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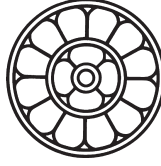
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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

No. 3

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## KARMA

### *(Radha's Complaint)*

Love, but my words are vain as air!  
In my sweet joyous youth, a heart untried,  
Thou tookst me in Love's sudden snare,  
Thou wouldst not let me in my home abide.

And now I have nought else to try,  
But I will make my soul one strong desire  
And into Ocean leaping die:  
So shall my heart be cooled of all its fire.

Die and be born to life again  
As Nanda's son, the joy of Braja's girls,  
And I will make thee Radha then,  
A laughing child's face set with lovely curls.

Then I will love thee and then leave;  
Under the codome's boughs when thou goest by  
Bound to the water morn or eve,  
Lean on that tree fluting melodiously.

Thou shalt hear me and fall at sight  
Under my charm; my voice shall wholly move  
Thy simple girl's heart to delight;  
Then shalt thou know the bitterness of love.

*(From an old Bengali poem)*

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, pp. 209-10)*

## BOTH THIS-WORLDLY AND OTHER-WORLDLY

ONE thing I feel I must say in connection with your remark about the soul of India and X's observation about "this stress on this-worldliness to the exclusion of other-worldliness". I do not quite understand in what connection his remark was made or what he meant by this-worldliness, but I feel it necessary to state my own position in the matter. My own life and my yoga have always been, since my coming to India, both this-worldly and other-worldly without any exclusiveness on either side. All human interests are, I suppose, this-worldly and most of them have entered into my mental field and some, like politics, into my life, but at the same time, since I set foot on the Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not divorced from this world but had an inner and infinite bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with influences and an effect from them upon the material plane, so I could make no sharp divorce or irreconcilable opposition between what I have called the two ends of existence and all that lies between them. For me all is Brahman and I find the Divine everywhere. Everyone has the right to throw away this-worldliness and choose other-worldliness only, and if he finds peace by that choice he is greatly blessed.

I, personally, have not found it necessary to do this in order to have peace. In my yoga also I found myself moved to include both worlds in my purview — the spiritual and the material — and to try to establish the Divine Consciousness and the Divine Power in men's hearts and earthly life, not for a personal salvation only but for a life divine here. This seems to me as spiritual an aim as any and the fact of this life taking up earthly pursuits and earthly things into its scope cannot, I believe, tarnish its spirituality or alter its Indian character. This at least has always been my view and experience of the reality and nature of the world and things and the Divine: it seemed to me as nearly as possible the integral truth about them and I have therefore spoken of the pursuit of it as the integral yoga. Everyone is, of course, free to reject and disbelieve in this kind of integrality or to believe in the spiritual necessity of an entire other-worldliness altogether, but that would make the exercise of my yoga impossible. My yoga can include indeed a full experience of the other worlds, the plane of the Supreme Spirit and the other planes in between and their possible effects upon our life and the material world; but it will be quite possible to insist only on the realisation of the Supreme Being or Ishwara even in one aspect, Shiva, Krishna as Lord of the world and Master of ourselves and our works or else the Universal Sachchidananda, and attain to the essential results of this yoga and afterwards to proceed from them to the integral results if one accepted the ideal of

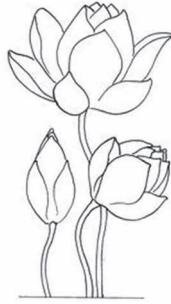
the divine life and this material world conquered by the Spirit. It is this view and experience of things and of the truth of existence that enabled me to write *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. The realisation of the Supreme, the Ishwara, is certainly the essential thing; but to approach Him with love and devotion and *bhakti*, to serve Him with one's works and to know Him, not necessarily by the intellectual cognition, but in a spiritual experience, is also essential in the path of the integral yoga. If you accept K's insistence that this and no other must be *your* path, it is this you have to attain and realise, then any exclusive other-worldliness cannot be *your* way. I believe that you are quite capable of attaining this and realising the Divine and I have never been able to share your constantly recurring doubts about your capacity and their persistent recurrence is not a valid ground for believing that they can never be overcome. Such a persistent recurrence has been a feature in the sadhana of many who have finally emerged and reached the goal; even the sadhana of very great yogis has not been exempt from such violent and constant recurrences, they have sometimes been special objects of such persistent assaults, as I have indeed indicated in *Savitri* in more places than one, and that was indeed founded on my own experience. In the nature of these recurrences there is usually a constant return of the same adverse experiences, the same adverse resistance, thoughts destructive of all belief and faith and confidence in the future of the sadhana, frustrating doubts of what one has known as the truth, urgings to abandonment of the yoga or to other disastrous counsels of *déchéance*. The course taken by the attacks is not indeed the same for all, but still they have strong family resemblance. One can eventually overcome if one begins to realise the nature and source of these assaults and acquires the faculty of observing them, bearing, without being involved or absorbed into their gulf, finally becoming the witness of their phenomena and understanding them and refusing the mind's sanction even when the vital is still tossed in the whirl and the most outward physical mind still reflects the adverse suggestions. In the end, these attacks lose their power and fall away from the nature; the recurrence becomes feeble or has no power to last: even, if the detachment is strong enough, they can be cut out very soon or at once. The strongest attitude to take is to regard these things as what they really are: incursions of dark forces from outside taking advantage of certain openings in the physical mind or the vital part, but not a real part of oneself or spontaneous creation in one's own nature. To create a confusion and darkness in the physical mind and to throw into it or awake in it mistaken ideas, dark thoughts, false impressions is a favourite method of these assailants, and if they can get the support of this mind from over-confidence in its own correctness or the natural rightness of its impressions and inferences, then they can have a field-day until the true mind reasserts itself and blows the clouds away. Another device of theirs is to awake some hurt or rankling sense of grievance in the lower vital parts and keep them hurt or rankling as long as possible. In that case one has to discover these openings in one's nature and learn to close them permanently to such attacks or to

throw out the intruders at once or as soon as possible. The recurrence is no proof of a fundamental incapacity; if one takes the right inner attitude, it can and will be overcome. One must have faith in the Master of our life and works, even if for a long time He conceals Himself, and then in His own right time He will reveal His Presence.

You have always believed in Guruvada: I would ask you then to put your faith in the Guru and the guidance and rely on the Ishwara for the fulfilment, to have faith in my abiding love and affection, in the affection and divine goodwill and loving kindness of the Mother, stand firm against all attacks and go forward perseveringly towards the spiritual Goal and the all-fulfilling and all-satisfying touch of the All-Blissful, the Ishwara.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 121-24)*



## **‘THE SUPREME SCIENCE, O LORD, IS TO UNITE WITH THEE . . .’**

**March 17, 1914**

WHEN physical conditions are a little difficult and some discomfort follows, if one knows how to surrender completely before Thy will, caring little for life or death, health or illness, the integral being enters immediately into harmony with Thy law of love and life, and all physical indisposition ceases giving place to a calm well-being, deep and peaceful.

I have noticed that when one enters into an activity that necessitates great physical endurance, what tires one most is anticipating beforehand all the difficulties to which one will be exposed. It is much wiser to see at every moment only the difficulty of the present instant; in this way the effort becomes much easier for it is always proportionate to the amount of strength, the resistance at one's disposal. The body is a marvellous tool, it is our mind that does not know how to use it and, instead of fostering its suppleness, its plasticity, it brings a certain fixity into it which comes from preconceived ideas and unfavourable suggestions.

But the supreme science, O Lord, is to unite with Thee, to trust in Thee, to live in Thee, to be Thyself; and then nothing is any longer impossible to a man who manifests Thy omnipotence.

Lord, my aspiration rises to Thee like a silent canticle, a mute adoration, and Thy divine Love illumines my heart.

O divine Master, I bow to Thee!

THE MOTHER

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vol. 1, p. 101)*



## A VISION

*(Continued from the special issue of November-December 2011)*

(8)

*[The following vision was discovered among the Mother's manuscripts. It is titled "A vision (8)" suggesting that it was intended to follow the seven visions published in the monthly Revue Cosmique in 1906-07.*

*In recounting her visions the Mother used a few terms from the "cosmic philosophy" expounded in the Revue. They have been rendered only approximately in this English translation so as to preserve the literary quality of the text. These terms have been identified in the text by footnotes. In the present text there is only one such term, pathétisme.]*

I SLEPT and now I am awake.

I awoke in a vast rectangular room lit by a large bay-window that looks out on the Southwest. The walls are panelled in oak. At the centre of the western panel stands a monumental fireplace of sculptured stone. The house must be built upon a hillside, for the window overlooks a vast plain, bounded on the horizon by a long range of mountains swathed in purple mist. At the bottom of the valley, amid the tall trees, winds a river burnished by the last rays of the setting sun.

At this late hour the room is dim in spite of the large bay-window, but I can see, sitting near it, a young girl in a plain white dress. Her hands lie folded on her lap; she is gazing unseeingly towards the East into the darkest corner of the room. She seems to be waiting.

There is another person in the room, an old man who stands in front of the fireplace; his garment is made of some dark and coarse material.

I observe the young girl, and her thoughts become as clear to me as if I saw them in a mirror: I am aware of her feelings as if they were my own. She is waiting for *someone*, and yet she knows not for whom, even though she senses that it is for her that He is coming.

Suddenly he has entered without any sound of the door opening and closing. He has entered at the end of the room opposite to where the young girl is sitting. To all eyes but hers he is cloaked in a sort of invisibility: a very dark violet covering which makes him appear like an ordinary man. But at once she has seen the brilliant white radiance emanating from his body and shining all around him.

With all her being she has recognised him in a surge of inexpressible divine

love.<sup>1</sup> But the emotion is so powerful that she is unable to leave her seat.

Then the old man, the father of the young girl, approaches the new-comer deferentially and welcomes him in respectful terms. The being of light responds with a warm embrace. And when they draw apart, the old man who had left his place in a sombre grey garment, returns to it in a magnificent flowing golden raiment. Full of wonder the young girl says in a rapt voice, "See what marvels He can perform."

Then he draws near to her, and as he does so the light around him grows whiter and more shining, and he himself is luminous. He is so surpassingly beautiful that in wonder and ecstasy she sinks to the floor in a brief swoon. But very soon she recovers. Coming close to him, she bends down and kisses his bare, sandalled feet. With a gesture full of tenderness he raises her up and enfolds her in his arms. She rests her head lovingly upon his shoulder, and thus enclasped they stand for a great length of time, gazing far across the vast plain into the last fading rays of the sun.

In silence they exchanged the depths of their souls and thoughts, in silence they spoke of the greatness of the work to be done and of the splendour of the victory to come, of which the dazzling radiance about him seemed a glorious pledge.

All in them was in communion, was in equilibrium in an intense happiness. And the pair they thus formed, standing near the window, was beautiful in its harmonious grace: he, tall and slender, with black hair and beard, facing the broad plain at the foot of the hill, with a grave and sad, but infinitely sweet and tender look; she, nestled against his shoulder, young and fair-haired, her eyes looking up to him and radiating with deep love. After their long and silent contemplation he turns to her and presses his lips to her brow.

I see that she too is gradually becoming luminous; she notices it and tells him so in a gentle murmur. And he answers, "It is the natural consequence of the great affinity that unites us; and it is made possible too by your spirituality. Is it not said, 'In the equilibrium of the duality of being lies the victory'? Now that we have achieved that equilibrium we can be sure of accomplishing the great work of harmony before us."

The old man had long since left the room. Now he returns to invite them to partake of the meal that is ready.

But the young woman replies, "I am not at all hungry and would much prefer to sleep the sleep of assimilation."

And he adds, "We are in no need of food; ours is an integral nourishment." And, turning towards her, "Come and take rest."

Side by side, hand in hand, they lie down upon a couch at the back of the room, and fall asleep.

The white light emanating from them grows ever more intense, spreading wider

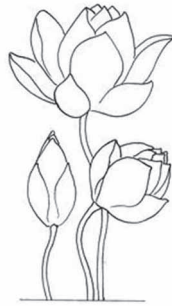
1. *Pathétisme*: divinised love.

and wider. It shines out through the house, far across the vast plain.

And wherever there shines the radiance in equilibrium, it brings health and hope and harmony and joy.

THE MOTHER

*(Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, August 1984, pp. 17-21)*



## “TWO PEAKS”

(Symbolic View of Purbal from Matheran)

From the stunned rapture of a single rock  
Thrust forward by a cleft in the mountain mood  
Two purple peaks wake into our night and day,  
One mastering the blind hours, one mothering  
The moments that uplift their cry to the Vast.

Behind them stretches breakless and aloof —  
Mile on straight mile — the unseizable sovereignty  
Of force that sheds all feature, love that wears  
No face for the deep prayer of the valley's heart —  
Sheer walls upon whose granite godhead crumble  
The ages of mankind — a trackless quiet  
Where light looks inward and the world is lost!

Out of that mystery sprang your passionate Word,  
O sweet companion-crests — two syllables  
Of beauty softening down to our myriad dream  
The timeless steep and silence of the One.

6.11.42

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[“Two Peaks” appeared in the Sri Aurobindo Circle — 1<sup>st</sup> Number (1945) as the opening poem without any title, simply preceded by a line-drawing of the mountain.

*The same year Amal sent the following information and comments to a correspondent of his:]*

. . . Thanks also for your complement to my opening poem. My grandfather has a picturesque little cottage on the hill of Matheran. I go there frequently — it is my nearest substitute for the Asram at Pondicherry. Something of the air, like heavenly wine that is in the Asram, I catch here — and one of the finest poetic aids I get here is the view, exactly opposite to our cottage, of a sister-hill to Matheran, called Purbal. It is the sight and contemplation of Purbal that has

inspired my poem. The line-drawing at the head of the page is a reproduction of the pattern Purbal makes. The precise spiritual symbolism of this hill, to my mind, arose out of my Matheran-mood being deeply charged with the presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Is the third stanza really an anti-climax? In poetry an anti-climax is what is, in the first place, incongruent with the rest and, in the second, lacking in poetic quality. Just to be “explanatory” is not a fall. I don’t think incongruence can be attributed to my closing lines. And as for poetic quality, can you say that the words:

. . . softening down to our myriad dream  
The timeless steep and silence of the One

are inferior to anything that has gone before? Have they not that fusing of far-reaching in-tone with suggestive vision, which marks out mystical inspiration? I hope you will excuse my trying to praise my own stuff, but I am so self-critical as a rule that I believe I can assume a certain detachment in judging myself and have no vanity if I find that this or that part of my work does not sink below the standard I exact of myself. I am pointing out the inspiration of the words I have quoted — in order to persuade you not to let artistic standards drop into the background when judging poetry: “explanation” by itself is not an artistic fault, just as non-explanation *per se* is no merit from the standpoint of art: all depends on how these things are done.

