-seeing phrases of the Master we may close our attempt to elucidate in some measure the mystery of that look of magnificent meditation with which he lay from early morning of December 5 for more than 111 hours in his simple bed in the room where he had spent over two decades of intense world-work. "Spiritually imperial" — this is the only description fitting the appearance of his body: the heroic countenance with its white beard and its flowing white hair above the massive forehead, its closed quiet eyes and its wide-nostrilled aquiline nose and its firm lips whose corners were touched with beatitude, the broad and smooth shoulders, the arms flexed to place on the indomitable chest hand over gentle artistic yet capable hand, the strong manly waist covered by an ample cloth of gold-bordered silk, even the legs stretched out with an innate kingship reminiscent of their having trod through seventy-nine years with holy feet at once blessing and possessing earth. The atmosphere of the room was vibrant with a sacred power to cleanse and illumine, a power which appeared to emanate from the Master's poise of conquering rest and to invade the bodies of all the watchers with almost a hammering intensity from over their heads as if, in redoubled force because of Sri Aurobindo's selfless physical withdrawal, there came pouring down to humanity the life-transfiguring grace of the Supermind.

And we may add that somehow the personal presence itself of Sri Aurobindo grew intenser. He who had so long kept to a room for the sake of concentratedly hastening the Yogic process of transformation, the wonderful bliss and dynamis of which the Mother had been canalising by her physical nearness to the disciples — he by setting aside his most exterior sheath broke out into a new intimacy with his followers and took them even more directly into his immense being. But it would hardly do justice to that being if we thought of it as merely a pervading greatness. Behind the material envelope are other organised vehicles — subtle and causal — and Sri Aurobindo had brought the remote causal effectively into the proximate subtle and was pressing it into the outer sheath at the time of his strategic sacrifice. To quote again his words, “The transformation has been done to a sufficient degree on the other planes.” This means that he held the Supermind embodied in his subtle *sharira* and that he was under no occult necessity, no law of subtle Nature, to give up the latter for the purpose of returning to some plane of the soul’s rest before being reborn with a new subtle body as well as a new gross one. Sri Aurobindo, at the hour of his physical withdrawal, was in a position to do much more than be the cosmic and transcendent Purusha that his supramental Yoga had made his incarnate personality. He could actually be that Purusha active in an indissoluble subtle body at once divine and human, in a far more direct constant touch with the material world than could the forms which mystics have visioned of past Rishis and Prophets and Avatars. In a most special sense, therefore, Sri Aurobindo the marvellously gifted and gracious person who was our Guru and whom we loved is still at work and a concrete truth is expressed by the Mother when she says: “To grieve is an insult to Sri Aurobindo, who is here with us conscious and alive.” The same concrete truth is ingemmed in the beautiful message of December 7, which she delivered out of her depths where she and Sri Aurobindo are one: “Lord, this morning Thou hast given me the assurance that Thou wouldst stay with us until Thy work is achieved, not only as a consciousness which guides and illumines but also as a dynamic Presence in action. In unmistakable terms Thou hast promised that all of Thyself would remain here and not leave the earth-atmosphere until earth is transformed. Grant that we may be worthy of this marvellous Presence and that henceforth everything in us be concentrated on the one Will to be more and more perfectly consecrated to the fulfilment of Thy Sublime Work.”

So the work goes on, the Mother fronting the future, with the Master by her side in subtle embodiment. And for those who have faith in the work’s fulfilment and who understand what that would be, there is a hope that sees the future pregnant with a particular most heart-soothing possibility. Sri Aurobindo has written in connection with the time when the Supermind’s descent into flesh and blood will be complete: “In the theory of the occultists and in the gradation of the ranges and planes of our being which Yoga-knowledge outlines for us there is not only a subtle physical force but a subtle physical Matter intervening between life and gross Matter

and to create in this subtle physical substance and precipitate the forms thus made into our grosser materiality is feasible. It should be possible and it is believed to be possible for an object formed in this subtle physical substance to make a transit from its subtlety into the state of gross Matter directly by the intervention of an occult force and process whether with or even without the assistance or intervention of some gross material procedure. A soul wishing to enter into a body or form for itself a body and take part in a divine life upon earth might be assisted to do so or even provided with such a form by this method of direct transmutation without passing through birth by the sex process or undergoing any degradation or any of the heavy limitations in the growth and development of its mind and material body inevitable to our present way of existence. It might then assume at once the structure and greater powers and functionings of the truly divine material body which must one day emerge in a progressive evolution to a totally transformed existence both of life and form in a divinised earth-nature.”

These words hold out the prospect that Sri Aurobindo who has already a divinised subtle physical sheath may employ the supramental mode of manifestation for the purpose of presiding in the domain of Matter itself over the new humanity which the Mother will initiate. In that dawn of God’s gold the Mother will be the first being to achieve the divine body by a progression through a body born in the natural manner, while through the support of her achievement Sri Aurobindo may be the first being to put on the physical vesture of transformation by a projection of substance and shape from supernature. Nothing, of course, is certain about what Sri Aurobindo may will to do, but the possibility we have figured is not out of accord with all that we have glimpsed of a quenchless and victorious light beyond the human in the very event which strikes the surface eye of the aspiring world as a universal sunset — the passing of Sri Aurobindo.*

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

[For the second edition of *The Indian Spirit and the World’s Future*, Amal added the following information at the end of *The Passing of Sri Aurobindo* (p. 133):]

* This was written before we came to know that the Mother herself had said around that time: “When I asked him to resuscitate he clearly answered: ‘I have left the body purposely. I will not take it back. I shall manifest again in the first supramental body built in the supramental way.’ ”

The Mother on my article:

1. Telegram from Nolini: "Your Passing of Sri Aurobindo admirable. Fully approved by Mother. Nothing to change." (27.12.1950)
2. The Mother's words as conveyed by Yogendra to Soli Albless, Associate Editor of *Mother India*: "I have read Amal's article. It is excellent. Tell him I am extremely satisfied. I would like to have it printed in booklet form. He can get it printed in Bombay. If not, I'll print it here." (28.12.1950)
3. The Mother's words again passed by Yogendra to Soli Albless: "It is quite the best thing Amal has written. I would like to print 15,000 copies." (29.12.1950)

"The secret of action," so we might summarise the message of the Gita, the word of its divine Teacher, "is one with the secret of all life and existence. Existence is not merely a machinery of Nature, a wheel of law in which the soul is entangled for a moment or for ages; it is a constant manifestation of the Spirit. Life is not for the sake of life alone, but for God, and the living soul of man is an eternal portion of the Godhead. Action is for self-finding, for self-fulfilment, for self-realisation and not only for its own external and apparent fruits of the moment or the future. There is an inner law and meaning of all things dependent on the supreme as well as the manifested nature of the self; the true truth of works lies there and can be represented only incidentally, imperfectly and disguised by ignorance in the outer appearances of the mind and its action. The supreme, the faultless largest law of action is therefore to find out the truth of your own highest and inmost existence and live in it and not to follow any outer standard and dharma. All life and action must be till then an imperfection, a difficulty, a struggle and a problem. It is only by discovering your true self and living according to its true truth, its real reality that the problem can be finally solved, the difficulty and struggle overpassed and your doings perfected in the security of the discovered self and spirit turn into a divinely authentic action. . . ."

Sri Aurobindo

(Essays on the Gita, CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 572)

CORRESPONDENCE ON *THE PASSING OF SRI AUROBINDO**

[*Letter to Amal:*]

LAST night I read your article with X and I can't resist writing to congratulate you. You have done a splendid job of it and the sincerity is so genuine that the reader's interest is gripped throughout the sixteen long pages. Besides all the facts are weaved smoothly in a language that is brilliant.

I am so glad that Mother wishes to have it published in pamphlet form. I am sure hundreds will enjoy reading it because it is not a metaphysical treatise but gives a personal glimpse into our Lord's life.

More than all this I will say when I next see you!

How are things with you, did you feel any reaction when you got back?

Every night I go and sit by the vault to breathe in the peace and calm of the courtyard and each time I say to myself, "Who says Sri Aurobindo is not there?" I intend bringing in the New Year there. I feel a strong urge to do so.

I wish you a Bonne Année and may the Lord and the Mother always be with you Amal.

30 December 1950

[*Amal's reply:*]

Your letter was quite unexpected, and therefore all the more delightful was its congratulation. Thanks to you and X, for keen response to my little bit of work at evoking the soul's sight of the event which, but for that sight, would be — to say the least — heart-shattering.

Yes, I know that Sri Aurobindo is always there — most concrete to the inner being — but a vision of his sacrifice is a great help to reconcile me to the acute sense which I cannot avoid of all that he could have done in the golden years ahead with his marvellous physical *adhar*. And, of course, there is the daily miracle of our Mother's presence — the greatest help to us in his retirement not into a room upstairs but into our own depths which often are the most locked away from us,

the rapt
Room of the inmost reverie within man.

**The Passing of Sri Aurobindo: Its Inner Significance and Consequence*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1951.

My essay is indeed not a metaphysical treatise — it was not meant to be merely a mental interpretation, however inspired and correct. I have striven, in my heart's blood, to paint our Master as he lived in all the profound grace and valour of his avatarhood. The movements of his actual being I have tried to capture in the progression of my thought and word. I have hoped and prayed and worked so that the very rhythm of his steps through our world might suggest the stupendous secret of his passage out of it. Nobody can guess how dejected I felt when I arrived in Bombay — even the will to live seemed to be slipping from me. Very unYogic of me, I am sure, but I am rather weak at times and, though I felt ashamed of myself, I couldn't do better. I only held on to Mother's assurance to me: "You will know everything. Go on asking Sri Aurobindo as you have always done. You will get all the answers. Nothing has changed." And I kept on asking him and asking Mother: "Please make me write the one article which may fulfil my life. If I fail here I have really done nothing worthwhile." And then I started work. It grew spontaneously — all the links joined together of their own accord almost. Only at one place I had to recast a little, for something intellectually strained seemed to come in. I cut it out and let the theme take shape without intellectuality. This went on up to the thirteenth page where I speak of "the life-transfiguring grace of the Supermind." I thought the article had ended; but the next day a further development took place and then the whole thing reached its natural close with a look both before and after.

Have I talked too much about myself? I am sorry. I wish I could forget myself entirely and live only as I felt I lived when I knelt by the side of the vault and bowed my head. At that time I felt Sri Aurobindo was too immense for me to hold within my small heart but I could enter into his being and live in its vastness, held most intimately within the immeasurable heart of him. I would see him standing and I would, as it were, walk right into his chest. I told Mother about my living in him rather than his living in me. She said, "That comes to the same thing and it is nearer the truth of the matter." I think again and again of being in the Ashram. Your idea of bringing in the New Year sitting by the vault was very fine. I am sure I would have done the same. But didn't you all go to Mother after the stroke of twelve? Did she play any music as in the old days? What is the New Year message? I should like to get it.

Thanks for the beautiful wish with which you accompanied your *Bonne Année* to me. My wish for you is also the same.

Bombay, 3 January 1951

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

ESSENTIALS OF INDIAN CULTURE

(Continued from the issue of November 2012)

[This article by Anilbaran Roy is of special interest as it has Sri Aurobindo's extensive corrections in several places. We continue with the reproduction of a few pages in two versions — the first indicating the changes Sri Aurobindo made, (~~strike through~~ to indicate deletions and *italics* to indicate additions) then the final version after the changes.]

INDIAN culture ~~recognises~~ *insistently proclaims* the spirit as the truth of our being and ~~our~~ *sees in life a field for the expressive growth and evolution of the inner self and spirit in man.* The body, the senses, the mind, the intellect, the reason, the will ~~all these~~ *are only its instruments of the spirit, and* vehicles for its manifestation. ~~Whereas the highest~~ *According to the dominant Europeans idea the reason is the highest thing in man is his reason and will but the Indians culture regards the spirit as above everything else and wants its aim is to build up life in the light and the force of the spirit. And this the spirit in man within us is a portion of God and the evolution of spiritual life is the a progressive manifestation of the divinity in man.* The progressive growth of man into self, into God, into spiritual existence by the development of our natural into our divine being is for Indian thinking the significance of life and the aim of human existence. ~~It is remarkable~~ *And now we see that the best minds of Europe also too are gradually turning towards the same spiritual idea of Nature.*

This difference in the conception about the true significance of human existence has naturally ~~given rise to~~ *brought with it* a difference ~~also~~ *in the ideals of that have guided social and political organisation in the West and in India.* Human society ~~has~~ *in its growth has to pass through three successive stages of evolution before it can arrive at the completeness of its possibilities. At In the first stage the forms and the activities of the communal existence are those of determined by the spontaneous play of the powers and principles of its life. The collective mind of the people is not yet intelligently self-conscious and the reasoning analytic-mind reason is not yet sufficiently developed for the reflective intellect to dominate and rule. Men are guided by the instincts and life impulses of the life-force in them to build up communal organisations through which to develop they can serve the needs and develop the powers of their collective life existence. The early framework of all societies has grew grown up in even such a period of the subordination of the reasoning mind to the play of their life-force; but the Indians even in their later stages of growing self-consciousness did not wholly reject those early forms but always tried to preserve and regulate the spontaneous growth of life in the people and to follow their instincts*

~~and life~~ to give an ordered form to the intuitions of the life-mind and the directives of its creative impulse. In the second stage the communal life becomes more and more intellectually self-conscious. ~~People~~ Men begin to understand the meaning of the forms and institutions that prevailing in society, ~~intelligently~~ criticise and change or modify them by the exercise of reason, consciously seek to organise the life of the people according to ideas and ideals conceived by the ~~reasoning-mind~~ logical intelligence. ~~At this stage~~ †There is an ~~greater~~ increasing efficiency and fullness of useful device, more and more system and discipline & and codes of social laws are prepared to guide, ~~fix and rationalise~~ the collective life of the people. Great ideals are thrown up for the betterment of mankind ~~as a whole~~. But Reason is made the arbiter of social life. But ~~as this tendency proceeds and develops~~, society tends towards artificiality and mechanisation of the forces of life. ~~People~~ Men form mental ideas about social organisation and ~~begin to think~~ that if they can set up an efficient machinery according to effectuate their ideas, ~~all society will be perfected and the happiness of social life will be perfectly secured.~~ and well-being of the race assured. But truth is not limited by these ~~one-sided~~ ideas ~~these mental~~ and the partial formations of the human mind; the mechanical organisations that are founded upon them expressing the truth ~~force~~ only a partially truth and do not last for long; after a short time ~~they collapse and give~~ place to newer forms, newer organisations founded on other and often quite opposite ideas. We see this phenomenon going on before our eyes in modern Europe. The ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity are held up as the greatest and final ideals before mankind but ~~coming to in their practice~~ they ~~lead to arrive at this~~ the alternative “or death”. Democracy, Socialism, Communism, Fascism — are all based on theories and speculations about the ideal organisation of society which only grasp some part of the truth; and the attempt to organise society on any of these ~~theories~~ abstractions leads again and again to failure. True success can come ~~only by reaching~~ only when mankind reaches a third stage ~~when man in his individual as well as in which society~~ it will be guided not merely by blind instincts and vital intuitions and not merely by reasoning and speculation, but “first, foremost and always by the power of unity, sympathy, spontaneous liberty, supple and living order of his ~~its~~ discovered greater self and spirit in which the individual and the communal existence have their law of freedom, perfection and oneness”. Society will realise its highest ~~ideas~~ ideal possibilities only by ~~being~~ when it is organised on a spiritual basis. It is argued/objected that such attempts were made in the past without any success. Hinduism, Christianity, Mahomedanism, all in their turn have sought to establish dharmarajya, a kingdom of heaven or a spiritual brotherhood, but nowhere have their ideals materialised; rather the greatest tyrannies and inequalities in the world have been perpetrated in the name of religion. The Russian Communists ~~say~~ contend that religion and spirituality are ~~the~~ only means by which clever people seek to keep the greater part of society perpetually in bondage. These criticisms ignore the fact that nowhere as yet on earth ~~has~~ the ideal

of a spiritual basis of a *our* collective life found its right conditions for even beginning its effort. What has hitherto been done is the attempt by individuals to attain to spiritual life, ~~in the case of~~ *but in the life of* communities spirituality has been degraded to the form of a popular religion which moves ~~in~~ *not on the spiritual, but on* the vital and mental planes.

