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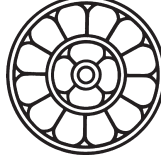
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXV

No. 9

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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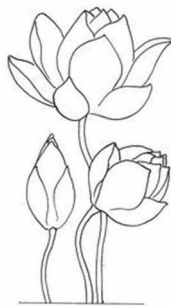
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THE TIGER AND THE DEER

Brilliant, crouching, slouching, what crept through the green heart
of the forest,
Gleaming eyes and mighty chest and soft soundless paws of
grandeur and murder?
The wind slipped through the leaves as if afraid lest its voice and the noise
of its steps perturb the pitiless Splendour,
Hardly daring to breathe. But the great beast crouched and crept, and crept
and crouched a last time, noiseless, fatal,
Till suddenly death leaped on the beautiful wild deer as it drank
Unsuspecting at the great pool in the forest's coolness and shadow,
And it fell and, torn, died remembering its mate left sole in the deep
woodland, —
Destroyed, the mild harmless beauty by the strong cruel beauty in Nature.
But a day may yet come when the tiger crouches and leaps no more in the
dangerous heart of the forest,
As the mammoth shakes no more the plains of Asia;
Still then shall the beautiful wild deer drink from the coolness of great
pools in the leaves' shadow.
The mighty perish in their might;
The slain survive the slayer.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 583)



‘A LAVISH AND MANIFOLD OPPORTUNITY GIVEN US TO DISCOVER, REALISE, EXPRESS THE DIVINE’

WE begin to see, through the principle and law of our religious being, through the principle and law of our aesthetic being, the universality of a principle and law which is that of all being and which we must therefore hold steadily in view in regard to all human activities. It rests on a truth on which the sages have always agreed, though by the intellectual thinker it may be constantly disputed. It is the truth that all active being is a seeking for God, a seeking for some highest self and deepest Reality secret within, behind and above ourselves and things, a seeking for the hidden Divinity: the truth which we glimpse through religion, lies concealed behind all life; it is the great secret of life, that which it is in labour to discover and to make real to its self-knowledge.

The seeking for God is also, subjectively, the seeking for our highest, truest, fullest, largest self. It is the seeking for a Reality which the appearances of life conceal because they only partially express it or because they express it from behind veils and figures, by oppositions and contraries, often by what seem to be perversions and opposites of the Real. It is the seeking for something whose completeness comes only by a concrete and all-occupying sense of the Infinite and Absolute; it can be established in its integrality only by finding a value of the infinite in all finite things and by the attempt — necessary, inevitable, however impossible or paradoxical it may seem to the normal reason — to raise all relativities to their absolutes and to reconcile their differences, oppositions and contraries by elevation and sublimation to some highest term in which all these are unified. Some perfect highest term there is by which all our imperfect lower terms can be justified and their discords harmonised if once we can induce them to be its conscious expressions, to exist not for themselves but for That, as contributory values of that highest Truth, fractional measures of that highest and largest common measure. A One there is in which all the entangled discords of this multiplicity of separated, conflicting, intertwining, colliding ideas, forces, tendencies, instincts, impulses, aspects, appearances which we call life, can find the unity of their diversity, the harmony of their divergences, the justification of their claims, the correction of their perversions and aberrations, the solution of their problems and disputes. Knowledge seeks for that in order that Life may know its own true meaning and transform itself into the highest and most harmonious possible expression of a divine Reality. All seeks for that, each power feels out for it in its own way: the infrarational gropes for it blindly along the line of its instincts, needs, impulses; the rational lays for it its trap of logic and order, follows

out and gathers together its diversities, analyses them in order to synthesise; the suprarational gets behind and above things and into their inmost parts, there to touch and lay hands on the Reality itself in its core and essence and enlighten all its infinite detail from that secret centre.

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

But in other spheres of life, in the spheres of what by an irony of our ignorance we call especially practical life, — although, if the Divine be our true object of search and realisation, our normal conduct in them and our current idea of them is the very opposite of practical, — we are less ready to recognise the universal truth. We take a long time to admit it even partially in theory, we are seldom ready at all to follow it in practice. And we find this difficulty because there especially, in all our practical life, we are content to be the slaves of an outward Necessity and think ourselves always excused when we admit as the law of our thought, will and action the yoke of immediate and temporary utilities. Yet even there we must arrive eventually at the highest truth. We shall find out in the end that our daily life and our social existence are not things apart, are not another field of existence with another law than the inner and ideal. On the contrary, we shall never find out their true meaning or resolve their harsh and often agonising problems until we learn to see in them a means towards the discovery and the individual and collective expression of our highest and, because our highest, therefore our truest and fullest self, our largest most imperative principle and power of existence. All life is only a lavish and manifold opportunity given us to discover, realise, express the Divine.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Human Cycle, CWSA, Vol. 25, pp. 146-48)

EAST AND WEST

(English translation of a Bengali article published in
Dharma No. 22, January, 1910)

THE main difference between our country and Europe is this, our life is turned inward, Europe's outward. We judge of good and evil, etc., from the point of motive, Europe judges it on the basis of action done. Knowing God as one who dwells within and who knows all that passes in our minds we seek Him in the soul, Europe looks upon Him as the King of the world and seeks and worships Him in the world outside. The heaven of Europe is in the material world; worldly riches, beauty, luxury are welcome and to be sought after; if they imagine any other heaven, that too is a reflection of these riches, beauty and luxury. Their God is akin to our Indra, who rules his world empire, sitting like an earthly monarch on a bejewelled throne, swollen by the hymns and prayers of a thousand flatterers. Our Shiva is the supreme among gods, yet he is but a beggar, out of his senses, uncaring and forgetful; our Krishna is a youth, fond of laughter, fun and love, it is in his nature to be playful. The God of Europe never laughs or plays, since His majesty is hurt by these activities, His godhead suffers. The extrovert attitude is at the back of it — signs of wealth are, for them, the support of splendour, they cannot see a thing unless they see the sign, they have no divine, no subtle vision, everything is material. Our Shiva is a beggar, but to the spiritual seeker he easily gives away all the wealth and wisdom of the three worlds; he is generous to a fault, but the wisdom beyond the reach of the wise is his inborn possession. Our loving, gay Krishna is the hero of the Kurukshetra, father of the worlds, friend and companion of the universe. India's immense knowledge and subtle vision, unfettered divine vision pierces through the material veils and brings out the inner attitude, the true truth, the inner and subtle principles.

* * *

The same order is observed about good and evil. We look at the inner attitude. There may lurk holy feeling behind an activity that we condemn, just as behind the outwardly good or sanctimonious conduct may lie hidden the self-seeking of a scoundrel; good and evil, joy and sorrow are subjective factors, the outer activity is but a veil. We know this; though for the sake of the social order we respect outward good and evil as evidence of the activity, but the inner attitude is what we really cherish. The renunciant, *sannyāsi*, who behaves like inert-mad-fiend, *jadonmatta-piśācavat*, as beyond rules and conventions, duty or otherwise, beyond good and evil, such a one, who has risen above laws, we call the supreme person. The western

intellect is unable to accept such a principle; he who behaves as inert it treats him as inert, he who behaves as if he is mad it treats him as off his head, he who behaves like a fiend, it treats him as a disgusting, lawless devil; for it has no subtle vision, and is unable to look at the inner attitude or truth.

* * *

Bound to this outward view of things European scholars say that at no time was there democracy in India. In the Sanskrit language words to describe democracy are not found, those days there were no legislative bodies like the modern parliament, the absence of the outer signs of democracy denotes the absence of democracy. We too on our part have been content to accept as valid this western view. In our ancient Aryan rule there was no lack of democracy; its external instruments were no doubt insufficient, but the democratic attitude permeated the core of society and the government, and stood guard over the people's welfare and progress. First, every village was run entirely on democratic lines, the villagers would come together and, on the basis of the general will and guided by the elderly and leading personalities provided for the administration of the village, and of society; this rural democracy was kept intact during Mughal rule, it vanished only the other day, under the oppression of the British government. Secondly, even in the small principalities, where there existed conditions favourable to a convention of the masses, this custom was in force. In Buddhist literature, in Greek records, in the *Mahabharata* there is abundant evidence in support of this. Thirdly, in the larger kingdoms, where it was impossible for these ingredients or external conditions to be available, the democratic attitude guided the monarchy. The subjects may not have a legislative body, but neither did the king have the least right to pass laws or modify the existing laws. The king was but the keeper of the codes, conventions and laws which the subjects were in the habit of observing. The Brahmins, like the lawyers and judges of today, would explain to the king these regulations admitted and observed by the subjects and they would record in writing the gradual changes which they had observed. The responsibility of governing was indeed the king's, but that power was also severely limited by laws; other than these the king had to act in accordance with the wishes of his subjects, he would never do anything that might displease his subjects, this political practice was observed by all. If the king violated this rule, the subjects were no longer obliged to respect and follow him.

* * *

The unification of the East and the West is the religion of today. But in this task of unification, if we consider the West as the foundation or the chief support we shall be making a grievous error. The East is the foundation, the chief support. The outer

world is established in the inner, not *vice versa*. Respect and emotion, or inner attitude (*bhāva*), are the source of energy and activity, one has to be faithful to one's inner attitude (*bhāva*) and sense of reverence, but one is not to be attached to the application of force and the external forms and means of activity. The occidentals are busy with the outward forms and means of democracy. But the external form is only for the purpose of expressing the inner attitude; it is this attitude that shapes the form, it is one's reverence that creates the means or the instrument. The occidentals are so attached to the forms and instruments that they are unable to notice that in their external expressions the inner attitude and reverence are languishing. These days in the eastern countries the inner attitude and respect for democracy are becoming rapidly and potently clearer and creating external means and building its outward forms, while in the western countries that feeling is getting dimmed, that respect is much attenuated. The East has set its face towards the dawn, moving towards the light — the West is moving back towards the dark night.

* * *

The reason for this is the ill effects of democracy that follow from an attachment to its outward forms and instruments. So long, having created a government wholly favourable to democracy, America was fond of declaring that there was no other country which was equally free. But, in reality, the President and executive officers, with the help of Congress, rule despotically, and support the wrongs done by the rich, the injustice and the all-consuming greed, and they themselves grow fat by the abuse of power. The subjects are free only at the time of electing representatives, but even then the rich maintain their power through huge expenditure, and even later, by buying up the representatives of the people, they exploit and dominate arbitrarily. France is the birth-place of democracy and freedom, but the administrators and the police who had been created as instruments to run, according to the people's wish, the departments, they have now turned into numerous miniature autocrats, of whom the people are afraid and tremble. Such a confusion has not taken place in England, it is true, but the other dangers of democracy have declared themselves there. Since the government and politics are determined by every change in the opinion of the fickle and half-educated electorate, the British race has lost its earlier political tact and is faced with danger from within and without. In order to maintain their interest and influence, the rulers, devoid of their sense of duty, by tempting or by trying to put fear into them or else misleading them, are perverting the mind of the people, folding to its fickle-mindedness and restlessness. Because of these factors some people who look upon democracy as an error are becoming sworn enemies of freedom, on the other hand, the number of anarchists, socialists and revolutionaries is going up. The conflict between these two groups is going on in England — in the sphere of politics; in America — in the conflict between workers

and capitalists; in Germany — among ideological groups; in France — between the army and the navy; in Russia — between the police and the assassins; everywhere there is confusion, excitement, absence of peace.

* * *

Such a consequence is inevitable for the extrovert outlook on life. For a while, swelled with *rājasic* forces, the *asura* grows powerful, great and glorious, then its inherent defects begin to come out, and everything breaks and dissolves. The country whose main principle of education is the value of inner attitude and reverence, willed and non-attached activity, only in such a country by its synthesis of the inner and the outer, the East and the West, can the social, economic and political problems find a satisfactory and practical solution. But we shall not be able to arrive at a solution if we follow western knowledge and education. We shall have to assimilate the West by standing firm on the basis of the principles of the East. The foundation within, the expression without. By adopting western instruments we shall be in danger, we have to create in keeping with our own nature and the eastern view of things.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Bengali Writings*, All India Books, Pondicherry, 1991)



**‘MAY THE SUPREME SERENITY OF THY SUBLIME
PRESENCE AWAKE IN THEM’**

March 22, 1914

O LORD, divine Master of Love, enlighten their consciousness and their hearts. They have made an effort to reach out towards Thee but because of their ignorance their prayers probably did not rise to Thee, and their false conceptions have barred the way to their aspiration. Yet in Thy mercy Thou dost turn all goodwill to account and a flash of sincerity is enough for Thy divine light to use it to illumine the intelligence, for Thy sublime love to penetrate into all hearts and fill them with that pure and lofty benevolence which is one of the best expressions of Thy law. What I willed for them, with Thy will, in moments when I could be in true communion with Thee — grant that they may have received it on the day when, striving to forget all outer contingencies, they turned to their noblest thought, their best feelings.

May the supreme serenity of Thy sublime Presence awake in them.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 106)



A TASTE FOR SUFFERING

What is the psychological difficulty which I can best study by experience?

IN each one of us there is a difficulty which is more central than all the others; it is the one which, relative to the part we have to play in the world, is like the shadow of that light, a shadow which gradually dissolves, fades more and more as the light becomes more intense, more brilliant, more powerful and extends to the whole being.

This difficulty, which is particular to each one, seems to me to be the one which deserves all our attention and effort, for if we know how to observe ourselves, we shall see that it is the source of all the others which may obstruct our way.

So this evening, I shall make a brief survey of a difficulty of this kind.

Some people have an excessive sensitivity, which becomes most acute when it does not manifest itself outwardly. This sensitivity is of an affective, emotional kind.

It usually comes from a supra-nervous substance which is highly intellectualised but not spiritualised enough for its degree of intellectualisation.

It is a stage of evolution in which the being is ready for self-giving, for he is conscious of himself; but, as a result of the work of individualisation, of intellectualisation he has undergone, he has acquired the habit of considering everything in relation to himself and has carried the illusion of personality to its utmost limit.

Thus it is sometimes very difficult for him not to watch himself acting, feeling and thinking, and this results in a lack of spontaneity which verges on insincerity.

The being takes pleasure in his extreme sensitivity; he is a delicate instrument which responds marvellously to the least vibration, and so, instead of exteriorising himself and forgetting his own self as he should, he withdraws into himself, observes and analyses and almost contemplates himself.

Thus cultivated, the emotional sensitivity goes on increasing, sharpening and refining itself. And since in life opportunities for suffering are more frequent than opportunities for joy, the need to experience and study these subtle movements of feeling develops an inclination, a taste for suffering, a true mystical aberration which is nothing but self-seeking through suffering, a refined but very pernicious form of egoism.

The practical results of this need to suffer are altogether disastrous if you add to it the intuitive but still inaccurate perception that the work you have to accomplish, your purpose in life, is to draw towards yourself, to take upon yourself, the suffering of others and change it into harmony.

As a matter of fact, on one hand this knowledge is incomplete because you do

not know that the only way to relieve others, to eliminate a little suffering in this world, is not to allow any sensitivity, however painful it may seem, to arouse suffering in yourself or to disturb your peace and serenity. On the other hand the idea of the work to be accomplished is itself warped by the illusion of personality. The correct idea is not to draw all suffering to yourself, which is unrealisable, but to identify yourself with all suffering, in all others, to become in it and in them a seed of light and love which will give birth to a deep understanding, to hope, trust and peace.

Until this is well understood, the taste for sacrifice rises in the being; and each time an opportunity for it appears, since you are not *disinterested* in this matter, since you *desire* this sacrifice, it becomes something sentimental and irrational and results in absurd errors which sometimes have disastrous consequences. Even if you are in the habit of reflecting before acting, the reflections preceding the act will necessarily be biased, since they are warped by the taste for suffering, by the desire to have an opportunity to impose a painful sacrifice on yourself.

Thus, consciously or not, instead of sacrificing yourself for the good of others, you sacrifice yourself for the pleasure of it, which is perfectly absurd and of no benefit to anyone.