(Bombay, 16 September 1945)

*[The same poem was printed in the September 1978 issue of Mother India as “Purbal” with the introduction: “Purbal is the uninhabited mountain seen at some distance from the hill-station of Matheran about fifty miles from Bombay. It has a remarkable ‘presence’ well-suited to be a symbol to the poetic vision.”]*

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

# **SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI**

*(Continued from the issue of January 2012)*

## **Chapter X**

### **His Highness and His ‘Most Brilliant’ Recruit: A Relationship in Retrospect**

To his pride as a ruler who knew his business and whose treaty rights entitled him to be an all but absolute ruler, was added a spirit of nationalism. Like most sensitive Indians of his age he too had been drawn under the spell of the advance guard of the freedom movement . . . and the most fervent and outspoken among the nationalists, and possibly the most brilliant too, Aurobindo Ghose, had been recruited by Sayajirao to his administrative service.

Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad<sup>1</sup>

Among the great changes that swept over the world during the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the speedy decline of one of history’s oldest institutions: monarchy. What the last monarch of Egypt, King Farouk, said proved almost prophetic:

Soon there will be only five Kings left — the King of England, the King of Spades, the King of Clubs, the King of Hearts and the King of Diamonds.<sup>2</sup>

In India the remnant of this institution, the Indian princedom — it was inseparable from the development of the nation’s culture, apart from its being the major force moulding its history in general — ended rather abruptly in 1947. It was no doubt a far cry from the classical Indian monarchy of the mythical era and the early historical days. Yet, as a former prince put it:

One thousand years of Indian history shows that there was not a single instance of a ruling prince being assassinated by his subjects. That in itself goes to show the relations between the ruler and the ruled and the cordiality and understanding between the two. With all their evils and virtues, the Princes gave stability, peace and contentment to the people. There were good princes and bad ones, but I would like to remind critics who did so much to publicise their evils and suppressed their virtues that many of them represented the finest qualities of rulership and manhood — their impartiality, sense of fair play,

even-handed justice, truthfulness and high morals were exemplary. They were great patrons of art, music and learning. Many were fine horsemen, sportsmen and lovers of forests. Some were deeply religious and God-fearing and the people adored them . . .<sup>3</sup>

Vast tracts of the Indian subcontinent were directly administered by the British, but more than five hundred states, small and big — some bigger than several Western nations — constituted the princely India. In the hierarchy of the paramount British power, the rank of these rulers was indicated by the number of ‘gun’ salutes to which they were entitled. Only five states received the highest rank — the ‘21-gun salute’ — and Baroda was one of them, the others being Jammu & Kashmir, Hyderabad, Mysore and Gwalior.

These rulers could be all-powerful potentates or benevolent dictators inside their realms. The treaty between the British and the high ranking States ensured for the latter an authority only short of absolute supremacy, but rarely could any of them defy the directive of their British protectors even when such a directive was not legally enforceable.

Sir Sayajirao belonged to that rare breed. He demanded from the British the courtesy and consideration an equal deserved. When the British would ask him to stop statements hostile to them emanating from his territory, he countered that by telling them to stop criticism of his policies and actions made by British officials and the Anglo-Indian press inside the territory directly ruled by the British.

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III was a phenomenon indeed. The chances of his ascending the throne could only be a fairy tale fantasy. But it did happen. The benevolent and conscientious Maharaja Sir Khanderao Gaekwad died without leaving a male child, paving the way for his dissolute brother Malharao to ascend the throne. This hedonist prince not only tended to empty the royal treasury in his untiring bid to explore every avenue of perverse self-gratification, but also tried to murder the British Resident. He was deposed and thrown out of the State. (He died in Madras in 1882.)

Since there was no immediate claimant to the throne, Maharani Jamnabai, the widow of Sir Khanderao, ordered a thorough survey to locate eligible candidates among the branches of the Gaekwad clan scattered over the State since the time of the very first Gaekwad Maharaja. The search narrowed down to one group. The Summons reached a family that had settled in a distant village named Kavhana generations earlier and had taken to farming.

For more than a hundred years nothing much had happened to the Gaekwads of Kavhana. Their military past was a little more than a memory, because even the few old weapons they had managed to hold on to had been confiscated in 1857, when the British had issued a fiat forbidding all Indians from possessing

arms except with a licence, and of course, collection of weapons were not to be permitted in any circumstances.<sup>4</sup>

Three boys from this family were shortlisted and brought to the capital, escorted by courtiers, a police party and a senior British officer. Legend has it that the Maharani put a single question to each of the three boys: “Why do you think are you brought here?” We do not know what reply the other two boys gave, but “To ascend the throne, of course!” was the twelve-year-old Gopal’s instant assertion.

This boy, elevated to the position of the crown prince and then upon coming of age anointed as the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, proved a remarkable administrator, reformer and visionary. When no other Princely ruler nor the British Indian government had dreamt of such a step, he made primary education compulsory in his State. Personalities patronised by him included Dr. Ambedkar and Dadabhai Naoroji, Raja Ravi Varma the artist and renowned musicians like Ustad Moula Bux, Ustad Inayat Khan and Ustad Faiyyaz Khan and several gifted Bharatanatyam artistes.

What was the nature of the relationship between this illustrious Maharaja and Sri Aurobindo? Sri Aurobindo rarely spoke of his association with people or his actions or experiences unless clearly asked about them and he rarely elaborated. Hence we do not have much material to reconstruct their link and rapport. We know that the Maharaja was happy with his choice of an I.C.S. at a relatively small salary. But that could only be the starting point for an attitude of subdued awe and esteem that the Maharaja seems to have developed towards this 20-year-old youngest member of the higher level of his administrative staff.

If we remember the spirit of the time and the portentous lifestyle of the royalty, the following first-hand account of an incident left by Sri Aurobindo’s younger brother Barindra Kumar cannot but be construed as an extraordinary gesture of affection for Sri Aurobindo on the part of the Maharaja:

One morning I was busy preparing tea; Sri Aurobindo was still in bed. I noticed a carriage passing by my window and the whole house was in a bustle. I came out only to know that the Maharaja Sahib had come and was quietly gone, hearing that Sri Aurobindo was still in bed and giving strict instruction not to disturb him. He came back from his drive in the park after an hour and Sri Aurobindo went out to meet His Highness just as he was in his dhoti and bare body.<sup>5</sup>

One wonders if Sri Aurobindo even remembered such occasions.

Widely believed was yet another incident of this nature. While in Kashmir the Maharaja once sent for Sri Aurobindo, but the messenger came back and timidly reported that Ghose Sahib was asleep. After a while a second messenger had the



same news to convey. “Couldn’t you wake him up?” shouted the Maharaja. As the messenger was hurrying away to execute his master’s order, the Maharaja stopped him. He then took a stroll along the balcony and peeped into Sri Aurobindo’s room and quietly came back to his table.

If the legend is apocryphal, it must have emanated from the unusual deference with which the Maharaja treated his recruit.

Some biographies mention that Sri Aurobindo acted as the Maharaja’s Private Secretary for some time. Sri Aurobindo has clearly stated that he did not hold that position except for a short time once — when the Maharaja was on a visit to Kashmir.

... but there was much friction between them during the tour and the experiment was not repeated.<sup>6</sup>

What kind of friction was that? We do not know. The following reminiscence by Govind Sakharan Sardesai, the noted Gujarati historian, does not go far to throw any light on our curiosity, but it informs us of Sri Aurobindo’s candid conduct towards his employer.

Sri Aurobindo and myself were together with Sayajirao very often . . . Once the Maharaja had to address a social conference. Sri Aurobindo prepared the speech. We three sat together and read it. The Maharaja, after hearing it, said, “Can you not, Arabind Babu, tone it down? It is too fine to be mine.”

Sri Aurobindo replied smiling, “Why make any change for nothing? Do you think, Maharaja, that if it is toned down a little, people will believe it to be yours? Good or bad, the people know that the Maharaja gets his speeches written by others. What matters is whether the thoughts are yours or not.”<sup>7</sup>

This goes well with the facts corroborated by Sri Aurobindo that he was called by the Maharaja whenever something had to be written with care and also to prepare his public speeches and matters of a literary or educational nature. But most of such work was done in an unofficial capacity. He would be invited for breakfast with the Maharaja at the palace and stay on to do this work.

Sri Aurobindo had a high opinion of the Maharaja. A distinguished Bengali writer and later the editor of the prestigious Bengali periodical, the *Basumati*, Dinendra Kumar Roy, who lived with Sri Aurobindo at Baroda for about two years in order to help him learn Bengali, wrote,

He told me that the Maharaja was capable enough to manage an empire. A politician like him is rare in India. I think there was nothing the Maharaja could not have given to Aurobindo, but there was nothing Aurobindo would ask for.<sup>8</sup>

Of the several accounts of the life of this prince, the one by his great-grandson, the late Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, the last officially recognised Maharaja of Baroda and an able Parliamentarian, is perhaps the most authentic and well-researched record of his ideals and the confrontations he had with the Residency — the agency whose function it was to safeguard the British government's hold over the native realm and to check the ruler from doing anything that could harm its interest. Needless to say, Maharaja Fatehsingh alone, of all the biographers, had the subjective privilege to hypothesise his great predecessor's mind.

From the Land Settlement Department and Stamp Office and then the Revenue Office of the Baroda Secretariat Sri Aurobindo had gone over to the college, first taking classes in French even while attending the Secretariat, but finally becoming the full-time Professor of English and the Vice-Principal and also the acting Principal for sometime. After the first few years of his stay at Baroda Sri Aurobindo had grown more and more politically active — though in utmost secrecy. Did the Maharaja have any hunch of it? Sir Sayajirao was highly intelligent. When in 1902 Sister Nivedita visited Baroda and sought the Maharaja's support for revolutionary activities and the Maharaja told her that he would send his reply through Sri Aurobindo (he never did), he would have of course known where Sri Aurobindo's sympathy lay.

Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad believed that

Sayaji Rao was perfectly aware of Aurobindo's political views and activities and, by all accounts, secretly sympathised with them. He was also aware that to harbour a well-known extremist in his educational service was, for someone in his position, a grave risk. And yet he had gone on supporting Aurobindo, to the extent of giving military training to one of Aurobindo's friends, Jatin Bannerji, in the Baroda Cavalry, and thereby defying a ban imposed by the British government against the employment of Bengalis in the army.

The position was that, even if the British had already branded Aurobindo as a revolutionary, Sayajirao had no intention of asking him to leave his service. It was Aurobindo who must have realised that his presence in Baroda was a constant source of recrimination between his employer and the Residency. In any case he was getting restive in Baroda. He was anxious to be in Bengal where the freedom movement was already active and to play his own part in it . . .

When while still in his travels, Sayajirao heard that Aurobindo had decided to leave Baroda for good, his reaction was characteristic. Anyone else might have been thankful that he was being rid of a man whose presence had been a major cause of his difficulties with the government. Instead, he dashed off a letter to his Dewan asking that efforts should be made to persuade Aurobindo "not to leave Baroda and the college". But Aurobindo had made up his mind. He "joined the staff of the Bengal National College on a salary of Rs. 150/- per month, one fifth of his salary at Baroda".<sup>9</sup>

The Residency, no doubt, was building up a case against the Maharaja. Even three years after Sri Aurobindo had left Baroda, Lord Hardinge who succeeded Lord Minto as the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, in a secret letter to the British government recommended “an uncompromisingly tougher line with the Gaekwad” and reinforced his plea by referring to the Gaekwad’s audacity in having Sri Aurobindo in his government’s payroll. He wrote:

For a time he acted as His Highness’s Private Secretary and . . . as Vice-Principal of the Baroda College . . . There can be no question but that his employment in the State gave a great impetus to the anti-British movement.<sup>10</sup>

The Governor-General’s observation on the alleged impact of Sri Aurobindo’s sojourn at Baroda in this ‘secret letter’ was obviously retrospective. By that time Sri Aurobindo had grown famous as the leader of the Nationalists. The more the British government realised the danger that was Sri Aurobindo, the more was the degree of its anger against the Maharaja. But the Maharaja was too intelligent to create a situation for his adversaries to propose any direct action against him.

*(To be continued)*

MANOJ DAS

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# SCHOPENHAUER AND INDIAN PHILOSOPHIES

*(Continued from the issue of January 2012)*

## **Part II. Schopenhauer and Indian Philosophies**

INDIAN philosophies include multiple schools of thought, and these cannot be lumped together since there are significant differences among these. Hindu philosophy's foundation is based on the Upanishads (800-600 BCE) and Gita (400 BCE), and it is significantly different from Buddhism (500 BCE). Besides these two major philosophies, which have developed into major religions of the world, the dualistic philosophy of Samkhya influenced Hindu philosophy substantially although there are certain fundamental differences between Samkhya and Upanishads (Vedanta). The developer of Samkhya is sage Kapila (600 BCE); however, its concepts and principles were documented by Ishwara Krishna at a later date, and this book is known as Samkhya Karika (500 BCE). Schopenhauer was exposed to all these major schools of Indian thought.

### Schopenhauer's Acquaintance with Indian Philosophy

Schopenhauer acknowledged explicitly three sources of knowledge that influenced his philosophy; these are the Upanishads, Plato and Kant. His writings have many references to these sources. Schopenhauer expressed in glowing language how deeply he appreciated and admired the philosophical concepts of Upanishads, and I presented a quotation from his writing about Upanishads in the introductory section of this article.

Schopenhauer was introduced to Gita and Upanishads by a close acquaintance of his, Friedrich Majer who was an Orientalist. In addition to these texts of Indian philosophy, he read many articles dealing with Hinduism in various journals, which he found in libraries; these include *Das Asiatische Magazin* (The Asiatic Magazine), which contained articles on Hinduism as well as Buddhism. Another famous text of Indian philosophy that Schopenhauer read is Samkhya Karika of Ishwara Krishna.