Most men on earth as yet have no perception of a soul within and the necessity of manifesting it. *The ordinary life is that of the average human consciousness separated from its own true self and from the Divine and led by the common habits of the mind, life and body which are laws of the Ignorance. The religious life (as distinguished from the spiritual with which it is very often confused) is a movement of the same ignorant human consciousness turning or trying to turn away from earth towards the Divine, but as yet without knowledge and led by the dogmatic tenets and rules of some sect or creed which claims to have found the way out of the bonds of the earth-consciousness to some beatific Beyond. The religious life may be the first approach to the spiritual, but very often it is only a turning about in a round of rites, ceremonies and practices or set ideas and forms without any issue. The spiritual life on the contrary proceeds directly by a change of consciousness — a change from the ordinary consciousness ignorant and separated from its true self and from God to a greater consciousness in which one finds one's true being and comes first into direct and living contact and then into union with the Divine. For the spiritual seeker this change of consciousness is the one thing he seeks and nothing else in the least matters.* The third and the final stage in the evolution of human society will come only when ~~men will~~ *man learns to* seek spiritual life “as the imperative need of his being and its true and right attainment as the necessity of the next step in the evolution of the race.”

ANILBARAN ROY

[Editorial Note: The portion between the two * * is part of a letter of Sri Aurobindo which has been incorporated into the body of this article.]

THE FINAL VERSION

Indian culture insistently proclaims the spirit as the truth of our being and sees in life a field for the expressive growth and evolution of the inner self and spirit. The body, the senses, the mind, the intellect, the reason, the will are only its instruments and vehicles for its manifestation. According to the dominant European idea the reason is the highest thing in man but Indian culture regards the spirit as above everything else and its aim is to build up life in the light and the force of the spirit. The spirit within us is a portion of God and the evolution of spiritual life is a progressive manifestation of the divinity in man. The progressive growth of man into self, into

God, into spiritual existence by the development of our natural into our divine being is for Indian thinking the significance of life and the aim of human existence. And now we see that the best minds of Europe too are gradually turning towards the same spiritual idea of Nature.

This difference in the conception about the true significance of human existence has naturally brought with it a difference in the ideals that have guided social and political organisation in the West and in India. Human society in its growth has to pass through three successive stages of evolution before it can arrive at the completeness of its possibilities. In the first stage the forms and activities of the communal existence are determined by the spontaneous play of the powers and principles of its life. The collective mind of the people is not yet intelligently self-conscious and the analytic reason not yet sufficiently developed for the reflective intellect to dominate and rule. Men are guided by the instincts and impulses of the life-force in them to build up communal organisations through which they can serve the needs and develop the powers of their collective existence. The early framework of all societies has grown up in even such a period of the subordination of the reasoning mind to the play of their life-force; but the Indians even in their later stages of growing self-consciousness did not wholly reject those early forms but always tried to preserve and regulate the spontaneous growth of life in the people and to give an ordered form to the intuitions of the life-mind and the directives of its creative impulse. In the second stage the communal life becomes more and more intellectually self-conscious. Men begin to understand the meaning of the forms and institutions that prevail in society, criticise and change or modify them by the exercise of reason, consciously seek to organise the life of the people according to ideas and ideals conceived by the logical intelligence. There is an increasing efficiency and fullness of useful device, more and more system and discipline and codes of laws are prepared to guide, fix and rationalise the collective life of the people. Great ideals are thrown up for the betterment of mankind. Reason is made the arbiter of social life. But as this tendency proceeds and develops, society tends towards artificiality and mechanisation of the forces of life. Men form mental ideas about social organisation and begin to think that if they can set up an efficient machinery to effectuate their ideas, society will be perfected and the happiness and well-being of the race assured. But truth is not limited by the one-sided ideas and the partial formations of the human mind; the mechanical organisations that are founded upon them express only a partial truth and do not last for long; after a short time they collapse and give place to newer forms, newer organisations founded on other and often quite opposite ideas. We see this phenomenon going on before our eyes in modern Europe. The ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity are held up as the greatest and final ideals before mankind but in their practice they arrive at the alternative "or death". Democracy, Socialism, Communism, Fascism — are all based on theories and speculations about the ideal organisation of society which only grasp some part of

the truth; and the attempt to organise society on any of these abstractions leads again and again to failure. True success can come only when mankind reaches a third stage in which it will be guided not merely by blind instincts and vital intuitions and not merely by reasoning and speculation, but “first, foremost and always by the power of unity, sympathy, spontaneous liberty, supple and living order of its discovered greater self and spirit in which the individual and the communal existence have their law of freedom, perfection and oneness”. Society will realise its highest ideal possibilities only when it is organised on a spiritual basis. It is argued/objected that such attempts were made in the past without any success. Hinduism, Christianity, Mahomedanism, all in their turn have sought to establish *dharma rajya*, a kingdom of heaven or a spiritual brotherhood, but nowhere have their ideals materialised; rather the greatest tyrannies and inequalities in the world have been perpetrated in the name of religion. The Russian Communists contend that religion and spirituality are only means by which clever people seek to keep the greater part of society perpetually in bondage. These criticisms ignore the fact that nowhere as yet on earth has the ideal of a spiritual basis of our collective life found its right conditions for even beginning its effort. What has hitherto been done is the attempt by individuals to attain to spiritual life, but in the life of communities spirituality has been degraded to the form of a popular religion which moves not on the spiritual, but on the vital and mental planes.

Most men on earth as yet have no perception of a soul within and the necessity of manifesting it. The ordinary life is that of the average human consciousness separated from its own true self and from the Divine and led by the common habits of the mind, life and body which are laws of the Ignorance. The religious life (as distinguished from the spiritual with which it is very often confused) is a movement of the same ignorant human consciousness turning or trying to turn away from earth towards the Divine, but as yet without knowledge and led by the dogmatic tenets and rules of some sect or creed which claims to have found the way out of the bonds of the earth-consciousness to some beatific Beyond. The religious life may be the first approach to the spiritual, but very often it is only a turning about in a round of rites, ceremonies and practices or set ideas and forms without any issue. The spiritual life on the contrary proceeds directly by a change of consciousness — a change from the ordinary consciousness ignorant and separated from its true self and from God to a greater consciousness in which one finds one’s true being and comes first into direct and living contact and then into union with the Divine. For the spiritual seeker this change of consciousness is the one thing he seeks and nothing else in the least matters. The third and the final stage in the evolution of human society will come only when man learns to seek spiritual life “as the imperative need of his being and its true and right attainment as the necessity of the next step in the evolution of the race.”

(To be continued)

ANILBARAN ROY

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of November 2012)

Chapter: XVIII

“Views too Advanced for the Times”

*O pale and guiding light, now star unsphered,
Deliverer lately hailed, since by our lords
Most feared, most hated, hated because feared,
Who smot'st them with an edge surpassing swords!
Thou too wert then a child of tragic earth,
Since vainly filled thy luminous doom of birth.*

Sri Aurobindo

‘Charles Stewart Parnell, 1891’¹

THE impression Dinendra Kumar Roy formed of Sri Aurobindo during his stay with him for a little over two years commencing in October 1898, is helpful enough to appreciate why one could not have expected Sri Aurobindo to leave for posterity any account of his activities outside his official duties. His involvements were not reflected in his demeanour. He was like a *yoganimagna tapasvi* — a hermit engrossed in Yoga, writes Roy. Not even once did he find Sri Aurobindo agitated or excited under any provocation. Just as he did not react either to awful summer or bitter winter, his equanimity remained undisturbed amidst occasions joyous or sad.²

This poise remained unchanged during the few following years at Baroda as well as the not-too-long span of turbulent years from 1906 onward when he plunged into active politics.

At Baroda his external life showed no sign of any preoccupation that was radically different from the usual routine of an officer. In 1894 he was shifted to the Revenue Department; in the month of May 1895 he was called by the Maharaja to Ootacamund to prepare an important legal document and in 1897 he was required to teach French at the college. In February next year he was designated Professor of English; in August of the same year, he was appointed the President of the State Library. He also paid a visit to Deoghur and returned to Baroda with Dinendra Kumar Roy. In 1900 he was made Chairman of the College Debating Society. Along with such duties he was also required to assist the Maharaja in the latter's official work — mostly for preparing for

him important documents, letters and speeches. His salary at this time was Rs. 350. In May the same year he received a bonus of Rs. 2000. He visited Bengal in August. In 1901 he had to tutor the Gaekwad's younger children for a while. We have seen earlier that his marriage took place during the same year.

Amidst all this he was quietly studying the forces active in the politics of the country; he was also delving deep into the heritage of India through her literature. He was no less observant of world events — glimpses of his reaction to them being found in creations like *Lines on Ireland*, *To the Boers* and the short poem written at the death of a remarkable character with which this chapter begins. Parnell (1846-1891) was an Irish leader who fought for obtaining the right of Home Rule for his people and was successful to a great extent. Sri Aurobindo sarcastically refers to the rulers of Ireland as “our lords” for they were British — our rulers too. This “child of tragic earth”'s influence on his countrymen had become pale towards the end of his short life because his critics had made a private affair of his a public issue though that had nothing to do with his political ideology that was as sharp as “an edge surpassing swords”.

We have seen the basis of Sri Aurobindo's political wisdom and vision clearly laid out through the series of nine essays, ‘New Lamps for Old’ published in the Anglo-Marathi journal *Indu Prakash* of Bombay, spread over its issues from 7 August 1893 to 6 March 1894, which M. G. Ranade (later decorated by the British throne as Companion of the Indian Empire) was instrumental in bringing to a premature close.

Till then the only newspaper that dared to be bitterly critical of the foreign rulers — not exactly of the foreign rule — was the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. Launched in 1868 as a weekly in Bengali in a village in the district of Jessore (now in Bangladesh) by two enterprising brothers, Motilal and Sisir Ghosh, it used to focus on the tyranny of the local officials and the exploitation of the peasants by the English indigo planters. The publication shifted to Kolkata in 1871 and its circulation and influence grew steadily. It was chiefly to curtail the freedom of this newspaper that the Vernacular Press Act came into being in 1878, championed by the Viceroy Lord Lytton. Outwitting the authority and the author of that humiliating Act, the paper immediately changed its language into English.

That was a time when the printed word commanded much greater attention than it does today. Sri Aurobindo's series in the *Indu Prakash*, its content, its language and style, came as shocks of surprise for its readers and as a bolt from the blue for the leadership of the Congress as well as the ruling class. Its extraordinariness can be appreciated only in the context of the attitude that the leading Indians harboured towards the British hegemony; its permanence was taken for granted. It was a holy duty of India to wish it well. If the rulers took any measure for the welfare of India or even to rectify its own wrong, the nation should take it as a gesture of compassion and be grateful to them.

Here is a small extract from the address delivered by Dadabhai Naoroji who

presided over the Ninth meet of the National Congress at Lahore in 1893, the year Sri Aurobindo returned to India and also began writing for the *Indu Prakash*:

If we are true to ourselves and to our country and make all the necessary sacrifices for our elevation and amelioration, I for one have not a shadow of doubt that in dealing with such justice-loving, fair-minded people as the British, we may rest fully assured that we shall not work in vain. It is this conviction that has supported me against all difficulties. I have never faltered in my faith in the British character and have always believed that the time will come when the sentiments of the British nation and the Gracious Sovereign proclaimed to us in our Great Charter of the proclamation of the 1858 will be realised (*applause*) . . . My last prayer and exhortation to the Congress and to all my countrymen is: Go on united and earnest, in concord and harmony, with moderation, with loyalty to the British rule and patriotism towards our country, and success is sure to attend our efforts for our just demands and the day, I hope, is not distant when the world will see the noblest spectacle of a great nation like the British holding out the hand of true fellow-citizenship and justice to the vast mass of humanity of this great and ancient land of India with benefits and blessings to the human race. (*Loud and prolonged cheering*)³

Even two years later, the celebrated Surendranath Banerjea, who was not likely to be ignorant of the anonymous articles in the *Indu Prakash*, said in the course of his Presidential address at the 11th conference of the Congress at Pune (1895):

We may oppose the policy of the Government, but we impute no motives. Above all our opposition is not dictated by any consideration of party spirit, but by the sole and single-minded desire to serve our countrymen and to broaden and deepen the foundations of British rule upon the unchangeable basis of a nation's affections.⁴

Again he reminded his audience,

Above all we rely with unbounded confidence on the justice and generosity of the British people and of their representatives in Parliament.⁵

As if that was not enough, he repeated before completing his address,

Let us so work with confidence in each other, with unwavering loyalty to the British connection . . . Then will the Congress have fulfilled its mission . . . not indeed by suppression of British rule in India, but by broadening its basis, liberalising its spirit, ennobling its character, and placing it upon the unchanging

foundation of a nation's affections. It is not severance that we look forward to — but unification, permanent embodiment as an integral part of that great Empire which has given the rest of the world the models for free institutions — that is what we aim at.⁶

To the best of our knowledge, post-1857 only one great man had dreamt of throwing the British out through an armed resurgence and he was none other than Swami Vivekananda. But he had never given vent to his wish through any writing or speech. He spoke about it only to a few persons like Sakham Ganesh Deoskar and Sister Christine. Asked by the latter he once said,

We had nurtured a plan of uniting the princes of India to put an end to the British rule. That is why I travelled on foot from the Himalaya to Kanyakumari. I even struck a friendship with the gun-maker Sir Hiram Maxim for this purpose. But I received no response from the country. The country was dead.⁷

Swami Vivekananda passed away on the 4th of July 1902. If Sister Nivedita visited Baroda shortly thereafter — in October — expecting assistance from the Gaekwad to the cause of a proposed uprising against the foreign rule, one wonders if she was not continuing to explore the possibility envisioned by her Master who expected the princes of India to rise in a revolt to end their servitude.