No action should be deemed good, no action should be undertaken until we know its immediate and, if possible, its distant consequences, and until it appears that they must in the end add, however little, to earthly happiness. But to be able to give a sound judgment on the matter, this judgment must in no way be disturbed by any personal preference, and this implies self-detachment.

Not the detachment which is equivalent to the annihilation of the capacity to feel, but the detachment which brings about the abolition of the capacity to suffer.

By this you should understand that for the time being I am excluding insensitive people, those who do not suffer because the substance they are made of is still too unrefined, too crude to feel, those who are not even ready for suffering.

But of those who have achieved a high development of sensitivity, it can be said that their capacity to suffer is the exact measure of their imperfection.

Indeed, the expression of a true psychic life in the being is peace, a joyful serenity.

Any suffering is therefore a precious indication to us of our weak point, of the point which demands a greater spiritual effort from us.

Thus, to cure in ourselves this attraction for suffering, we must understand the absurdity, the petty egoism of the various causes of our sufferings.

And to cure our excessive and ridiculous desire for sacrifice — too frequently for its own sake, regardless of any useful results—we must understand that if we are to remain in contact with all human sufferings through our sensitivity, we must also be vigilant and discerning enough to dissolve these sufferings as they come; to the clear-sighted, they are purely imaginary.

For, from this point of view, the only way to come to the help of men is to

oppose to their suffering an immutable and smiling serenity which will be the highest human expression of Impersonal Love.

Finally, in a case such as the one I have just shown to you, even more than in any other, it is indispensable to keep in mind that true impersonality does not consist only in forgetting ourselves in our acts, but above all in the fact of not being aware that we are forgetting ourselves.

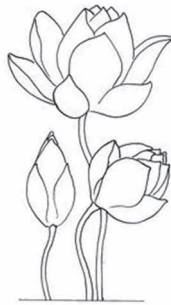
In short, to be truly impersonal, we must stop noticing that we are being impersonal.

And then the work can be accomplished with a large-hearted spontaneity, in all its perfection.

28 May 1912

THE MOTHER

(*Words of Long Ago*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 2, pp. 58-61)



COMMENTARY ON ‘THOUGHTS AND APHORISMS’

To see the composition of the sun or the lines of Mars is doubtless a great achievement; but when thou hast the instrument that can show thee a man’s soul as thou seest a picture, then thou wilt smile at the wonders of physical Science as the playthings of babies.

. . . WHAT Sri Aurobindo means, I think, is that when one is in communion with the soul and has the knowledge of the soul, that knowledge is so much more wonderful than material knowledge that there is almost a smile of disdain. I do not think he means that the knowledge of the soul teaches you things about material life that one cannot learn through science.

. . .

. . . I think he meant that the world of the soul and the inner realities are so much more wonderful than physical realities, that all physical “wonders” make you smile — it is more like that.

. . .

It is really when one has the experience — the experience and knowledge and identity with the higher forces — that one can see the relativity of all external knowledge; but until then, no, one cannot, one denies the other realities.

I think this is what Sri Aurobindo meant: only when the other consciousness has been developed will the scientist smile and say, “Yes, it was all very well, but . . .”

. . .

One can only state one thing: everything you know, however beautiful, is nothing compared to what you can know if you are able to use the other methods.

(Silence)

This has been the whole object of my work recently: how to touch this refusal to know? It has been there for a long time. It is the continuation of what Sri Aurobindo said in one of his letters: he says that India has done much more for spiritual life with her methods than Europe has done with all her doubts and questionings. That’s exactly it. It is a kind of refusal — the refusal to accept a particular method of knowledge which is not the purely material one, and the denial of experience, of the reality of experience. How can one convince them of that? . . . And then, there is the method of Kali which is to give a sound thrashing. But according to me that means a lot of damage without much result.

This is another big problem.

It seems that the only method which can overcome all resistances is the method of Love. But then the adverse forces have perverted love in such a way that many very sincere people, sincere seekers, have steeled themselves, so to say, against this method, because of its distortion. That is the difficulty. That is why it is taking time. However . . .

29 May 1965

(CWM 10: 205, 206-07, 209-11)

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* *

The beginning and end of things is a conventional term of our experience; in their true existence these terms have no reality, there is no end and no beginning.

Only last week there was a whole development of this experience.

In fact, it is the same thing for worlds as for individuals, for universes as for worlds. Only the duration is different — an individual is small, a world is a little bigger, and a universe is a little bigger still! But what has a beginning has an end.

And yet Sri Aurobindo says that “there is no end and no beginning”.

We have to use words but the Thing escapes. What we know as “the eternal Principle”, “the Supreme”, “God”, has neither beginning nor end — we are obliged to say “it is”, but it is not like that, because it is beyond Non-Manifestation and Manifestation; it is something which we are unable to understand and perceive in the Manifestation — and that is what has neither beginning nor end. But constantly and eternally, That is manifested in something that begins and ends. Only there are two ways of “ending”, one which appears to be a destruction, an annihilation, and another which is a transformation; and it would seem that as the Manifestation becomes more perfect, the necessity of destruction diminishes until a time comes when it will disappear and be replaced by a process of progressive transformation. But this is a very human and external way of putting it.

I am fully aware of the inadequacy of words, but through the words you must catch hold of the Thing. . . . The difficulty for human thought and still more for expression, is that words always carry a sense of beginning.

(*Silence*)

I have had a perception of this manifestation — a “pulsating” manifestation, one might say, which expands and contracts, expands and contracts. . . . And there comes a time when there is such an expansion, such a fluidity, plasticity, capacity for change that there is no longer any need for it to be reabsorbed so that it can take a new form; and there will be a progressive transformation. I used to know an occultist who said that this is the seventh universal creation, that there have already been six *pralayas* and that this is the seventh creation, but that this one will be able to transform itself without being reabsorbed — which obviously has no importance whatsoever, for when one has the eternal consciousness it does not matter whether it is like this or like that. Only in the limited human consciousness is there this kind of ambition or need for something that has no end, because, within, there is what might be called the “memory of eternity” and this memory of eternity aspires for the manifestation to share in this eternity. But if this sense of eternity is active and present, we do not grieve; we do not grieve when we throw away a spoiled garment — we may be attached to it, but even so we do not grieve! It is the same thing: if a universe disappears, it means that it has fully fulfilled its function, it has come to the end of its possibilities and must be replaced by another one.

I have followed the whole curve. When you are very small in consciousness and development, you feel a great need that the earth should not disappear, that it should continue perpetually — it can go on transforming itself, but it should always be the earth that goes on. A little later, when you are a little more mature, you give it much less importance. And when you are in constant communion with the sense of eternity, it becomes merely a question of choice; it is no longer a need, because it is something that does not affect the active consciousness. A few days ago — I do not remember when, but very recently — I lived this Consciousness for a whole morning and I saw, in the curve of the being’s development, that this kind of need, which seems to be deep-seated, for the life of the earth to be prolonged — for the life of the earth to be prolonged indefinitely — this need is objectified, so to say, it is no longer so deep-seated; it is like looking at a performance and judging whether it should be like this or like that. It was an interesting change of viewpoint.

It is like an artist, but an artist giving shape to himself, making one trial, two trials, three trials, as many as he needs, and then achieving something complete enough in itself and receptive enough to be able to adapt to new manifestations, to the needs of these new manifestations, so that it would not be necessary to draw everything back in, to mix it all up and bring it all out again. But it is nothing more than this, and as I say, a question of choice. After all, the manifestation is made for the delight of objectivisation — the delight or interest or, well . . . And once what has taken shape is plastic enough, receptive enough, flexible enough and vast enough to be capable of being constantly moulded by the new forces that are manifesting, there is no longer any need to unmake everything in order to remake it.

With the curve also came an adage, “What has a beginning must have an end”

— this seems to be one of those human mental constructions that are not necessarily true. But subjectively, what is interesting is that the problem gradually becomes less acute as one views it from higher up, or from a more central point, to be more exact.

It seems that it is the same . . . not “principle”, because it is not a principle — the same law for the individual as for worlds and universes.

(Long silence)

As soon as one tries to express it (*Mother makes a gesture of reversal*), everything becomes warped. . . . I was looking at this experience of the relation with the Consciousness, the All; this relation of the human being with the All; of the earth — the consciousness of the earth — with the All; of the consciousness of the manifested universe with the All; and of the consciousness that presides over the universe — over all the universes — with the All; and this inexpressible phenomenon that each point of consciousness — a point that does not occupy any space — each point of consciousness is capable of *all* experiences. . . . It is very difficult to express.

One could say that only limits make differences — differences in time, differences in space, differences in size, differences in power. It is only the limits. And as soon as the consciousness goes outside its limits at any point in the manifestation, whatever the dimension of this manifestation — yes, the dimension of this manifestation has absolutely no importance — at any point in the manifestation, if one goes outside the limits, it is *the* Consciousness.

From this standpoint one could say that it is the acceptance of limits that has made the manifestation possible. The possibility of manifestation came with the acceptance of the sense of limits. . . . It is impossible to express. Always, as soon as one begins to speak, one has the impression of something which does this (*same gesture of reversal*), a kind of tipping over, and it is finished, the essential thing has gone. Then the metaphysical sense comes along and says, “One could put it like this, one could put it like that. . . .” To use words: every point contains the Consciousness of Infinity and Eternity — these are words, nothing but words. But the possibility of this experience is there. It is like stepping back out of space. . . . It might be amusing to say that even stone, even . . . oh, water certainly, fire certainly, has *the* power of Consciousness — the original — all the words that come are stupid — essential, primordial — all that means nothing — eternal, infinite Consciousness. . . . All this is meaningless, it gives me the impression of dust thrown on glass to prevent it from being transparent! . . . Finally, in conclusion, after having relived this experience — these last few days I have had it repeatedly, it reigned supreme, in spite of everything, work, activities, it ruled over everything — any attachment to any formula, even the ones that have stirred people through the ages, seems childish to me. And now it's only a matter of choice: you can choose whether it is like this or like that or like that; you can say this or this or that — amuse yourselves, my children . . . if it amuses you.

But it is certain — this is an observation for general use — it is certain that the human mind, in order to have the urge to act, needs to build a dwelling-place — more or less large, more or less complete, more or less flexible — but it needs a dwelling-place. Only (*laughing*) it is not that! That distorts everything!

And what is strange, what is strange, is that outwardly one goes on living automatically according to certain ways of life, which no longer even have the virtue of seeming necessary to you, which no longer even have the force of habit, and which are accepted and lived almost automatically, with a sense — a kind of feeling or sensation, but it is neither feeling nor sensation, it is a kind of very subtle perception — that Something, so immense that it is undefinable, wants it. I say “wants” it or I say “chooses” it, but it is “wills” it; it is a Will that does not function like the human will, but which wills it — which wills it or sees it or decides it. And in each thing there is this luminous, golden, imperative vibration . . . which is necessarily all-powerful. And it provides as a background the perfect well-being of certitude, which, a little lower down in the consciousness, expresses itself by a smile of benevolent amusement.

Further on, Sri Aurobindo speaks of worlds that have no beginning and no end, and he says that their creation and their destruction is “a play of hide-and-peek with our outward consciousness”. . .¹

It is certainly a very elegant way of saying the same thing I have just said!

What I wanted to ask is whether from the “other side”, the material world continues to be perceived clearly or whether it all evaporates?

This is another experience of these last few days. It came to me with an absolute certitude — although it is very difficult to express — that this so-called “error” of the material world as it is, was indispensable; that is to say, the material mode or way of perceiving, of becoming aware of things, was gained through the “error” of this creation and would not have existed without it, and it is not something that will vanish into non-existence when we gain the true consciousness — it is something that *is added* in a special way — which was perceived, lived at that moment in the essential Consciousness.

It was like a justification of the creation that has made possible a certain mode of perception — which might be described by the words “precision”, “exactness” in objectivisation — which could not have existed without it. Because when this

1. [*The question refers to the next aphorism:*]

“Neither is it that I was not before nor thou nor these kings nor that all we shall not be hereafter.” Not only Brahman, but beings and things in Brahman are eternal; their creation and destruction is a play of hide-and-peek with our outward consciousness.

Consciousness — the perfect Consciousness, the true Consciousness, *the* Consciousness — was there, present and lived to the exclusion of any other, there was something like a mode of vibration, so to say, a mode of vibration with objective precision and exactness, which could not have existed without this material form of creation. . . . You see, there was always this great “Why?” — “Why is it like this?” Why is there all this, which brought about everything that the human consciousness interprets as suffering, misery and helplessness and everything, all the horrors of ordinary consciousness — why? Why is it? And so this was the answer: in the true Consciousness there is a mode of vibration, of precision and exactness and clarity in objectivisation, which could not have existed without that, which would not have had any opportunity to manifest. That is certain. That is the answer — the all-powerful answer to the “why”.

It is obvious — obvious — that what we experience as progress, as a progressive manifestation, is not simply a law of the material manifestation as we know it, but the very principle of the eternal Manifestation. To come down to the level of terrestrial thought, one might say that there is no manifestation without progress. But what *we* call progress, what is “progress” to our consciousness, up there it is . . . it can be anything, a necessity, whatever you like — there is a kind of absolute that we do not understand, an absolute of being: it is like that because it is like that, that is all. But for our consciousness it is more and more, better and better — and these words are stupid — it is more and more perfect, better and better perceived. That is the very principle of manifestation.

One experience came very fleetingly, but precisely enough to allow one to say, very clumsily, that — I was about to say the “flavour” of the Non-Manifest — the Non-Manifest has a special flavour because of the Manifest.

All this is just words, but that is all we have. Perhaps one day we shall have words or a language which can say these things properly; it is possible, but it will be always a translation.

There is a level here (*pointing to the chest*) where something plays with words, with images, with phrases, like this (*shimmering, undulating gesture*), that makes pretty pictures; it has a power of bringing you into contact with the Thing, which may be greater — at least as great, but perhaps greater — than here (*pointing to the forehead*), than the metaphysical expression — “metaphysical” is a manner of speaking. Images, that is to say, poetry. Here there is an almost more direct way of access to that inexpressible vibration. I see Sri Aurobindo’s expression in its poetic form, it has a charm and a simplicity — a simplicity and a sweetness and a penetrating charm — which brings you into direct contact much more intimately than all the things of the head.

When one is in this eternal Consciousness, to have a body or not to have a body, does not make much difference; but when one is what is called “dead”, does the perception of the material world remain clear and precise or does it become as vague and imprecise as the consciousness of the other worlds can be when one is on this side, in this world? Sri Aurobindo speaks of a game of hide-and-peek. But the game of hide-and-peek is interesting if one state of being does not preclude the consciousness of the other states of being.

Yesterday or the day before, throughout the day, from morning till night, something was saying, “I am — I am or I have the consciousness of the dead on earth.” I am translating it into words, but it was as if I was being told, “This is what the consciousness of a dead person is like, relative to the earth and physical things . . . I am a dead person living on earth.” According to the position of the consciousness — for the consciousness is always changing its position — according to the position of the consciousness, it was, “This is how dead people are, relative to the earth”; then, “I am absolutely like a dead person relative to the earth”; then, “I am living as a dead person lives in the consciousness of the earth”; then, “I am exactly like a dead person living on earth . . .” and so on. I went on behaving, speaking, acting as usual. But it has been like this for a long time. For a long time, for more than two years, I have been seeing the world like this (*upward gesture from one level to another*) and now I see it like this (*downward gesture*). I do not know how to explain this because there is nothing mentalised about it, and non-mentalised sensations have something hazy about them which is hard to define. But the words and the thought were a certain distance away (*gesture around the head*), like something that watches and evaluates, that is to say, which says what it sees — something that is all around. And today, two or three times, it was extremely strong — I mean that this state dominated the whole consciousness — a kind of impression or sensation or perception — but it is none of these: I am a dead person living on earth.

How to explain that?