There is some controversy among scholars as to which Indian philosophical text Schopenhauer read first — the Gita or the Upanishads. One scholar who examined this question in depth came to the conclusion that the first book on Indian philosophy read by Schopenhauer was a translated version of the Gita in German. (App, 2006) The translation was done by Friedrich Majer, whom Schopenhauer himself has recognised to have introduced him to Indian philosophy. Later he also read a translation of the Gita done by A. G. Schlegel, which was published in 1823,

and he made references to this book in the second volume of his book, *The World as Will and Presentation* (1844). Although nobody can know with certainty how thoroughly Schopenhauer read the translated versions of the Gita, it has been established, based on his handwritten notes and references that he made in his books, that Schopenhauer read a large part, if not all, of the Gita.

Friedrich Majer introduced Schopenhauer also to the Upanishads, and he read a translation in Latin of some of the Upanishads; this book is known as *Oupnek'hat*, which itself was translated from a translation of the Upanishads in Persian. The translation in Latin was done by Anquetil Duperron, and it was published in Paris in 1801. It is not known exactly how many of the several Upanishads Schopenhauer read and in what degree of detail. However, from the references that he made to these sources in his writings it is evident that he read Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads. An example of his familiarity with the famous verses in Chapter 6 of Chandogya Upanishad, in which the concept of Self (Atman) and its immanence in the world were discussed, can be found in the following quotation from Volume One of his book *The World as Will and Presentation*:

We find the direct depiction in the Vedas, fruit of the highest human cognizance and wisdom, the core of which, in the Upanishads, has finally reached us as the greatest gift of this century, expressed in a variety of ways, but particularly where all the beings of the world, living and lifeless, are led in succession before the gaze of the disciple and over each of them pronounced the word that, become a standard formula, was given the title *Mahavakya: Tatoumes*, or more correctly, *tat tvam asi*. It means: 'This is you.'

(Schopenhauer, 2008, pp. 413-14)

Schopenhauer was introduced to Indian philosophies after he had finished his formal education in philosophy and after he wrote a few of his early publications. One question that has been raised and examined by a few recent scholars is whether Indian philosophies influenced him strongly enough so that he actually changed some of his early views in his later writings. This issue dealing with a noticeable change actually occurring in Schopenhauer's writings is controversial although some scholars believe it to be true as expressed by Moira Nicholls. (Nicholls 1999) I will not deal with this issue, instead I will address a more straightforward question: what are the similarities and differences between Schopenhauer's philosophy and Indian schools of thought.

### Comparison of Metaphysical Aspects

Schopenhauer's philosophy has similarities with as well as differences from Indian philosophies. For this article I will compare Schopenhauer's philosophy with those

of Vedanta (Upanishads), and Samkhya (of Kapila), and I also will point out a few similarities and dissimilarities with Buddhism. As stated earlier Schopenhauer was familiar with the primary sources of Hinduism — Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Samkhya Karika — and several Buddhist texts. The issues or topics that my comparative discussion will focus on will include: the world as a presentation of objects to subjects, the thing-in-itself and Will, human psychology and ego. I will examine also the concept of Maya since Schopenhauer referred to Maya and the “veil of Maya” on several occasions.

### *The World as a Presentation of Objects to Subjects*

One of the fundamental concepts of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, which is reflected in the title of his famous book, *The World as Will and Presentation*, has striking similarity with a concept of Samkhya philosophy. This concept is that the phenomenal world is a presentation (‘Vorstellung’ in German) of objects to cognizant subjects as in a theatrical presentation. However, despite this striking similarity between Schopenhauer’s philosophy and Samkhya with regard to the concept of objects being presented to subjects, there is a fundamental difference between the two philosophies. Samkhya is a strictly dualistic philosophy as it believes that there are two separate principles operating in the phenomenal world although they are linked together. One of these principles constitutes all objects, which include in addition to objects of gross physical matter many seemingly immaterial things such as life force, mind, ego, and intelligence. This active principle is Nature (*Prakriti* in Sanskrit), which is energy and its process. However, Nature does not possess consciousness, which resides in the other principle with which it is connected. The other principle is Conscious Being or Soul (*Purusha* in Sanskrit), and it is inactive, immutable and self-luminous. It should be noted that according to Samkhya, ‘Nature’ is ‘one’ but ‘Soul’ is multiple, i.e., there are numerous individual souls or subjects. It is also important to note that according to Samkhya Nature’s dynamism depends on the presence and consent of Soul which reflects the activities of Nature. The inactive Soul has to be present to observe or witness in order for Nature to become active and make its presentation. The Soul can give or withdraw its consent to the activities of Nature. This is similar to the case of a theatrical presentation where spectators must be present for a play to begin and continue. Further, some of the elements of Nature such as intelligence and ego assume the hue of consciousness when their activities are reflected in Soul’s consciousness. In Verse 21 of Samkhya Karika the relationship between Nature and Soul is compared to that between a blind person carrying a lame person with unimpaired sight. The blind person in this verse represents the unconscious but active Nature, and the sighted lame person represents the conscious but inactive Soul. Schopenhauer uses the same example or analogy to depict the relation between will and intellect. Intellect, however, is a product of

brain function, and thus a manifestation of will.

Whether the dualism of Samkhya is compatible with Schopenhauer's philosophy is a debatable issue. On one hand his philosophy appears to have strong similarity with Samkhya as he presents a dualistic view when he envisions Matter in an undifferentiated state and a universal Subject standing as the two poles of the world as presentation before individual objects and subject are manifested, and says that it is only in some sort of union of this Matter with the Subject that there comes to be constituted, as objects for the subject, a world of objects that can be thought of as made of matter. He also says in some places that the Subject is not made of Will. On the other hand in some places he presents a monistic view when he seems to say that everything including the Subject of pure cognition is constituted of Will. It is impossible to resolve this incoherency.

### *The Thing-in-Itself in Schopenhauer's and Indian Philosophies*

If we interpret Schopenhauer's philosophy as monism of Will, it will agree with the philosophy of the Upanishads (Vedanta) at least in one respect that everything in the universe is constituted by a single principle. However, this single principle for the Upanishads is Self (Atman) whereas that for Schopenhauer is Will, and clearly there is a difference between these two principles. Further, for Vedanta there also is another status of Reality, which transcends the universe although it is immanent in the universe as its Self. This transcendent reality is Brahman. Schopenhauer's philosophy does not accommodate any transcendent reality similar to the concept of Brahman. Now with regard to the thing-in-itself of the empirical world, there are fundamental differences between Hinduism's Self (Atman) and Schopenhauer's Will. Self (Atman) is a conscious principle that has a force inherent in it, which represents its 'becoming' aspect, and simultaneously it has a 'being' aspect, which supports the 'becoming' aspect. Schopenhauer's Will basically is a blind force, a dynamic principle, and it represents only 'becoming'. Schopenhauer did not discuss any 'being' aspect of Will underlying or supporting its 'becoming' aspect. Both objects and subjects are made of Will, although, as I said earlier, he presented two types of subjects — the subject of willing and the subject of knowledge. His 'subject of willing' is similar to the 'ego' (*Ahamkara* in Sanskrit) of Hindu philosophy, and Samkhya's too, which is constituted by Nature (*Prakriti*). However, the comparison of the concepts of Schopenhauer's subject of knowledge and that of Hindu philosophy is complicated by the unclear way in which Schopenhauer discussed the idea of a universal Subject (or Self) of knowledge, which frequently seems to be a non-physical entity that is not made of Will. A few times he described the Subject of knowledge as "one eye" that is present in all cognizant subjects. This is similar to the concept of a universal Self or Conscious Being presented in the Gita's Chapter XIII, which is described as "one knower of field" present in all individual "fields".



The Upanishads also present the concept of a universal Self in many ways. Verse III. 7. 23 of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad describes Self as “he who is never perceived, but is the perceiver”. Schopenhauer described the Subject as “that which is cognizant, never cognized”. (Schopenhauer, 1819, p. 34) Similarities between these two descriptions are obvious. However, whereas for Gita and Upanishads this Self is the essence of everything, Schopenhauer’s Subject of knowledge seems to be fundamentally distinct from Will, at least in the sense of the possibility of escape from it, and thus not to be the thing-in-itself. Schopenhauer was ambiguous about how his Subject of knowledge fits in with his view that everything is constituted of Will, and sometimes he said that this ‘Subject of knowledge’ is same as the ‘subject of willing’. In any case, Schopenhauer never presented the Subject of knowledge as the thing-in-itself, or Self, of everything. It is also likely that Schopenhauer’s Subject is not a ‘thing’ or ‘being’ similar to the Self (Atman) or Conscious Being (Purusha) of Hindu philosophy. It may very well represent merely conscious acts without any underlying unitary reality supporting it.

As I mentioned earlier, for Vedanta Self represents Being, and although the Self has inherent in itself a Force, which is manifested in everything in the phenomenal world, it is not identified with Force in the way that Schopenhauer’s Will seems to be. In the Svetasvatara Upanishad (Verse I. 3.) it is said that “they beheld the self-force of the Divine Being deep hidden by its own modes of working”. In Sanskrit this Force is called ‘devatmashakti’ (self-force of the Divine Being or God). It also is called ‘chit-shakti’ (consciousness-force), and it represents the dynamic aspect of Self. In the words of Sri Aurobindo,

All phenomenal existence resolves itself into Force, into a movement of energy that assumes more or less material, more or less gross or subtle forms for self-presentation to its own experience. (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 80)

This Force that Sri Aurobindo is referring to is in its original form the ‘devatmashakti’ of Svetasvatara Upanishad (Verse I. 3.) although in phenomenal existence it has been degraded. It should be noted that for Vedanta philosophy, Self and Nature, Being and Becoming, are always together as two sides or aspects of the same principle, which is Spirit, or Conscious Being. In the case of the manifested world the Nature aspect is predominant and Consciousness appears to be hidden especially in gross materials and lower forms of life. In lower forms of life the conscious-force acts as blind striving, which is very similar to Schopenhauer’s Will. However, in higher forms of life and especially in human beings the force begins to become conscious and manifests several aspects of itself such as desire, emotion, intelligence, will, and also reflected consciousness.

In the context of ‘thing-in-itself’ I should add that Buddhist philosophy does not recognise any unitary principle or entity as the reality underlying the phenomenal



existence. According to Buddhism phenomenal existence is a dynamic process, or flow, consisting of a chain of causally connected events, and there is no substantial entity such as Will or Self underlying this flow. In early Buddhist philosophy this concept is known as 'No-Self' (Anātman), and in Mahayana Buddhism it was further extended to the concept of 'emptiness' (Sūnyatā). The explanation of 'emptiness' is founded on the principle of 'dependent arising', or 'inter-dependent-origination', according to which no entity has an independent or intrinsic existence since everything is caused by something else. Schopenhauer believed in the law of causality, but he also believed in a thing-in-itself underlying and constituting everything in the phenomenal world. The metaphysical foundation of Buddhism is quite different from that of Schopenhauer's philosophy although there are similarities in some other aspects.

### *Egoism and Veil of Maya in Schopenhauer's and Indian Philosophies*

The description of desire-filled, egoistic, and competitive human psychology that Schopenhauer presents agrees with Hindu and Buddhist views of life for the majority of human beings. Both Hinduism and Buddhism agree with Schopenhauer that the root causes of human suffering are 'ego' and 'desire'. With regard to 'ego', Schopenhauer's view that it is formed only in space and time, which represent the 'principle of individuation' or the '*principium individuationis*' (in Latin), agrees with the views of Vedanta and Samkhya since according to both philosophies ego is a construction of manifested Nature. As Sri Aurobindo explains,

The formation of a mental and vital ego tied to the body-sense was the first great labour of the cosmic Life in its progressive evolution; for this was the means it found for creating out of matter a conscious individual.

(Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 341)

Schopenhauer attributes the egoistic human psychology to the principle of individuation, which, on several occasions, he equates with 'the veil of Maya'.

*Maya* for Schopenhauer was the falsification of our perception of the 'world', the taking of the world to be nothing more than a collection of differentiated phenomena and individuals of heterogeneous natures . . . (Berger, p. 221)

Schopenhauer believed that because of this false perception caused by the veil of Maya people fail to see the unitary and all-pervasive Will operating in the universe and they act egoistically thinking that each individual is a completely separate entity. This interpretation of the word Maya is compatible with the meaning of Maya in Vedanta philosophy although the unitary principle for Vedanta is different. Actually

Maya has been used with different meanings in different Hindu scriptures, for example, as a magical power of gods (in Rg Veda), as a power of creating illusion (in certain versions of non-dualistic Vedanta), as the cause of ignorance in lower Nature (in the Gita), and the creative divine force inherent in Self (Atman) or Brahman (in Svetaswatara Upanishad). In the Gita, the word Maya is used only in a few places, and in Chapters VII and XVIII where it is used the meaning is similar to how Schopenhauer interpreted it. In Verse VII-5 the Gita makes a distinction between two Natures — one higher or supreme (Para Prakriti), and the other lower (Apara Prakriti). The higher is the spiritual Nature beyond the manifested world, and the lower Nature constitutes the phenomenal world. The higher Nature is the divine force or power inherent in Self. The lower Nature is made up of the three modes of energy (Gunas) — Sattwa, which represents intelligence and purity; Rajas, which represents force and action; and Tamas, which represents inertia and non-intelligence. In Verses VII- 12, 13 and 14 the Gita refers to this lower Nature (Prakriti) as Maya and explains that this lower nature of three Gunas creates a false view of things, bewilders our knowledge, and creates the ego sense. It should be emphasised that the Gita does not view Maya as creating illusion and the phenomenal existence as unreal. However, there are certain schools of Vedanta philosophy that consider the phenomenal world created by Maya as illusory or unreal. Schopenhauer did not consider the phenomenal world as unreal, and his interpretation of Maya is consistent with that of the Gita.