She came as a State guest and, what was of significant consequence, she was received at the Railway station by Sri Aurobindo and his friend Khaserao. Recollects Sri Aurobindo:

I do not remember Nivedita speaking to me on spiritual subjects or about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. We spoke of politics and other subjects. On the way from the station to the town she cried out against the ugliness of the College [building] and its top-heavy dome and praised the Dharmashala near it. Khaserao stared at [her] and opined that she must be at least slightly cracked to have such ideas! I was very much enamoured at the time of her book *Kali the Mother* and I think we spoke of that; she had heard, she said, that I was a worshipper of Force, by which she meant that I belonged to the secret revolutionary party like herself and I was present at her interview with the Maharaja whom she invited to support the secret revolution; she told him that he could communicate with her through me. Sayajirao was much too cunning to plunge into such a dangerous business and never spoke to me about it. That is all I remember.⁸

Even though the Gaekwad had developed much animosity towards the British Raj, he was not the one to commit to any organised anti-British move. A well-researched biography of Sister Nivedita by Pravrajika Atmaprana states,

From her diary we come to know that she received a letter on October 23 from the Gaekwad about which she was quite upset. Next day she saw the Gaekwad again.⁹

We can presume that Sister Nivedita must have been disillusioned about the prospect of enrolling the support of the princely class for a struggle against the foreign rule. Before long we will see her actively participating in a movement that was in keeping with Sri Aurobindo's plan for a national resurgence. From Sri Aurobindo's own statement we know that the two discussed politics. We do not know the exact content of their discussion. Sister Nivedita kept her activities that could be called political, a closely guarded secret; Sri Aurobindo, even long after his withdrawal from politics would not care to utter a word about it or on any other activity that he considered as belonging to the surface of his life and hence unimportant. If at all he shed any light on such subjects, it was only when a categorical question was put to him on any of the earlier episodes in his life, or if his attention was drawn to some unfounded or exaggerated rumour or conception about him.

However, we know that by the time Sister Nivedita met him, his interest in politics had gone quite beyond analysis of and observations on the situation in that regard. Details of his actions will probably never come to light, although we know that he had joined a secret society in Western India in or around the year 1902. He refers to a Rajput noble, a Thakur of Udaipur, who played an important role in instilling the spirit of revolt in the army. We learn with some surprise that Sri Aurobindo himself "took a special journey into Central India to meet and speak with Indian sub-officers and men of one of these regiments."¹⁰ These could not be isolated incidents; there must have been prologues to them.

Prior to that, in 1899, with the help of his friend Madhavrao Jadhav, he got a young man, Jatindranath Bandopadhyay (1877-1930), admitted to the Baroda army so that the young man's knowledge as a soldier could be used to train the would-be revolutionaries. Since the Bengalis were considered a non-martial people, Jatindranath, well-versed in Hindi, shortened his surname to Upadhyay and passed himself off as a north-Indian candidate.

He was sent to Bengal in 1902 to prepare the youth for forming an army of freedom-fighters. There were several centres formed with patriotic zeal already active in Bengal, but coordination among them was lacking.

Jatindranath succeeded in founding a centre for revolutionaries at 108 Circular Road. Sister Nivedita was linked with it. Almost all who became noted revolutionary leaders used to take classes of the youth there. Sakharam Ganesh taught economics, P. Mitra history and Jatindranath the techniques of war. Jatindranath also serialised the history of the Italian revolution in the magazine *Bharati* . . . He was introduced to Bagha Jatin. Soon Barindrakumar joined him. The Centre developed branches all over Bengal and in Bihar and Orissa too.¹¹

How did Sri Aurobindo envision the struggle?

There were three sides to Sri Aurobindo's political ideas and activities. First, there was the action with which he started, a secret revolutionary propaganda and organisation of which the central object was the preparation of an armed insurrection. Secondly, there was a public propaganda intended to convert the whole nation to the ideal of independence which was regarded, when he entered into politics, by the vast majority of Indians as unpractical and impossible, an almost insane chimera. It was thought that the British empire was too powerful and India too weak, effectively disarmed and impotent even to dream of the success of such an endeavour. Thirdly, there was the organisation of the people to carry on a public and united opposition and undermining of the foreign rule through an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance.¹²

Such was the situation in the first decade of the 20th century that there was nothing utopian in the idea to oblige the British to give up their Indian empire if the scheme formulated by him could be worked out.

The rifle was still the decisive weapon, air power had not developed and the force of artillery was not so devastating as it afterwards became.¹³

If a nationwide urge for freedom could be inspired and the spirit could manifest in a general resistance and revolt, supported by, if necessary, a guerrilla warfare, the end could very well be achieved. He had also studied the British mentality well enough to expect that once they foresaw the improbability of retaining the colony, they would "prefer to grant independence rather than have it forcefully wrested from their hands".¹⁴

Says the aforesaid biographer of Sister Nivedita,

When his [Sri Aurobindo's] emissary Jatindranath Banerjee, a soldier in the Baroda army, came to Calcutta with his programme of preparation and action, the young men who had joined various associations without any clear idea of a settled programme began to turn in this direction. Slowly the active societies were won over for revolutionary purposes. The cultural and other programmes remained ostensible objects of the societies while more training was given in activities such as riding, athletics of various kinds, drill and organised movements. In military uniform Jatindranath rode horses on the public roads and asked the boys to follow suit. A Riding Club was organised by two young members, Manmatha Chatterjee and Debabrata Basu.

Sri Aurobindo knew about the existence of the societies and planned to

organise them into one party. To quote his words: “I found a number of small groups of revolutionaries that had recently sprung into existence, but all scattered and acting without reference to each other. I tried to unite them under a single organisation with the barrister P. Mitra as the leader of the revolution in Bengal and a Central Council of five persons, one of them being Nivedita.” (*Sri Aurobindo on Himself*)

The idea of close association between different societies did not succeed, for the Council ceased to exist during Sri Aurobindo’s absence at Baroda. It was found impossible to keep up agreement among the many groups. The committee which actually took up the programme of Sri Aurobindo was the Anusilan Samity. Nivedita often visited it and addressed its young members.¹⁵

Whatever be the immediate effectiveness of this mobilisation, its lasting impact on the nation’s mind was great. The principles laid down by Sri Aurobindo became the solid base on which the nation’s struggle for freedom continued, though the methods changed. By and by Sri Aurobindo’s observations that “the Congress fails because it has never been, and has made no honest endeavour to be, a popular body empowered by the fiat of the Indian people in its entirety”¹⁶ sank into the body-politic of the organisation. Referring to his statement that the “real strength of the National Congress lay in the masses — the proletariat”, the noted historian Amalendu Dey says that to the best of his knowledge no one had thought of the proletariat vis-à-vis the Congress before him.¹⁷

According to the illustrious author of the *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Tarachand, Sri Aurobindo’s

views were too advanced for the times . . . he had to wait for years before he would be heard. Meanwhile the process of orientalised continued, and when the Partition of Bengal created the opportunity and prepared the country to listen to him, he was ready with his message.¹⁸

(*To be continued*)

MANOJ DAS

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5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. 'Swami Vivekananda — Mahabiplabi Hemchandra Ghosher Dristite' (Bengali) quoted in *Sri Aurobindo Anudhyan* by Sushil Chandra Burman Roy; Sri Aurobindo Karmi Sangha Trust, Matrimandir, Habda (W.B.).
8. Sri Aurobindo: *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*; CWSA, Vol. 36, pp.73-74.
9. Pravrajika Atmaprana: *Sister Nivedita*; Sister Nivedita Girls' School, Nivedita Lane, Kolkata.
10. Sri Aurobindo: *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*; CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 70.
11. *Samsad Bangali Charitavidhan* (Bengali) by Anjali Basu; Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata. Jatindranath later became an ascetic and was known as Niralamba Swami. Even then he was arrested in 1908, suspected as an extremist, but was acquitted for lack of evidence. Bagha Jatin used to seek his advice for his revolutionary activities. Jatindranath died in 1930.
12. Sri Aurobindo: *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*; CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 47.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
15. Pravrajika Atmaprana: *Sister Nivedita*.
16. Sri Aurobindo: *Bande Mataram*; CWSA, Vol. 6, p. 26.
17. Amalendu Dey: *Sri Aurobindo O Bharater Jatiyavadi Andolan* (Bengali); Raktakarabi, Kolkata.
18. Tarachand: *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. 3; Publications Division, Govt. of India.

*Love is a glory from eternity's spheres.
Abased, disfigured, mocked by baser might
That steal his name and shape and ecstasy,
He is still the godhead by which all can change.*

Sri Aurobindo

(Savitri, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 397)

THE TEACHINGS OF SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO'S teachings are extremely comprehensive. He wrote on all subjects that are of human interest and his writings, we believe, will give a new light and direction to the life of humanity. In 1914, he started editing and publishing a philosophical review, the *Arya*, and at the end of the fourth year of its publication, he wrote:

Spirit being the fundamental truth of existence, life can be only its manifestation; Spirit must be not only the origin of life but its basis, its pervading reality and its highest and total result. But the forms of life as they appear to us are at once its disguises and its instruments of self-manifestation. Man has to grow in knowledge till they cease to be disguises and grow in spiritual power and quality till they become in him its perfect instruments. To grow into the fullness of the divine is the true law of human life and to shape his earthly existence into its image is the meaning of his evolution. This is the fundamental tenet of the philosophy of the "Arya".¹

...

This truth had to be worked out first of all from the metaphysical point of view; for in philosophy metaphysical truth is the nucleus of the rest, it is the statement of the last and most general truths on which all the others depend or in which they are gathered up. Therefore we gave the first place to the "Life Divine".²

...

Truth of philosophy is of a merely theoretical value unless it can be lived, and we have therefore tried in the "Synthesis of Yoga"³ to arrive at a synthetical view of the principles and methods of the various lines of spiritual self-discipline and the way in which they can lead to an integral divine life in the human existence. But this is an individual self-development, and therefore it was necessary to show too how our ideal can work out in the social life of mankind. In the "Psychology of Social Development"⁴ we have indicated how these truths affect the evolution of human society. In the "Ideal of Human Unity" we have taken the present trend of mankind towards a closer unification and tried to appreciate its tendencies and show what is wanting in them in order that real human unity may be achieved.⁵

1. *Arya*, Vol. IV, July 1918. [Instead of the original references, we have provided reference to the more recent texts wherever possible. —Eds.] *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 106-7.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

3. Most of the quotations in this article are taken from this book.

4. Now published in book-form as *The Human Cycle*.

5. *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 108.

Apart from this Sri Aurobindo translated into English and commented on hundreds of the hymns of the Vedas; rendered into English eight of the Upanishads on two of which he wrote commentaries; wrote a series of essays on the Gita, a prophetic book on the Future Poetry, a great mass of poetry of all kinds, several plays and a great epic called *Savitri*. There are also a number of monographs on various subjects and thousands of letters on an astonishing variety of topics. He wrote on so many subjects not merely because he was interested in them separately but because his philosophy of human life — both individual and collective — is that it is meant to be a perfect expression of the divine potentialities in man. Therefore he dealt with all things that have any connection with the fulfilment of man.

Sri Aurobindo's own philosophy was the result of his spiritual experience and realisations. Though the basic truths of this philosophy are found in the ancient spiritual lore of India, in fact in mystical metaphysics of other countries also, its author did not base his worldview on these sources but derived it from his own spiritual knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo found in the Vedas a mystical knowledge and discipline hidden behind a system of symbols. Material things and forces were used by the seers of the Vedas as symbols of psychological states, forces and truths. The philosophical position of the Vedas, according to him, is that there is a Supreme Reality, One Existent or That One, which manifests Itself through a pantheon of its own powers and personalities and also in a system of worlds or planes of existence. The Devas, the shining ones, who have different names, are time and again described as nothing but the Deity in different aspects, representing different functions in the creation which is a manifestation of his being. The gods and goddesses are presiding deities of the forces and operations of Nature both physical and psychological. The ordinary man was naturally more concerned with the external religion of prayers and petitions for material benefits of various kinds and for Swarga or Paradise after death. But the initiate mystic looked upon sacrifice as a journey of ascent to the peaks of Truth. The gods and goddesses were for him powers of God, potentially present in himself and could be awakened and made operative in his mind and life and body. Agni, the fire-god, for example, is the flame of aspiration opening the mind and soul of man, the sacrificer, to the cosmic divinities and through them to the supracosmic Divine. Vayu, the air-god, is really the deity presiding over the vital energy of man. His help is sought to bring the vital force under control and make it purified of agitations and blind urges. Varuna, the ocean-god, is the conscious director of life and he is appealed to by the sacrificer for guidance in the fight against wayward tendencies and wrong motives. Mitra, another god, signifies the principle of harmony, whose help is sought in man's battle against division and discord. Indra is the god of purified intelligence and enlightened mind. Saraswati is the goddess of inspiration of the Word. Surya, the Sun, is the great god of plenary wisdom shining in his own light and shedding his illumining rays on the dark corners of the mind of man,

freeing the spiritual Light and releasing the purified intelligence from the cramped prisons of the powers of Ignorance. All these gods and goddesses are the children of Aditi who is the Mother Goddess from whom all creation proceeds. Aditi is the dynamic aspect of God. She is the Consciousness and Will of the Supreme Deity and it is through Her that God becomes all that has been, is and will be. In fact Aditi who is identical with the Supreme is herself described as That which becomes all. She is the giver of the boon of immortality.

The fruits that the ordinary sacrificer prayed for were apparently material things, like cattle, children, treasures, etc. But *go*, which means cow in Sanskrit, also means light and the cow became, in the language of the seer-poet, a symbol of illumination. Thus when the sacrificer was praying for *go*, it stood for Light in the inner mystical religion of the Veda. Similarly, also with *madhu*, honey, which is really spiritual Bliss, of which Soma is the deity.

The creation is arranged in a series of different worlds. Starting from our side, these are earth, the mid-region and the sky, symbolising matter, life and mind; and there are the three higher spiritual worlds of Delight, Consciousness-Force and Existence. Linking the lower three and the higher three worlds is the fourth, the Truth, the Vast, what Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind.