And so, for example, with regard to sight, there is no objective precision (*Mother makes a gesture of not seeing with the eyes*). I see through and by the consciousness. As regards hearing, I hear in a very different way; there is a kind of “discrimination” — it is not “discernment” — something in the perception which chooses, something which decides — decides, but not automatically — what is heard and what is not heard, what is perceived and what is not perceived. It already exists with sight but it is even stronger with hearing: for some things one can only hear a continuous hum and others are crystal-clear; others are vague, scarcely audible. With sight it is the same thing: everything is behind a luminous mist, as it were — very luminous, but still a mist, that is to say, there is no precision — and then, suddenly, there is something absolutely precise and clear, an extraordinarily precise vision of detail. Usually, the vision is the expression of the consciousness in things. That is to say, everything

seems more and more subjective, less and less objective. . . . And they are not visions that impose themselves on the sight or sounds that impose themselves on the hearing; there is a kind of movement of consciousness which makes some things perceptible and others a kind of very vague background.

The consciousness chooses what it wants to see.

There is nothing personal — nothing personal. Of course there is a feeling of choice and decision, but there is no feeling of personal choice and decision. Besides, the “personal” becomes little more than the need to introduce this (*Mother touches her hands*). For example, eating is very queer, very queer. . . . It is as if someone were looking on at a body — which is not even something very precise and very definite, but a kind of conglomeration that holds together — and were looking on . . . at something that is happening! No, it is really a queer state. Today, it was very strong, it dominated the whole consciousness. And there are even moments when one has the feeling that the slightest thing would make you lose the contact (*gesture of disconnection, as if the link with the body were broken*) and it is only when one keeps very still and very indifferent — indifferent — that it can continue.

These experiences are always preceded by a kind of very intimate and very inward closeness to the Supreme Presence, with a kind of suggestion: “Are you ready for anything?” Naturally I reply, “Anything.” And the Presence becomes so marvellously intense that there is a kind of thirst in the whole being: that it should be like that constantly. Only That exists, only That has any reason to exist. And in the midst of it comes the suggestion: “Are you ready for anything?”

I am speaking of the body, not of the inner beings, but of the body.

And the body always says yes. It does this (*gesture of surrender*): no choice, no preference, not even aspiration, a total, total surrender. And then things like this come to me; all day yesterday, it was: “A dead person living on earth.” With the perception — not yet very marked, but quite clear — of the very great difference between this way of living and that of other people — all of them. It is not yet clear-cut or distinct or very precise, but it is very clear. It is very clear, very perceptible. It is another way of living.

One might be inclined to say that it is not a gain from the point of view of consciousness, since things fade away. I do not know, is it a gain?

It can only be a transition. It is a transitional state.

From the point of view of consciousness, it is a tremendous gain! Because every bondage, every attachment to outer things, all that is finished, it has fallen away completely — fallen away completely: an absolute freedom. That is to say, only That — the Supreme Master — is master. From this point of view, it can only

be a gain. It is such a radical realisation. . . . This seems to be an absolute of freedom, something that is considered to be impossible to realise while leading an ordinary life on earth.

This corresponds to the experience of absolute freedom one has in the higher parts of the being when one is no longer at all dependent on the body. But what is remarkable — I insist strongly on this — is that the consciousness *of the body* has these experiences and it is a body which is still visibly here!

Obviously, there is nothing left of what gives “confidence in life” to human beings. Apparently there is no longer any support from the outer world, there is nothing but . . . the supreme Will. To translate this into plain words, well, the body has the feeling that it lives only because the supreme Lord wants it to live, otherwise it could not live.

Yes, but it seems to me that a state of perfection ought to embrace everything, that is to say, one could be in the supreme state without abolishing the material state.

But that does not abolish it!

But still you say that it is “far away”, that it is “behind a veil”, that it has lost its exactness and precision.

That is a purely human and superficial perception. I don’t at all feel that I have lost anything, on the contrary! I feel it is a much higher state than the one I had before.

Even from the material point of view?

What the Lord wants is done — that is all; that is the beginning and the end of it.

If He told me . . . Whatever He wants the body to do, it can do it; it no longer depends on physical laws.

What He wants to see, He sees, what He wants to hear, He hears.

Beyond all question.

And when He wants to see or hear materially, He sees and hears perfectly.

Oh! Perfectly. There are moments when the sight is more precise than it has ever been. But it is fleeting, it comes and goes; because, probably, it is only like an assurance of what is to come. But for example, the perception of the inner reality of people — not what they think they are or what they pretend to be or what they seem

to be: all that disappears — but the perception of their inner reality is infinitely more precise than before. I see a photograph, for example; it is no longer a matter of seeing “through” something: I see almost nothing but what the person *is*. The “through” diminishes to such an extent that sometimes it does not exist at all.

Naturally, if a human will wanted to act on this body, if a human will said, “Mother must do this or Mother must do that, or she should be able to do this, she should be able to do that . . .” it would be completely disappointed; it would say, “She is no longer good for anything”, because the body would not obey it any more. . . . And human beings constantly exert their will on one another, or the human being himself receives suggestions and manifests them as his own will, without noticing that all that is the outer Falsehood.

(*Silence*)

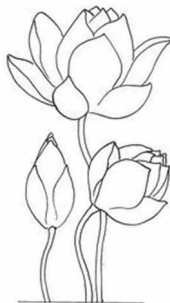
There is a kind of certainty in the body that if even for a few seconds I were to lose contact — “I” means the body — with the Supreme, it would instantly die. Only the Supreme keeps it alive. That’s how it is. So, naturally, for the ignorant and stupid consciousness of human beings this is a pitiful condition — to me it is the true condition! Because for them, instinctively, spontaneously, in an absolute way, so to say, the sign of perfection is the power of life, ordinary life. . . . Well, that no longer exists at all — it has completely gone.

Yes, many times, several times, the body has asked the question, “Why do I not feel Thy Power and Thy Force in me?” And the reply has always been a smiling one — one puts it into words, but it is without words — the reply is always: “Patience, patience, for that to happen you must be *ready*.”

4 and 9 March 1966

(CWM 10: 216-28)

THE MOTHER



“SECRET ETHER”

A Letter

WHEN the Mother informed you that I had diphtheria you said to her: “Amal will write another poem.” Well, the poem has taken a little while to come, but I think it has at last arrived.

It sums up the most outstanding spiritual perception and feeling I had this time when in the midst of diphtheria I looked out at the universe. I had always responded keenly to the moods of the sky, but now for the first time deep within me something woke to find, thrillingly, the sky to be pure stuff of Ananda and a sheer loveliness that was independent of what philosophers or aesthetics call “significant form”. To look at the sky was for me to touch an eternal happiness: the blue was very God. I think I skirted the fringe of the truth revealed in the Taittiriya Upanishad: the Akash of Ananda, without whose omnipresence nothing can live.

My poem is rather short. I could have written a longer one, but I have sought for quintessential concentrated suggestion, without being too cryptic. I may add a line or two somewhere, but for the present this should convey my intuition.

An unknown sky breaks through my sleep today.
This brilliant blue is an ether of ecstasy
Wakening to immortal roots the lotus heart —
Depth beyond depth strikes inward, gripping God.
Without this secret ether none can live.
Its boundless azure glows not by sun-gold
But laughs with some eternal radiance
By whose one quiver Time’s truth flashes out!
A beauty that needs no form to seize the soul,
Because it bursts a sheer infinity:
A love that is effortlessly everywhere:
Oneness in which a myriad hells grow heaven:
Fount of all, fire of all, fate of all — Bliss!

Bombay, 20 June 1952

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

Addendum

Except for the title added to the poem, no modifications have been carried out by Amal. (*Vide: The Secret Splendour — Collected Poems of K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran)*, 1993, p. 383)

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of July 2012)

Chapter: XV

The Momentous “Side-door Entry”

“This understanding is not to be gained by reasoning nor by tapasya nor by much learning, but whom this Self chooses, to him it reveals its own body.”

The Upanishads¹

WHEN did Sri Aurobindo begin his Yoga? When queried whether any “interesting” incident took place in his life in the year 1905 (we do not know the reason for the correspondent’s inquisitiveness), he wrote, “I think it was the year in which I began my Yoga — that is, the practice of Yoga — for I had had experiences before without knowing what they were.”² In another letter written about two years later he said that he began his Yoga in 1904.³

However, the statement quoted first, though as precise as precision could be, implies that Yogic experiences had started coming to him long before he identified them as such. “. . . he had inner experiences, from the time he stepped on to the shores of India, but did not associate them at that time with Yoga about which he knew nothing.”⁴ What is more, they came to him even when he lived in a state of “contented agnosticism”.⁵ This is a surprising revelation. We do not know if agnosticism and experiences spiritual in nature could co-exist, even though temporarily, in the same *ādhāra* in any other case. But this could happen with Sri Aurobindo, probably because the different faculties of his consciousness must fully have their perfect blossoming, uniting in an immeasurably vast comprehension before long.

We have seen earlier that an inexplicable “vast calm” enveloped him the moment he set his foot on the soil of India on the sixth of February 1893. Subsequently he had a series of experiences ranging from playfully indulged fringe-occult exchange with spirits through automatic writings to chance-encounters with unsuspected luminous powers within himself as was evident during his early stay at Vadodara when an accident to his carriage was averted.⁶ On a visit to Srinagar, in Kashmir, in May-June 1903 he had the “realisation of the vacant Infinite while walking on the ridge” of the Shankaracharya Hill or the Takht-i-Sulaiman. While on a visit to Chandod, on the banks of the river Narmada, his companions led him into a shrine of Kali. Even

though he had least interest in idols, he suddenly felt a mighty presence in the image of the Mother-goddess.⁷ Much later, explaining such phenomena to a seeker, he wrote:

A philosophic statement about the Atman is a mental formula, not knowledge, not experience; yet sometimes the Divine takes it as a channel of touch; strangely, a barrier in the mind breaks down, something is seen, a profound change operated in some inner part, there enters into the ground of the nature something calm, equal, ineffable. One stands upon a mountain ridge and glimpses or mentally feels a wideness, a pervasiveness, a nameless Vast in Nature; then suddenly there comes the touch, a revelation, a flooding, the mental loses itself in the spiritual, one bears the first invasion of the Infinite. Or you stand before a temple of Kali beside a sacred river and see what? — a sculpture, a gracious piece of architecture, but in a moment mysteriously, unexpectedly there is instead a Presence, a Power, a Face that looks into yours, an inner sight in you has regarded the World-Mother.⁸

Once Barindra Kumar caught a virulent fever while wandering in the hills. Medicines did not prove effective and he was in a bad shape when a Naga ascetic took up his case. While repeating a mantra he moved his knife crosswise in a cupful of water and made Barindra Kumar drink it. Well, the fever left him in no time. Such demonstrations of Yogic power surely were of interest to Sri Aurobindo, but despite overwhelming inner experiences, he was yet to explore the supra-physical world with any decisive resolution. Sri Aurobindo also had acquaintance with a leading member of the community of Naga Sannyasis “who gave him a *mantra* of Kali (or rather a *stotra*) and conducted certain *kriyās* and Vedic *yajña*, but all this was for political success in his mission and not for Yoga”.⁹

A Yogi to whom Sri Aurobindo has made reverential references in his evening talks and other statements was Swami Brahmananda who lived in his hermitage at Ganganath, not far from Chandod. Sri Aurobindo paid a visit to him towards the end of his sojourn at Vadodra, in 1906, in the company of his friend K. G. Deshpande and a few others. The Yogi sat still, his eyes closed while each member of the party did pranam to him. But when Sri Aurobindo lifted his head after doing pranam, the Yogi was seen looking at him with his eyes wide open “as if he saw something extraordinary or as if he recognised somebody. Sri Aurobindo once said that Brahmananda’s eyes were very beautiful.”¹⁰

There were legends galore about the Swami’s long life. Says Sri Aurobindo:

It is known however that he lived on the banks of the Narmada for 80 years and when he arrived there, he was already in appearance at the age when maturity turns towards overripeness. He was when I met him just before his death a man of magnificent physique showing no signs of old age except

white beard and hair, extremely tall, robust, able to walk any number of miles a day and tiring out his younger disciples, walking too so swiftly that they tended to fall behind, a great head and magnificent face that seemed to belong to men of more ancient times.¹¹

The connotation of Yoga, in the mind of the common man, is often found reduced to bizarrerie today. Even if we ignore the extremely silly use of the word in advertisements clubbing Yoga with massage or assurance of Nirvana through telephonic Yoga or the promise of cosmic consciousness through a Yogically designed cushion, Yoga in a general way has come to mean asanas and pranayama. It is significant that Sri Aurobindo, when he said that he took up Yoga in 1904 or 1905, did not give his practice of pranayama the status of Yoga proper, although he began with it. Pranayama practised four or five hours a day induced in him a speedy flow of poetry and brought forth to the surface several dormant qualities, but that was not his passage to the sublime. As he stated in reply to a query from a disciple, the flow of spiritual experiences came to him a long time after he had stopped pranayama. “And it came as a result not of years of pranayam or concentration, but in a ridiculously easy way, by the grace either of a temporary guru (but it wasn’t that, for he was himself bewildered by it) or by the grace of the eternal Brahman and afterwards by the grace of Mahakali and Krishna.”¹²

Even though written in a not-too-serious vein — for he was trying to correct some superficial impressions created about his pursuit of Yoga — the account clearly establishes that his true guide was none other than his own inner being.

He had obtained instructions in pranayama from one engineer, Devdhar, a disciple of Swami Brahmananda.¹³ So far as Yoga was concerned, that had become a spontaneous process with him. But the Maharastrian Yogi, Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, helped him to turn it in a certain important direction. That happened when Sri Aurobindo visited Vadodora in December 1907 while already in the midst of his turbulent political engagements. Lele was called from Gwalior by Barin for the purpose of meeting Sri Aurobindo. In 1916 Lele disclosed to Sri Aurobindo’s earlier biographer and disciple A. B. Purani that he had an intuition when he received the telegram asking him to come over to Vadodora that “he would have to give initiation to a very great soul”.¹⁴ Sri Aurobindo, as advised by Lele, “suddenly disappeared from the tumultuous political scene of which he was an important centre. Friends knew where he was but no one disturbed him. He remained with Lele for three days in the small room on the top floor of Sardar Majumdar’s Wada in Baroda”.¹⁵

Lele revealed to him that all our thoughts, though they appear to be originating in ourselves, are in reality external to us. As Sri Aurobindo recollected much later,

. . . I saw and felt concretely the thought approaching as if to enter through or above the head and was able to push it back concretely before it came inside.

In three days — really in one — my mind became full of an eternal silence — it is still there.¹⁶

But how important a role did this temporary teacher play in Sri Aurobindo's Yogic pursuit, his adventure in consciousness, that began at Vadodora? Sri Aurobindo would refer to it in another letter:

After four years of *prāṇāyāma* and other practices on my own, with no other result than an increased health and energy, some psycho-physical phenomena, a great outflow of poetic creation, a limited power of subtle sight (luminous patterns and figures etc.) mostly with the waking eye, I had a complete arrest and was at a loss. At this juncture I was induced to meet a man without fame whom I did not know, a bhakta with a limited mind but some experience and evocative power. We sat together and I followed with an absolute fidelity what he instructed me to do, not myself in the least understanding where he was leading me or where I was myself going. The first result was a series of tremendously powerful experiences and radical changes of consciousness which he never intended — for they were Adwaitic and Vedantic and he was against Advaita Vedanta — and which were quite contrary to my own ideas, for they made me see with a stupendous intensity the world as a cinematographic play of vacant forms in the impersonal universality of the Absolute Brahman. The final upshot was that he was made by a Voice within him to hand me over to the Divine within me enjoining an absolute surrender to its will, a principle or rather a seed-force to which I kept unswervingly and increasingly till it led me through all the mazes of an incalculable Yogic development bound by no single rule or system or dogma or Shastra to where and what I am now and towards what shall be hereafter. Yet he understood so little what he was doing that when he met me a month or two later, he was alarmed, tried to undo what he had done and told me that it was not the Divine but the Devil that had got hold of me. Does not all that justify my phrase “it seemed to come by an accident”? But my meaning is that the ways of the Divine are not like that of the human mind or according to our patterns and it is impossible to judge them or to lay down for Him what He shall or shall not do, for the Divine knows better than we do. If we admit the Divine at all, both true reason and bhakti seem to me to be at one in demanding implicit faith and surrender. I do not see how without them there can be *avyabhicāriṇī bhakti* (one-pointed adoration).¹⁷

We encounter at least two more revelations. First, the usual process of cause and effect, the law of a specific outcome from a specific spiritual practice did not work in Sri Aurobindo's case. His realisations, thus, were “accidents” in that exclusive sense — an indication that there are powers far above our sense of logic and their

intervention in the normal sequence of events appears to us as accidents.