According to Buddhism human personality consists of five interconnected aggregates or groups (*Skandhas*) of physical and mental events — material form (*Rūpa*), sensation (*Vedana*), cognition (*Samjñā*), disposition (*Samskāra*), and consciousness (*Vijñāna*). Desire, or craving, arises from sensations, and it gains force when it interacts with disposition, which includes volition. The second Noble Truth of Buddhism says that the cause of suffering is craving (*Trṣṇā*), which is practically same as desire. Desire leads to attachment. The Buddhist way to stop suffering is to eliminate attachment arising from desire/craving and also to realise that there is no abiding self underneath the constantly changing personality of an individual being. There is no concept exactly equivalent to Maya in Buddhism although it admits the concept of ignorance.

### *Will in Schopenhauer's and Indian Philosophies*

Schopenhauer uses the term Will in a very broad sense, and according to his terminology 'desire' is made of 'Will'. Hindu philosophy, however, makes a distinction between 'desire' and 'will' although these are interrelated. Vedanta philosophy, which is based on the Upanishads, generally agrees with the psychological scheme that Samkhya presents according to which the psychological/psychic forces within a human being are grouped into broad categories in a hierarchical fashion. Starting

with the sense capacities (*Jnanendriyas* in Sanskrit), the next higher group is mind (*Manas* in Sanskrit), then comes 'ego' (*Ahamkara* in Sanskrit), and then intelligence (*Buddhi* in Sanskrit). 'Desire' is generated by the interaction of sense capacities, mind and ego sense. Hinduism recognises the pervasive role of desire in ordinary human life. In the words of Sri Aurobindo,

This desire is essential to the ordinary man; he cannot live or act as an individual without knotting up all his action into the service of some kind of lower or higher craving, preference or passion.

(Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 648)

However, for Hinduism this desire is not synonymous with will. Will in Hinduism is the power of choice and determination to act in order to fulfil a chosen goal, and it has a higher or superior status than desire. Will is included in *Buddhi* along with intelligence. *Buddhi*, which is the discriminating power, is the highest principle in Nature. In the *Chandogya Upanishad* it is said that (Verse VII. 4. 1) 'Will, assuredly, is greater than mind'. The Sanskrit term for will is '*samkalpa*', and that for desire is '*kama*'. The psychology of *Samkhya* agrees with this scheme.

It should be pointed out that for the psychology of Hinduism the different categories of psychic principles such as desire, mind and will are not completely separate entities but represent a continuum, and further these can get mixed up with each other. For example, an aspect of will can join desire and strive for its fulfilment. According to Hinduism, in the lower forms of life there may not be a difference between desire and will and these two are fused with each other, but in human beings the difference begins to show, and in spiritual life will plays an important role since it can overcome the compulsive force of desire or craving. Schopenhauer does not make this distinction between 'desire' and 'will' even for human beings, and in his philosophy these two are blended together. Actually Schopenhauer's Will includes a variety of forces including vital or life-force, desire, "will power" in the sense of the power of choice, and even subconscious forces. In Hinduism there is also a higher or divine Will, and human will is considered to be a degraded form of the divine Will; but for Schopenhauer, who was an atheist, there is no Divine Being and so the question of a divine Will does not arise. For Buddhism too there is no divine Will.

(To be concluded)

ARUN CHATTERJEE

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## HUTA — ‘THE OFFERED ONE’ — A VERY SPECIAL CHILD OF THE MOTHER

EVERY one of the Mother’s children is special — I believe that she has said that none of her children can be a zero: each has something special about them, because their souls have been touched by the Mother’s Grace. Nevertheless, if we look back across the years, at the unfolding of the history of the Ashram, a number of especially special children of the Mother stand out. Huta, who passed away on November 17, 2011, is surely one of those whose memory and legacy will leave a lasting imprint.

She was born in East Africa, to a prosperous family of Gujarati entrepreneurs, where she had a number of experiences indicating that she was destined for a spiritual life and felt drawn to the Mother, even before meeting her for the first time on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1954. Thereafter, the Mother considered this date her spiritual birthday. In February 1955, she joined the Ashram and the Mother gave her the name Huta, “The Offered One”. For the next 18 years she enjoyed a unique relationship with the Mother.

The story of their relationship is recorded in Huta’s books, starting with *Salutations* — her own translation into English of the prayers which she wrote to the Mother in Gujarati before she ever met her, while she was still living with her family in East Africa. The Mother saw the Gujarati manuscript and concentrated on it, before giving Huta blessings to translate it into English and publish it. On these prayers the Mother commented: “*This is how all sincere aspirations are fulfilled.*”

Then came *White Roses* — messages of value to all seekers, collected from the Mother’s many letters to Huta. (Mother once told her, “I have never written so many letters to anyone as I have to you” and Huta once told me that in all she had received over 8000 letters and cards from the Mother.) The Mother wished *White Roses* to be translated into many languages and made available all over the world, and some translations are already done, including a Gujarati translation by Huta herself. Tamil, French, Italian and Russian translations were done by people living in or connected with Auroville. A Hindi translation is also available. Surely more will come in the future.

Another project was *The Story of a Soul* — the name given by the Mother to Huta’s autobiographical notes, with the message “*This is the interesting story of how a being discovers the Divine Life*”. For many years instalments of *The Story* appeared monthly in *Mother India*; and more recently the early parts have been published in book form. More volumes were planned. These narratives, put together from diary notes, give an inspiring picture of Huta, her aspiration and her difficulties, as well as of the Mother’s dealings with this special child of hers.

*Gems from the Mother to Huta* contains facsimiles of the Mother’s own

handwriting, inspiring messages and quotations from wise men from many times and cultures, which the Mother sent on cards to Huta while she was away from the Ashram on a visit to her family in East Africa.

Another treasure is *Victory of the Truth*, where Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya's photographs of the Mother's hands in various mudras are presented along with the Mother's explanations and comments, and relevant quotations from the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Most recently, Huta brought out in book form her records of things the Mother had told her, corrected and authorised for publication by Mother, under the title '*You said so . . .*'

It was from 1956 onwards that the Mother, herself a gifted artist, started training Huta in oil-painting. It seems she had a special purpose in this, for she stated that she had earlier tried with several other people, before Huta was born. She wished to find someone with the right kind of receptivity to be able to give expression through painting to her own vision. Although Huta never had any earlier experience with art, she responded to the Mother's teaching and several of her visionary paintings were selected by the Mother to be printed for distribution as New Year cards.

In October 1961 the Mother initiated the work of illustrating *Savitri* using Huta's hands. She gave the name "*Meditations on Savitri*" to this project, and has herself described how they worked:

Savitri, this prophetic vision of the world's history, including the announcement of the earth's future. Who can ever dare to put it in pictures?

Yet, the Mother and Huta have tried it, this way.

We simply meditate together on the lines chosen, and when the image becomes clear, I describe it with the help of a few strokes, then Huta goes to her studio and brushes the painting.

It is in a meditative mood that these "meditations" must be looked at to find the feeling they contain behind their appearance.

The Mother

Of course the Mother would see the completed paintings, and sometimes she asked for changes to be made before she was satisfied. The resulting series of 472 paintings was exhibited in the Ashram in February 1967. For this occasion the Mother gave the following message:

The importance of Savitri is immense.

Its subject is universal.

Its revelation is prophetic.

Take all the time necessary to see the exhibition.

The time spent in its atmosphere is not wasted.  
It will be a happy compensation for the feverish haste men put now in all they do.

The Mother  
10.2.67

The Mother had the paintings corresponding to selected passages from Book One of *Savitri* published in book form from 1962 onwards, in four volumes covering Canto One, Cantos Two and Three, Canto Four and Canto Five. However most of those paintings were redone before the exhibition of 1967, and the volumes have now been out of print for many years.

As part of the celebrations for Sri Aurobindo's Centenary in 1972, the Mother gave blessings to Aurovilian Richard Eggenberger, whom she later named Narad, to photograph all the *Meditations on Savitri* paintings and present them as a series of slide shows, which were then shown in the Ashram and in Auroville. The tape-recordings which Huta had made of the Mother's readings of the selected passages from *Savitri* which correspond to the paintings were used with the Mother's own organ music as a sound-track for the slide shows.

The same recordings were also given to the Ashram musician Sunil, the Mother's composer, for him to prepare music to accompany them. His wonderful compositions, combined with the Mother's powerful readings, have been a source of inspiration and delight to many people. We regret that he was able to complete only up to the end of Book Ten before passing away in 1997.

In December 1967, Huta took to the Mother a file containing all the passages of the *Meditations*, and asked her,

Mother, will you please explain them to me and allow me to take down your explanations on the recorder? Then surely people will understand the *Savitri* paintings more easily.

In reply the Mother said enthusiastically:

If I have to explain these passages, I would prefer to start from the very beginning and give a full explanation of the whole of *Savitri*.

Already in 1954, Amal Kiran reports, the Mother had told a small group of sadhaks:

*Savitri* is occult knowledge and spiritual experience. Some part of it can be understood mentally, but much of it needs the same knowledge and experience for understanding it. Nobody except myself can explain *Savitri*. One day I hope to explain it in its true sense.



From January 1968 up to August 1970 the Mother met Huta regularly for this work, to which she gave the name *About Savitri*. The first volume of the Mother’s explanations, covering Book One, Canto One, and accompanied by paintings of Huta, was published in 1972. For this volume the Mother gave her message:

Savitri — the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo’s vision

*About Savitri* was published in four parts, corresponding to Canto One (1972), Canto Two (2002), Canto Three (2005) and the first half of Canto Four (2006) of Book One of Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*. While the earlier series *Meditations on Savitri* consists of paintings inspired directly by the poem, in this later series the paintings made by Huta under the Mother’s guidance are inspired by the Mother’s comments on Sri Aurobindo’s mantric lines. Unfortunately after August 1970 the Mother was unable to continue this work.

Huta had a strong connection with Auroville — a letter of hers to the Mother in 1965 inspired the creation of Matrimandir, the Mother’s Shrine; and it was to Huta that the Mother first explained, with sketches, her concept for the town-plan of Auroville. In 1966 Huta produced the painting which the Mother named ‘*The Spirit of Auroville*’. All this is told in her books *Matrimandir — the Mother’s Truth and Love* and *The Spirit of Auroville*.

I first met Huta in 1972 through my friend Christl Klostermann, who like me was living in Aspiration, Auroville at that time. She had been assisting her husband, Michel Klostermann, in preparing the first film that was made, with the Mother’s Blessings, of Huta’s *Meditations on Savitri* paintings. When that film was shown for the first time, in the courtyard of Huta House, I was amongst the invited guests. I remember that at the same time we were shown a film of the Mother opening the New Horizon Sugar Mills, which had been established by Huta’s brothers. It was the first time I had seen a film of the Mother — an unforgettable experience.

In retrospect it seems significant that my first contact with Huta was in connection with her work with the Mother on *Savitri*. Although we had intermittent contacts over the intervening years, some in connection with Matrimandir and Auroville matters, some in Amal’s office, and I was once invited to her apartment in Huta House, our relationship became closer in the late 1990s with the creation of Savitri Bhavan.

Savitri Bhavan has grown out of a dream that was first formulated by a member of the Savitri Study Circle, initiated in Auroville on November 24, 1994. Suresh Dey, then Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, invited some Aurovilians to meet on that day and proposed the idea that Sri Aurobindo’s revelatory epic should be studied



on a regular basis. The idea took hold, and the Study Circle has met every Sunday morning since then — at first here and there wherever a room was available. One of the group, now deceased, Narayanbhai, expressed that there ought to be a place in Auroville where all materials that would support and help a deeper understanding and appreciation of *Savitri* could be gathered and made available in such a way that any sensitive person coming there — even if they knew nothing about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother or the poem — would feel ‘Here is something special’. This idea must have been an inspiration from the Master himself. Definitely it has received his Blessing. On November 24, 1995 Nirodbaran laid the Foundation Stone of the Savitri Bhavan at a ceremony that was attended by many Ashramites and Aurovilians, on a beautiful plot of land between the Bharat Nivas and the Matrimandir, that had been assigned to it on the specific instructions of Roger Anger, the Mother’s architect for Auroville.

It took some years for the first permanent building to come up — it was inaugurated on August 8, 1999, again by Nirodbaran. It was after this that Huta began to take a great interest in the Bhavan. When our architect, Helmut, asked the members of the Study Circle to formulate what facilities would be needed for the Bhavan, and we thought about the kind of resources that were or were likely to become available there, I think that none of us dreamed that Huta’s *Meditations on Savitri* paintings would ever come there. They were almost legendary creations, which we had heard about, but knew only from the illustrations in the books published by the Mother in the early 1960s when they were still in creation — illustrations based on early versions of paintings which were later redone. But still we hoped that if the Savitri Bhavan became the place we dreamed of, perhaps Huta would allow us to exhibit some of the paintings from time to time. But as it turned out, she herself had another inspiration.

After the final series of paintings was exhibited in the Ashram exhibition hall in February 1967, they were stored in a special room in Golconde allotted to Huta’s materials by the Mother. There the paintings and the Mother’s sketches for them could be glimpsed sometimes by privileged people at Huta’s invitation. But they were not entirely welcome there — the Golconde management would have preferred them to have another home. And Huta too from the very beginning felt that this was not their proper place. She told me that in 1967, when all of the *Meditations on Savitri* paintings had been exhibited in the Ashram, and were being kept at Golconde, she communicated to the Mother her strong feeling that “Savitri must have her own place”. The Mother went into a deep concentration, then said emphatically, “It will be.”

When Savitri Bhavan was started, Huta felt that this was the “own place” which the Mother had promised for Savitri. She invited some of us to meet her to discuss the possibility of her collection being housed at Savitri Bhavan. As I was acting as the coordinator of the Savitri Bhavan team, from that time onwards we began to

work together with increasing closeness and in June 2001 the entire set of 472 oil paintings illustrating the whole of *Savitri*, entitled by the Mother "*Meditations on Savitri*", was entrusted to Savitri Bhavan, along with facsimiles of the Mother's original sketches, written instructions and comments, copies of her recorded recitations of the selected passages, and of her recorded explanations of *Savitri*. This is a unique treasure, which will be a goldmine of insight to future scholars seeking to gain a deeper understanding of Sri Aurobindo's vision. To house and display this priceless collection under secure and state-of-the-art conditions, as well as providing the necessary curatorial and research facilities, is now an important aspect of the work of Savitri Bhavan.