The spirituality of the Vedas was not exclusive. It tried to effect a synthesis between the purely spiritual reality and its expression in material life. But our world, as the Veda itself declares, is full of falsehood. Man normally lives in ignorance of his true being. He mistakenly thinks that he is either the body, the life, the mind, or a combination of these. It is from this Ignorance that he seeks release, by knowing the truth that he really belongs to a higher world, the world of the Spirit. Later, there grew a tendency among the seekers of the age of the Upanishads to pursue a more exclusively spiritual life. Even though many of the Upanishads present a synthetic outlook, there is in many others a strong note about the sole reality of the One and the unreality of the world of the many. This tendency developed the ideal of the denial of life which culminated in the teaching of the Buddha and, much later, of the great medieval philosopher and Yogi, Shankara.

There were, however, some attempts at synthesis. The Bhagavad-Gita represented this trend, as did the Tantras. But on the whole several spiritual disciplines were developed, each following a limited aim. It was perhaps necessary for this to happen, so that different types of experiences and realisations could be made secure and the disciplines leading to them perfected. The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo accepts the validity and the value of the exclusive and limited Yogas, but it itself seeks a synthesis of the methods of the special Yogas and the totality of its aim far exceeds theirs, and on the basis of this synthesis it sets its own unique goal of the divine transformation of man.

If Reality is One, how can there be different realisations of it? In India this is not a problem at all. For even from the very beginning it was recognised that the

Divine Reality has many aspects and seekers after the Truth can and do want to realise one or more of these different facets of the One Truth. Brahman, the Absolute, which is itself beyond any description, reveals itself to our consciousness as Existence, Consciousness and Delight. The Reality does not need any Light other than itself to reveal Its own existence, but is self-aware and is the Delight of self-aware existence. Some Yogis however have seen this Consciousness as able to reflect on Itself, to know Itself. This is the original dynamism in Reality, this is the Word which was at the beginning and was with God and is termed Consciousness-Force. This self-reflection, this knowledge of Existence of itself is also Bliss. But this Consciousness-Force is not only a power of self-knowledge and self-enjoyment of the Reality but it is also Will and Creative Force. The Bliss aspect of the Reality is the true material of the creation. Out of Delight creatures are born, by Delight they are sustained, to Delight they return, says one Upanishad. Delight is the breath of life and if it were not, no creature could live.

In philosophical language this means that Reality is both Impersonal and Personal. It is Existence, but it is also a Being conscious of His Existence and thus Existent, a Person. It is Consciousness in the light of which all things are illuminated. But it is also Consciousness-Force, a Power of self-knowledge of the Conscious Person with a Cosmic Will. It is Delight which is the stuff of all things created, but it is also the self-enjoying blissful Person. The plenitude of his joy in His own existence flows out as the creation.

Thus the Reality is transcendent, impersonal, static and at the same time universal, personal, dynamic. This self-consciousness of the Reality manifests itself as many centres of self-knowledge and self-enjoyment. These centres are the individual selves, each knowing itself as nothing but the Absolute Reality and the individual expression of its own ultimate Being and Consciousness and Bliss. Thus the Reality is not only Transcendent and Universal, but also Individual. Brahman, the Absolute, according to the Veda, some of the Upanishads, the Gita and the Tantra, is Ishwara, the Lord. "He went forth", says one Upanishad. This going forth is the Lord's movement, the result of which is the creation of which He is the Lord, the Ordainer, the Ruler. It is through His own inherent, all-achieving Will and all-knowing Truth, the Real-Idea as Sri Aurobindo calls it, that the Lord manifests all out of His own being. Creation is a loosing forth of what is already in the Reality. And the Lord is the Self, the inmost reality of everything and seated in the heart of all creatures as their inner Guide.

Though what we have said above is the synthetic viewpoint found in the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita, later philosophies became interested in particular aspects of this Truth and different Yogas achieved partial realisations only. Some concentrated on the knowledge of the identity of the individual self with the impersonal static aspect of the Reality, others on absolute love and surrender to the Personal aspect and on the distinction between the individual soul and the Lord, while still

others were content with the realisation of the Reality as individual self only. Either of these delivers man from Ignorance which is the nescience of his true spiritual being as separate from mind, life and body. But as far as the synthesis of life in God and life in the world was concerned, it was forgotten and ceased to be a practical ideal.

Both the Gita and the Tantra were great attempts at some sort of synthesis. The Gita formulates the ideal of that harmony of knowledge, devotion and will. The Gita's aim is very comprehensive and the seeker is asked to know the Reality in its essence, its different aspects and its manifestations integrally, to love the Lord and surrender his will to Him and accept His Will and work for the pleasure of the Master of Works which He is. But even the Gita ultimately advises Arjuna, the representative man, that the world is transitory and full of suffering and that he should leave it and retire to the bosom of the Lord. The Gita does not seek His full manifestation in the world and in life on earth.

The conception of the Reality in the Tantras is essentially the same as the one we have sketched above, though they have their own technical terms. The Tantras not only lay down the ideal of liberation from Ignorance due to which the spiritual self in man mistakenly identifies itself with mind and life and body and thus suffers limitations. They also add to this idea of the release from Ignorance that of the free enjoyment of the Lord in everything in the world which is nothing but the manifestation of His own Being and Power. But even the Tantras declare that the perfect realisation can be had only when man leaves his body and the world. So there is here also a lacuna and the world is left untransformed.

Sri Aurobindo avers that man's primary spiritual aim is to attain liberation from Ignorance and its consequences and that on the basis of this release he can, if he will, synthesise knowledge of the Absolute with love of the Lord and add to that the dedication of himself as an instrument of His Will in the world. But, he says, this is not the highest and most complete spiritual ideal. For him the harmony of the ideals of the different Yogas is only a basis of his own Integral Yoga.

Here we must give a brief account of Sri Aurobindo's view of the main Yogas current in India. In his view the processes of Nature and the methods of Yoga bear a certain correspondence. Nature is "the cosmic energy and working of God Himself"⁶ inspired by an infinite but "minutely selective Wisdom".⁷ Yoga, far from being an abnormal activity, is "in its essence a special action or formulation of certain great powers of Nature."⁸ It is a method of self-perfection through the expression of the potentialities latent in the being. Yogic methods bear similar relations to the psychological workings of man as do the uses, by applied science,

6. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 9.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

of natural forces like electricity or steam to the ordinary operations of those forces. Likewise, they are based “upon a knowledge developed and confirmed by regular experiment, practical analysis and constant result.”⁹

Hathayoga, for example, depends, on the

perception and experience that the vital forces and functions to which our life is normally subjected and whose ordinary operations seem set and indispensable, can be mastered and the operations changed or suspended with results that would otherwise be impossible and that seem miraculous to those who have not seized the rationale of their process.¹⁰

Rajayoga

depends on this perception and experience that our inner elements, combinations, functions, forces, can be separated or dissolved, can be new-combined and set to novel and formerly impossible workings or can be transformed and resolved into a new general synthesis by fixed internal processes.¹¹

In less mechanical and more intuitive Yogas, like those of Knowledge and Devotion, this feature of Yoga is not so easily discernible; yet they too start from the use of some principal faculty by ways and for ends not contemplated in its everyday, spontaneous working.

Nature herself is engaged in a kind of Yoga in that she is always trying an ever-increasing expression of her potentialities to achieve perfection and to be finally united with the divine Reality deeply involved within her.

In man, her thinker, she for the first time upon this Earth devises self-conscious means and willed arrangements of activity by which this great purpose may be more swiftly and puissantly attained.¹²

But Yoga is a means of effecting individual evolution far more rapidly than can the leisurely movements of Nature. . . A given system of Yoga is thus a selection and compression into more intense forms of the general methods of Nature.

Yoga is in essence the union of the human consciousness with the Divine, “the union of that which has become separated in the play of the universe with its own true self, origin and universality.”¹³ This union may be effected through all or any

9. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

level of the individual being. In the current Indian Yogas we can see an ascending order of progression starting from the body and ending with the direct union of the soul with the Self.

The aim of Hathayoga, which selects the body and the vital functionings as its means, is the conquest of the life and the body whose balance is the basis of all Nature's activities in man. This balance, sufficient for the normal egoistic life, is not so for the Hathayogin, who seeks to create another balance in order to enable the body to sustain an increased flow of vital force, so that there can be a much less fixed and limited action of the universal energy. Fixed physical postures and breath control are the chief processes of Hathayoga. It aims at perfecting the body, liberates vitality and, by awakening the "coiled-up serpent" of energy at the base of the spine, opens to the Yogin ranges of consciousness and experience denied to the ordinary human life, while intensifying such powers and faculties as he already possesses.

The achievements of Hathayoga, though very impressive, are won at a very great price. Its detailed and infinitely complicated processes demand complete withdrawal from life so that it cannot be fruitfully utilised for the life of the world. And the same results of preservation and perfection of the physical life can be achieved through Rajayoga and the Tantra with much less labour and exacting processes. Moreover there is a risk that the Hathayogin, too much preoccupied with abnormal powers, may lose the Divine. The control of nature, rather than spiritual liberation, comes to be accepted by many Hathayogins as the hallmark of perfection. Integral Yoga accepts the essential aim of Hathayoga, that is, the perfecting of the body and the increase and free play of the life-force in it, but it seeks this in order that the body and life can be made perfect instruments of the manifestation of the Spirit.

The purpose of Rajayoga is to attain liberation and perfection of the mental being by controlling the emotional and sensational life and mastering the whole range of thought and consciousness. Chitta in which all psychological activities originate, is here the main instrument which Rajayoga seeks to quieten and purify.

The preliminary movement of Rajayoga is a careful self-discipline by which good habits of mind are substituted for the lawless movements that indulge the lower nervous being. By the practice of truth, by renunciation of all forms of egoistic seeking, by abstention from injury to others, by purity, by constant meditation and inclination to the divine Purusha who is the true Lord of the mental kingdom, a pure, glad, clear state of mind and heart is established.¹⁴

While accepting the disciplines of posture and breath-control, Rajayoga rejects the elaborate processes of Hathayoga. After establishing control over the body, the

14. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

vital functions and the mind, it leads on through a complete “restriction” of the mental activities to *samādhi* or Yoga-trance, in which the mind by constantly shedding all its activities and springs of action attains complete resolution of itself and comes to perfect rest. The soul is thus able to withdraw from its normal identification with the activities of the mind and to enter its true spiritual existence. Secondly, the capacity of force and intense energising of consciousness is or can be acquired.

Liberation of the soul from the confusions of the mind and the power of self-rule and mastery of the world are achieved through Rajayoga, but its chief limitation is its preoccupation with abnormal states of trance in which the Yogin gets absorbed. Here again, in spite of the idea of using released sources of energy for knowledge and mastery of the world, the normal functionings of the mind and physical life are only quietened but not transformed and transmuted.

The three higher Yogas of Knowledge (*Jñāna Yoga*), Devotion (*Bhakti Yoga*), and Work (*Karma Yoga*), attempt what Rajayoga does not, and seizing on certain main principles, namely the intellect, the heart and the will respectively, turn them to the Divine by converting their normal activities. Sri Aurobindo remarks that they do not give the importance bestowed by Rajayoga to the perfection of the mind and body. At the same time each of these Yogas is normally practised in isolation from the others. Both these features are considered by Sri Aurobindo as defects from the standpoint of the Integral Yoga.

The ultimate aim of the Yoga of Knowledge is the realisation of the Supreme Self. It proceeds by intellectual inquiry into the nature of the Self to right discrimination between the Self and the not-Self. It progressively rejects the false identification with the elements of our phenomenal being, and culminates in the discovery of true identity of the individual soul with the pure and unique Self.

From this point the path, as ordinarily followed, leads to the rejection of the phenomenal worlds from the consciousness as an illusion and the final immergence without return of the individual soul in the Supreme.¹⁵

Sri Aurobindo refuses to accept this fulfilment of the Yoga of Knowledge as its only result. Not only transcendence by rejection of the cosmic existence, but its conquest for the Divine can also be the aim. This necessitates not only the realisation of the Supreme Self in one's own being, but in all beings, and finally the realisation that the phenomenal world is a play of the Divine Consciousness. Indeed, this realisation can be extended to include the conversion of all forms of knowledge into activities of the spiritual consciousness. It is conceivable that this might well lead to the spiritualisation of the human intellect and to “the justification of the cosmic travail of knowledge in humanity.”¹⁶

15. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

The dedication of all human activity to the Supreme Will is what the Yoga of Works seeks. By giving up all egoistic aim for our works and all action for any interest or worldly result, the mind and will are purified and there is a clear perception of the cosmic Energy as their ruler. This Yoga demands the surrender of all works and their result to the supreme Will and cosmic Energy. The soul is liberated by these means from its bondage to appearances and to the reaction of phenomenal activities. But here again the ultimate fulfilment is “liberation from phenomenal existence and a departure into the Supreme.”¹⁷ Sri Aurobindo says that the perceptions underlying Karmayoga can lead to the spiritualisation of human will and activity and to “the justification of the cosmic labour towards freedom, power and perfection in the human being.”¹⁸

Looking upon the Supreme as the divine Lover and Enjoyer of the universe, the Yoga of Devotion seeks the enjoyment of the supreme Love and Bliss. This Yoga utilises all human relations into which emotion enters, not in the ordinary unpurified worldly way but by applying them to the delight of the All-Loving. This also culminates in the total absorption of the devotee in the bosom of the Beloved, away from the world’s existence, though again, this need not be the inevitable result. In fact it is provided in this Yoga itself that the relation of love between the Divine and the devotee may be extended to all living beings. Sri Aurobindo feels that this Yoga may be applied to the spiritualisation of the whole range of human emotions and to the “justification of the cosmic labour towards love and joy in our humanity.”¹⁹

Love and Knowledge and Works need not be exclusive. Perfect intimacy with the Beloved will bring perfect knowledge of Him and divine service; knowledge should lead to love and the acceptance of works; dedicated works pave the way to the love of the Master of Works, and knowledge of His ways and His being.

It is in this triple path that we come most readily to the absolute knowledge, love and service of the One in all beings and in the entire cosmic manifestation.²⁰

There is a Yoga in India, the Tantra, which though not a conscious synthesis of all the Yogas is yet of a synthetic turn. The central principle of the Tantra is expressly different from that of the Vedic methods of Yoga. In the latter the soul (*Puruṣa*) is the Lord and the chief method is knowledge, either by the mind, heart or will. In the Tantra it is *Prakṛti*, the Nature-Soul and Creatrix of the Universe, who is the mistress of the Yoga. The Tantrik, that is, one who practises this discipline of Tantra, learns the secret methods of the Will-in-Power to realise his aim in Yoga. In

17. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

actual practice, however, partial knowledge of the secret and occult methods of Nature without sufficient purity of motive and spiritual intention, and a tendency to encourage satisfaction of the normal hungers and passions of an unregenerate nature under the garb of spiritual practice, led to serious abuses. This is responsible for the enlightened mind's abhorrence of Tantra. It should, however, be made clear that the abuses of a degenerate Tantra must not make us blind to the great merits and achievements of the original and essential Tantra.