Secondly, the incomprehensible and mysterious power that was shaping Sri Aurobindo's role upon the earth obliged his instructor — the Yogi Lele — to hand him over to the Divine within himself. The instructor was no more than a provisional instrument innocent of the fact that his role was “thus far and no farther”.

On the surface of things Sri Aurobindo did not view Yoga very sympathetically during his Vadodara days.

. . . Sri Aurobindo took no interest in philosophy at all at that time; he was interested in the sayings and life of Ramakrishna and the utterances and writings of Vivekananda, but that was almost all with regard to spiritual life; he had inner experiences, from the time he stepped on to the shores of India, but did not associate them at that time with Yoga about which he knew nothing. Afterwards when he learned or heard something about it from Deshpande and others, he refused to take it up because it seemed to him a retreat from life. There was never any talk about the reconstruction of India, only about her liberation.¹⁸

Indeed, it is this goal — the liberation of the country — that was the prime motivation — on the surface of things again — for him to turn to Yoga. In his own words,

But I had thought that a Yoga which requires me to give up the world is not for me. I had to liberate my country. I took it seriously when I learnt that the same Tapasya which one does to get away from the world can be turned to action. I learnt that Yoga gives power, and I thought why the devil I should not get the power and use it to liberate my country?¹⁹

That Providence reserved for him the divine project of liberation of humanity from its bondage to ignorance and its future evolution, was yet to emerge as the *raison d'être* of his life. In response to an observation — “God very cleverly exploited your desire to liberate India” — he said,

It was the time of “country first, humanity afterwards and the rest nowhere”. It was something from behind which got the idea accepted by the mind; mine was a side-door entry into Spiritual life.²⁰

(To be continued)

References and Notes

1. Cited by Sri Aurobindo in a letter. *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*; CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 231.
 2. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
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 4. Sri Aurobindo: *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*; CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 39.
 5. Sri Aurobindo: *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*; CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 232.
 6. The poem entitled 'The Godhead' reflects the experience. *Collected Poems*; CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 607.
 7. The poem entitled 'The Stone Goddess' reflects the experience. *Collected Poems*; CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 608.
 8. Sri Aurobindo: *Letters on Yoga — I*; SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 199.
 9. Sri Aurobindo: *On Himself*; SABCL, Vol. 26, p. 19.
 10. A. B. Purani: *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*; p. 87 (1958 Ed.). Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.
- Shri Champak Chatterjee, scholar and former Principal Secretary to the Govt. of India, Ministry of Education, whose maternal grandmother was a direct disciple of the well-known Swami Balananda, one of the chief disciples of Swami Brahmananda, informs this author:
- Hemchandra Bandopadhyaya in his biography of Balananda has stated that Brahmananda's life spanned five to six generations of those who came to him for blessings. Separately Brahmananda said that he was a young man when the English first came to Kassimbazaar in Bengal (*circa* 1760). Swami Brahmananda died on the *Magh Purnima* day in 1906. On a conservative estimate he lived for one hundred and twenty-five years.
11. Sri Aurobindo: *On Himself*; SABCL, Vol. 26, p. 352.
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 17. Sri Aurobindo: *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*; CWSA, Vol. 35, pp. 239-40.
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 20. *Ibid.*

SRI AUROBINDO ON CONSCIOUSNESS, WILL AND MOTIVATION

(Continued from the issue of July 2012)

Liberation from the Personal Will

THE personal will is that of the egoistic consciousness. To be liberated from the personal will is therefore to be liberated from the bondage of the ego. The two knots of this bondage are desire and ego-sense, “the twin obscure powers of the obsessing world-wide Ignorance that we have to enlighten and eliminate”.¹

The first step for loosening the knots is “to disinherit desire and no longer accept the enjoyment of desire as the ruling human motive.”² Desire takes many forms of which the most powerful is the seeking after the fruit of our actions:

The fruit we covet may be a reward of internal pleasure; it may be the accomplishment of some preferred idea or some cherished will or the satisfaction of the egoistic emotions, or else the pride of success of our highest hopes and ambitions. Or it may be an external reward, a recompense entirely material, — wealth, position, honour, victory, good fortune or any other fulfilment of vital or physical desire. But all alike are lures by which egoism holds us. Always these satisfactions delude us with the sense of mastery and the idea of freedom, while really we are harnessed and guided or ridden and whipped by some gross or subtle, some noble or ignoble, figure of the blind Desire that drives the world.³

Hence the celebrated maxim of the Gita regarding the performance of “desireless action”, the doing of work that should be done, without desire for the fruit, in a spirit of self-consecration by which all acts and works are done not for one’s ego but as an offering to one’s highest Self, the one Self of all.

Self-consecration leads progressively to the extirpation of the egoistic desire-motive, but one is still left with the ego-sense of being the doer of works. The ego-sense can disappear only when the personal will becomes one with the divine Will — the one motive-Force that does all action in the universe.

The Gita indicates two steps by which one overcomes the bondage of the illusory ego-sense. First, one must arrive at the “the realisation of the Self as the equal, the inactive, the immutable principle and of all works as simply the operation of universal Force, of the Nature-Soul, Prakriti”. . .⁴

An executive cosmic force shapes us and dictates through our temperament and environment and mentality so shaped, through our individualised formulation of the cosmic energies, our actions and their results. Truly, we do not think, will or act but thought occurs in us, will occurs in us, impulse and act occur in us; our ego-sense gathers around itself, refers to itself all this flow of natural activities. It is cosmic Force, it is Nature that forms the thought, imposes the will, imparts the impulse. Our body, mind and ego are a wave of that sea of force in action and do not govern it, but by it are governed and directed. The Sadhaka in his progress towards truth and self-knowledge must come to a point where the soul opens its eyes of vision and recognises this truth of ego and this truth of works. He gives up the idea of a mental, vital, physical “I” that acts or governs action; he recognises that Prakriti, Force of cosmic nature following her fixed modes, is in him and in all things and creatures the one and only worker.⁵

Next, one must through surrender to the divine Will come to see the Divine, the supreme self, as governing the Prakriti and directing all her works:

There must be accepted and progressively accomplished a surrender of our capacities of working into the hands of a greater Power behind us and our sense of being the doer and worker must disappear. All must be given for a more direct use into the hands of the divine Will which is hidden by these frontal appearances; for by that permitting Will alone is our action possible. A hidden Power is the true Lord and overruling Observer of our acts and only he knows through all the ignorance and perversion and deformation brought in by the ego their entire sense and ultimate purpose. There must be effected a complete transformation of our limited and distorted egoistic life and works into the large and direct outpouring of a greater divine Life, Will and Energy that now secretly supports us. This greater Will and Energy must be made conscious in us and master; no longer must it remain, as now, only a super-conscious, upholding and permitting Force.⁶

The superconscious, upholding and permitting Force just mentioned is “the self-existent, self-cognitive, self-effective Power . . . which expresses itself in the workings of Prakriti.”⁷ It is the Force — the divine Shakti — that is the Power behind Prakriti, dominating all existence, Prakriti being only her executive or working force. A progressive identification with the divine Will, embodied by the divine Shakti, abolishes the ego-sense, for one feels more and more that one is the instrument and not the worker. One realises that

the divine Shakti not only inspires and guides, but initiates and carries out your works; all your movements are originated by her, all your powers are

hers, mind, life and body are conscious and joyful instruments of her action, means for her play, moulds for her manifestation in the physical universe.⁸

Sri Aurobindo indicates a still further stage towards identification with the divine Force:

You must grow in the divine consciousness till there is no difference between your will and hers, no motive except her impulsion in you, no action that is not her conscious action in you and through you.⁹

This consummate identification with the Force, the Divine Mother of the universe, dissolves even the sense of being an instrument:

The last stage of this perfection will come when you are completely identified with the Divine Mother and feel yourself to be no longer another and separate being, instrument, servant or worker but truly a child and eternal portion of her consciousness and force. Always she will be in you and you in her; it will be your constant, simple and natural experience that all your thought and seeing and action, your very breathing or moving come from her and are hers. You will know and see and feel that you are a person and power formed by her out of herself, put out from her for the play and yet always safe in her, being of her being, consciousness of her consciousness, force of her force, Ananda of her Ananda.¹⁰

* * *

Will in Modern Psychological Thought

William James devoted one of the longest chapters of his *Principles of Psychology* to the topic of will. By contrast, the term “will” is not even indexed in current textbooks of psychology. The term “consciousness”, too, has had a checkered history. Having been the central focus of Structuralism, the earliest school of psychology, the concept became banned by the advocates of Behaviourism. But whereas consciousness is again a basic topic of present-day psychology, will is still a neglected subject. Assagioli, who has made what is perhaps the most comprehensive survey of the literature on the subject of will, concludes:

While it cannot be said that the will has been totally ignored by modern academic psychologists, it must be pointed out that most of those who have dealt with it have afforded it only partial consideration and have failed to recognise its central importance and position in human psychic life.¹¹

It is however refreshing that several eminent thinkers subsequent to James, notably Jung, Assagioli, and Wilber, have employed the concept of will even though it has been cast in limbo by mainstream psychology.

Most of what has been written in modern psychology on the subject of will deals with the human will, what in this essay has been described as the mental will. This includes everything that James has written on the subject. Therefore, Assagioli, whose concept of will is broader than that of the personal will, remarks that even though James made valuable contributions to the psychology of the will, “he formulated no coherent and inclusive concept of the will.”¹²

Though James deals exclusively with the mental will, he makes insightful observations about the powerful influence of what in yogic psychology is called the vital or life-force and its frequent sway over the mental will, leading to what in this essay has been described as weakness of will. He says that “states of mind which normally possess the most impulsive quality” include “those which represent objects of passion, appetite or emotion — objects of instinctive reaction, in short.”¹³ Healthiness of will, says James, depends on the relative strengths of the “obstructive” (mental) force and the “explosive” (vital) force. He aptly quotes Dr. Clouston on this: “the driver may be so weak that he cannot control well-broken horses, or the horses may be so hard-mouthed that no driver can pull them up.”¹⁴

Jung’s concept of libido as psychic energy, “the total force which pulses through all the forms and activities of the system”¹⁵ is somewhat akin to the yogic concept of Will as a multiform force. Just as Will, from the yogic viewpoint, is the one universal Force of consciousness that expresses itself differently at different levels of consciousness — physical, vital, mental, psychic, spiritual — so the general psychic energy of libido is “reflected in the specific phenomena of the psyche: drives, wishes, will, affect, performance, and the like.”¹⁶ It should be noted, however, that Jung regards will as energy which is *available* to consciousness rather than *inherent* in consciousness as conceived in yogic psychology. Thus Jung states: “I regard as will the sum of psychic energy which is disposable to consciousness. According to this conception, the process of the will would be an energetic process that is released by conscious motivation.”¹⁷

Assagioli states that the existential experience of will is that of “an *intelligent energy* directed towards a definite aim, having a *purpose*.”¹⁸ This echoes the yogic view of Will as a *conscious* Force.

Though, like all other modern psychological thinkers, Assagioli deals with will as only a human experience, he speaks of will as something deeper and wider than the ordinary human or mental will. He states that there is an “intimate connection between the will and the self,”¹⁹ and regards the self as the “centre of pure self-consciousness and of will.”²⁰ In attributing will to the self — which Assagioli distinguishes from body, feelings and mind — he implicitly states that will is something other than what is regarded as mental will. This becomes clear when he

says that the discovery of “being a will”, as distinguished from “*having a will*” comes as “a revelation” or “an awakening”:

At a given moment, perhaps during crisis, one has a vivid and unmistakable inner experience of its reality and nature. When danger threatens to paralyse us, suddenly, from the mysterious depths of our being, surges an unsuspected strength. . . . Similarly, when assailed by some insinuating and seductive temptation, the will raises us, shaking us out of our acquiescence and freeing us from the snare.

. . . During periods of silence and meditation, in the careful examination of our motives, in moments of thoughtful deliberation and decision, a “voice”, small but distinct, will sometimes make itself heard urging us to a specific course of action. . . .²¹

These descriptions — which have a ring of personal experience — of the ways in which the inner experience of “willing” may come are reminiscent of ways spoken of in yogic literature by which one comes into contact with one’s psychic being. Thus, Assagioli’s concept of will has aspects of what in this essay has been referred to as psychic will. One such aspect is that of goodwill. Goodwill is usually based on a mental (ethical) ideal, but the source of goodwill, as of love and compassion, is, according to yogic psychology, the psychic being.

Though Assagioli’s concept of will has elements of the psychic will, it partakes chiefly of the mental will because his “personal self”, which is the centre of the will, is primarily related to what in yogic psychology is called the mental ego. However, Assagioli’s concept of the personal self has also elements of the psychic being.²²

Assagioli’s unique contribution to the subject of will in modern thought lies in incorporating the ancient yogic concept of universal Will in his modern system of Psychosynthesis. The view held in Psychosynthesis that the fusion of the personal will with the Universal Will is “the very apex of the journey”²³ is a psychological restatement of the yogic goal — union of the individual self with the Universal Self and of the personal will with the divine Will.

Wilber, like Assagioli, sees an intimate connection between will and self, and regards the self as the locus of will.²⁴ Wilber’s view of the expansion of self-identity “as the self navigates from egocentric to sociocentric to worldcentric to theocentric waves — an identity that ranges from matter to id to ego to God”²⁵ seems to be consistent with the yogic view of different levels and types of will corresponding to the different levels of self-identification — physical, vital, mental, spiritual.

Yogic psychology, however, makes an important distinction, based on spiritual experience, between the illusory self which is identified with Nature (Prakriti) — physical, vital, mental — and feels itself to be the source of will and action, and the true Self (Atman) which, as experienced spiritually, is inactive:

The Self or Atman is inactive; Nature (Prakriti) or Shakti acts. When the Self is felt it is first an infinite existence, silence, freedom, peace that is felt — that is called Atman or Self. What action takes place in it is according to the realisation either felt as forces of Nature working in that wideness, as the Divine Shakti working or as the cosmic Divine or various powers of them working. It is not felt that the Self is acting.²⁶

Hence the message of the Gita:

. . . you must learn and feel that your self is not the doer of the action. Observe simply, observe unmoved the working of Nature. . . . Observe too that even the will in your works is not yours but Nature's. It is the will of the ego sense in you . . . It depends on the play of your natural personality and that formation of Nature is not your true person. Draw back from this external formation to your inner silent self; you will see that you the Purusha are inactive, but Nature continues to do always her works according to her Gunas. Fix yourself in this inner inactivity and stillness: no longer regard yourself as the doer.²⁷

It should be noted that Atman, the Self, represents itself to the consciousness of the individual in three states, dependent on the relation between Purusha (Soul) and Prakriti (Nature).²⁸ The three states, in the language of the Gita are: Kshara (mutable), the Purusha in Prakriti; Akshara (immutable), the Purusha standing back from Prakriti; and Purushottama, the Highest Purusha or Supreme Self which possesses both the mutable and the immutable. The Atman described above by Sri Aurobindo as inactive refers to the Akshara Purusha, the Immutable Self.

A. S. DALAL

(Concluded)

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4. *Essays on the Gita*, SABCL, Vol. 13, p. 34.
5. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 203.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
7. *The Upanishads*, SABCL, Vol. 12, p. 82.