In August 2008 the Picture Gallery was opened with the first exhibition of *Meditations on Savitri* paintings. It is not yet possible to have the entire series on permanent display according to the Mother's wish, but that is our aim. Meanwhile we are showing rotating exhibitions of about 90 paintings at a time, along with the corresponding passages from Sri Aurobindo's poem. We are deeply grateful to Aurovilian photographer Giorgio Molinari, who has taken digital photographs of all the paintings, and provided magnificent archival quality reproductions of them in the actual size of the originals. This enables us to display them in the original frames prepared when the paintings were first exhibited in the Ashram in 1967.

Moreover, at Huta's request, these photographs of Giorgio have been made into digital films by another Aurovilian from Italy — Manohar (Luigi Fedele). Each half-hour film is accompanied by the original soundtrack prepared for the slide-shows made for Sri Aurobindo's centenary in 1972, from the recordings of the Mother's voice made by Huta in the 1960s mixed with the Mother's own recorded organ music. In August 2011 all 18 of these films were published by Havyavahana Trust in 3 boxed sets of 6 DVDs each and are now available from SABDA.

After the *Meditations on Savitri* paintings were moved to Auroville in June 2001, Huta visited us at Savitri Bhavan, to meet the team members and to see where the paintings were being kept, in the cupboards that had been made for them according to the Mother's design and instructions. She came again in August 2005, with her cousin Mr. Lalit Modi and his wife and sister. At that time the main building, which was to include the Picture Gallery intended exclusively to display the *Meditations on Savitri* paintings, was just at the foundation stage. Apart from these two visits, the only times she came to Savitri Bhavan, I used to meet Huta two or three times a month, first at her apartment in Ambabhiikshu Gardens, and later in the house in rue de la Compagnie, behind the Ashram Library, which was allotted to her by the Ashram Trust and renovated at her expense — she named it 'Gratitude'. These were mostly working meetings, when she would be giving me things to be kept with her collection at Savitri Bhavan, instructions about what was to be done with them and how they were to be cared for, or consulting me about her publications. In fact it

was from that time on that the output of new publications from Havyavahana Trust began and went on increasing considerably.

She would often tell me about her experiences with the Mother, particularly during the time when the *Savitri* paintings were being made; and at other times she would share with me various things that were on her mind, troubling her. Those meetings were not always easy for me. This small sweet-looking lady, who could be so loving and generous and appreciative, also had somewhere within her a lion who would wake up and roar fiercely at anything she felt was contrary to the Mother's wish and will. She worked tremendously hard, made enormous efforts to fulfil the mission she felt the Mother had given her, and she expected everyone else to come up to her own high standards. Any slackness or carelessness would annoy her, and if she felt any intention to distort the Mother's intentions she could become frighteningly fierce. I have heard that it was very difficult for those whose work brought them into close daily contact with the Mother to bear the pressure of her will for perfection and progress. Although I only met Huta two or three times a month — apart from frequent phone calls — I felt some similar pressure. Yet I learned a great deal from her, and she was constantly giving generously. She felt that everything she had to share was a gift from the Mother which it was her duty and mission to pass on to future generations and humanity as a whole. Gradually she came to trust and rely on me more and more, and she appreciated the affection and respect shown to her by the members of the Savitri Bhavan team. Each year she would ask me the list of names, as the team grew and changed, so that she could send a gift to all, usually in August.

On October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011 she phoned to tell me that our appointment to meet the following Wednesday would have to be postponed as she was going into the Ashram Nursing Home to receive glucose drip treatments. On the phone that day her voice sounded as strong and determined as usual, but I knew that her body was getting dangerously weak. Over the previous months I had seen her drastically losing weight, and could see that she was finding it more and more difficult to keep up with all the work that she still felt she had to do. Since 2000 Havyavahana Trust had brought out one or two significant new publications each year, and many more were in preparation or planned, not to mention reprints of perennial best-sellers such as the various translations of *White Roses* — especially the Tamil version — and *Victory of the Truth*; but over the last year she had insisted that she must concentrate on preparing new books: reprints and translations, she said, could wait until she was no longer with us.

On August 24 at her request I had taken Manohar to meet her. She wanted to thank him for completing the work of making films of all the *Meditations on Savitri* paintings. Manohar had not met Huta since she visited Savitri Bhavan in August 2005, when he was just starting that project. He was struck by the difference in her

physical appearance. But she was the same Huta in all her loving generosity when she received us. She discussed with Manohar the possibility of making further films of her paintings, starting with the ones inspired by lines from some of Sri Aurobindo's poems, then the *About Savitri* series, and others which she was also planning to publish in book form — the *Earlier Paintings* of flowers and items from the Mother's collections of rare objects which the Mother used to send her to paint when she was teaching her the art of oil painting in 1957-60, as well as some remarkable *Visionary Paintings*. She was very happy when Manohar agreed to make a start with the *Paintings inspired by Poems of Sri Aurobindo*.

She told us that a collection of sketches made on tinted handmade papers illustrating visions of the Mother and herself was at the Ashram Press to appear soon with the title *Joy of Light*. Next on the list for publication, she explained, was a much expanded version of an essay called '*My Savitri Work with the Mother*' which she had contributed to the second volume of R.Y. Deshpande's collection *Perspectives of Savitri*, published in 2002. That essay was also serialised in the Savitri Bhavan journal *Invocation*. Now she had added a lot of new material and it was to be brought out in two parts by Havyavahana Trust. (Preparing these two volumes was the last work that my colleague Tatiana and I worked on for Huta. She also told Tatiana that she should start preparing *The Story of a Soul* Part 3 (1957) but work on this project was postponed as her health declined.)

Then on September 7<sup>th</sup> Helmut (the architect of Savitri Bhavan) accompanied me — she wanted to see him before he left for Germany on a visit to see his seriously-ill elder brother. As we returned to Auroville in the car, both of us felt that this might be the last time that we would see her: she seemed so frail and thin, it was as if she could just fade away at any moment. After that I met her again for a few minutes on September 21<sup>st</sup> to hand over a cheque. She told me that she had got out of bed specially to receive me, after being mostly bedridden for the two weeks since I was last there.

On the day of the last phone call, I was able to inform her that Manohar had completed the first of two films of the *Paintings inspired by Poems of Sri Aurobindo* — which made her very happy. That was the last time I spoke to her.

During the first week or two of her stay in the Nursing Home, when she was receiving the glucose drips, Huta did not want to receive any visitors. On November 1<sup>st</sup> — her spiritual birthday — I tried to phone her there, but was told she was resting. After that we heard that she was improving, that the drips had been discontinued and that she was on a liquid diet. My own health difficulties prevented me from visiting her in those last weeks, but news received through friends indicated to me that she was extremely weak — too weak even to speak, it seemed.

So when the news came on November 17<sup>th</sup> that she had left us, it was not entirely a shock — rather the sense that she had made a conscious choice to depart on that significant day. But there was, and remains, the sense of a great loss. So

much of the work that Huta planned to do remains incomplete. For instance, she wished to publish all the *Meditations on Savitri* paintings in a series of 18 volumes, accompanied by a further two volumes showing some of the sketches which the Mother made to guide her in the course of the work. She wanted to write a book on all that the Mother had taught her about Occultism, and hoped to share all the research she herself had done about *Savitri* in a series entitled *Savitri — the Supreme Revelation*. Apart from the collections of paintings, many volumes of *The Story of a Soul* remain to be published. The trustees of the Havyavahana Trust have resolved to do their best to fulfil Huta's intentions for all that she had prepared, in order to share with the whole of humanity as much as possible of the wealth of treasures which the Mother had bestowed on her over the 18 years that they worked together; but without her personal guidance and input that work will necessarily remain incomplete.

How grateful we must be to the Mother for picking out this special soul and for all the treasures that she poured out on Huta; and how grateful we must be to Huta for all that she has shared with us — an inspiring legacy for the future.

SHRADDHAVAN

Q: I believe that each divine being has a hostile being associated with it for some unknown purpose in the Asrama.

*Sri Aurobindo: It is not only in the Asram but everywhere that it is like that. It is a well-known principle of all occult knowledge that there are these two elements overstanding each seeker of the Truth.*

(*Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 643)

## THE DIVINE BANKER

### (A Tribute to Huta-ben)

*Huta-ben needs no introduction. She was a special child of the Mother who lived in Her consciousness all the time 24/7 till she breathed her last on 17<sup>th</sup> November — the same date on which the Mother attained Samadhi. Her love for Mother was intense and on the 16<sup>th</sup> evening when she was in the Nursing Home she requested the sisters and doctors not to come for any checks during the night as Mother would be visiting her late at night and she would be busy talking to her. Earlier during the day she had also asked a close friend of hers to keep her residence at No. 10, Rue de la Compagnie clean and tidy as she would be returning home from the Nursing Home the next day (17<sup>th</sup> November). Both her requests were respected. At 1:32 p.m. on 17<sup>th</sup> afternoon, Huta-ben left her body and by 4 p.m. she was brought to 10, Rue de la Compagnie.*

*When anybody was in difficulty and confided in her, she invoked the Mother and blessed him/her with a blessing packet asking them to have faith in the Mother and that “all will be well” — and all did get well!!! As a tribute to this wonderful lady with steel-like faith in the Mother, I wish to share one of the many such occasions I experienced.*

*Personally, it was Huta-ben who brought me and my soul close to the Mother.*

IN the year 1990, when the stock exchanges all over the country became buoyant and dynamic, some well-wisher clients of my chartered accountancy firm, first prompted and then persuaded me to become a facilitator for transacting in shares on their behalf. This was to enable them to invest in shares through my establishment instead of dealing directly with brokers outside Pondicherry. They called it vertical integration — an integration that almost ripped me apart horizontally! Though the inner voice expressed its reluctance, I went by the populist recommendation and established a firm called Sriji Investment Consultancy with my spouse and the spouses of the partners of my audit firm as partners. As the partners had no inkling about the business, it was I who managed the show. The firm got linked to a broker in Chennai, and immediately we were on the “highway”. Though we were amateurs in this business, the few hiccups, hitches and glitches that came on the way were overcome and ignored.

I am no stranger to turmoil, and small problems in life have never managed to ruffle me, so I got something big this time. There is a popular belief that the stock



markets go up by the staircase and come down by the elevator and the so-called “bulls” and “bears” suddenly realise that they have only been “asses”! In 1992, the elevator itself crashed and there was a bloodbath in the market, sounding the death-knell of my share broking venture. Our broker in Chennai, who speculated with our share certificates, failed and refused to pay us. The amount was huge and unless he honoured his part of the commitment, there was no way I could settle my clients’ accounts. Frequent calls and visits to the broker yielded no result, and the pressure to pay our patrons mounted. I found myself in the middle of a complex web of crises. I was shattered and devastated and on the brink of a nervous break-down. I could not perceive a single silver lining in the cloud.

In the midst of this gloom came my birthday. On this day, every year I go to my cousin Huta-ben’s house to meditate in front of the most living picture of the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. On this fateful day too, I kept my appointment with the Divine and went to Huta-ben’s place.

Huta-ben was a staunch devotee of the Mother and had worked with the Mother for nearly three decades. She received me and wished me with a kindly smile and affectionate eyes. In an instant, she realised that I was not in my element and asked me if I was facing some problem. I replied in the negative and started moving towards the meditation room.

“Is it financial?” she persisted.

“No Huta-ben, all’s fine”, I lied.

“If you are in need of some money, I’ve got some savings — you can have it all”, she ventured.

“No Huta-ben, brothers should give to sisters, not take from them”, I replied.

So saying, I stepped into the meditation chamber and sat on the floor in front of the Mother’s altar, with closed eyes. Huta-ben stood beside me in silent contemplation, feeling my restlessness. The atmosphere of the meditation chamber was tranquil and comforting. My meditation was deep and long. When I rose to leave the chamber I found Huta-ben standing beside me. Her gaze seemed to penetrate into my heart and soul. With her arm pointing towards a small packet placed on the altar she spoke, “Lalit, that’s a little gift from the Mother to you. Will you not take it?”

I bent to pick the gift up and went through the motions of touching it to my forehead and chest and turned to leave the chamber.

“What’s the hurry Lalit. Will you not open the gift in the Mother’s presence?” she asked.

I obeyed and unwrapped the packet. It was a beautiful leather purse. I thanked Huta-ben and started to walk.

Again she stopped me, “Will you not see what is inside the purse?” she queried.

Obediently, I opened the purse and found a one-rupee coin and a tiny blessings packet containing a couple of flower petals and looked up.

Then she spoke, “Lalit, that coin was given to me by the Mother. Somehow, I feel that you need it more than me. Keep it safely with you as long as you live.”

I looked at her dumbfounded and then looked at the Mother’s picture. She seemed to say, “All will be well, my son.”

Like a drowning man clinging to a straw, I held the purse close to my chest thanking Huta-ben abundantly. I left the chamber and her house quickly. The tears gushed out as soon as I stepped into the street leaving me helpless and forlorn but energised.

Equipped with faith in the Divine instilled in me by Huta-ben, the sacred coin in my pocket and the name of Mother on my lips I headed for Chennai the next morning to meet the broker. Swamy, the manager, profusely apologetic, did not allow me to enter the broker’s chamber because of orders from the latter. I begged, pleaded and prayed to Swamy to do something about the payment. He expressed his inability to do anything about it and I persisted with my persuasion telling him that I was doomed and had nothing on me to pay my customers. Noticing my worried and nervous condition, his heart melted and he reluctantly agreed to talk to his boss. So saying, he stepped into his boss’s chamber and was there for nearly half an hour. A heated argument seemed to ensue inside the chamber. When Swamy returned to his table where I was biting my nails, he had a cheque in his hands for half the sum due to my firm which he handed over to me. Moved by compassion, Swami confided in me that I should arrange to open a bank account in Chennai immediately and deposit the cheque. His boss was aware that I had no bank account in Chennai and that I had to go back to Pondicherry and deposit the cheque in my firm’s bank account there, and by the time it came for clearance to Chennai, he would advise his bank to stop payment. Those days it took more than a week for a Chennai cheque to get cleared.

I gaped at Swamy and told him that it was impossible for me to open a bank account in Chennai with the news of the Harshad Mehta scam having spread far and wide. Swamy could only shrug his shoulders and say that since he understood my plight, he offered the clue but was clueless as to how I could manage to open a new account in my firm’s name in Chennai.