The limitations of the Yogas very briefly reviewed above are that they all fix their attention on a realisation beyond the cosmos and none to the world and world-values. Also they tend to emphasise the individual's spiritual life and do not envisage any collective spiritual evolution, which, of course, they cannot do, because they are concerned with supracosmic aims. The Tantra, more than any of the other Yogas mentioned above, accepts both the static and the dynamic, the transcendent and the cosmic aspects of the Divine equally in its philosophy. But here again, says Sri Aurobindo, there is too little stress on the soul's divine potentialities, and "a haste of insistence on the escape into superconscience".²¹

It is not however by combining *en bloc* the different Yogas nor by the successive practice of them (if that were possible in one human life) that one can get an integral Yoga. A common central principle and some fundamental dynamic force, which is the secret Power of the different Yogas and therefore capable of organising their aims and utilities, must be seized upon. For the aim of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is to "reunite God and Nature in a liberated and perfected human life"²² and its method is "not only [to] permit but favour the harmony of our inner and outer activities and experiences in the divine consummation of both."²³

Very briefly the main points of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy are as follows. He accepts the view of Reality which we have summarised above. But he emphasised very much more than other great philosophers of India the idea that the spiritual Reality has involved itself in what constitutes the world as we know it, namely matter, life and mind. The process of the Divine's manifestation as the world is that of a descent into states of consciousness and corresponding planes of existence in which the Supreme Reality becomes progressively hidden. Of course there are, as indicated above, four of these in which the Reality is fully manifested. In fact, three of these, Existence, Consciousness and Bliss, constitute the very essence of Brahman. The fourth, called in the Vedas *ṛta-cit* or Truth-Consciousness and *Vijñāna* in the Upanishads is, in Sri Aurobindo's interpretation, the power of integral Knowledge, sovereign Will and All-powerful Love of the Divine. "The Supermind is the Divine's own knowledge of Himself and His own native power of acting." It is the Real-Idea,

21. *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 302.

22. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 8.

23. *Ibid.*

the true Cause from which creation proceeds. These four, Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss and the Supermind constitute the higher hemisphere of being.

The Divine is both One and Many. The Supermind holds the inherent multiplicity of the Divine integrally; that is, here Unity is so predominant that the One and the Many aspects of the Divine are completely harmonised and there is no discord or even any sense of separateness. But we know that in our world unity is only a vague ideal and the sense of the One is lost. This happens because the units of multiplicity held in perfect unity in the Supermind are allowed to regard themselves as distinct from one another. When the distinction is emphasised to the extent that an element of separateness comes in, Sri Aurobindo calls it an exclusive concentration. Due to this, each member of the multiplicity regards itself as independent of the unity of the essential Reality and also as separate from other members. In Sri Aurobindo's terminology, this level of consciousness and manifestation is the Overmind. In the Overmind, the living sense of unity just begins to recede into the background. There is still no sense of separateness and there is a global awareness. The Overmind however makes disunity possible. Sri Aurobindo describes it as Knowledge-Ignorance. But in the next lower plane of consciousness, the Mind, the idea of separateness is paramount and we can arrive at the idea of unity only by summing up discrete parts. Mind is not in possession of Knowledge, but only an instrument of seeking it. It can reflect knowledge and develop intuition. But even when it attains true knowledge, that knowledge is incomplete and imperfect. Mental will also is not sovereign but weak and vacillating. In Life, the next lower level of descent, consciousness is fragmented even more. There is not only more exclusiveness, greater separateness, but even intelligence of the mental type is not present. Here consciousness is instinctive, and full of blind urges. Life in us is the instrument of desire, of the tendency to possess and self-assertion. It has a higher aspect in which it is full of noble emotion; heroism, love, high endeavour, etc. are then its results. Matter is the lowest rung of the descent of Reality in which consciousness is almost completely absent. In point of fact, Consciousness being the basic Reality cannot be absent, but it can be nearly totally unmanifest. In Matter it has hidden itself so successfully that there is no sign of it. Whereas unity is the stamp of Consciousness in its pure self-manifest nature, the plane of Matter is that of utter separation and isolation.

Sri Aurobindo says this process of involution is deliberate on the part of the Divine. Of this process, by which Consciousness turns into unconsciousness, Bliss into pain, Unity into utter separation, the main key is the action of the Overmind. But behind all the action of the Overmind the Supermind is present though in a hidden manner. It is the sovereign Truth-Will secret behind energy in atoms, force in the vital, thought in the mind and love in the psychic being.

But the process of involution is followed by that of evolution, that is, the ascent of Consciousness which is dormant in Matter to its own native plane of existence. Here evolution is not the emergence of more complex organisms from simpler ones,

but the progressive self-manifestation of the basic Conscious Reality in Matter in higher and higher formulations of its essential nature. This urge for self-manifestation of the Conscious Reality evolves Life in Matter and then Mind in living Matter.

The full emergence of mind in living matter is what brings about the appearance of man in the world. He is, to quote one Upanishad, the mental being, the leader of life and body. But he is not merely or even primarily a mental being: the centre of his reality is the spiritual soul which Sri Aurobindo calls the psychic being. It is inherently conscious, a projection of the individual Self (Jivatman) into the world of evolution, a deputy of God on earth. In mental-vital-physical man, the soul comes to its own and seeks to realise its own essential reality which is God Himself. This seeking is the beginning of the higher religions and its progress and refinement result in various systems of spiritual mysticism.

The instrument of knowing, willing and doing in mental man is naturally predominantly mental. Even in his spiritual seeking, man cannot get out of the limitations of the mind and know the Truth entirely and integrally. The result of this limitation is that all spiritual experience and realisation is restricted, incomplete, and imperfect. Even spiritual intuition is basically a faculty of the mind — not the dialectical, rationalistic mind, but mind purified, subtilised, made calm and receptive of the Truth. Still it is the mind in man which knows spiritual Truth. The power which this knowledge brings to man is also limited, because as consciousness is, so also will its power be. The result of this in the history of spirituality has been twofold. Those who are more bent upon spiritual realisation have found the burden of mind, life and body too heavy and irreconcilable with spiritual Knowledge. They have neglected and even denied these three as truly real, as is evident in early Buddhism and in the philosophy and Yoga of Shankara. Others who have been inspired by the ideal of the reconciliation of Spirit and Life have not been able to bring down the light and power of the Divine into the field of Ignorance, into mind, life and body. At best the dynamic power has been moral and ethical and not truly spiritual²⁴ and these have remained unregenerate, untransformed, untransmuted.

Sri Aurobindo is emphatic that this need not be the issue of our spiritual endeavours. The ascent of Spirit which has descended into matter to its own true reality beyond creation is not the total aim of the Integral Yoga. The planes of existence manifested in the world as a result of the descent of Spirit should and can be transformed and divinised. Because man has approached the Reality even in spiritual life through the mind, — though purified and receptive of the Light and Truth, it is still the mind, — he has failed to know the Divine wholly and integrally. Due to this

24. In a letter to a disciple, Sri Aurobindo writes: "... the Christian ideal aims at the attainment of a celestial existence beyond the earth existence (beyond this single earth life, for reincarnation is not admitted), which is only a vale of sorrows and a passing ordeal." (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 129) Christianity, he says in another letter, "has no higher spiritual or psychological knowledge behind it and ignores the foundation of human character and the source of the difficulty — the duality of mind, life and body." (*Ibid.*, p. 133)

failure, the Power which he has tried to apply to life for changing it has always been sadly inadequate. Thus he has not succeeded in achieving the synthesis of Spirit and Life, of Consciousness and Matter. This is because mind is not the cause of creation but is part of it and thus cannot be the instrument of its divine transformation. It is the Supermind which is the true cause of the creation, of the world of mind, life and body. And it is that which holds in it the power of transforming them. It is the evolution of the mental consciousness of man into the Supermind that alone can effect a perfect reconciliation between Spirit and Matter. Mind will then be free from its errors and limitations in knowledge, life from its blind urges and persistent desires, body from its inertia and resistance to the Light. They will participate in spiritual Knowledge and Delight. This integral ideal of synthesis is the goal of the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

The Synthesis of Yoga which is Sri Aurobindo's special contribution to spiritual methods of knowing and uniting ourselves with the Truth is a vast subject. We can only give a brief account of the methods of Integral Yoga. The seeker has to open himself by intense aspiration to the Divine Power, make a contact with It and let It work out the Yoga in him. But we are ego-bound and, due to our egoism, we feel that we can do things ourselves, and as long as we have this idea, we must use all the means we have to bring the body, life and mind to such a state in which they can either separately or jointly no longer be obstacles to the attainment of spiritual knowledge and experience. This means a constant rejection of all that stands in the way of such knowledge and realisation. The misconceptions of the mind about the world and its basis in God, the ambitions, large and small, the persistent desires, big and petty, the tendency to grasp and possess, which are the activities of life, the inertia and obstinate resistance of the body, all this must be renounced. But the most important process is the surrender of all that one has, of one's being and nature to the purifying Force of God.

The secret of the Integral Yoga is to have the Divine do our *sāadhanā*, the spiritual effort, for us and in us. This must not be understood to mean that we are being asked to be passive, to give up responsibility, to become inert. But from the point of view of the spiritual life the most difficult thing is to give up egoism, the sense of being a doer and author and to accept the control and guidance of the Divine in us. It is the inner Controller in us, God as the secret Guide, who knows completely and best what we need, what we ought to do and how we should do it. The giving up of the personal sense of being the doer and the idea of our freedom to Him is the gateway to true freedom.

As our surrender progresses, the action of the Divine Force in us increases. It purifies all that is dross in us. It creates what is lacking in us, breaks down all that is anti-divine in our being and progressively moulds us in the image of God.

The seeker of the Integral Yoga must know God as the Transcendent Absolute, Universal and Immanent Divine, as Cosmic and Individual Self, as the inmost Reality

of everything. He must also know God as the Creative Force which manifests the Divine in the world and sustains what it manifests, and as that which becomes mind, life and body. To know this fully, the seeker must raise himself to the Supermind, because it is only the supramental Truth-Consciousness which is inherently aware of all these aspects of the One Reality and of the process by which the Divine becomes the world. This evolution of the Truth-Consciousness will be the result of the ascent of consciousness from below and of the descent of the Supermind from above.

The seeker of the Integral Yoga must develop exclusive devotion to the Lord of Love and Beauty. He must give himself to none other but the Eternal Beloved. The more he gives himself to the Lord, the more the Lord gives Himself to him. But since the Lord chooses to express Himself as a multiplicity of souls, the Integral Yogin will love his fellow beings because they are equally manifestations of the supreme object of his love. One who loves God but does not love humanity does not really love God.

The seeker of the Integral Yoga must renounce his egoistic will, learn not to insist on his own likes and dislikes, attractions and aversions. He must give up the fruit of action, even the sense of doing, that is, the idea that one does anything and accept the fact that it is conscious Nature, the Power of God, which executes all actions. This will enable him to free himself from the unspiritual aspects of total Nature which has two aspects, one conscious and the other unconscious. After this freedom has been achieved, the Integral Yogin should concentrate upon accepting the Divine's Will and learn to be an instrument of His Force. He will not make any distinction between work and work, for to him all work will become means of worship of the Master of Works and eventually an expression of His Cosmic Will.

The seeker of the Integral Yoga must consummate his spiritual endeavour in the all-comprehensive realisation of the unfolding God in the world, must feel the peace of the evolving Divine in the very cells of his body and the movements of his life, in the functions of his mind, in the activities of his heart. Thus God and Nature will unite in him in a divine exchange of love and adoration from which nothing in his being and nature will be excluded.

This is the highest goal yet set before ignorant, divided, impotent man, who nevertheless is destined to evolve into the spiritual superman, triumphantly achieving in himself the synthesis of Heaven and Earth.

Individual realisation however is not enough, for the society is also essentially a manifestation of the 'Many' aspect of the Divine. Each community, according to Sri Aurobindo, has a collective soul. This group-soul may not be properly developed, just as the individual soul is not developed in all men. But Sri Aurobindo believes that the next stage of the social evolution will bring the collective soul into the forefront.

At the very beginning the mind of the community is symbolic. It looks upon the world and everything in life and its activities as the expression of an unseen

Reality or unseen realities. And thus all activities of life in an ancient society were symbolic and sacramental. But gradually the real spirit of this attitude receded to the background and the forms became more important with the result that the institutions of the collective life which once had a living truth in them became mere types in the typical society and eventually turned into rigid conventions in the conventional age.

These sterile forms became increasingly rigid but still controlled the life of the society and of the individual. There was bound to follow an age of individual revolt against the formal institutionalism. The spirit of doubt, questioning and inquiry replaced conventionalism and the individual declared his right to find the Truth by himself and not to accept institutions which were a legacy of the past. But the rational method has severe limitations. Reason can deal only with the quantitative and the measurable aspects of things. Logically enough the rational methods of inquiry into the truth of existence and life culminated in Science. But Science discovers general laws of which individuals are mere byproducts. The application of this scientific attitude to the field of social living was bound to give rise to totalitarian systems of various kinds. The State becomes all-important and the individual is reduced to a rather insignificant unit of the mass, the pack, the hive and the soul is crushed. Sri Aurobindo says that this phase of evolution is bound to be followed by an age of fresh philosophical anarchism in which the individual shall assert his right to inquire into the truth of existence and life and his own role in the community.

The individualistic and rationalistic age of social evolution has broken down many useless and reactionary forms of life. But, as we have already pointed out, reason by its own effort cannot know the essential truth of things, it can deal only with phenomena and not with the reality of the world and of human life in it. Sri Aurobindo says that a subjective period of social evolution will follow the rationalistic age. The collective soul of the community properly formed and awakened and able to guide will express itself in the life of the individuals and of the community as a whole. The clashes between the interests of individuals or those between individuals and society as a whole will no longer be a problem. Men will apprehend the Truth not only as individuals, but in their approach to social living also they will intuitively know the interests of different individuals and their respective roles in the life of the community. This intuitive grasp of the spiritual reality of the community and its expression in the collective life will be the leading light of the subjective age of the human cycle. Unity expressing itself in a diversity of interests and ideals will make a concerted life the pattern of the future society.