8. *The Mother*, SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 16.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.
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18. Assagioli, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
19. Assagioli, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
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22. This point has been elaborated in, A. S. Dalal: “Sri Aurobindo on Self, Ego and Individuality: An Integral View — Part Two: Comparisons with Modern Psychological Thought”, *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, 1996.
23. Assagioli, *op. cit.*, p. 135.
24. Ken Wilber, *Integral Psychology*, The Collected Works of Ken Wilber, Vol. 4 (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1999), p. 468.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 1078.
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28. *The Upanishads*, SABCL, Vol. 12, p. 87.

To say that one enters the stream of sadhana through work only is to say too much. One can enter it through meditation or bhakti also, but work is necessary to get into full stream and not drift away to one side and go circling there. Of course all work helps provided it is done in the right spirit.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 537)

LABOUR OF LOVE

Introduction

THE MOTHER'S book *Prayers and Meditations* is a magnificent bouquet of beautiful flowers offered at the lotus feet of the Lord. The dominating perfume emanating from it is her one-pointed love for the Master and the spontaneous eagerness to spread this love-perfume throughout the entire earth:

Lord, let this pure flower of love blossom in me, that it may give its fragrance to all . . . and that this fragrance may sanctify them. (December 16, 1913)

These prayers are, in fact, poems in prose. She opens her heart and mind to the Lord with the simplicity of a child, and pours all of herself — soul, heart, mind, life and body — spontaneously to Him, like a river flowing towards the sea unhampered, like a smoke of incense mounting straight upward towards the sky unwaveringly. In the *Prayers* there are innumerable passages packed with sheer beauty of poetic expression. Let us satisfy ourselves by quoting only three of them, for in the course of our study we will come across numerous other such beautiful lines:

Like a flame that burns in silence, like a perfume that rises straight upward without wavering, my love goes to Thee; and like the child who does not reason and has no care, I trust myself to Thee that Thy Will may be done, that Thy Light may manifest, Thy Peace radiate, Thy Love cover the world.

(December 7, 1912)

or,

. . . Let the pure perfume of sanctification burn always, rising higher and higher, and straighter and straighter, like a ceaseless prayer of the integral being, desiring to unite with Thee so as to manifest Thee. (March 13, 1913)

or,

My whole being prostrates before Thee in a gratitude beyond measure and a ceaseless worship; and that worship goes up from my heart and my mind towards Thee like the pure smoke of incense of the perfumes of India.

(February 8, 1913)

The ‘Meditations’ are in the form of conversations between the Mother and the Lord. She makes her confession with earnest sincerity, and she promises the Lord:

. . . I shall put into material shape each day a little of the conversation I have so often with Thee; I shall make my confession to Thee as well as it may be . . .
(November 2, 1912)

The *Prayers* is a record of the Mother’s inner experiences and realisations. We could as well say that it is her spiritual autobiography. She reveals in it her great mission, the divine Work that the Lord has entrusted to her, and the elaborate preparation and sadhana she has to do in order to help the Master to establish the divine Law of Light, Love and Delight upon earth.

I have attempted to study the *Prayers* keeping in view the following titles and subtitles:

Part 1: The Great Mission

- a. The Divine Work and the Divine Law.
- b. The Mother Identifies Herself with Mankind and Earth.
- c. The Incarnation of the Supreme Mother.
- d. The Lord’s Messenger.

Part 2: Preparation and Sadhana

- a. A Perfect Instrument
- b. To Live Exclusively in the Divine Consciousness; No Preference, No Desires, No Attachments.
- c. Integral Identification with the Lord.
- d. Basic Requisites in Yoga.
- e. Abolition of Egoism and Ignorance.
- f. Peace, Silence, Equality.

Part 3: Experiences and Realisations

- a. The Triple Consciousness: Individual, Universal, Transcendental.
- b. Experiences of all the Three States of Consciousness.
- c. Ascending and Descending Ladder.
- d. Supermind: Link between the Triple Higher Worlds and the Triple Lower Worlds.
- e. Man Refuses to Change.

Part 4: Mother of Love

- a. Love, the Driving Force behind Creation.
- b. The Mother, the Incarnation of the Supreme's Love.
- c. Mother doing Bhakti Yoga for the Transformation of Mankind and Earth.

* * *

Part 1 — The Great Missiona. The Divine Work and the Divine Law

In her *Prayers* the Mother's attention is focussed exclusively on the divine Work and the establishment of the divine Law upon earth. The divine Work is to prepare oneself integrally for the manifestation of the divine Law of Love and Light, Peace and Delight upon the world.

In the process of involution, the Supreme entered into the Inconscient, into chaos, suffering and death, and in the reverse process of evolution, He is gradually unveiling Himself into His original Splendour: Light, Love, Truth, Delight and Immortality. The work allotted to man by the Lord is, firstly, to make contact with Him, then to identify with Him, and, secondly, to help Him to bring down all the divine qualities or His Law upon earth. Man is the link between heaven and earth. This is his mission: "The redemption and purification of Matter." In her prayer dated June 15, 1913 the Mother categorically pinpoints the Work to be accomplished:

To know that a part of our being is perfectly pure, to commune with this purity, to be identified with it, can be useful only if this knowledge is later used to hasten the transformation of the earth, to accomplish Thy sublime work.

Man in his eagerness to live solely in the divine Beatitude neglects to include his body's participation in the work or sadhana of purification and transformation. The human body is the symbol of Matter or earth. The transformation of the body or earth is the mission entrusted to man by the Lord, and it is the Mother, His emissary and collaborator, who has descended upon earth to show and guide mankind on the path of transformation. She prays for all humanity:

. . . to make us spread our wings and soar above the contingencies of material life, so as to fly away into Thy divine atmosphere and be able to return as Thy messengers to the earth to announce the glorious tidings of Thy approaching Advent . . . (August 17, 1913)

*

b. The Mother Identifies Herself with Mankind and Earth

The Mother's sadhana is for the upliftment and emancipation of all humanity and earth. Repeatedly she prays on behalf of all. For her the pronouns 'I' or 'we', 'me' or 'us' have the same meaning. Spontaneously she switches from singular to plural, from plural to singular, i.e.:

At no moment do I feel that I am living outside Thee and never have the horizons appeared vaster to me and the depths at once more luminous and unfathomable. Grant, O Divine Teacher, that we may know and accomplish our mission upon earth better and better, more and more, that we may make full use of all the energies that are in us, and Thy sovereign Presence become manifest ever more perfectly in the silent depths of our soul, in all our thoughts, all our feelings, all our actions. (March 28, 1914)

or,

O Divine Force, supreme Illuminator, hearken to our prayer, move not away from us, do not withdraw, help us fight a good fight, make firm our strength for the struggle, give us the force to conquer!

O my sweet Master, Thou whom I adore without being able to know Thee, Thou who I am without being able to realise Thee, my entire conscious individuality prostrates itself before Thee and implores, in the name of the workers in their struggle, and of the earth in her agony, in the name of suffering humanity and of striving Nature; O my sweet Master, . . . Thou who makest light spring forth in the darkness and strength to arise out of weakness, support our effort, guide our steps, lead us to victory. (July 8, 1914)

The Mother has identified herself with the entire earth:

. . . the 'I' which speaks to Thee is the entire Earth . . . (May 25, 1914)

or,

. . . the 'I' . . . is the whole earth that aspires to Thee in a movement full of fervour. (October 25, 1914)

or,

Then I was the whole earth and the whole earth prostrated itself before Thee, imploring the benediction of Thy illumination, the beatitude of Thy Love.
(May 31, 1914)

Addressing the agony-ridden Earth, the Lord utters words of consolation and encouragement through the Mother, His messenger and representative:

Poor sorrowful Earth, remember that I am present in thee and lose not hope; each effort, each grief, each joy and each pang . . . each renewal of thy seasons, all, all without exception, . . . lead thee towards me, who am endless Peace, shadowless Light, perfect Harmony, Certitude, Rest and Supreme Blessedness.
(February 5, 1913)

Then the Mother requests the Earth:

Hearken . . . to the sublime voice that arises,
Hearken and take new courage! *(Ibid.)*

And she offers thanks to the Lord:

. . . in the name of the earth I give Thee thanks for manifesting Thyself; in its name I implore Thee to manifest Thyself ever more fully, in an uninterrupted growth of Light and Love. (January 1, 1914)

The Mother, the very incarnation of Love, Light and Delight is there upon earth and she assures men and earth that “the streams of Thy infinite grace fill and overflow the world” (May 11, 1913), and she asks the earth and men to participate in the festival of divine love and joy:

Sing, O lands, sing O peoples, sing O men,
The Divine Harmony is there. *(May 11, 1913)*

The Mother willingly accepts the challenging task of becoming a true divine worker. She is extremely eager to prepare herself for the divine work. At the same time she wants all men to involve themselves in this sublime endeavour so that by a combined effort the establishment of the divine’s Law upon earth could be hastened and the earth be delivered

. . . from the heavy weight which is crushing it, the weight of its own inert, ignorant, and obscure ill will. (August 5, 1914)

In a number of prayers, the Mother prays to the Lord:

Peace, peace upon all the earth!

or,

Let Thy Peace reign upon earth.

And she fervently prays:

. . . thou mayst transfigure definitively and integrally this universe of strife and anguish into a universe of harmony and peace. . . . (February 8, 1914)

And this being is now only an embrace of peace enveloping the whole earth, an ocean of joy breaking over all things. (November 21, 1914)

*

c. The Incarnation of the Supreme Mother

Sri Aurobindo explains that:

The Prayers are mostly written in an identification with the earth-consciousness. It is the Mother in the lower nature addressing the Mother in the higher nature, the Mother herself carrying on the Sadhana of the earth-consciousness for the transformation praying to herself above from whom the forces of transformation come. . . . There is the Mother who is carrying on the Sadhana and the Divine Mother, both being one but in different poises, and both turn to the Seigneur or Divine Master. (*The Mother*, SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 383)

The following two extracts from her *Prayers* will suffice as examples:

Mother Divine, Thou art with us; every day Thou givest me the assurance and, closely united in an identity that grows more and more total, more and more constant, we turn to the Lord of the Universe and to That which is beyond in a great aspiration towards the new Light. All the earth is in our arms like a sick child who must be cured and for whom one has a special affection because of his very weakness. (October 14, 1914)

and,

There is only the immense universe, our sublime Mother, burning with an ardent fire of purification in honour of Thee, O Lord, divine Master, sovereign Will, so that this Will may meet with no farther obstacle in the way of its realisation. . . .

O Lord, all the earth in an inexpressible ecstasy unites with Thee.

(September 14, 1914)

*

d. The Lord's Messenger

The Mother constantly prays to the Lord that she aspires to be His perfect messenger:

Let me be Thy herald among men . . . (February 8, 1913)

or,

Thy messengers to the earth . . . (August 17, 1913)

or,

I want to proclaim Thy reign over all the earth. (December 29, 1913)

She prays intensely to be the harbinger of the Master to help the 'suffering humanity' and earth:

Men are so unhappy and ignorant and have so great a need of help.
(June 17, 1913)

The Mother represents the collective aspiration of the whole humanity:

. . . let me be the representative of all the earth, so that, united with my consciousness, it may give itself unreservedly to Thee. (October 10, 1914)

or,

May I be their mediator with Thee that Thy light may illumine them, that Thy peace may appease. (October 5, 1914)

or,

It is Thy Will that I should be like a channel, always open, always wider, through which Thy forces may pour themselves in abundance on the world. . . .
(October 16, 1914)

or,

Grant . . . that we may be more and more the faithful intermediaries of Thy divine and absolute law. (March 15, 1914)

or,

O Lord . . . we can become the heralds of Thy word, the servitors of Thy work.
(February 10, 1914)

or,

Lord, hear my prayer. . . .

. . . may I gradually be able to make humanity worthy of a still sublimer peace in which, all internal dissensions having ceased, the whole effort of man may be united for the attainment of a more and more perfect and integral realisation of Thy divine Will and Thy progressive ideal. (January 18, 1915)

Just feel the intensity of her sincere wish:

O divine Master, accept the offering of all myself as a holocaust that Thy work may be accomplished and the time may not pass by in vain.

(August 5, 1914)

or,

My being is laid before Thee in a holocaust conscious and complete, that their unconscious holocaust may by it be made effective.

Accept the offering, answer our call: *Come!* (August 4, 1914)

or,

O Lord, we know that it is an hour of great gravity for the earth: those who can be Thy intermediaries to it to make a greater harmony arise from the conflict and from its dark ugliness a diviner beauty, must be ready for the work. O Lord, O eternal Master, we entreat Thee, answer our endeavour, enlighten it, show us the way, give us the strength to break down all inner resistance and overcome every obstacle. (August 6, 1914)

or,

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

(March 31, 1917)

By the Lord's Grace and a sincere 'cry' from below, the Mother is sure to accomplish her divine mission. In her prayer dated July 22, 1914, she ardently entreats the Lord:

. . . Accomplish Thy work of transfiguration: illumine us. Open the still closed doors, widen the horizon, establish strength, unify our beings and make us participate in Thy divine beatitude . . . that we may conquer the last obstacles, inner and outer, overcome the final difficulties. An ardent and sincere prayer has never risen in vain to Thee; always in Thy munificence Thou answerest every call and Thy mercy is infinite.

O divine Master, let Thy light fall into this chaos and bring forth from it a new world. Accomplish what is now in preparation and create a new humanity which may be the perfect expression of Thy new and sublime Law.

Nothing will stop our impetus; nothing will tire our effort; and, resting upon Thee all our hopes and all our activities, strong in our complete surrender to Thy Supreme Will, we shall march on to the conquest of Thy integral manifestation with the calm certitude of victory over all that would oppose it.

The challenge has been taken up with earnest and ardent sincerity. No resistance can hinder her forward movement. She is ready to face all eventualities and prepare herself to lead mankind and earth towards 'a new humanity', 'a new world':

Thy servitors must be ready for all eventualities, must be capable of answering all demands, satisfying all needs. (November 16, 1914)

Lord . . . we would go forward, making a complete and constant effort . . .
(January 9, 1914)

A half-hearted effort cannot take us far, it must be 'complete and constant'. The Mother wants us to make an all-out effort; our whole being — heart, mind, vital and body — must participate in this sublime endeavour to help the manifestation of the Lord upon earth. She wants to combine all paths, synthetise all the Yogas: Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, etc. She wants to do the integral Yoga:

. . . combining all the multiple paths leading to Thee, go forward like a rising, indomitable tide, breaking down all obstacles, crossing every barrier, lifting up every veil, scattering all clouds, piercing through all darkness, go forward towards Thee, ever to Thee, in a movement so powerful, so irresistible that a whole multitude may be drawn in our wake, and the earth, conscious of Thy new and eternal Presence, understand at last its true purpose, and live in the harmony and peace of Thy sovereign realisation. (January 9, 1914)

The divine storm rages furiously in her. Nothing can stop her forward momentum towards the final goal. The divine cyclonic impetus has lifted her entire being on the increasingly rising tidal wave of rapid spiritual progress, breaking all resistances and obstacles and, at the same time, sweeping the entire humanity and earth along this ever-progressive spiritual surge:

Thy power in me is like a living spring, strong and abundant, rumbling behind the rocks, gathering its energies to break down the obstacles and gush out freely in the open, pouring its waters over the plain to fertilise it.

(July 31, 1915)

(To be continued)

ARVINDBABU

The relation of Guru and disciple is only one of many relations which one can have with the Divine, and in this Yoga which aims at a supramental realisation, it is not usual to give it this name; rather, the Divine is regarded as the Source, the living Sun of Light and Knowledge and Consciousness and spiritual realisation and all that one receives is felt as coming from there and the whole being remoulded by the Divine Hand. This is a greater and more intimate relation than that of the human Guru and disciple, which is more of a limited mental ideal. Nevertheless, if the mind still needs the more familiar mental conception, it can be kept so long as it is needed; only do not let the soul be bound by it and do not let it limit the inflow of other relations with the Divine and larger forms of experience.