Realising that the cheque was not even worth the paper it was printed on, I still hurried to a bank nearby. It happened to be a branch of the same bank our firm was banking with in Pondicherry. I met the manager with a request to open a current account in the name of “Sriji Investment Consultancy”. The manager was amused when he found that none of the partners of the firm were available to sign the application, that there was no document evidencing the existence of the firm handy — in fact, I had nothing with me except this cheque. I requested him to talk to his branch in Pondicherry and ascertain the credentials of my firm. I promised to bring the three partners, legal documents and all necessary papers the next day. He noticed the desperation in my voice and the restlessness in my body language. But the



mature officer was not impressed and he politely refused, saying that being a Chartered Accountant, I should know better that such a thing could not be done and particularly in the scam environment, it would take more than a week to get permission from his regional office to open the account. I knew he was right. Crestfallen I left and tried my luck with two other banks — but with the same negative result.

Sensing that I was fighting a losing battle, I headed for my newly-appointed broking firm's office, hoping to use their good offices to open a bank account with their bankers. Business wisdom at that point was in continuing the share business with another broker so that funds were available for rotation. Therefore, as soon as our old broker failed, I immediately tied up with another, to keep the business and funds flowing. They were three partners and unaware of my tribulations.

Two of the partners were available and I narrated the whole history and placed the cheque before them. They apprehended that our erstwhile broker was a speculator and might soon be suspended from the stock exchange. Sympathetic to my woes, one of the partners called up the manager of his firm's bank and requested him to open an account in the name of my firm. In spite of all his assurances and guarantees the request was politely turned down.

The relentless negativity began to chip away at my optimism. Utterly shaken and stunned I sank into the chair with a deadpan face, not knowing what to do. My stupor was frightening and I looked like a World War II soldier surrendering all his earthly arms and ammunition and did not care what happened to me now. However, from the consistent decline in self-confidence emerged the ascent of faith in the Divine induced by Huta-ben. I simply took refuge in the new found sacred coin and the blessings packet Huta-ben had given me and her goodwill. My battle lines were drawn and on the psychic plane I was in no mood to surrender. I kept praying to the Divine.

At this juncture, Jinesh, the third partner, walked in. Observing my wrinkled brow and ashen visage he asked me what was wrong. At that point of time my thought-form was disjointed and my thought-process incoherent. So the other partners apprised him of the facts. Jinesh looked at me with pity and genuine sympathy and casually asked me to show him the cheque. I pushed it across to him. He looked at the instrument, first indifferently and then suddenly sat up and again looked at it more carefully, and with his face lighting up, proclaimed that my problem was solved. Coming out of my daze, I looked at him with incredulousness and warned him that I was in no mood for any nonsense and told him not to pull my leg at this critical juncture. Jinesh's happiness was undisguised and uncontrollable. Opening the drawer of his table, he produced a little book and placed it before me. I glanced at it nonchalantly without reaching out for it and realised that it was a bank pass book. I looked towards Jinesh with a puzzled look. "Have a good look at it, *yaar*," Jinesh screamed with excitement. I took the bank pass book into my

hands and examined it with circumspection. A careful scrutiny of the book made the hair on my body stand and quiver. I was just dumbfounded and speechless. I looked at Jinesh and my heart went out to him. Just when it seemed all was lost the Eureka moment came! It took some time to clarify the dynamics in my head but I recognised the defining moment. It was no doubt a simple bank pass book but it was the passbook of an establishment called “Sriji Investment Consultancy”! Jinesh too had a concern in Chennai in the same name and style of “Sriji Investment Consultancy” as the one I had in Pondicherry. What a coincidence and what a miracle! Astounding, but true! Right in front of me appeared on a Divine Platter . . . a bank account in the name and style of my firm “Sriji Investment Consultancy”. I clutched the Divine Coin in my pocket and tears rolled down my cheeks. The divinity of the Divine manifested in all its glory. The Divine Banker provided me a bank account just on Huta-ben’s recommendation without any proofs and paper. The only proof He required was Faith. The Professional Divine Banker did it with élan. The power of prayer and faith worked. It was indeed a Divine solution to a hostile and horrendous problem. Tough times may sometimes be everlasting, tough people may also not last but tough and unshaken faith in the Divine will always yield lasting solutions.

The rest is history. The cheque was immediately deposited in this account and funds credited therein the next day before the conniving ex-broker could do the damage by stopping the payment. Later, I learnt that he did go to his bank for the ‘stop payment’ a couple of days later and was shocked to find that the funds had already been transferred.

The impulsive decision to commence an enterprise entirely on recommendation of my chums and cronies would have turned into a major catastrophe had it not been for the timely initiative of Huta-ben and the Divine intervention. And to introduce you to the Divine, an instrument like Huta-ben is absolutely essential.

LALIT N. MODI

*Do not let your mind labour in anticipation on a work that has to be done. The Power that acts in you will see to it at its own time.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 705)*

# ITINERARY OF A CHILD OF THE CENTURY

## Pavitra's Correspondence with His Father

*(Continued from the issue of January 2012)*

### Chapter XIII *(Continued)*

A Time of Bereavements

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

Tel. Addr.  
AUROBINDO — PONDICHERRY  
**Personal**

PONDICHERRY  
India  
August 7, 1953

My dear Albert,

Recently I have received a letter from Father where he told me of his passing through a difficult crisis. His handwriting seemed to have been affected, but I hope that he can nevertheless continue some activities. The decline of the faculties of the body and the mind is a painful trial; the consciousness which little by little withdraws from the world, then needs to rely resolutely on the higher consciousness. If the soul has a religious bent, it is relatively easy; the rationalist has more difficulty. All the same, I think that being the sincere idealist that Father is at heart — in spite of his declaration of materialism — he finds access to the inner kingdom of light and peace and that he will avoid a painful transition. Sri Aurobindo and Mother, and I see more and more like them, actually consider death merely as a transition from one state of consciousness to another. It is often painful because generally people are totally ignorant of the new state of consciousness which they are entering and they cling to the old. A personal knowledge of the profound life, independent of the body, lessens the suffering by removing the fear of the unknown. It is in this sense that I would like to help Father, but I do not see what I can now do except to think of him with love and place him under Mother's protection. I know that you are near him and that you will give him your support and your love in the difficult period. I request you to convey to him my filial gratitude, my respect and my love.

This letter is for you. Here is another one which you may show.  
 I embrace you with all my heart.  
 Your affectionate brother.

*Signed:* Philippe

\* \* \*

### SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

Tel. Addr.  
 AUROBINDO — PONDICHERRY

PONDICHERRY  
 India  
 August 7, 1953

My dear Albert,

The occasion to write to you has been furnished to me by the fact that I have recently met Astoin, the new branch manager of the Banque de l'Indochine. He spoke to me quite at length about you and he has fond memories of the contacts that you have had in the common army mess. He has asked me to send you his happy remembrances.

We have had quite a few visitors from France in recent times: professors from the Sorbonne, come to conduct the baccalauréat exams, students on study tour, politicians and also people who had come specially for the Ashram.

I shall soon send you a brochure on the Ashram School and the developing University Centre. It is a report of the work done and some indications of the future. Here, in advance, are some of the photos which will illustrate the work. I think you will recognise me, in spite of the change due to age.

Here I am in my 60<sup>th</sup> year. It is not surprising then that the years have begun to touch me also. I am defending myself energetically because I know that in this field, the effect of collective suggestion is enormous. My health is now good, without being perfect. Regular physical exercise keeps me in good form and I enjoy participating in various sporting competitions of our adult group.

I would like to have photos of all of you. The holidays provide a favourable time and if you have some nice prints, they will be welcome.

Where do you spend the month of August? Probably on some beach where I hope this letter finds you all reunited. I hope Father recovers from his recent illness and can enjoy a few walks in the open air.

Here the weather is excellent this year. Today, it is now ten o'clock, the thermometer shows 32°C with a pleasant sea breeze and a beautiful sun. Quite plentiful

rains have refreshed the atmosphere in the month of June and we have not suffered from the heat.

In Autumn we shall send to France a film on the Ashram. Duration: an hour and a half or two hours, partly in black and white and partly in colour, with a commentary (in English). I have asked that you be informed of all the shows in Paris and I wish that all of you can see it. I would like you to tell me frankly your individual reactions, if they differ from one another. I shall be interested to know.

My dear Albert, my kind thoughts are always with all of you. Embrace Father for me. Brotherly remembrances to Denise.

Very affectionately,  
Your brother.

*Signed: Philippe*

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#### SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

Tel. Addr.  
AUROBINDO — PONDICHERRY

PONDICHERRY  
India  
September 25, 1953

My dear Father,

This little note is to send you my best wishes for your birthday. You will all surely be gathered together for this occasion and I shall be with you in my heart. I would like to tell you here of my filial gratitude and my respect.

A few days ago I have sent by airmail a brochure which has just come out about the University Centre. I hope that it will reach you before the 2<sup>nd</sup> October and that you will be glad to see the progress of our work.

Sometime back I have received, after a month's delay due to strike, your letter of the 12<sup>th</sup> August and I thank you for it.

We are not satisfied with the film on the Ashram and we have not yet sent it to France. Can we rework it and make something less "amateurish"? I do not yet know. As it is now, it will please those who know the Ashram or who have some feelings for it, but it might give a wrong impression to complete strangers, or in any case might be incomprehensible to them.

I embrace you lovingly.  
Your affectionate son,

*Signed: Philippe*

\* \* \*

## SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

Tel. Addr.  
AUROBINDO — PONDICHERRY

PONDICHERRY  
India  
November 30, 1953

My dear Father,

I have received your letter of the 12<sup>th</sup> instant and was happy to learn of your little celebration in honour of your 91<sup>st</sup> birthday. Albert had informed me, by a letter from Los Angeles, about his journey and of the development of his business in America. I am very glad of it; I hope he will not have too many worries. Some economists foresee an economic crisis in the United States in 1954, similar to that of 1929.

Our work continues. We are now in the holiday period and we are preparing for the celebrations of our school anniversary on the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> December, and that keeps everybody busy. Then we shall have the 5<sup>th</sup> December, the anniversary of the passing of Sri Aurobindo, and the 9<sup>th</sup>, that of his *Samadhi*. The school and the University Centre will reopen on the 10<sup>th</sup> December and we must begin preparing the courses. I am working on a course on the theory of probability and statistics, subjects which have interested me since long. Finally to increase the workload, I am, for the time being and for a week, deputy magistrate at the Assizes Court.

I hope that you are in good health and that you still walk to your club in fine weather.

I often think of you, and embrace you with all my love.

Your devoted son,

*Signed:* Philippe

\* \* \*

## SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

Tel. Addr.  
AUROBINDO — PONDICHERRY

PONDICHERRY  
India  
December 19, 1953

My dear Father,

I want to be faithful to the end of the year meeting. In spite of the physical distance, I shall be present amongst you during these days when it is customary to rejoice. One could ask oneself, what about? It is certainly a proof of the profound optimism which dwells in us all, because the appearances are not encouraging and one does not see any prospect, other than the inner certitude, that the future will be better than the past.

It is therefore on this inner certitude that we must depend. Without that, life will be hopeless and dreary. That alone allows us to endure all and to go triumphantly through the tribulations.

Here is the translation<sup>1</sup> of the enclosed card:

“Let the dawn of the New Year be for us also  
the dawn of a new and better life.”

The Mother

It is this sincere wish which I make for all of you and I greet you with my affectionate thoughts.

I embrace you very lovingly.

Your devoted son,

*Signed:* Philippe

\* \* \*

1. *The Mother had written the message in English.* — MI ed.

## SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

Tel. Addr.  
AUROBINDO — PONDICHERRY

PONDICHERRY  
India  
January 13, 1954

My dear Father,

I have received a beautiful New Year gift: it has been a surprise and a real pleasure. In your picture I rediscovered all the features which I knew. It seems to me though that there you are a little more “American” than in the photos which I have of you. In any case, my compliments to the artist. Who is he?

Your little note of the 1<sup>st</sup> January has also just reached me and I am most touched by your so tender and loving thought. On your side, you may be assured of all my grateful and filial affection. I regret that destiny has separated us physically, but I thank her for leaving Albert and his family to surround you with their loving care. I have too much confidence in the meaning of the terrestrial life not to think that the future will reveal to us, to you and to me, the significance of all our joys, our suffering, our hopes and our cares.

I am going to be sixty in a few days; it will be an occasion to turn my thoughts to you, as I do often, and to make the wishes that you become wholly conscious of the divine Presence in yourself, with the Peace, the Light and the Joy which that alone brings.

I embrace you very lovingly.  
Your affectionate son,

*Signed:* Philippe.

*(To be concluded)*

PHILIPPE BARBIER SAINT HILAIRE

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Our thanks for their kind permission.)



# TRUTH OF POETICAL CREATION: SRI AUROBINDO'S POETICS OF OVERHEAD CONSCIOUSNESS

## I

THE present article deals in brief with Sri Aurobindo's vision of the mystery of poetical creation and its principle. In other words the attempt here is to present Sri Aurobindo's theory of a new "poetics" for the future poetry of his vision. Artists and poets invariably speak of their inspiration as the fountainhead of their creative energy. Since man's attention first turned to the process and mystery of artistic creation, poets, philosophers and critics of all ages and all climes have attempted to go deep into this mystery and analyse it. Understanding the source of this inspiration and its operation is termed 'Poetics' in literary criticism. Poetics has two aspects, the first its operative part and the second its principle. In this Section of the article it is proposed to present the operative aspect.