In Sri Aurobindo's view the whole of humanity is meant to be the field for the manifestation of God's collective image. Nature in its secret process, according to Sri Aurobindo, is slowly but surely forging human unity. The differences between the various nations of the world are real, real also the clashes of interest between country and country. Yet not only philosophers and poets and idealists are dreaming of world unity, but practical politicians, in charge of the government of their

respective nations, are beginning to realise more and more clearly that some form of world-government is not only desirable but necessary if humanity is to be saved from collective destruction. Modern means of communications have made available to people all over the world firsthand knowledge of other nations and also brought them closer together. There are already various economic, political, educational and cultural and administrative activities on a world scale in which many nations participate. Not only joint efforts at international commerce but actual co-operation in economic and political matters are increasingly becoming real. There have been cases of a few nations combining their efforts economically and politically to help poorer nations and of military co-operation to stop local wars in many parts of the world.

Sri Aurobindo however feels that while these external methods must be tried out and more and more co-operation of the kind already in existence increased, the real and truly effective means of world unity is psychological. There must be a living sense of unity among the peoples of the world. A sense of brotherhood must needs be a vital necessity without which international unity cannot be achieved. But for this, says Sri Aurobindo, what is most needed is a new Religion of Humanity. He does not mean like Auguste Comte and the Positivists that Humanity as such must be deified and worshipped. But just as society has a collective soul, so also mankind has a global and international soul. This is not yet formed, not even properly born. But the emerging soul of humanity must be the God we must worship and evoke as the cementing bond and this is the spiritual religion of humanity. This is the true basis of world unity — the dedication to the idea and ideal and reality of the collective Spirit of mankind and united international life as an expression of it in the world.

This in brief is the Integral Yoga, God's own chosen method of fulfilling man in the world which is his visible manifestation — as yet imperfect but destined by the Divine to be the embodiment of His utter Glory and Harmony.

ARABINDA BASU

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[Arindam-da, as he was known here, passed away on 3 July 2012]

LABOUR OF LOVE

(Continued from the issue of November 2012)

Part 3 — Experiences and Realisations

a. The Triple Consciousness: Individual, Universal, Transcendental

(i) The Individual Divine Consciousness

. . . I feel, more than I have ever felt before, free and vast, infinitely. . . .

And in a supreme beatitude I offer Thee thanks, O Lord, for the marvellous favour Thou hast bestowed upon me: that of being before Thee like a new-born child. (December 4, 1914)

O my sweet Master . . . Thou hast taken away all my cares and left me only the Beatitude, the supreme ecstasy of Thy divine Communion. (July 17, 1914)

. . . Thy Peace deepens and grows more sweet and Thy Voice more clear and distinct in the silence that fills my being. (August 15, 1913)

The Mother is liberated from egoistic materialistic consciousness and she merges with the Lord:

. . . it is Thou who speakest in me, for I have lost the sense of separativity. . . .

It is Thou who breathest, thinkest and lovest in this substance . . .

(November 19, 1912)

. . . in my consciousness there is no longer any preference, only one Will persists — Thine, O Ineffable. (September 16, 1914)

My God . . . Nothing remains of the past but a potent love which gives me the pure heart of a child and the lightness and freedom of thought of a god.

(Oiwaké: September 3, 1919)

I have cried too with the joy of a child, “O supreme and only Confidant . . . Thou hast made me know the supreme, the sublime joy of a perfect confidence, an absolute serenity, a surrender total and without reserve or colouring, free from effort or constraint.” (July 12, 1918)

My father has smiled and taken me in his powerful arms. What could I fear? I have melted into Him and it is He who acts and lives in this body which He himself has formed for His manifestation. (October 10, 1918)

Thou hast filled my being with an ineffable peace and unequalled repose . . . Without any personal thought or will, I let myself be cradled passively by Thy infinity. (January 6, 1917)

Thou hast made my heart and mind fall silent. . . . Peace alone has reigned . . .
(January 8, 1917)

All is calm, serene; there is no more struggle, no more anguish; aspiration itself becomes sovereignly peaceful in its immensity, yet loses nothing of its intensity . . . (October 6, 1914)

All is to me beautiful, harmonious, silent, despite the outer turmoil. And in this silence it is Thou, O Lord, whom I see . . . (August 8, 1913)

In the perfect silence of my contemplation all widens to infinity, and in the perfect peace of that silence Thou appearest in the resplendent glory of Thy Light. (October 25, 1914)

Then Thou appearest in all Thy splendour, in the dazzling force of Thy infinite glory; at Thy contact the flame changes into a column of light that chases the shadows away for ever. (November 8, 1914)

A great Light floods my whole being, and I am no longer conscious of anything but Thee. . . . (December 13, 1913)

O Lord, Thou hast given me peace in power, serenity in action, immutable happiness in the heart of all circumstances. (December 15, 1914)

Lord, Thou hast given me the happiness infinite. (October 14, 1914)

O Lord, Thy sweetness has entered my soul and Thou hast filled all my being with joy. (January 5, 1917)

All the being exults in intense joy and unequalled plenitude.
(December 22, 1914)

O Lord, Thy Presence is settled within me like an unshakable rock; and the whole being exults in belonging to Thee without the least reserve, with a wide and complete surrender. (November 10, 1914)

O Lord, sweet Master of love, Thou whom I see so living, so conscious within all things, I adore Thee with a boundless devotion. (February 9, 1914)

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(ii) The Universal Divine Consciousness

There is no longer an "I", no longer an individuality, no longer any personal limits. There is only the immense universe. . . . (September 14, 1914)

The being grows immeasurably in largeness and becomes vast like the universe.
(October 16, 1914)

Thou everywhere and always; nothing but *Thou* in the essence and in the manifestation. (November 26, 1912)

. . . I no longer know whether the universe is I or I the universe, whether Thou art in me or I in Thee; Thou alone art and all is Thou . . . (May 11, 1913)

. . . I do not know . . . whether Thou and I and the entire universe are this marvellous chant of which I have just become conscious. . . . Surely there is no longer any Thou or I or any separate universe . . . (July 23, 1913)

I am Thyself even as Thou art I and I see Thee in each being, each thing . . .
(August 16, 1913)

. . . the Divine appeared, visible in everyone and everything. One of the lightly-built houses became transparent, revealing a woman seated on a tatami in a sumptuous violet kimono embroidered with gold and bright colours. The woman was beautiful and must have been between thirty-five and forty. She was playing a golden samisen. At her feet lay a little child. And in the woman too the Divine was visible. (December 5, 1916)

When I was a child of about thirteen, for nearly a year every night as soon as I had gone to bed it seemed to me that I went out of my body and rose straight up above the house, then above the city, very high above. Then I used to see myself clad in a magnificent golden robe, much longer than myself; and as I

rose higher, the robe would stretch spreading out in a circle around me to form a kind of immense roof over the city. Then I would see men, women, children, old men, the sick, the unfortunate coming out from every side; they would gather under the outspread robe, begging for help, telling of their miseries, their suffering, their hardships. In reply, the robe, supple and alive, would extend towards each one of them individually, and as soon as they had touched it, they were comforted or healed, and went back into their bodies happier and stronger than they had come out of them. (February 22, 1914)

It was their sorrow and suffering which the physical being was feeling, Lord. When will ignorance dissolve? When will pain cease? (October 12, 1914)

Mother Divine. . . . All the earth is in our arms like a sick child who must be cured and for whom one has a special affection because of his very weakness. (October 14, 1914)

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(iii) The Transcendental Divine Consciousness

Then all becomes a marvellous Silence; Being is absorbed in Non-Being, all is suspended, at rest, motionless. (September 13, 1914)

. . . there is no longer the perception of the body, no sensations, no feelings, no thoughts — a clear, pure, tranquil immensity penetrated with love and light, filled with an unspeakable beatitude is all that is there and that alone seems now to be myself . . . (April 10, 1914)

The entire consciousness immersed in divine contemplation, the whole being enjoyed a supreme and vast felicity. (November 26, 1915)

. . . while in the hours of solitude the being is immediately enveloped by a marvellously powerful atmosphere, limpid, calm, divine; it lies merged within it . . . and all the being exults in an endless beatitude, a boundless love, a sovereign power, a perfect knowledge, an infinite consciousness. . . .

(November 3, 1914)

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b. Experience of all the Three States of Consciousness

All *is*, in one time, in a triple and clairvoyant total Consciousness, the Individual, the Universal, the Infinite. (August 31, 1914)

... all personal limits fall away little by little even in the most material sensation. The being grew in greatness progressively, methodically. ... It was a progressive dilatation of the cells until there was a complete identification with the earth: the body of the awakened consciousness was the terrestrial globe moving harmoniously in ethereal space. And the consciousness knew that its global body was thus moving in the arms of the universal Being. ... Then it felt that its body was absorbed in the body of the universe and one with it; the consciousness became the consciousness of the universe, immobile in its totality, moving infinitely in its internal complexity. The consciousness of the universe sprang towards the Divine in an ardent aspiration, a perfect surrender, and it saw in the splendour of the immaculate Light the radiant Being. ... Then ... the consciousness itself was absorbed into the Unutterable, the Ineffable.

(November 26, 1915)

We have already discussed that the Mother's Sadhana is for the emancipation and transformation of the whole humanity and earth. So her personal attainment of the triple Divine Consciousness is only a preparation, a necessary prerequisite to perfect herself integrally, to transform the triple lower nature in the light and consciousness of the highest supreme Consciousness. She is incessantly praying to the Lord to give her all kinds of experiences and different types of realisations so that she could be equipped integrally in order to fulfil her mission efficiently and perfectly:

To see the goal from a new angle which may usefully light up the others, we should constantly renew the experience of the inner discovery and return to the extreme limit of consciousness without at any time postulating beforehand what the end of our journey will be. (August 20, 1914)

The Mother is a great divine adventuress, an indefatigable and patient explorer in the unknown and uncharted inner realms. She can never remain satisfied basking in the glory of a particular experience, however high and vast it may be, for she wants to explore still vaster and higher domains of realisations:

... I am like a boat which has long enjoyed the delights of the port and, despite the dark storm-laden clouds which hide the sun, unfurls its sails to launch forth into the great unknown, towards shores unheard of, towards new lands.

(August 18, 1914)

It seems to me that Thou wouldst make me taste successively all the experiences which are ordinarily put at the summit of a Yoga as its culmination and the proof of its perfect accomplishment. The experience is striking, intense, complete; it carries within it the knowledge of all its effects, all its consequences; it is conscious, willed, the result of methodical effort and not of unexpected chance; and yet it is *always single of its kind*, like milestones set along a route which are separated from each other by a long ribbon of road; and moreover, these milestones which mark the infinite ascent are never alike; they are always new and seem to have no connection one with the other. . . . Will a time come when Thou wilt make this being capable of synthetising all these countless experiences so as to draw from them a new realisation, more complete and more beautiful than all achieved so far? . . . Thou hast taught me not to regret an exceptional state when it disappears any more than I desire it before it comes. I see in the disappearance no longer the sign of an instability in the progress made, but the evidence of a march which goes deliberately forward without stopping any longer than is indispensable for the various stages of the road. (July 31, 1914)

The very remembrance of past experiences should sometimes be swept away from the thought so as not to obstruct this work of perpetual reconstruction which alone in a world of relativities permits Thy perfect manifestation.

Often one clings to that which was, fearing to lose the result of a precious experience, to give up a vast and high consciousness, to fall back into a lower state. (November 20, 1914)

But Thou hast broken all my habits, for Thou wouldst prepare me for liberation from every mental form. Certain mental forms, more particularly powerful or adapted to the temperament, are sure guides to supreme experiences. But once the experiences are over, Thou wouldst have them free in themselves from bondage to any mental form, however high or pure it may be, so as to be capable of expression in the new, most true form, that is, the one most suitable to the experience.

So Thou wouldst break all my forms of thought, and I found myself before Thee stripped of all mental constructions, as ignorant about this as a new-born child . . . (December 4, 1914)

c. Ascending and Descending Ladder

Thou hast subjected me to a hard discipline; rung after rung, I have climbed the ladder which leads to Thee and, at the summit of the ascent, Thou hast made me taste the perfect joy of identity with Thee. Then, obedient to Thy command, rung after rung, I have descended to outer activities and external states of consciousness, re-entering into contact with these worlds that I left to discover Thee. (Tokio: September 24, 1917)

Because Thou ledst me to the threshold of Thy splendour and gavest me the joy of Thy harmony, I thought I had reached the goal: but, in truth, Thou hast regarded Thy instrument in the perfect clarity of Thy light and plunged it back into the crucible of the world that it may be melted anew and purified.

(October 15, 1917)

*

d. Supermind: Link between the Triple Higher Worlds and the Triple Lower Worlds

When one enters with full consciousness into the higher states, to live this existence, light and bliss is easy, almost inevitable. But what is very important, as well as very difficult, is to awaken the being to this triple divine consciousness in the most material worlds. This is the first point. Then one must succeed in finding the centre of all the divine worlds (probably in the intermediate world), whence one can unite the consciousness of these divine worlds, synthetise them, and act simultaneously and with full awareness in all domains.

(May 27, 1914)

In the above prayer, the Mother speaks of “the intermediate world” which has the potent power to harmonise and synthetise the triple lower worlds — physico-vital-mental worlds — with the higher triple worlds, namely, Sat, Chit and Ananda. Sri Aurobindo terms this “intermediate world” the Supramental.

In her prayer dated July 21, 1914 the Mother gives a powerful graphic description of her experience:

There was no longer any body, no longer any sensation; only a column of light was there, rising from where the base of the body normally is to where usually is the head, to form there a disc of light like that of the moon; then from there the column continued to rise very far above the head, opening out into

an immense sun, dazzling and multicoloured, whence a rain of golden light fell covering all the earth.

Then slowly the column of light came down again forming an oval of living light, awakening and setting into movement — each one in a special way, according to a particular vibratory mode — the centres above the head, in the head, the throat, the heart, in the middle of the stomach, at the base of the spine and still farther down. At the level of the knees, the ascending and descending currents joined and the circulation thus went on uninterruptedly, enveloping the whole being in an immense oval of living light.