12 December 1929

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 395)

KANAILAL DUTT — A GREAT REVOLUTIONARY

Foreword

RECENTLY I was elated to discover in *Sri Aurobindo and the Freedom of India*, compiled and edited by Chanda Poddar, Mona Sarkar and Bob Zwicker, what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said about that era of self-sacrifice and the profound patriotism of the ‘heroic martyrs’ of that age.

Sri Aurobindo wrote about his fellow prisoners, the young revolutionaries of Bengal:

Looking at these lads . . . one felt as if the liberal, daring, puissant men of an earlier age with a different training had come back to India. That fearless and innocent look in their eyes, the words breathing power, their carefree delighted laughter, even in the midst of great danger the undaunted courage, cheerfulness of mind, absence of despair or grief, all this was a symptom not of the inert Indians of those days, but of a new age, a new race and a new stir. (*Tales of Prison Life*, Sri Aurobindo, p. 94)

. . . Watching their behaviour in the court room I could really feel that a new age had dawned, a new type of children had begun to live on the Mother’s lap. (*Tales of Prison Life*, Sri Aurobindo, p. 93)

A question that has haunted Indian patriots then (and it does so even today), is “Why does this sacred land of India, which has never coveted, attacked or conquered (except spiritually) any country, have to suffer such terrible repression?” Sri Aurobindo has answered this question:

Repression is nothing but the hammer of God that is beating us into shape so that we may be moulded into a mighty nation and an instrument for his work in the world. We are iron upon his anvil and the blows are showering upon us not to destroy but to re-create. Without suffering there can be no growth.

(*Karmayogin*, SABCL, Vol. 2, pp. 61-62)

He has also said:

We are a people to whom suffering is welcome and who have a spiritual strength within them, greater than any physical force, we are a people in whom God has chosen to manifest himself more than in any other at many great moments of our history. It is because God has chosen to manifest himself and has entered

into the hearts of his people that we are rising again as a nation. (*Karmayogin*, SABCL, Vol. 2, pp. 62-63)

Sri Aurobindo asked his countrymen to remember and emulate the martyrs:

Today let us remember these brothers of ours . . . Today let us recall what it is that they expect from us; forgetting for a while our selfish preoccupations, our little fears, our petty ambitions, let us identify ourselves in heart with these nobler spirits whom it is our privilege to call fellow-countrymen, and ask ourselves whether we are really working to bring about the great ideal for which they have immolated themselves. Who is there who can really say that his work is worthy of these heroic martyrs?

(*Bande Mataram*, SABCL, Vol. 1, p. 744)

In 1967 Mona Sarkar showed the Mother the photographs of many revolutionaries. The Mother said:

These revolutionaries are exceptional. . . . Their dedication, their power of endurance and their self-sacrifice were really extraordinary . . . Suffering is written on their faces — but without any anxiety, without any regret as to what happened. They surrendered themselves joyfully to the Motherland. It was really an exceptional time in history and they were exceptional people to have had the courage to challenge the British Government. It is an extraordinary group. (*Sri Aurobindo and the Freedom of India*, compiled and edited by Chanda Poddar, Mona Sarkar and Bob Zwicker, p. 177)

Mona writes,

She gazes with much concentration at the photo of a young man [Kanailal Dutt] who has just been hanged: fully garlanded, he is ready to be taken to the cremation ground for the last rites. The Mother exclaimed, “. . . It is clearly written on his face that he was with Sri Aurobindo — it is like an aura. His psychic being [i.e. soul] is burning intensely; it is quite an individualised psychic being. . . . These revolutionaries have proved that the realisation of the embodied Motherland is dearer than life itself. That is why there is no sign of worry or grief on their faces.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 179-180)

The Mother continued:

It is wonderful, one can read it on their faces: no trace of grief, not the least fear of death, but a sort of anxiety because they were not able to complete the

task they vowed they would accomplish — to free India from her foreign yoke. A sort of pain is in their heart at the thought that they would die too soon. Otherwise, they were ready to use any means to throw the British out of India. They were so devoted to their Motherland that they were ready to sacrifice their lives for Her. One even feels that they were proud to offer their lives on the altar of the Mother's temple as if to adore Her. Oh, what a wonderful self-abnegation for the sake of the country! It is truly unique. . . .

(*Ibid.*, pp. 190-191)

I end this foreword with the Mother's reassuring declaration:

India is a protected land, the land of Sri Aurobindo.

* * *

His head held high, calm and fearless, without a trace of anxiety or sorrow on his face, the 20-year-old brave youth, Kanailal Dutt, stood in the dock of the Alipore Court and declared, "I wish to state that I did kill him . . . because he proved a traitor to his country."

Birth and Childhood

Kanailal Dutt, the extraordinary patriot and martyr, was born in Chandernagore at his maternal uncle's house on 30 August, the sacred birthday of Sri Krishna in the year 1888. Because he was born on Sri Krishna's birthday he was called Kanai, another name of Sri Krishna.

When Kanai was only five years old, his father, Chunilal Dutt, took him to Mumbai and enrolled him in a high school run by the Aryan Education Society of Girgaon. Due to his intelligence Kanai became a favourite of his teachers. Impressed by his brilliance, his teachers would buy good books for him with their own money.

From his childhood Kanai was generous and loving. He felt love and compassion for his poor classmates. He easily became intimate with poor boys and used to give them food and clothes. Even though his family was well-to-do, from his childhood onwards, Kanai led a simple life. He would ask his mother to prepare food for his poor classmates. Kanai especially loved an orphan boy, Toba, whose parents had died in a plague epidemic. He treated this orphan as his younger brother and often kept him at home. Kanai's favourite food was milk and flattened rice. In his childhood he drank two litres of milk every day.

Apart from this inborn compassion for the poor and a simple way of life,

truthfulness was another characteristic of Kanai. He never told a lie. Once Kanai's mother, Brojeshwari Devi, forbade him to play in the sunlight. He went to the terrace of his house and sat in the shade to watch other children fly kites. His mother thought that he was flying kites in the sun. She called him down and to punish him, hit him on the back with a stick. Kanai was surprised and asked her why she had hit him. His mother thought that first he had disobeyed her and was now being insolent. She hit him several times. Kanai began to weep. Nobody could pacify him. He was so hurt at his mother's lack of trust that he refused to eat. His tears would not stop. Then his mother called the other children and ascertained the facts from them. When the children assured her that Kanai had not gone in the sunlight to fly kites his mother felt very sorry and asked Kanai to pardon her. Kanai then smiled and took his food. Kanai was a sweet and respectful boy. He never raised his eyes when he talked with his parents.

Kanai's childhood was spent outside Bengal. In 1903 he went to Chandernagore for his matriculate entrance examination from Dupleix School, which he passed, and then he studied at Dupleix College. Today both these institutes are named after him. Later he graduated from Hoogli College with Honours in History.

The Awakening

At that time India was sunk in deep inertia. The Nationalist awakening was yet to come. Due to the influence of Sri Ramakrishna, the national consciousness began to take root. The first phase of the national renaissance began in Bengal with devotional fervour and social service. The Bengali youth organised kirtans (chanting of divine name), helped the downtrodden, and cremated the dead poor.

The young men of Chandernagore organised a drama club. In the evenings Kanai went to this club and played on the harmonium or the esraj (a stringed musical instrument). He continued to play the instruments even during the rehearsals. Then his friends would hold his nose to stop him. Kanai watched for hours these plays staged by his friends. He would laugh uproariously. As he had no talent for acting and could not speak long dialogues, he would be given the part of an ambassador or a messenger. After some time this club was dissolved. Due to the influence of Sri Ramakrishna these young men organised an association called Satya- Pathavalambi Sampradaya (The Association of the Followers of Truth).

By this time, having passed the entrance examination, Kanai began to study for his F.A. examination. He was a brilliant student. Even though he studied very little, he stood first in his class. After his examination he would put his books aside. A family friend of Kanai, Motilal Roy, writes that once he noted that Kanai only briefly leafed through his books before his B.A. examination. He thought that Kanai would surely fail that year. But when Kanai passed, Motilal had to recognise his brilliance.

The Nationalist and the Revolutionary

When Lord Curzon partitioned Bengal, the whole of Bengal exploded. The province resounded with the slogans of Swadeshi and Civil Disobedience. Many of the members of the Satya-Pathavalambi Sampradaya club walked on the roads barefoot and bare bodied, raising slogans in favour of Swadeshi. Kanailal enthusiastically participated in every Nationalist activity. He was active in the boycott of foreign clothes. On 16 October 1906, the Nationalist leaders decided to celebrate the festival of Raksha Bandhan. Kanai participated in the preparations wholeheartedly and with his enthusiasm made vibrant the different activities — Ganga-bathing, the processions and the meetings held at night. On 7 August 1907, the members of Satya-Pathavalambi Sampradaya decided to celebrate the festival of Raksha Bandhan on a larger scale. They decorated their houses with flowers and put ceremonial pitchers on the doorways. Kanai's elder brother belonged to the Brahmo Samaj. He threw away the banana plants and the pitchers put up by Kanai to celebrate the occasion, saying it was a mere show. Kanai never argued with his elders. He did not say anything to his brother but he was deeply hurt. He lay on a bed and cried. Then his maternal uncle, Nand Kumar, put back the banana plants and the pitchers.

Kanai always depended upon truth and the power of his character. Once some of his friends challenged him to prove his patriotism by coming to the cremation ground at midnight on the new moon day. A rendezvous was fixed under a banyan tree. It was an intensely cold and pitch-black night. A bitter wind blew. Two of Kanai's friends waited for him under the banyan tree. By midnight Kanai had not reached the spot. Thinking that Kanai was a coward his friends decided to return. Just then Kanai arrived. Suddenly a gust of wind blew the cloth which covered his upper body. His friends saw that he was carrying a naked dagger. Kanai laughed heartily. He informed his friends that while he was on his way, he had met two or three patriots near a broken temple. He had been delayed because they danced and sang national songs.

Charuchandra Roy of Duplex College of Chandernagore had started the Jugantar Dal, a revolutionary group. This group had links with the revolutionaries of Gondalpara, *i.e.*, Upendranath, Shrish Chandra Ghosh and others. Shrish Chandra began to train Kanai and others in the use of revolvers and pistols. From him Kanai learnt boxing and the use of firearms. The patriotic members of this club used to learn different types of exercises. They studied the history of the rise and fall of nations with Charuchandra Roy. Kanai studied in depth the history of India and the freedom struggles of different countries. He knew almost by heart the history of Ireland and of the Nihilists of Russia. Apart from the *New India* edited by Bipin Chandra Pal he read with rapt attention Nationalist journals like *Bande Mataram*, *Sandhya* and *Yugantar*. With his friends he used to discuss the present condition of the country. His whole day would pass in discussions and reading newspapers.

When his head became heated due to the discussions he would pour water on his forehead with cupped hands. Nobody could know what was passing through the mind of the large-eyed and curly, long-haired Kanai.

Some prostitutes lived close to Kanai's house. Every night English soldiers came there. Their drunken noisy brawls continued throughout the night. One night Kanai decided to stop this nuisance. The English soldiers began their usual drunken dance. Neither the police nor the public dared to raise their voice against the English. Kanai asked them to stop. The three drunks paid no attention to this boy of slight build. Then Kanai gave such a blow to one of them who was more than double his size that he fell down. The other two thought that their friend was mortally wounded and they ran away in panic. Kanai ran after them, caught hold of one and gave him a resounding blow. The third ran away for dear life. After that the soldiers stopped coming.

In 1907 the Lawrence Circus Company came to Chandernagore. In those days the young men of the city were filled with the ideal of Swadeshi. They could not bear the idea that a foreign company would loot the wealth of their country. Apart from this, there was the added insult of separate seating arrangements for Indians and Englishmen. Therefore Kanai and his friends tried to stop the sale of tickets. The enraged owner of the circus company began to abuse Kanai. Kanai retorted in kind. An Englishman tried to beat Kanai with a stick. Kanai saved himself by turning away and then gave him a blow with the left hand. Blood began to flow from the nose of the Englishman. He fell on a peg of the circus tent. In the ensuing confusion Kanai and his friends escaped. The police were called but in spite of their best efforts, they could not catch Kanai or his friends. The circus company decided to beat a hasty retreat from Chandernagore. Kanai went on to become a powerful boxer and an excellent shot.

The harsh suppression of the Nationalistic fervour enraged the youth of the country. Towards the end of 1907, the young men of Chandernagore organised a Swadeshi meeting at a place called Hath. Several hundred people had already arrived at the venue when the French Government of Chandernagore banned the meeting. About 20 to 25 soldiers from Madras, armed with guns, surrounded the place of the meeting. Then about 600 young men decided to hold the meeting in a deserted ruin. These enraged young men wanted to attack the house of the Mayor. Kanai pacified them with the assurance that revenge would be taken. If they acted now, it would be dangerous. They had faith in Kanai and the meeting was cancelled. In March 1908 an unsuccessful attempt was made on the life of this Mayor.

In those days the young men were burning with anger against the repressive policies of the British. They were ready to kill the British. The people were overjoyed by the news of the killing of Mr. Allen at Gwalandi Station. Motilal Roy guessed that Kanai was participating in revolutionary activities. He asked Kanai, "What is happening? Am I dreaming?" Kanai answered, "You will see such dreams everyday." Without

a thought of the result, these young men were ready to lay down their lives for the freedom of the Motherland. When the leader of the movement against partition, Surendranath Banerjee, came to Chandernagore, Kanai and his friends pulled his carriage as a mark of respect.

Plunged in the service of his country and his countrymen, Kanai neglected his health. In the winter of 1907, Kanai organised a group to help the pilgrims bathing at the Sangam. The newspapers praised the service this group rendered. Then for another festival Kanai organised a larger group. But he was unhappy that an attack of malaria did not allow him to work with his group. One day, a large fire broke out at Chandernagore. That day Kanai was lying at home almost unconscious with a 105° fever. But when he heard of the fire, he went to the spot and began carrying pots of water to put out the fire. He, along with others, laboured untiringly for five to six hours. At last the fire was put out. Kanai fell down unconscious. His friends had to carry him to his house on their shoulders.

After his B.A. examination, Kanai took leave of his mother and went to Calcutta, apparently to find a job. In fact, service was only a pretext. He had already decided to join the revolutionary group formed by Sri Aurobindo's younger brother, Barin (Barindra Kumar Ghosh). In 1907 Barin left the office of *Yugantar* and established his headquarters and training centre at Maniktolla. It was a two-acre property owned by the Ghosh brothers. Kanai became a member of this secret society. He tried his best to spread the ideas of this society to all parts of India.

Kanai was a born revolutionary. He had an inborn talent for keeping secrets. It was impossible, even for his close friends, to know what was passing in his heart or mind. He did things in a simple way. When he was arrested in the Maniktolla Conspiracy, even his close friends were surprised. Nobody had an inkling that he was working for the Revolutionary Movement.

On 11 April 1906, Barin's group had made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Mayor of Chandernagore. On the night of the 6th December 1907, they tried to blow up the train of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Andrew Fraser, but he too escaped. On 30 April 1908, the revolutionaries tried to kill the much-hated magistrate, Kingsford, who had ordered the whipping of 14-year-old Sushil Sen. Unluckily, in place of Kingsford two English ladies were killed. The police at once swung into action and searched the places where the revolutionaries lived, including the Maniktolla Gardens. Thirty-eight people, including Sri Aurobindo, were arrested. Kanailal was arrested on 2 May 1908, at 15 Gopi Mohan Dutt's lane. Several documents were found there. On 4 May the house of Naren Gosain was searched and he was arrested on 10 May 1908. Satyendra Nath Bose had already been sentenced under the Arms Act in Midnapur. He too was lodged in Alipore jail with these revolutionaries. This case became the famous Alipore Bomb Case.