### Poetics of the past:

Several philosophers — Kant, Schiller, Schelling of Germany — put forward their theories in this regard. From Kant's idea in his *Critique of Judgment*, Schelling derived that the creative impulse is not a conscious contrivance; it is an instinctive process. It has its source in the unconscious part of the artist's being. To Schiller, a creative work involves the poet's unique departure in the unconscious by his imaginative power. From this the English poet and critic, Coleridge developed his theory of 'Esemplastic Imagination'. To him, there is in genius itself an unconscious activity, nay, that is the genius in the man of genius. His theory is based on the well-known phrase: to make the external internal, the internal external. It has two operative aspects. In its first aspect the external Nature becomes thought in the mind of the poet; this is performed by what Coleridge called primary imagination. In the second stage the internal, the thought in the poet's mind, becomes external, i.e. the poet's thought finds expression outside in language; this is performed by what Coleridge called secondary imagination. Here, although the mind of the poet intervenes and acts as the recording and transmitting instrument, yet the process according to Coleridge is an 'unconscious activity'. Unsatisfied with these theories, Freud the psychologist plunged into the horrid depth of the subconscious and the 'libido'. To him all art and poetry originate from here. If this is accepted, then it would make of

poetry an ‘Inferno’s art’; we shall not have anything sublime in poetry. All these theories of the past speak of the nature and origin of poetic process either as an instinctive one or an unconscious activity or having its origin in the subconscious and the libido. None, however, speaks of the mystery of poetic inspiration, how it comes, how it acts and under what conditions. It is ultimately left to Sri Aurobindo to lay bare the process of this mysterious activity of poetic creation.

### **Poetics of Sri Aurobindo:**

In the history of poetics Sri Aurobindo’s greatest contribution lies in his explanation of the process and working of poetic inspiration. But his explanation is not mere theory, it is a truth-vision, a revelation based on actual realisation of high spiritual truths.

Sri Aurobindo is a poet and a yogi: “He is a true Rishi and a poet combined,” as Tagore spoke of him in a letter of November 30, 1919. Whatever Sri Aurobindo writes on poetry and poetics emanates from the experiences of his yoga-sadhana. His yoga-sadhana takes him to the discovery that

Consciousness is a fundamental thing, the fundamental thing in existence — it is the energy, the motion, the movement of consciousness that creates the universe and all that is in it — not only the macrocosm but the microcosm is nothing but consciousness arranging itself.<sup>1</sup>

Consciousness is usually identified with mind but mental consciousness is only the human range of it. Sri Aurobindo’s yogic vision has, however, discovered many ranges, planes or variables of consciousness above the mind plane and below it. Yet consciousness is one energy and the variables or the grades of this energy form the many paces or rungs to form the ‘World Stair’ for the ‘soul’s remote ascent’ to the ‘Eternal’s house’:

At each pace of the journey marvellous  
A new degree of wonder and of bliss,  
A new rung formed in Being’s mighty stair,  
A great wide step trembling with jewelled fire  
As if a burning spirit quivered there  
Upholding with his flame the immortal hope<sup>2</sup>

1. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 236.

2. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 277.

Speaking further on the variables of consciousness Sri Aurobindo writes:

The gradations of consciousness are universal states not dependent on the outlook of the subjective personality; rather the outlook of the subjective personality is determined by the grade of consciousness in which it is organised according to its typical nature or its evolutionary stage.<sup>3</sup>

Many are these universal gradations of consciousness above the mind level and all these Sri Aurobindo collectively calls Overhead consciousness. These gradations of worlds or planes of consciousness in the cosmos form one complex movement to form what Sri Aurobindo metaphorically speaks of as the 'World-Stair', 'a brief compendium of the Vast', 'the single stair to being's goal'.

Alone it points us to our journey back<sup>4</sup>

Besides these universal gradations or planes of consciousness,

In each of us there is a mental plane of consciousness, a psychic, a vital, a subtle physical as well as the gross physical and material plane. The same planes are repeated in the consciousness of general Nature.<sup>5</sup>

Thus we see as per Sri Aurobindo's vision that Consciousness, the one fundamental creative energy, flows in two currents — one in universal Nature and the other in the being of man; and yet the two currents are the same.

To understand the new poetics, the operation of the mystery of poetical creation and image-making as propounded by Sri Aurobindo, we must go deep into what his spiritual insight reveals about the grades or planes of consciousness and their nature. Consciousness is essentially the same throughout but variable in status, condition and operation. This variability gives it the semblance of different ranges or planes of consciousness when in truth it is one energy, only it acts at and from various levels of magnitude. These Overhead planes of consciousness are named by Sri Aurobindo as the Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind and the Overmind according to their nature. But the highest plane is the Supermind which is in the Transcendent sphere. It is, however, not possible to discuss all these variables or planes of consciousness in a short article.

3. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 235.

4. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 98.

5. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 24, pp. 1499-1500.

### **Mechanism of poetical creation:**

In the absence of a more suitable word, the author has used the word ‘mechanism’, when in truth this section deals with the operative part of Sri Aurobindo’s poetics, how and from where poetic inspiration originates.

Every poet is stationed at a certain level or status of consciousness. According to Sri Aurobindo’s truth-vision and his own experience, poetical creation is the result of contact or centralising of the poet’s consciousness with some universal gradations of consciousness in general Nature. The stress formed by the contact of the poet’s consciousness at a particular level of the universal consciousness releases the creative energy or the poetic inspiration from that point of contact and descends into the poet. Where the consciousness places and concentrates itself on the universal level, from that plane or region poetry is formed, making the poet’s consciousness its channel. The higher the point of contact of the poet’s consciousness with the universal level, the more intense and pure becomes poetic inspiration. Sri Aurobindo, too, revised and rewrote *Savitri* several times according as he ascended the ladder of overhead consciousness. He writes,

... my greater power over poetry and perfect expression was acquired in these last days not by reading and seeing how other people wrote, but from the heightening of my consciousness and the greater inspiration that came from the heightening.<sup>6</sup>

According to the ‘contact’ theory, the poet’s consciousness may concentrate in the ego, in the mind or the external being; poetry then becomes the expression of the physical externalities of life. It may concentrate in the inner mind or vital or the inmost psychic, centralising its stress there; poetry then becomes the expression of the inner being or of the deeper psychic being. The consciousness may ascend to the wideness and freedom in the cosmic Self, poetry and imagery then become the utterance of the deepest soul of man and of the universal spirit in things.

Poetic inspiration may thus originate from any of the regions where the consciousness puts the stress of its centralising force. Sri Aurobindo’s explanation of the poetic activity, the origin and source of poetic inspiration and its working lies in his ‘contact’ theory. The creative operation is:

By the contact with the source of inspiration the creative Power at one level or another and the human instrument, receptacle or channel get into contact.<sup>7</sup>

6. *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26, p. 221.

7. *Letters on Poetry and Art*, CWSA, Vol. 27, p. 7.

This is the process.

If the substance, rhythm, form, words come down all together ready-formed from the plane of poetic creation, that is the perfect type of inspiration; . . .<sup>8</sup>

Sri Aurobindo advises budding sadhak-poets that

. . . if you could always write direct from the illumined mind — finding not only the poetic substance . . . but the rhythm and language, that indeed would be a poetry exquisite, original and unique. The intellect produces the idea, even the poetic idea, too much for the sake of the idea alone; coming from the illumined mind the idea in a form of light and music is itself but the shining body of the Light Divine.<sup>9</sup>

It has often been seen that a poet has different tones or pitches of expression, even his vision of truth. As Sri Aurobindo points out, the origin and quality of poetic inspiration depends on the level of the point of contact the poet's consciousness makes with a particular level in the scale of consciousness of the universal gradations. By one reason or the other this contact glides upward to bring into the poet a higher or truer and purer inspiration; the contact or the centralising stress may also slide down in the scale so as to create from a lower inspiration. Such a sliding of the contact in the scale brings 'variations' in the quality and magnitude of the poet's inspiration. Hence poets very often complain of lack or interrupted flow of inspiration in their poetry. This problem can be remedied if the poet alters the poise of his consciousness and stations himself in the overhead planes. This is Sri Aurobindo's explanation regarding the operative aspect of his poetics of overhead consciousness.

### **Salient characteristics of Sri Aurobindo's Overhead poetics:**

1. Poetical creation is a highly conscious activity, not an instinctive process, nor an unconscious activity, neither originating from the subconscious and the 'libido' as critics and philosophers of the past suggested.
2. Poetical creation is a highly conscious activity. If poetry has to be sublime, the Mantra of the Real, its creative energy or inspiration has to be released from some very high overhead plane of consciousness, say, the Overmind plane:

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Missioned voices drive to me from God's doorway  
 Words that live not save upon Nature's summits,  
 Ecstasy's chariots.

'Descent'<sup>10</sup>

In the above quotation 'God's doorway' and 'Nature's summits' mean the Overmind plane.

3. The poet's consciousness must have a contact or centralising stress with the overhead grades of universal consciousness.
4. The higher this contact with the hierarchical grades in the scale of universal consciousness, the more intense and pure shall be the power of poetic inspiration.
5. The poet's consciousness becomes the channel of the inspiration for its creative function. And if the poet himself is stationed in the overhead plane, the poetry thus composed shall be wonderful and unique.

The contact or centralising stress of the two currents of consciousness, one in the poet and the other in general Nature, may glide upward or may slide down in the ladder of consciousness. Poetry then becomes more sublime or mediocre. For poetry to become the Mantra of the Real, its creative energy or inspiration has to be released from the overmind and be channelled into the poet's consciousness. The operative aspect of Sri Aurobindo's poetics of Overhead consciousness stands admirably explained by the result of his yogic experience.

## II

It is here proposed to lay down the basic principles, the fundamental 'laws' that shall govern the poetical creation of Sri Aurobindo's vision. Sri Aurobindo regards "Mantra as the highest and intensest revealing form of poetic thought and expression"<sup>11</sup>. Such a rhythmic and creative self-expression in poetry or for poetry to be the 'Mantra of the Real', according to Sri Aurobindo, is possible by "a supreme harmony of five eternal powers, Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and the Spirit"<sup>12</sup>. These powers form the governing principles or 'laws' of the new poetics of the future poetry; these are the 'five suns' of the new poetics.

10. *Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 578.

11. *The Future Poetry*, CWSA, Vol. 26, p. 217.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

## 1. The Sun of poetic Truth:

Truth is one of the high powers of the inspired singer. But what is that sunlight of Truth in which the poet must see and “shape from its burning rays . . . the flame-stuff of his creation”<sup>13</sup>? For the votaries of realism in literature poetic truth is the stark naked reality of the surface life to express all the dirt and mire that come up to the surface of life from the subconscious. The Truth of which Sri Aurobindo speaks is “the very front and face of Infinity”<sup>14</sup>:

In her glorious kingdom of eternal light  
All-ruler, ruled by none, the Truth supreme,  
Omnipotent, omniscient and alone,  
In a golden country keeps her measureless house<sup>15</sup>

The field of poetry is certainly not any religious or ethical ground, nor the pursuit of knowledge. It is rather “all soul experience, its appeal is to the aesthetic response of the soul to all that touches it in self or world; it is one of the high and beautiful powers of our inner and may be a power of our inmost life”<sup>16</sup>. The function of poetry is to make all of the infinite Truth of being a part of that life. This is the first principle of Sri Aurobindo’s new poetics, “the sun of poetic truth in whose universal light the poet creates”<sup>17</sup>.

## 2. The Breath of Greater Life:

Poetry to be great requires the enlightening power of the poet’s vision of truth and the sustaining power of “the breath of greater life”<sup>18</sup>. The new poetry according to Sri Aurobindo’s poetics shall deal with life, “not with the outward physical life as it is or the life of the passions and emotions only for its own sake or even with some ideal life imaged by the mind”<sup>19</sup>. The insistence on exact presentation of life with its crudities is not acceptable to the new poetics and art always deals with the beautiful. The breath of a greater life shall open “new realms of vision, new realms of being”<sup>20</sup>. This forms the second principle of the new poetics which shall make the new poetry

13. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

15. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 661.

16. *The Future Poetry*, CWSA, Vol. 26, p. 237.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 238-39.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

express “the strong and infinite sense, the spiritual and vital joy, the exalting power of a greater breath of life”<sup>21</sup>.

### 3. Soul of poetic Delight and Beauty:

The light of truth and the breath of greater Life though great and potent powers for poetic creation, yet unless the poet serves the twin deities of delight and beauty he cannot achieve perfection of composition. It is this twin power that give rhythmic beauty and joy to truth and life. “For the poet the moon of beauty and delight is a greater godhead.”<sup>22</sup> It is this godhead that impresses poetry with the intoxicating rapture of the soul. ‘Delight is the soul of existence, beauty the intense impression, the concentrated form of delight’,<sup>23</sup> and the two are inseparable: “Delight, God’s sweetest sign and Beauty’s twin”<sup>24</sup>. The poet is truly “a spokesman of the eternal spirit of beauty and delight”<sup>25</sup> and not a mere handmaiden of aesthetic pleasure.

### 4. The Power of the Spirit:

The poetics of Sri Aurobindo puts on poetry the responsibility to restore to humanity the sense of the Eternal and the presence of the Divine; it is indeed the power of the Spirit in the poet that shapes his poetic utterance, makes even the most commonplace a thing splendid, noble and beautiful:

Its absence left the greatest actions dull,  
Its presence made the smallest seem divine.  
When it was there, the heart’s abyss was filled;  
But when the uplifting Deity withdrew,  
Existence lost its aim in the Inane.<sup>26</sup>

These are the five governing principles and ‘laws’ of poetics as propounded by Sri Aurobindo. The two aspects of his new poetics — the operative part as discussed in Section I and its governing principles as presented in this Section go to create a most sublime revelatory poetry, a “direct poetising of the Divine”.

Such is the Poetics of Overhead Consciousness and aesthesis.

ASOKA K. GANGULI

21. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

24. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 629.

25. *The Future Poetry*, CWSA, Vol. 26, p. 260.

26. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, pp. 305-06.



## THE LUMINOUS PAST

*(Continued from the issue of January 2012)*

ONCE, Bharati-di expressed the wish to know something more about what happened when Sri Aurobindo left his body. She was interested to know how the Mother took on herself the huge responsibilities alone. The Mother had always overseen the running of the Ashram by herself, but after Sri Aurobindo's passing, she had to stand alone. Bharati-di wanted to know whether we had felt any indications about what was going to happen. I answered, "No, we were not aware of anything. The only thing we knew was that Sri Aurobindo was unwell. Dr. Sanyal arrived. There was no reason to worry. We were relieved when we got the news of the doctor's arrival. On 24<sup>th</sup> November we had the *darshan* of Sri Aurobindo. We could not detect any sign of weakness in him at that time. But suddenly, on the evening of 4<sup>th</sup> December, at the Playground, the Mother's usual cheerful face became serious. Someone said something at the threshold of the Mother's room and rushed out like a bolt of lightning. The Mother, without looking here or there, was distributing groundnuts to us in a great hurry, like a stormy gust of wind. It was as if the Mother was not there, she was somewhere very far away. A stillness as enormous as a mountain had descended into the Mother. In spite of this, physically she rushed from the Playground to the Ashram as an unstoppable force of Nature. All of a sudden, she stood before us, and looking at the frivolous attitude of a young girl, she exclaimed, "Something horribly tragic is about to happen and don't these people have any inkling about this? Is this the time for useless chatter?" That is when we guessed her state of mind.