. . . and then the life of splendour begins again in all its amplitude, all its complexity, all its sublimity; the physical body is glorified, supple, vigorous, energetic; the mind is superbly active in its calm lucidity, guiding and transmitting the forces of Thy divine Will; and all the being exults in an endless beatitude, a boundless love, a sovereign power, a perfect knowledge, an infinite consciousness. . . . It is Thyself and Thou alone who livest, even in the least atom of the body-substance itself. (November 3, 1914)

*

e. Man Refuses to Change

The Mother is preparing herself integrally to become a perfect instrument of the Lord, and through her conscious collaboration He wants to fulfil His Work of establishing His Law upon earth. But unfortunately man fails to awaken to the need of a change, he still clings to ignorance, falsehood and darkness. The question arises as to how to awaken in man the overwhelming need for a change? What Power could penetrate the thick coating of darkness and slowly begin the process of dispersing the clouds of ignorance and bring to the front the sun of Truth and Light? It is, in fact, the Power of Love that can do the miracle of bringing a radical change in humanity and earth, and as man refuses to change, the Mother has accepted the responsibility to instil in man an urge, a yearning for Light and Truth by the transforming Power of her love. She requests the Lord:

Thou knowest what happiness would be mine if by Thy grace I could be integrally transformed into a hearth of divine love — that love which is the first and highest manifestation of Thy eternal Truth, that love which is at once the completest expression in this world of Thy Truth and the most direct road to lead to it the human consciousness that has gone astray. In the days when I used to aspire, desire and ask, how many times I have asked of Thee the grace of this state as the one most in conformity with my present ideal of action! And

at that time it seemed to me that the day I should be purified of all egoistic preference, Thou wouldst choose this individual terrestrial being as an instrument of Thy manifestation of love upon earth. (December 21, 1916)

The Mother prays for all:

May we be all ablaze with Thy divine Love; make us Thy torches in the world.
(November 28, 1913)

The fire of love burns and destroys all impurities of our lower nature, illumines the dark layers of ignorance and unconsciousness, and by its sweet warmth soothes and calms all our torments and sufferings:

. . . one single drop of Thy divine love, can transform this suffering into an ocean of delight! (November 29, 1913)

The Lord encourages the Mother to go ahead with her great mission:

“I see in thy heart a diamond surrounded by a golden light. It is at once pure and warm, something which may manifest impersonal love. . . . Learn to radiate and do not fear the storm. . . . Thou art like a pilgrim coming out of the sanctuary; standing on the threshold in front of the crowd, he hesitates before revealing his precious secret, that of his supreme discovery. . . . Turn to the earth and men — isn’t this the command thou always hearest in thy heart? — in thy heart, for it is that which carries a blessed message for those who are athirst for compassion. Henceforth nothing can attack the diamond. It is unassailable in its perfect constitution and the soft radiance that flashes from it can change many things in the hearts of men. . . . It is precisely this that wraps up thy strength in that dark mantle of starless night. . . .” (December 20, 1916)

(To be continued)

ARVINDBABU

A CAPTIVE OF HER LOVE

(Continued from the issue of November 2012)

5.2.1958

SOMETIMES I think I shall not be able to bear all this She is pouring on me, my gratitude is so great that I think I shall burst. When I aspire so strongly with all my heart for something and then She gives it to me it is as if Heaven had opened. I usually write to Her (but I do not send it) in the diary, every morning after Darshan and breakfast. I write to Her in French. This morning I wrote: *“Aujourd’hui pendant le Darshan, nous tous, les sadhaks, étions l’Un — et il n’y avait plus, ici, en bas, qu’une paire d’yeux Te contemplant. O, ma Mère Divine, le besoin de me donner, de me donner complètement à tous et à tout devient une nécessité. Ma gratitude est immense. Permits que ce besoin de me donner s’accroisse continuellement. Ma Mère, Amour Suprême, Vibration Suprême, je viens à Toi, je m’abandonne à Toi et me blottis dans Tes bras. Et tout est félicité. Tu es ce que j’ai cherché toute ma vie et je ne le savais pas. Et maintenant je T’ai reconnue. Je me prosterne devant Toi comme Tu es en tout et en tous.”*¹

I am so thankful that I can write these letters to you. This morning during Darshan I prostrated myself before you, who are the Mother, and at last I found the true love for you, the ardent, living love.

* * *

6.2.1958

I understand and feel what Sri Aurobindo said about not being concerned with one’s own perfection. I simply forget all about it. I just have a kind of fever to be able to serve Her and nothing else. There is no place for anything else. Only to do Her will.

Do you know what happened yesterday? Mother sent me a sadhika whose

1. “Today during the Darshan, all of us sadhaks were the One — and there was only one pair of eyes down here looking at Thee. O my Divine Mother, the need to give myself, to give myself completely to everyone and everything, has become a necessity. My gratitude is immense. Let this need to give myself grow constantly. My Mother, Supreme Love, Supreme Vibration, I come to Thee, I abandon myself to Thee and nestle in Thy arms. And all is bliss. Thou art that which I have sought for all my life without knowing it. But now I have recognised Thee. I bow down before Thee as Thou art in everything and in everyone.”

husband was very ill, he almost died, but Mother kept him alive. Now he is out of the hospital and at home and now this Indian lady came to me to ask some details about the diet. But I felt that Mother wanted more from me and as there are no patients at present I proposed to go every day to her home and to supervise the servant and help with the cooking!! I am so happy because she accepted the proposal — I mean Mother has accepted it. I shall see Her in the sick man and I shall cook Her in the food and She will help me. But I would like to learn more from a book, and if you would send me one with recipes I would be awfully grateful. I feel the Mother must be laughing too about Janina's cooking! And in all these arrangements She is also teaching me French, because I had to prepare for Her the list of needed articles and write some explanations.

You should see me in the Indian "kitchen", cooking on the charcoal stove on the floor!! You are really missing something! Sometimes I pinch myself and realise that it is not a dream and I chuckle to myself. And you should have seen me today humbly serving "the king" and assisting humbly while he was eating! He is a darling old man. The doctor in the hospital said that his illness cannot be cured, but Mother works in all the cells of his body. So I know and feel that Mother is cooking through me and I pray and pray and try to learn not to do anything else but just to pray in all I do for him. Today I made vegetables (beetroot), rice, poached egg, one banana boiled in water with honey and a beaten egg-white with sugar which he liked best. I think you would burst out laughing seeing my worried face when I look at him to see if he likes the dishes I served or not. Until now he has liked everything, my dear!! So do not laugh too much! And now I am thankful that I did so much mountaineering and cooking on the rocks and at the lakes. Here it is done in just the same way. But here I have a servant — of course — who washes the dishes! So you see that it was only in the Belchen Str. 19² that I was treated badly and washed dishes every day!

This evening She will again distribute sweets in the playground. Something must have happened in my being as there was never such a glorious happiness in me as today. I do not want anything from Her — I just give myself and love Her. And so I shall go to Her this evening, to Her as the Universal Vibration who acts everywhere and is everything.

I had a very bad pain in my ear (the pain has been going on for two weeks). But since the day She touched my body with Her fingers, I said that there can be no compromise and that She is the only Master in this body of mine. So yesterday there was a kind of climax and I knew that the pain itself was She too and Her supreme Love working in me. I felt a great happiness — I implored Her that She help me to persevere. I knew it would not be right to ask for the pain to disappear. All this was going on in the afternoon and I went to the *Synthesis* lesson and implored Her all

2. The address of the friend in Germany to whom these letters were written.

the time while we were waiting for Her. And then She came and stopped at the door and looked at me. I sit on the last bench. She just encouraged me to go on and the pain did not stop then. But She took it from me after one hour and allowed me to do my physical exercises without pain. Since then a great nearness and intimacy have been created, because She is in me and I in Her. This is how I begin to realise it. She is also the one who feels the pain in me, who moves my limbs, talks, thinks and feels, and this She does in every human being. So slowly She goes on widening my consciousness. Sometimes I am so thankful that I would like to give Her something great and wonderful and a few days ago I felt that I can give Her all the world, why not? If the time comes when all the world is in me, why should I not — in my deepest act of gratitude — do it?

* * *

13.2.1958

It is high time to move out of this “house” definitely. So She made me feel this morning. She tolerated for a long time the conceited lodger, who imagined that he was the true owner, and She let him make a fool of himself but now — She said — it is enough. She started already yesterday, to show me methodically that I just stand in Her way. Almost each action I do She showed me how I spoilt it by mixing myself into it. Exercises, walking on the street, attitude to people, working, painting . . . Oh, it is as if a loving teacher was bent over me explaining to me my lesson with such infinite patience and love that I just cannot do anything else but learn the lesson as quickly as possible. My gratitude is so great that I realised today that being prostrated before Her is becoming almost the normal, continuous attitude. And if I do not learn this lesson now I will always see myself as on a stage where She is acting and where “I”, the dwarf actor, am just continuously doubling Her in a miserable distorted way, crawling and jumping between Her legs. She started this new process in me the day before yesterday during the distribution I mentioned. She filled me with something that grew and grew in my heart, until I realised that these were my dear old patient and my servants. She just opened my heart like a box and put them in. So there is no more of forcing myself to love them, or aspiring for it, they are just there in my heart (in the inner heart). In a strange way I even feel, really feel, that my heart is heavier, that I am really carrying something. It is like being pregnant, so it really is. And She said that this heart can stretch itself infinitely, so now when I go somewhere or meet people I just take them one by one and put them in my heart.

Now as to the cook-book; it is not necessary to send one. I never thought there would be cook-books in our wonderful library where Medhananda reigns, but

imagine — I found twenty-two of them! Yes, twenty-two cook-books in the Ashram! Some of them as old as the world, but some quite new. Medhananda is quite amused by my studies. And these twenty-two are quite enough to make a real gourmet of my dear old patient, the husband of Tripura. They had both been in the Ashram for thirty years, not living together. But in 1947 they left the Ashram as a protest against the development of more group and community life. He is a Brahmin with a head full of theories and fixed ways of living. So he was outside for nine years in Madras. In 1956 he asked Mother to accept him again. Whether he did it because he was growing old or for other reasons I do not know. Anyway soon he became ill. When I came here and got slowly nearer to the people, I discovered that our (I mean the three of us) deep attitude towards yoga has something in it that is western, but western in a positive sense. Maybe I wrote once about it already. These Indian people here seem to be very spiritual but then you discover that they have only stopped eating meat, or do not live with the wife any more, or just gave away their property, etc. I think that the kind of surrender that breaks through in a western being after even a very prolonged protest has a richness in it that is foreign to the Indian way. This is of course not meant as a generalisation — Sri Aurobindo was an Indian and many of the Indians here are far on the way. But I hope you feel what I want to say. Here they so easily call things spiritual.

As to the money for stamps, do not send any at present. First I will find out how many letters are sanctioned by Her. If Nolini who supervises the correspondence feels that it is too much and wants to ask Her, we shall see. I have still one rupee so I can pay for this letter.

You know, I discovered that I am so concentrated on serving Her that I do not even pay attention to so-called realisations and experiences. I really *saw* the stream of vibration pouring down from Her eyes during Darshan a few days after my arrival here, and the day before yesterday I also *saw* the vibrating Light coming from Her eyes when She looked at me. But I forgot to write about it because it seems so natural to me. She is the Highest Vibration for me, almost scientifically.

* * *

14.2.1958

I am “crying” a little out of too much happiness. I have just read your letter once more, and together with this morning’s darshan it is overflowing my soul. This morning I noticed that She is in my heart. She is there, simply, in all Her Glory. And I asked Her what I should do now. She has already placed the old man and the servants in this heart and now I see that it is filled with Her and that She works there silently with Her divine smile as in Her own house. There is nothing for me to do,

only to prostrate myself and be the most humble witness of Her actions. Now all my movements will change, they will become more delicate, more subtle, because it is She who lives in this body and it will try to carry Her in itself with the greatest care and love. For She is the greatest treasure in all the infinite Universe. And just to think that She was always there in my heart and I did not know it! Now I understand also this feeling of being pregnant. In the Mystery of creation She became my child which I carry in my heart. Do you know what I want to say? You must know also that all I write are only changes of consciousness, you know it, don't you? And I describe to you just the most glorious work She is doing in me. But there are also hours (which I also have to learn to see as glorious) when the lower tries to come again and again, but I dash to Her for help, solution, consolation and that brings always the victory at each crucial moment.

Now it is 8.30 and I have to supervise a bit what the servants are doing. At 10 o'clock I am going to my old man to cook. Ashram life is now concentrated on Her birthday (21 February). The main buildings are being renovated and there is such joy vibrating in the air, that I just smile at these houses that look like people who put on new clothes. They seem to be alive. And in a way they are. Crowds of people have come — and more will be coming. Now the distributions are in the playground; there are also "blessings", in the Meditation Hall in the main building. For blessings She sits like a queen among flowers. There She also distributes saris for Her birthday, but then there are no flowers and She sits as if in a shop among stored cloths.

On the 21st She will sit in Sri Aurobindo's room,³ as during all the darshans. I have understood also what a transforming power our love for Her has. It is only that everything She does becomes immediately something wonderful and glorious. When one does not love Her completely and naturally, thoughts creep in. I remember it from before. But it is rather not our love for Her, but Her love for us, Her all-powerful and omnipresent Love, that does it.

This morning during the darshan I did what I had decided, I prostrated myself before Her as completely as never before and I offered Her my being. And She accepted it, yes, She accepted it. Now in everyday life I have to practise it: "*C'est Toi qui parleras, qui marcheras, qui penseras, qui dessineras . . . qui feras tout.*"⁴ She will be doing it — not I. Oh, I am so grateful!

* * *

3. Actually, another room nearby. —Ed.

4. "It is Thou who wilt speak, who wilt walk, who wilt think, who wilt draw . . . who wilt do everything."

16.2.1958

She is in me, my dear. She really is. I feel Her present in my heart. So these are not only changes of consciousness but something is happening in my inner heart. Or has it always been so, and now She allows me at last to discover Her? And there are vibrations of such great happiness going through my body. I could just prostrate myself before Her and remain so. This morning at 10 a.m. She gave us saris, shorts and shirts. Yes, Her presence is continuous Grace, I feel it so strongly.

* * *

17.2.1958

This morning during Darshan I was only telling Her: “*je T’aime, je T’aime . . .*”.⁵ All the problems seemed to disappear. I have a difficult servant, but when I prostrate myself before the Mother in him the atmosphere immediately becomes different. During Her classes She speaks much about vigilance and that only when the meditation becomes spontaneous in our life, something living, can we say that we are really on the way. You will find all these talks later in the *Bulletin*.

* * *

24.2.1958

It is now necessary that I drop my mental as completely as possible. So She wants it. But it is not easy and for a time I shall stop formulating what is going on with me. This will help me. I want just to live in self-giving only, just to close my eyes and plunge myself into Her.

There are such wonderful articles in all three monthlies and quarterlies, *Advent*, *Bulletin* and *Mother India*, that I am sending you the last number of *Mother India* too. And from the *Advent* I am copying here a few sentences from the Mother that have for me a special value:

Perfect surrender

Three figures of total self-giving to the Divine:

(1) To prostrate at His feet giving up all pride in perfect humility.

5. “I love Thee, I love Thee . . .”