Motilal Roy met Kanai in Alipore Jail. He was surprised to find that Kanai had no hope of coming out. There was no serious charge against Kanai, and his brother

Ashutosh wanted to appoint a lawyer to apply for his bail. But the valiant Kanai was adamant. He wanted to share the fate of his friends. He told his brother, "If I do not share my comrades' joys and sorrows I will deem myself unfortunate. My destiny is irretrievably linked to that of my friends and what happens to them will happen to me." The lawyer talked with him for an hour but could not shake him from his firm decision. He advised Ashutosh Dutt to give up any plan to seek bail for Kanai. Kanai made a cryptic comment, "Do not think that we took up this work to perish in jail, or to live in the Andamans, or to die on the gallows like gentle lambs."

Nolini Kanta Gupta, who was one of the accused in the Alipore Bomb Case and would later become Sri Aurobindo's disciple, writes in his reminiscences:

. . . Barin got an idea: we must break out of jail. Our lives, he argued, were going to be wasted in any case, so why not do something worthwhile before we lost all? . . .

Sri Aurobindo however refused to have anything to do with Barin's plan. "As far as I am concerned," he said, "I mean to stand the trial."

Another group, consisting of some four or five persons, had in the meantime been hatching another plan in secret. Kanai Dutt was there, and Satyen Bose; perhaps Hem Das also was in the know, and Upen and Ullas too. But they did not say a word and showed only by their deed what they had meant to do.

Close on this second phase of our life came the third. The authorities had known us long enough by now to get convinced that we could make no trouble, not even the kind of indiscipline which they expected of the ordinary prisoners. There was the big hall where all the forty of us were lodged. Each had his allotted space, with his own 'altar', that is, a mound of earth that served as the bedstead and was covered with a blanket; at one end the mound was raised slightly to do duty for the pillow. I had at first nothing but disdain for this piece of earth, but later I came to appreciate its value, as I shall soon relate . . . Inside, within the hall, all manners of games and frolic were on — it was a regular fair. There was acting and caricature, recitation and song, an endless mirth.

In the midst of all this, Sri Aurobindo occupied his little corner engrossed most of the time in his *sādhana* and meditations . . .

Such was the picture of our outer life. But how about the inner feelings? There a fire had been smouldering. Barin had suggested that it would be easier and more feasible if we tried to make good our escape from jail itself, for we used to take our strolls in the yard adjoining the compound wall and the sentries also did not seem to be much too alert. Revolvers began to be collected . . . I had one in my keeping. On one side of the mound we used as a bed I had made a hole. In order to prevent discovery and lest the sentries should know, I used to sit with my back against the mound and go on digging with my bare

hands from behind. The earth was removed to either side and covered with the blanket. In this way the pistol could be kept hidden in a cavity within my 'bed'. The opening was plastered over with mud and then covered up with a tin plate on which they served us meals. But what happened to the pistol I left buried in this way I do not know. For as these plans and preparations were getting under way, there came a bolt from the blue, a deluge that swept away everything like a house of cards. It was Kanai and Satyen who had brought that about.

I did not know Satyen much, for we were told that he was ill and had been kept in the jail hospital. Kanai too was not much of a mixer. But we could sometimes hear him say, "Jail is not for me. I shall give the slip to the British Government." We used to laugh at his words.

...

To come back to Kanai. Most of the time he used to lie in bed covered up from head to foot. If one got curious and asked him why, he would reply, "Oh, I am trying to find my way into the inner worlds." One day, a jail warder came and gave him the good news that he had passed his B.A. examination — the results were just out. Kanai had joined in our activities while appearing for his examination. The next we heard about him was that he was ill and had been removed to the jail hospital and then . . .

All of a sudden, one evening, the alarm bell of the jail rang out. This bell with its furious clang was rung only in a grave emergency. At the same time a prisoner ran wildly about, shouting in Hindustani, "*Naren Gosāin thandā ho gayā, Naren Gosāin thandā ho gayā,*" — "Naren Gosain has been done for, Naren Gosain has been done for!" Before we had time to think or realise what had happened, swarms of armed policemen with rifles and fixed bayonets trooped into the courtyard where we had been taking our evening stroll. They pushed us back into our quarters like a drove of sheep or as if we had been animals for slaughter . . .

Kanai and others had wanted to get rid of Naren Gosain as soon as possible, not simply because he had been a traitor to the country but in order that his testimony be rejected in the Sessions Court, for his evidence would have no value unless it could be tested in cross-examination. This saved us all, at least from the clutches of the law.

(Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta, Part 7, pp. 376-379)

(To be continued)

SHYAM KUMARI

A QUEST FOR TRUTH

KIRAN KUMARI: *October 12, 1917 – December 24, 2010*

KIRAN KUMARI'S life was an unusual one because it was entirely dedicated to the service of the Mother and in this respect she stands as an example to all those who want to follow a spiritual path.

Until her teenage years, Kiran Kumari's life followed the pattern of every young girl of her time. She was brought up in a protected and conservative environment in Rusera (Bihar) and given in marriage to a man from her community at the age of 14 in 1932. Her son, Sumantra, was born in 1933. In 1934 she had a daughter, who sadly died after a year. Shortly after this, her life took a turn that was completely out of the usual; her husband, Umirchand, decided to leave his home and family and join the Ashram.

Kiran Kumari could have continued to live with the other members of the large extended family, as other women whose husbands joined the Ashram did. But she was made of a different stuff. She was determined to go and see the Ashram where her husband had decided to spend the rest of his life. What was it that had attracted him to this place and had made him turn his back on the life of ordinary fulfilment that others craved for?

Kiran Kumari first visited the Ashram in 1935 following in her husband's footsteps. She came to the Ashram with a large family group. The family had come during the November Darshan and was going back after a few weeks. Kiran Kumari, however, felt that this was too short a period and decided that the only way she could learn more about the Ashram was to live there for at least six months. To be in a completely new place, absolutely on her own must have been pretty daunting for a girl still in her teens. But, Kiran Kumari's indomitable spirit was not deterred by this prospect. She sought the Mother's permission and having got it stayed back alone. During those six months Kiran Kumari immersed herself in her work and experienced the life of an Ashramite. The seed was sown, and in August 1937 she settled in the Ashram for good.

The Ashram in those days was a very austere place and the sadhaks and sadhikas followed a very strict discipline. Men and women lived separate lives and even married couples were not allowed to have any contact with each other. Although Kiran Kumari first came to the Ashram because of her husband, once she joined it as a sadhika she lived in the circle of the other sadhikas and had no contact with him. Later on, when the Mother started the School in the Ashram, She asked Kiran Kumari's son, Sumantra, to come and join the Ashram in 1944. But he too lived in a separate house when he became a member of the Ashram.

From 12th November 1938, Kiran Kumari began working in the Mother's room and made service the central pillar of her sadhana. Interestingly, the very first flower she had offered to the Mother was "Service". Apart from working in the Mother's room doing Her personal work, she repaired the stoves, typewriters, pens, clocks, watches and fridges belonging to the Ashramites. She also repaired and maintained all the pumps and filters of the Ashram. Each day's work was meticulously documented by Kiran Kumari in several diaries which were seen and signed by the Mother on a daily basis. In the evenings, she cleaned stamps for the Mother's collection, helped in the Ashram stitching work and helped in cooking for the Mother amongst other things.

Another work which was allocated to her was to count all the "special" flowers that were offered to the Mother. The numbers were written in a thick notebook every day and given to the Mother. The "special" flowers comprised of "Service", "Aspiration", "Transformation", "Patience", "Power", "Divine's Love". This was something the Mother was very particular about during the years of the Second World War. This practice of counting the flowers was stopped after the war.

Kiran Kumari's day began at 4.30 a.m. with starting the pump in the Dining Room and carried on until late in the evening — each waking hour being dedicated to the service of the Mother. At the same time, Kiran Kumari also taught herself English and Bengali and learnt some French from the Mother. She sought perfection in everything she did and this extended to the running of her household. Kiran Kumari not only brought up her own son, Sumantra, but at the Mother's request took on the responsibility of looking after three more children — Bikash, Mounnou and Astha, all of whom she brought up with loving care and discipline.

Kiran Kumari was never swayed by the herd mentality, but followed the path she believed to be right. An example in point is when the ladies of the Ashram began going to the playground for group exercises, she refused to join them. When asked by the Mother why this was so, Kiran Kumari replied that someone had to stay back in Her room to keep things ready for Her when She returned from the playground, hearing which, the Mother smiled. Kiran Kumari was ready to forego an activity that everyone valued so much because she did not want the Mother to face any inconvenience.

How closely the Mother followed all her inner movement can be seen from an incident which took place some years after she joined the Ashram. As mentioned earlier, the Ashram life in those early years was one of austerity and discipline. The inmates of the Ashram concentrated on their sadhana and there were no distractions whatsoever. One day Kiran Kumari felt disturbed and was contemplating leaving the Ashram. As she was getting ready to do so, she found Dyuman-bhai at her door. He informed her that the Mother was going to come to see her in her house. The Mother walked from the garage door of the main Ashram building to Kiran Kumari's house, which was known as "Sadhana House", at 30 Rue François Martin and took

her back to Her room. So strong was the Mother's inner contact with all the sadhaks and sadhikas that She could feel and know whatever was passing through their minds and hearts. From that day onwards Kiran Kumari knew for a certainty that the Ashram was her home and all depressing thoughts were thrown out of her mind.

Kiran Kumari did not follow the crowd and spoke her mind, even when she knew this would not make her popular. Fearless and single-minded in the pursuit of her goal, Kiran Kumari had a strong character, but at the same time possessed an incredible ability to understand and relate to people of all ages and backgrounds. She was international in her outlook and most modern in her approach to life — ready to adapt to changing circumstances, aided by her sharp sense of humour.

To summarise: Kiran Kumari came to the Ashram as a young girl, with no formal education and developed into an efficient and precise worker, technician, cook, seamstress and, last but not least, a devoted mother to her many children. Indeed, her life has been a flowering in the Mother's Light.

We would like to end with one of Kiran Kumari's favourite prayers from the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* (25th October, 1914).

My aspiration to Thee, O Lord, has taken the form of a beautiful rose, harmonious, full in bloom, rich in fragrance. I stretch it out to Thee with both arms in a gesture of offering and I ask of Thee: if my understanding is limited, widen it; if my knowledge is obscure, enlighten it; if my heart is empty of ardour, set it aflame; if my love is insignificant, make it intense; if my feelings are ignorant and egoistic, give them the full consciousness in the Truth. And the "I" which demands this of Thee, O Lord, is not a little personality lost amidst thousands of others. It is the whole earth that aspires to Thee in a movement full of fervour.

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

MOUNNOU, PRIYA, SUNAYANA

Yes; vigilance should not be relaxed. In fact, it is only as the automatic Knowledge and action are established in the being that the constant vigilance ceases to be needed — even then it cannot be given up absolutely until there is the full Light.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 607)

VISITS RELIVED

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

(Continued from the issue of July 2012)

DURING March 1973 I had an occasion to go to Madras on some official duty. This offered me an opportunity to go to Pondicherry. My elder brother and I were at Pondy on the 14th March. Met Pandit-ji and requested for a personal room-darshan of the Mother. What a rare blessing! We got permission to see the Mother on the 16th March. My brother Babuanna and I went up to the Mother at 12.10 p.m. and bowed before her for her blessings. She was cheerful. She graciously touched my head and blessed me. *I never dreamt that this would be her last celestial blessing for us in this life.*

On the 14th August, 1973 we were again at the Ashram for the Mother's darshan the next day on the Lord's birthday. But the notice for the Mother's darshan was not yet put on the notice board. We came to know that the Mother was too withdrawn to give the darshan. The darshan was thus doubtful; and we were shocked!

However, on the 15th a notice was put up stating that the Mother would give Balcony Darshan at 6.15 p.m. What a pleasant surprise and a marvellous blessing! There were long queues at the Dining Hall for lunch, as around 10,000 visitors had gathered. Went to the balcony street at 5 p.m. The Mother came out on the balcony at 6.10 p.m. in a wheelchair, and slowly stood up at the railing and gave darshan. She appeared very weak, and it was painful for her to get up and stand. She withdrew inside after about 5 minutes.

On the 17th August we purchased the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary books. We also met Dyuman-ji, received the napkins which he used to give us on darshan days. We then returned to Mysore via Bangalore.

While I was at Mysore, I received an important letter from M. P. Pandit dated 25.10.1973 saying, "Dear friend, May I wish a happy Diwali to you? We have just received your Diwali presents to us. Sister finds the sandalwood piece excellent — top quality. I cannot be too grateful to you. Mother is still in . . . (*some words could not be deciphered*). I do not know how long this state of things will continue. With Her blessings to you. Yours, Madhav Pandit."

17th November 1973 was an extremely important day in the earth's evolutionary history. On this day the Mother left her mortal body at Pondicherry. I was camping at Bandipur, 550 kms away, for the launch of the Project Tiger. Bandipur in those days was cut off from all communications, save through the land telephones, and

these often remained unoperational thanks to ravages by wild elephants.

My brothers at Hubli, about 475 kms away, had received the shocking news. They were trying to convey to me the news, but communication could not be established. A friend of mine, based at Mysore, had heard the sad news on All India Radio and he somehow managed to send it on to me on the 18th morning. Immediately I got into my jeep and rushed to Mysore. Picking up my younger brother I proceeded to Bangalore. By the time we reached Bangalore it was late in the evening. Telephonically we contacted my Hubli home, and came to know that my brothers had already left by rail to come to Bangalore on their way to Pondy. So I had to wait for their arrival till the next morning, with a taxi waiting to travel to Pondy.

Soon after my brothers, dear Babuanna, Kitty, and my dear mother arrived, I picked them up from the railway station, and rushed to Pondy on the 19th morning, hoping not to miss the last darshan of the Mother. We were in a state of shock! We reached Pondy at 3 p.m. Receiving the flashed news, thousands of devotees had already gathered, waiting in long, long queues to go inside the Ashram. In fact, we were amongst the few fortunate ones to have had this last blessing. Many could not make it in time.

An unforgettable experience! Immediately on reaching the Ashram, we felt that the Mother's force had taken charge of all the devotees gathered there. Normally when a near and dear one suddenly departs, human beings are in a mentally dazed state; and the body's immediate reaction to that would be that the legs tremble and lose the strength to hold the weight of the body. But nothing of the sort happened! We were moving automatically in the queue. In fact, we felt as if we were being led in the queue by Her force. All the visitors were also calm and collected!

The mortal remains of the Mother were kept in the Meditation Hall for the devotees' last darshan. She was laid in State on a reclining couch. She was covered by a white cloth, with the face uncovered. Large lumps of camphor were kept on all sides of the couch, to keep away any possible insects from crawling on to the couch. We went in a queue, paid our respects to the Mother. We were grateful to the Mother for bestowing on us her last darshan, which we would have lost if we had been late in reaching Pondy. Not satisfied with having one quick darshan, we had the privilege of again standing in the queue for one more last darshan.

We were grateful to the Mother for having given us, and others like us, her last darshan, after leaving her body three days earlier. Many devotees, including overseas devotees, had missed this rare blessing by whiskers, even after flying long distances.

After the announcement that the Mother would be laid to rest the next morning, we went to the Park Guest House. It was full, no accommodation was available anywhere. Daya-bhai, the person in charge of the Park Guest House, obliged us by allowing us to rest in his room.

The next day, the 20th November, the mortal remains of the Mother were to be put into the vault, so far kept vacant but filled with sand, over the Samadhi of Sri

Aurobindo. We went very early, and took our place quite near to the Samadhi. My three brothers Babuanna, Dr. Kitty, Dr. Vasanta and my mother and myself were seated very near the Samadhi. Preparations were going on. The upper cover over the raised vault of Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi was filled with sand, which the disciplined devotees removed slowly. The empty space in the vault was kept open for lowering into it the rosewood box containing the Mother's body. The rosewood box was lined inside with silk cloth and perhaps a silver sheet. The casket containing the Mother's mortal remains was brought to the Samadhi at about 8 a.m. Udar Pinto was in the lead in carrying the casket. It was slowly lowered into the opened vault over the Lord's Samadhi. The sand removed from the upper partition of the vault over the Lord's Samadhi was later given to all the visitors, as a memento and blessing. This holy sand we took home, and have preserved it till today in a silver casket, as a great precious Blessing.