I know that we are plunged deep within the Inconscient, but in spite of that and across it all, we could see the shadow of a great danger passing on the Mother's face. We saw the Mother and from the way she went about her work and from the way she spoke we were cautioned and it was then that we felt that pain in our hearts. Jatin-da and I entered the Ashram along with the Mother. We both sat in the Meditation Hall and meditated. On our way back home Jatin-da said, "The Mother alone knows what is in our fate. I am really worried from the time I saw the Mother's anxiety at the Playground." I went to bed quietly when I reached home.

The next day, early in the morning at 4 o'clock, Jatin-da came and fetched me from my house. On the way, with tears in his eyes he told me, "Pramila, Sri Aurobindo left his body a little after one o'clock in the morning. Go to the Ashram right away. People are being allowed to pay their respects." Jatin-da went to his work at the Bakery. I went straight to Sri Aurobindo's room. In fact, I went three times

consecutively. It was an extraordinary sight. I saw a luminous aura all around his body. I sat in the Meditation Hall and quietly thought about this shining light. I could not explain rationally what had caused it. I went to Jatin-da and asked him. He was in a serious mood and didn't want to say anything. All he said was, "It was not an earthly light. I too noticed it. I am sure the Mother will say something about it." In the middle of my work I went several times to loiter around Nolini-da's room. He looked his usual self as he sat in silence in his room. He went out once in a while. There was a look of deep thoughtfulness on his face. He was not reading or writing that day. Suddenly Amrita-da said to Nolini-da, "Sri Aurobindo always disappears at the moment when a big change takes place. You surely know what happened when he came from Chandernagore to Pondicherry. You will see, he will suddenly open his eyes and putting away this robe of light he will get down to the work of a new creation." Nolini-da, affectionate by nature, listened to his younger brother as he looked at him with compassion and then cast on him his luminous gaze. He did not make any remarks. Amrita-da went away to his own room. I went into Nolini-da's room along with him and in a voice full of emotions, asked him if Sri Aurobindo would recover. "That depends entirely on his own wish. Whatever happens it will be according to his wish. No one knows what he has willed."

After the 4<sup>th</sup> we did not get to see the Mother. A notice was put up which informed the people that the Mother did not want her children to break down. She wanted everyone to continue the normal rhythm of their lives, including taking their meals at the right times. By the Mother's blessings everything went on as usual. At night, when people were filling the Samadhi with earth, I caught sight of the Mother for a few moments, standing at the western window, next to the stairs above Dyuman-bhai's room. She looked at the Samadhi with deep gratitude for a moment and went away. Fifteen days later, sitting in the south verandah upstairs, she distributed pictures of Sri Aurobindo's *Mahasamadhi* and blessed us. She was a new Mother. In the dim light the Mother's bright luminous eyes were like two cascades of compassion. At first glance her eyes communicated to us what a priceless treasure we had lost. At the same time there was a glow of hope on her face. Sri Aurobindo was still there. He had not gone away anywhere. True, we had lost his golden body but not for a moment had we lost him. By placing the photograph of the *Mahasamadhi* in our hands she spoke to our hearts with her gentle look and assured us that he had been with us, was still there and would continue to be there. With hands joined I bowed down to her and as I looked at her I heard within me the Mother saying that she herself was there for us.

*(To be continued)*

PRAMILA DEVI

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

## THE KRISHNA WORLD

### 7. Krishna Chomps Puris

THE elders assure me that the Supreme is all-pervading. I do not know much about that but certainly Krishna pervades my library, insinuating himself into narratives, poems, prose writings and the paintings on the walls, the figurines on the shelves. I do not seem to come across an angry Krishna. Could he ever be angry or look foolish? But that too seems to have been part of his personality. When Arjuna will not hit Bhishma or Karna, Krishna does become angry, or pretends to be angry. Whether it is a little baby kicking a cart to pieces or a guardian-spirit or a charioteer rubbing down the tired horses . . . So many Krishnas in the narratives. But Krishna at the dining table?

Well, that too is part of our scriptural lore. The Jaimini version of the *Mahabharata* has a hilarious canto that we would not normally associate with such works of feverish adventure and staid wisdom. Yudhisthira has been advised to perform an Ashvamedha sacrifice and he sends Bhima to Dwaraka to invite Krishna. For Yudhisthira will not undertake anything without the advice of Krishna. Bhima, despite his girth, comes fast enough; after all, he is the son of the Wind-God. He lands up in Krishna's palace when lunch is on. Krishna is eating from a golden plate given by the auspicious Devaki herself. Fancy that! The plate has sixty-four small cups containing various food items (*kacolānām catuh-ṣaṣṭinyāste sughaṭite*). It is true our epics contain sublime thoughts and action. But alas! Having been a full-time housewife and Mistress of the Kitchen for more than half a century, even *Savitri* is for me the epic of the Supreme Homemaker!

The sorrowing woman they saw not within.  
No change was in her beautiful motions seen:  
A worshipped empress all once vied to serve,  
She made herself the diligent serf of all,  
Nor spared the labour of broom and jar and well,  
Or close gentle tending or to heap the fire  
Of altar and kitchen, no slight task allowed  
To others that her woman's strength might do.  
In all her acts a strange divinity shone:  
Into a simplest movement she could bring  
A oneness with earth's glowing robe of light,  
A lifting up of common acts by love.<sup>1</sup>

1. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 470.

But when we begin with the Upanishadic dictum of food being Brahman (*annam brahma*), I suppose cooking does get elevated to a fine art in our scriptures, whether it is *Nalopakhyaṇa* or the Virata Parva in the *Mahabharata*. After all these centuries, we say “Nala-pākam” or “Bheema-pākam” if we wish to appreciate good food. As for Krishna, his sheer joy in enjoying tasty food is almost infectious. He makes us partners in the enjoyment of food.

Back to Jaimini. They say he may have written his own version of the entire Mahabharata events, but we have only the Ashvamedhika Parva extant. The happenings come after the Pandava victory in the Kurukshetra War. Krishna is at the apex of his avatar-presence. But he is very much in tune with the Krishna of Brindavan days, capable of laughter a-plenty. Vyasa’s *Mahabharata* has an Ashvamedhika Parva too, but the Krishna we see there is a very grave personality speaking always seriously as when he commands the Pandava king to posit a victory over his own mind. This is done by following one’s duty, controlling the mind through yoga. This is as terrible a fight as facing Dronacharya on the battlefield, says Krishna to Yudhisthira who is overcome with sorrow for having been party to the Kurukshetra conflagration.

Here there are no arrows nor servants nor relatives. One has to battle with one’s own mind all by oneself. Now this battle is confronting you. If you do not gain victory over your mind, I have no idea what will happen. If you understand this, all will be well with you. All living beings have this problem. Decide with the help of your mind the future course of action, proceed to manage your ancestral heritage and rule this land in the proper manner.<sup>2</sup>

Look at Jaimini. We are not far into his work when we get to have a good laugh with Krishna and Bhima. Instead of discussing the Ashvamedha Sacrifice, they discuss gluttony. Krishna teases Yudhisthira for taking Bhima’s advice to perform the Sacrifice. Bhimasena is dull, isn’t he, because he has this enormous paunch? *Sthūlodarah param mando jāyate nātra saṁśayaḥ!* Bhima hits back: Fancy a person who carries the entire creation in his stomach criticising him for having a sumptuous belly! We then get to have a beautiful *ninda-stuti* (prayer as a satire), such a vital component in India’s bhakti literature:

The whole of the universe of mobiles and immobiles, is located in your stomach. Whose stomach will be bigger than yours and who will be a bigger glutton? Are the gods like Brahma and rivers and oceans and all-holding quarters not accommodated in your stomach?<sup>3</sup>

2. Ashvamedhika Parva, chapter 12, verses 14-16.

3. Jaiminiya Mahabharata, Gita Press Gorakhpur, p. 25.

Having traded such fun-filled repartees, the two hug each other. As they set out on a journey Bhima's mother gives them eatables to be consumed on their journey: *dadau kunti modakāñśca pātheyaṁ pāṇḍavāya sā*. Jaimini positively enjoys culinary art. When Bhima goes to Dwaraka in another context, he enters Krishna's palace just as the latter is about to take his food. I can never have enough of this passage which keeps me wondering at the advanced culinary delicacies prepared thousands of years ago when people did not have the advantages of a mixer, a grinder, an electric cooker, an induction heater, a microwave oven and the rest. They had to fill the sixty-four cups mentioned earlier, right? It is unadulterated culinary romance as Jaimini begins, *pāyasaṁ candrasaṅkāśam*:

Payasa with sugar white like moon, rice like Kumuda, pulses of Munga, the rice dressed well in three rows accompanied with many edibles. The food was seasoned with lemon-juice, ginger and other fruits . . . There were Sohālas, Puri, Satachidra, Jalebis, Pupas and condensed milk and curd etc., all looking fine.<sup>4</sup>

*Sauhālikā purikāstu!* Never knew the ubiquitous puri has such an ancient history. And the varieties of vegetables, spices, chutneys, garnishings. And the pickles “prepared in pure mustard oil mixed with salt and kept in jars for three years minimum after seasoning with black mustard.” Of course, the chilly is conspicuous by its absence and so are *tur dal*, tomatoes and potatoes. Apparently poor Krishna of the Brindavan days has been made to undergo training like Eliza Doolittle in the hands of Prof. Higgins and Colonel Pickering. Satyabhama tells him with a sense of achievement:

You have given up the early habits of a cow-boy, drinking curd and milk. In your past days you drank boiled milk while bending slightly and ran after calves on the banks of Yamuna and snatched the repast of other cow-boys — and all that has been forgotten. Now you know all the manners of a civilised man due to the association with the King Yudhisthira.<sup>5</sup>

When Bhima comes in, Krishna keeps crunching fried sweets (*phenikācarvaṇāśvādam*) and makes a good deal of noise to tease him. We have more bantering and then both return to the serious work on hand regarding the planning of the Ashwamedha yaga. It all falls in place because from his very birth Krishna is associated with the enjoyment of food. He even enjoyed drinking the poisoned milk of Putana! The ancient Tamil hymnologists, the Alvars, enjoy no end the pranks of Krishna as he stole butter and drank pots of milk without waiting for permission from his mother.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-76.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

You go to graze cows  
 Not knowing that you are medicine  
 To us; wandering all over the forest,  
 Your dark body wilting,  
 You now drink the milk from the pot  
 In a hurry, as others laugh at you.  
 My Lord, who is sweeter than honey!  
 Let me decorate you with champak flowers.<sup>6</sup>

Perialwar cannot have enough of Krishna's closeness to eatables. He imagines that Yashoda keeps tempting Krishna with fruits like the *jambu* and jackfruit, and sweets like *appam*, made of jaggery. She gets angry with him for going out and eating what he gets outside. Look at his dark body pasted with butter and dust! In any case, "I have never had the pleasure of having freshly made butter or ghee," she laments. He always eats everything and cleans the pots! Her friends come over with bigger complaints, all his mischief somehow connected with food. He goes from house to house, gobbles up the butter, drinks the milk and then breaks the pots.

He gobbles the butter,  
 Flings the empty pot on a stone  
 And revels in the sound.  
 We are not able to bear the tricks  
 Mastered by Kannan. His mischief  
 Is like pouring tamarind water on a sore.  
 Damsel Yashoda who has given birth to a boy  
 So unlike his elder brother! Call him to yourself.<sup>7</sup>

Oh dear! Is there any end to his naughtiness?

To celebrate the twelve Tiruvonam days,  
 I prepared sweets with red rice, green gram,  
 Jaggery, sweet-scented ghee and milk.  
 I know this boy's ways very well.  
 Gobbling up everything he comes out saying,  
 "I could do with some more." Yashoda!  
 Call your son. These are but a few  
 of his roguish deeds.<sup>8</sup>

6. *Peria Thirumozhi*, 2-7-1. All translations from the Tamil Alwars are by Prema Nandakumar.

7. *Ibid.*, 2-9-1.

8. *Ibid.*, 2-9-7.

The cowherdresses of Brindavan are no less capable than the queens in Jaimini's Ashvamedhika Parva. When it is Krishna, we are dancing midst sweets and crunchies so the gopies complain that the *laddus*, the sesame-sweets and fried savouries made by them with care have all been cleared by Krishna and when they came in he was also cleaning up the pot of butter that was gleaming white. "Why," screeches another, "he took away the bangles of my little daughter and exchanged them for a handful of *jambu* fruits from the fruit-seller. When caught red-handed, he just laughs, 'Not me!'"

Hapless mother! She gets frustrated and calls out to him. But she loves him so much that she shows she is not happy with her neighbours:

Keshava, come here.  
Come here without protesting.  
Do not go to play in the houses  
Of people who have no affection.  
Do not tarry where servant maids  
And others line up to complain.  
Know that it is proper to listen to mother.  
Damodara! come here.<sup>9</sup>

Even Tiruppan Alwar who is describing the handsome appearance of Ranganatha lying at rest on Adishesha in Srirangam, suddenly finds Krishna there, his face smeared with butter:

A babe on the banyan leaf,  
He had encompassed the seven worlds.  
Fondly He reclines on the serpent.  
He is bedecked with pearls and gems  
Bright with fadeless beauty.  
His sky-blue omnipresent form  
Wholly fills my being, ah me!  
Cloud-hued Cow-herd —  
With butter-stained lips  
He has captivated my heart.  
Lord of the Immortals!  
Ravishing Ranga! Nectar Supreme!  
Having seen Him, nought else  
Shall my eyes encounter.<sup>10</sup>

9. *Ibid.*, 2-9-8.

10. *Amalan Adippiran*, verses 9-10.