(2) To lay down one's being before Him, to open out the whole body from head to foot, as one opens a book, spreading out the centres in order to make all their movements visible, with a full sincerity that permits nothing to remain hidden.

(3) To nestle in His arms, melt in Him with a loving and absolute trust. These movements may be accompanied with three formulas or any one of them, according to the case:

(1) Let Thy Will be done, not mine.

(2) As Thou wilt, as Thou wilt.

(3) I am Thine for eternity.

Generally, when these movements are done rightly, they are followed by complete identification, the dissolution of the ego, bringing the sublime Felicity.

As to the "Douce Mère", they have here come to the same conclusion as you have, that in many languages it sounds odd.

I have been doing some drawing lately. For Her birthday I have made a project for a glazed window — Aspiration, a figure in a flame and all as a composition in Mother's emblem. And small flames as ornamental finishing touches — around, between the middle and outer circle.

I wish I could send you one of my servants. Do you know that Mother gives for each sadhak privately a servant for 2-3 hours daily? Not only for institutions.

I am starting a new letter for you where I shall at last write about my work and the Ashram's work. I shall try to give a picture of Her birthday darshan. In *Mother India* there is an article about Mother's work and some details of Her life. Did you know that in Algeria She practised occult science with a Polish(!) occultist for some years? And She studied painting in Paris! But essential for this article is that there is no doubt Who She is. And in the *Bulletin* She gives some answers so overwhelming that I thought I could not bear it. Something new has come into it. She speaks directly as God speaks.

* * *

25.2.1958

I am not afraid of the mental any more. She will help me and it will dissolve itself into something higher. So I shall remain natural. But I must tell you how it all happened. During the morning Darshan on Her birthday I was so overflowing with gratitude that I was just singing a song of thankfulness to Her in my heart. Later in the morning, at 10 a.m. started the proper Darshan. She was sitting in Sri Aurobindo's

room upstairs (where we can only go on the quarterly Darshans) and all of us, one by one, were passing before Her. She was distributing the message of 21.2.58.⁶ Much earlier had started a process in me in which I did not see anything wrong, the decision to go with the attitude of gratefulness only. Now I know that “the conceited noodle” was there, who wanted to be different from the other people. So, repeating to myself: “I am a wave of gratitude . . .” I came before Her . . . received a charming smile and — nothing more!! I was so stuck in thinking things out that I did not notice that my attitude had lost the simplicity it had before. All day I felt that something was wrong, but it was only the day after that She lifted the veil and taught me that I have to remain empty so that She may fill me with what She wills — and not force myself into gratefulness.

In my last letter I copied from the *Advent* three bits of advice from the Mother. These are Her own words. Since three days I have been living almost continuously what She said. When I awake the first movement is: “I am at Thy feet” — and so I go on. And I open myself so widely, as widely as I can, so that She may see the most hidden corners — Oh, I am so thankful doing it! I try to stretch everything and to open as perfectly as possible which brings a glorious happiness. Now I know that it was this kind of self-giving I have been trying to find all my life — that nothing is hidden from Her eyes and every particle of the being gives itself with a glorious joy. But I had been trying to do it with men — and so I landed with the wrong one. All my life I have been longing for this melting into another “being” and now She has granted it to me. But I do not do it alone.

When I cook for Tripura’s husband I take him with me and I settle as if in a nest in Her arms, (although it is no more Her human form only, but just the Supreme She is) and I hide my head deeper and deeper and, — my dear, I really disappear in Her Love. It is a new life again. What I am writing about makes me feel very strongly the intimate tie that exists between Mother and the sadhaks. One is as if moved from behind, inspirations that She sends come and I realise them, but it is She in the inspiration and so the whole day I feel that I am almost physically connected with Her. You must understand me well. This being of mine is full of rust and dirt and is crooked — but I have to become Divine and She is changing me, so I can say that I am part of Her. She says it to us: “*Je suis vous et vous êtes moi.*”⁷

I wanted to say more about the morning Darshan. Oh, I am often so sad that you, both of you, are not here! As I have written already, first She appears smiling like a fairy and a real mother, both together, and then She begins Her work with us through Her eyes. Her face is no longer smiling (only sometimes She smiles at somebody who needs it) but usually She looks like a mother or teacher so completely

6. “To celebrate the birth of a transitory body can satisfy some faithful feelings. To celebrate the manifestation of the eternal Consciousness can be done at every moment of the universal history. But to celebrate the advent of a new world, the supramental world, is a marvellous and exceptional privilege.” (The Mother)

7. “I am you and you are me.”

concentrated on the needs of her children that nothing else exists. After that, She lifts Her eyes to the Horizon and I feel as if She is lifting all of us with, and in, Her eyes. There is an article about this Morning Darshan in the book: *Pioneer of the Supramental Age*. Maybe She lifts us into the universal then. And afterwards comes the moment you see in the calendar photo. She goes to Her own Domain. This is the Trance, the Transcendent. It cannot be described. I just feel Grace pouring on us. And I feel shy looking at Her when She “comes down to us” after the trance. It is all such happiness.

Now more about the Birthday Darshan Day. There were lots of visitors, double the number of sadhaks. All of them come to the morning Darshan and then pray at the Samadhi. You can imagine what crowds there were. The day before, in the afternoon there was a gala performance by Indian dancers from Calcutta and Madras in the Ashram theatre. Maybe you will see me too somewhere in a magazine. There were photographers, All India Radio and reporters. During the performance Mother sat in an armchair on a small platform before the stage. Around it a few prominent guests sat on chairs, but just on the small platform were She and Her nearest collaborators like Pavitra and Amrita. Then the children and then we and the visitors. It is always a bit difficult for me to accept that noise is permitted in Her presence, but it must be right so. It is striking that there never is such noise in the playground during our everyday birthdays. It is always after concentration and before meditation.

My cooking develops very characteristically. The old gentleman has withdrawn a bit. He does not come to greet me and when I have finished my cooking he says through a servant that he will eat later, so that I leave without seeing him. I just go on, while cooking, to surrender to the Force that cooks and nothing else is my business. It is quite clear that all this work is given to me by Mother for me to learn and go on with my yoga. Oh, I am so thankful that She makes me more and more matter of fact.

I just go on living in the three figures of self-giving to the Divine. I try to learn and inertia tries to trample me down and I go on and on. But when I learn to step back definitely from my adhara it will be easier.

(To be continued)

JANINA STROKA

(A Captive of Her Love by Janina Stroka edited by Michèle Lupsa,
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THE LUMINOUS PAST

(Continued from the issue of November 2012)

My birthday is in August. I had a great desire in my heart to offer my *pranam* to the Mother that day. Nolini-da said, "The Mother is resting. She is still quite weak." Then I said on my own that he should not tell anything to the Mother.

He replied, "One does not have to tell anything to the Mother. She herself looks at the list of birthdays."

Jatin-da said, "Now we will know whether the Mother has permanently established you in the boarding."

I asked, "How are we going to know that?"

He answered, "I will be able to understand."

It was my birthday. First of all the children, in a group, sang aloud together the birthday song and wished me. Jayshankar was the leader in all this. On the way to the Samadhi with the children I met Madhav Pandit-ji. He did not know that it was my birthday. As he stood in front of me he said, "I am going to give you a piece of good news."

I said, "What is it? I will be very happy."

He replied, "The Mother has asked me to inform you that Jhunjhun Home is very dear to her. She inaugurated it in the late afternoon of 9th December 1961. After this she has not done any official work. That was her last official duty."

My heart was filled with gratitude. At that point Madhav Pandit-ji became aware that it was my birthday. He said that he would come to visit me on Jayshankar's birthday. Jayshankar was his friend's son. As he was busy on that day he would not be able to come. I did my *pranam* to him and went to the Samadhi where I offered flowers and incense and went to see Nolini-da. With a smile he accepted my *pranam* and blessed me with his affectionate gaze.

I asked my school students to come in the afternoon. They came at 3 o'clock. At noon when the boarding children were having lunch, two teachers from the School came to see me. They too sat down, following my request, at the table with the children. All of a sudden, at that time, Dyuman-bhai appeared. The Mother had sent a card for me through him. I quickly washed my hands and took the birthday blessing-card sent by the Mother and told Dyuman-bhai that he had to have a sweet. In her generosity the Mother herself had asked Dyuman-bhai to enjoy my birthday lunch with the children in the boarding. I was thrilled and offered a thousand *pranams* in my heart to the Mother. Luckily, I had planned the non-vegetarian dishes for dinner and had only cooked vegetarian dishes for lunch. All three guests were vegetarian. While I was serving, I saw a man who worked for Pavitra-da, standing

at the doorway with an envelope in his hand. As soon as I took the envelope from him the man left. I did not have the opportunity to offer him something to eat. At the end, Bharati-di's servant came with a present from her. She was a bit unwell, that is why she could not come.

Sitting in my room, Jatin-da had been observing all that had taken place within that hour. I was not aware that he was sitting in my room. As the door was half-closed nobody noticed him. He generally came late. Today he had deliberately come early and had quietly sat down. When everybody had left I entered my room. Jatin-da told me happily, "Jhunjhun Home is indeed your permanent home. The Mother has made it clear today that you are going to stay here. She sent Dyuman, she told Madhav Pandit to inform you and Pavitra sent a card. All these are pointers."

*

On 8th December Pavitra-da came to remind us that the next day, meaning the 9th, was the birthday of Jhunjhun Home. That was our first anniversary. This meant that Nolini-da was going to give us the Mother's blessing-cards for this occasion. I found out from Nolini-da what I had to do that day. He told me that as it was the *Mahasamadhi* day of Sri Aurobindo I need not organise a celebration or cook special meals. We should, all together, go and do *pranam* at the Samadhi as well as attend the meditation in the Playground in the evening. He also told me to collect from him the blessing-card that the Mother was going to send. I said, "The children would like to send something to her as an offering."

Nolini-da said, "All right, you can give it to me in the morning. Put each one's name on their envelope."

The children went to the market and bought toys, handkerchieves and other things of their choice. The presents that I had received on my birthday, I had kept them to offer them to the Mother on Sri Aurobindo's *Mahasamadhi* day, and along with that there was also a silk sari given to me by the mother of one of my students. I took this occasion to send my presents along with everybody else's. Before I took up the work in the boarding I had once offered to the Mother a silk sari given to me by the mother of one of my students. Nolini-da was pleased and told me, in order to encourage me, that I had done a good thing by offering that sari to the Mother. There was a rule in the Ashram in the early days that one could not keep anything for oneself. I was aware of that rule. When the Mother had accepted me as a permanent member, Nolini-da had told me, "Give me whatever money you have so that I can hand it over to the Mother." I had given everything and kept 2 or 3 rupees to buy envelopes. Nolini-da forbade me to keep even one paisa. He would provide me with envelopes and postcards. And indeed he would supply them whenever I needed anything.

On 9th December, the ten of us went to Nolini-da together. His face lit up with

a smile when he saw us. At first he asked us how many years the boarding had completed. I said in reply, “Nolini-da, today we have completed one year.”

“Very good. Be like a one-year-old child in front of the Mother. If you can always live like a child then you will go very fast on the path of progress,” said Nolini-da. He opened our inner doors to the Mother’s new light. After receiving the Mother’s blessings we bowed down to her with love and respect and came back to Jhunjhun Home, which was Sweet Mother’s home of peace and joy.

*

13th January is Nolini-da’s birthday. I went in the evening of the 12th to greet him and told him, “Tomorrow you will be very busy. That is why I came beforehand to take your birthday blessing.”

Giving me a sweet he said, “Come with the children tomorrow early in the morning.”

When I went there the next morning I saw that there was not even standing-space in his room. We peeped through the open door and then went away to do *pranam* at the Samadhi. As soon as we finished our *pranam* someone who worked with Nolini-da came to tell us, “Nolini-da is calling you.”

We ran to his room. When he saw the little children he smiled with joy. One by one he looked at each one, taking his time and with happiness. Jayshankar elbowed his way to the front and stood before him. First he bowed down to him and then started singing the birthday song. I had no idea he was going to do this. He sang, “Happy birthday to you, Nolini-da.” He repeated this line three times. Nolini-da listened to him, totally charmed. He was delighted by his spontaneous expression of love and respect. This made me very happy. After this, Nolini-da gave a sweet to Jayshankar. One by one the children did *pranam* and took a sweet and all of us came back home happily.

*

On 17th January it was Jayshankar’s birthday. He wanted to invite Nolini-da, Amrita-da and Madhav-ji for lunch. I took him with me and went to see Nolini-da on the 15th. All three of them accepted the invitation. Jayshankar told Nolini-da, “I am only four days younger than you. I feel like writing books, like you.”

“When you are tall like me then you can write,” he said in an amused tone.

“When I will be tall like you will I have a moustache?” asked Jayshankar.

“Do you like moustaches?” asked Nolini-da, trying to hide a smile.

“I like everything about you,” replied Jayshankar.

“If we both have moustache people might have difficulty distinguishing us,”

pointed out Nolini-da.

“Why should that happen? You will have your moustache and I will have mine, we will be recognised by our respective moustaches.¹ All right, Nolini-da, now I must go.”

“All right, we will come on your birthday.”

Pandit-ji came first and finished eating. Nolini-da and Amrita-da wanted to see my bedroom first. Amrita-da said, “The Mother said: ‘a golden cage’ when she saw this room. You suffer from asthma. You should live in a room on the first floor of a house. Where do you sleep now?”

One of the invitees, Gauri, said, “Pramila sleeps in the girls’ room.”

They saw the girls’ room and were happy. It was open on the east, the south and the north. Nolini-da asked Gauri to serve them. After that he came to my room once again, and saying that he would make arrangements to break the shelves on the south side and make a big window went back to the dining table.

*

(To be continued)

PRAMILA DEVI

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

1. Translator’s note: This is a line quoted from Sukumar Ray’s nonsensical poems from his book *Abol Tabol*.

You are here to contact your soul, and that is why you live. Aspire persistently and try to silence your mind. The aspiration must come from the heart.

11 June 1971

The Mother

(Words of the Mother – II, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 14, p. 6)

*By the Divine Consciousness
we mean the spiritual consciousness to which the Divine alone exists,
because all is the Divine
and by which one passes beyond the Ignorance and the lower nature
into unity with the Divine and the Divine Nature.
Here in the Ignorance
we are not aware of the Divine
and we obey the lower nature.*

Sri Aurobindo

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

With Compliments from Well-wishers

All that is true Truth
is the direct expression
in one way or another
of the Divine Consciousness.

Life is the dynamic expression of Consciousness-Force
when thrown outward to realise itself
in concrete harmonies of formation;

Love is an intense self-expression of the soul of Ananda,
and

Light is what always accompanies the Supramental Consciousness
and its most essential power.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga — I, CWSA, Vol. 28, p. 6)

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