(To be continued)

S. G. NEGINHAL

In the liberated state it is not the inner Purusha only that remains detached — the inner Purusha is always detached, only one is not conscious of it in the ordinary state. It is the Prakriti also that is not disturbed by the action of the gunas or attached to it — the mind, the vital, the physical (whatever Prakriti) begin to get the same quietude, unperturbed peace and detachment as the Purusha, but it is a quietude, not a cessation of all action. It is quietude in action itself. If it were not so, my statement in the Arya that there can be a desireless or liberated action on which I found the possibility of a free (mukta) action would be false. The whole being, Purusha-Prakriti, becomes detached (having no desire or attachment) even in the action of the gunas.

The outer being is also detached — the whole being is without desire or attachment and still action is possible. Action without desire is possible, action without attachment is possible, action without ego is possible.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 684)

THE LUMINOUS PAST

(Continued from the issue of July 2012)

I WENT and told all this to my teacher Janina. She was also happy that I had accepted the two children. Let me take the opportunity here to recount an incident from her life before she came to the Ashram. Actually I had heard this story from Bharati-di.

One day when I went to see Janina, she gave me a blank sheet of paper. I found some very fine pencil lines on it. I could not understand anything. Janina pointed to a spot with her needle and drew my attention. There was a picture of the Mother embracing a young girl with both her arms. The girl also was embracing the Mother. In surprise I said, "This is the Mother's picture." Suddenly Janina got up and went into her room. I kept looking at the picture with deep concentration.

It seemed to me that a young girl had entered a dark forest and was trying to walk through thorny bushes. There were needle-like thorns stuck to her body. Janina came back after almost fifteen minutes. Her face was swollen. There were marks of tears on her face. She sat beside me and smiled a little, then said, "My friend, let's take the day off today. I have to finish my stitching. Come back after seven days. I am relieved to know that your classes are going on well."

Later I learnt from Bharati-di that during the Second World War Janina had to grapple with death in the German concentration camps,* month after month. Doctor Hipe and Mrs. Hipe were Janina's very dear German friends. They were highly placed officials. Secretly they used to make discreet enquiries about Janina. No one in Poland knew anything about this. Unknown to others they looked through many German concentration camps until they found Janina in one but she was in an unconscious state. Using all their guile they managed to put her in their car and to bring her out. If they had been caught they would have been punished with death.

They worked very hard, nursed her selflessly and had her treated until she regained her consciousness. The first words she uttered were, "Where is that goddess who was holding the blue and white lights in her hands? She was so sweet! I found limitless joy in having found her."

Soon after Janina got well Germany surrendered. She went back to her own country, Poland, then with her own efforts and with the help of Dr. and Mrs. Hipe she found out about the Mother by reading her books. Janina recognised that she was the same compassionate Mother who had pulled her out of the jaws of death. She held in her hands blue and white lights representing power.

That was the picture she had drawn.

* There is a somewhat different version in the next article. — Ed.

The Mother recognised her dear child very easily and blessed her. She told her to go ahead with her artistic work. She advised her to come to the Ashram. She was given the work of nursing in Dr. Sanyal-da's clinic. But Janina was an artist and an unusual artist at that. Guided by her own inspiration and the Mother's suggestions she drew many pictures and sent them to the Mother. Our Art Gallery is fortunate to have her works in their collection.

She never spoke about the war. Whenever memories of the German concentration camp would come up in her mind she would not be able to control her tears.

That day, after giving me the picture she must have gone into her bathroom and cried, unseen by me, to make her heart lighter before she came back.

I consider myself fortunate for having had Janina as my teacher. We shared a deep friendship.

(To be continued)

PRAMILA DEVI

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

It is the lesson of life that always in this world everything fails a man — only the Divine does not fail him, if he turns entirely to the Divine. It is not because there is something bad in you that blows fall on you — blows fall on all human beings because they are full of desire for things that cannot last and they lose them or, even if they get, it brings disappointment and cannot satisfy them. To turn to the Divine is the only truth in life.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 844)

A CAPTIVE OF HER LOVE

SHE was like a flame. What can we say about her life? We know so little. Though she was a close friend, I never questioned her about it. For she had come to the Ashram to practise the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo, leaving the past behind her to be reborn to a new life. It was only incidentally that she spoke about herself and related some episodes of her life-story.

From her papers we know that she was born in Lvov, Poland, on the 18th of July 1909. Her father, Jan Stroka, was an engineer, her mother, Jadwiga Krasuska, a teacher. Janina was the younger of their two daughters. After her secondary school examination in Zakopane, she entered the University of Cracow and in 1933 received her M.A. degree in pedagogy and psychology. During the six following years she worked as a teacher in a teachers' training college.

In 1939, when the Nazis invaded Poland, the intelligentsia was advised to leave the country as there was fear of genocide. Janina was among those who joined the exodus. She started her journey with a group of thirty or more people, travelling by all available means, taking lifts in bullock carts or going on foot. Later, they had to disband and take shelter in farms on the way and, as the days passed, her group grew smaller and smaller, many dropping out through sheer exhaustion. When they drew near the Slovakia border in the Tatry, Janina found herself with only one companion who suddenly collapsed while they were climbing a mountain. It was a crucial moment, for any delay would defeat all their efforts. He entreated her to leave him to his fate and not lose her last chance of reaching safety. He preferred to die in his motherland under the wide sky — this was his freedom — his body one with the earth of Poland.

Soon she was on the other side — alone.

From Slovakia she went to Hungary and then, via Yugoslavia and Turkey, to Palestine — or rather what was then Palestine — along with other Polish refugees. This was in January 1941. Neither the itinerary by land and sea nor the details of the journey are known to us. The refugees were given shelter in a camp near Jerusalem. But there came a day when Janina could no longer bear the promiscuity of camp life and she left the settlement in search of work. She knocked at many doors, but they were all closed to her. She went on inquiring here and there and finally arrived at Ramallah, where she presented herself at a boarding school for Arab girls. The headmistress was a Dutch lady who had been posted there by a Quaker association. She felt very sorry for Janina, whose qualifications were irrelevant here.

“Do you know how to cook? how to sew?” she asked. There was nothing that Janina could do which would justify her employment. Yet, not having the heart to send her away, the headmistress welcomed her into the house. “We shall find

something," she said.

Janina found not only a refuge but also a friend, and more, a kindred soul. It is to this friend that most of the letters published here are addressed.

Before Janina's arrival in that boarding school there was no real infirmary there, only a sick-room which often remained vacant. The nursing was confined to taking temperatures, giving medicine and food, and sending the boarders to a hospital if their condition was serious. Though there was no need of a special attendant, Janina was appointed to this task. Later on, she helped in teaching and gardening and assisted the headmistress in solving the problems of the Arab girl students. As time passed in that foreign land, the friendship between the two deepened.

Once, in Jerusalem, a lecture on Sri Aurobindo was delivered by a German clergyman¹ who later became a close friend of theirs. He used to give regular talks on the world's sages and mystics. In a way, he too was a refugee. Before Hitler came to power, he had seen in him a dark force and had written some articles in which he warned people about the coming danger. His political activities led to his arrest and imprisonment. The church negotiated his freedom but expelled him and he had to go into exile. This was for him the occasion to realise one of his old dreams: to go to the Orient, study Arabic and learn more about Islam. So it was that he found himself in Palestine when the war broke out.

One day, as he was ferreting in a secondhand bookshop in Jerusalem, he discovered Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*. This came to him as a revelation and a message of hope. Even if the dark forces were at present holding the world in their grip, there was Someone on earth whose spiritual force could change the course of events, transform the Shadow into Light and sow the seeds of a new world.

Janina heard the message of Sri Aurobindo and it was for her the beginning of a new life. More books by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were obtained and she began to practise yoga with her friend. It was also at that time that she started painting. She had learned drawing and painting at school in Poland, but had never developed her talent, or only as much as was necessary for her teaching. Here, in Palestine, she began to paint water-colour landscapes.

Work in the boarding school for Arab girls came to a stop at the end of the British Mandate in Palestine. As Janina was not a Jew, there was no reason for her to stay there and she decided to go back to Poland in February 1948. She worked there for nearly nine years, supervising the educational work of different institutions. Later on, she was put in charge of a home and school for mentally deficient children. Throughout this period, she continued to study the works of Sri Aurobindo and practise yoga, but she fell ill in the destructive atmosphere of soviet communism. In November 1956, thanks to a change of government in Poland, she obtained a passport for Germany where her friend now lived. There she was welcomed once more and

1. Heinz Kappes, who later translated many of Sri Aurobindo's works into German.

nursed both in body and soul. It was in some way an apprenticeship of freedom, a kind of re-education. Janina had to learn to breathe and move and think as a free being in a free country. Living in a different atmosphere, she started to realise how much her soul had been stifled, her spirit wounded by the life in Poland under the communist regime. She could not possibly go back. It was then that she made her decisive choice and with the consent of the Mother embarked for India, arriving in Pondicherry on the 17th of December 1957.

About her life in the Ashram, her letters to her friend reveal more than anything we can say. The Mother put her in charge of a nursing home for surgical cases. As she was not a trained nurse, the technical side of nursing was generally performed by others, but she kept the house spotlessly clean and managed, often out of next to nothing, to create an atmosphere of harmony and beauty.

During her free time, she devoted herself to painting, drawing her inspiration from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The colours she chose were always symbolic of a state or a plane of consciousness. She often used the technique of stippling: hundreds and hundreds of dots, into each of which went all her concentration; each dot contained the Divine Name. Later she painted several series of pictures to illustrate certain spiritual themes such as the adventure of the soul, the divine Play and the story of Creation. In her creative periods she could not stop painting, yet continued to take care of the patients with the same attention — the brush in one hand, the bedpan in the other, as she would say. In six and a half years, she produced more than three hundred paintings. From 1961, she started experiments with cement, taking the help of a master-mason to inlay this raw material with some fine worshipping figures. While thus experimenting, she dreamt of the future, of towns and houses whose walls would reflect the higher aspiration of man and his inner life.

She also decorated pottery — plates, vases, lamps. Her designs were not simply ornamental; each line and shade had a deep meaning. A spiral of tiny circles of different colours would suggest the evolution from the dark Inconscient to the orange-gold of the Supramental, the long journey of the soul through the red, green, blue and yellow of all the planes of existence and levels of consciousness — with, in the centre of each small circle, a golden dot, the divine spark, growing from a pinpoint in the dark inconscience and burning progressively through all the colours until it blazes forth into a golden sun.

Her activities were not confined only to nursing and painting, she also helped some teachers of the Ashram school in their educational work and she wrote a number of poems in English and in French, a few of which we have included here.

She lived in the consciousness of the One. For her, all was He, the Lord. This could be felt in her dealings with people, no matter who they were or what they did. Whether persons of rank or scavengers, she would always address them in the same considerate, even ceremonious manner. All happenings were to her manifestations

of Him. Once there was a cyclone. All night the tempest raged. One felt as if the world was being shaken to its foundation. Many trees were uprooted, roofs torn away. There was no electricity, no water supply, houses were leaking. The next morning, everybody's mind was full of the inconveniences of the situation. I met Janina and inquired about the damage to her nursing home and about how she had felt amidst the fury of the elements. Her face expressed nothing but glowing wonder and in amazement she said: "All this is happening in the body of the Lord!"

I had read the Bhagavad Gita many times, and meditated upon the chapter where Krishna reveals to Arjuna His cosmic form and appears as Time the Destroyer, swallowing all the worlds in His blazing mouth. All this I had tried to see in my mind and imagination, but that day, while our ears were still filled with the clamour of the storm, this simple remark of Janina's struck me with the force of a living truth — a truth that she had lived. At once I swung to another consciousness through the power of her experience.

She had also a great sense of humour. About someone who had not been very nice to her, she said: "In one of my pictures, I shall paint him as a flower in the buttonhole of the Lord."

This was her way of taking everything, good or bad, into herself and offering it to the Lord so that He might transform it.

On July 17, 1964, the eve of her fifty-fifth birthday, as she was recovering from a fever, she suddenly died. Just prior to that, she had been working hard on a series of forty-eight pictures she wanted to offer to the Mother on that day. She had completed them all. They illustrated her favourite theme: the journey of the soul out of the Mother's Heart, the plunge into the abyss and, through the divine alchemy in all the worlds, the Return and the Crown. She too was returning from her long journey.

On the morning of the 18th, her birthday, at the time fixed by the Mother, her body was taken to the cremation ground, as is the custom here.

As I was looking at the funeral pyre with a distressed heart, I saw the rising flames merge with the figures of her paintings. This indeed was her life; she was herself a flame of God's living Fire.

MICHÈLE LUPSA

(Introduction to *A Captive of Her Love — Letters and Paintings of Janina Stroka*,
Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondichery, 1998)

THE KRISHNA WORLD

(Continued from the issue of July 2012)

12. Anandamaya Purusha

WHEN Arjuna decides not to fight, throws down his bow and arrows and sits back in his seat, the very image of dejection, we get ready for Krishna's reaction. How does he look? *Prahasanniva*, as if smiling. Of all the characters in our racial memory, he is the one person who never seems to have lost his cool. The entire armed forces of a land are in battle array and about to go on a mutually-destructive spree, Krishna can yet smile!

It is not the Gita alone. Wherever you dip into Krishna literature, he spreads fun, frolic, mischievous smiles. Being the daughter of a Krishna-bhakta like my father, I have been lucky with the abundance of books on Krishna at home. And yet, it was but recently that I learnt that there is even a *Sri Krishnopanishad*. My good poet-friend Kovala Suprasannacharya sent me this slim volume with his detailed introduction. I had vaguely heard of this Upanishad but never came across it, though the story of the Rama-Krishna linkage through the Munis is familiar enough. The *Padma Purana* says that the sages of the forest wanted to have a closeness with Rama as with one's beloved and he assured them that this would happen. Only, it would be in the following Dwapara Yuga when he would be born as Krishna and they would be the cowherdesses of Brindavan. The Upanishad has two chapters. In the first we have a dialogue between the sages and Rama who assures them of their togetherness in the next birth. But why did the sages want this closeness with the Lord when they were already his devotees and remembered him day and night? Weren't they related as devotees and the Deity? To answer this question we have to go to Sri Aurobindo who points out that there are various facets to this relationship.

But the highest and the greatest relation is that which starts from none of the ordinary religious motives, but is rather of the very essence of Yoga, springs from the very nature of love itself; it is the passion of the Lover and the Beloved. Wherever there is the desire of the soul for its utter union with God, this form of the divine yearning makes its way even into religions which seem to do without it and give it no place in their ordinary system. Here the one thing asked for is love, the one thing feared is the loss of love, the one sorrow is the sorrow of separation of love; for all other things either do not exist for the lover or come in only as incidents or as results and not as objects or conditions of love. . . .

Love is a seeking for mutual possession, and it is here that the demand for mutual possession becomes absolute.¹

Now we seem to draw closer to the idea of *Rās Līla* and why we love the very name of Krishna and feel that he is within our psyche all the time as a subtle presence. A point is made by Dr. Suprasannacharya who sees in Krishna the integrating factor of all the ways of yoga, reflecting the Aurobindonian view:

Bhakti, Jnana and Karma are not separate entities. They are just aspects of the one way referred to variously in different languages. Bhakti means love. The love we have for someone makes us act for the good of that person. When a mother looks after her child and breast-feeds the baby, she is performing Karma Yoga. Behind it is devotion and love. Just by listening to the silent crying of her child the mother is able to discern whether the crying is due to hunger or stomach-pain or some other hurt: well, this is the bondage through Jnana. Hence the basis of all paths is Bhakti, Love. Whatever the *Purva Mimamsa*, the *Upanishads* and ever so many shastras say, ultimately the Yoga of Divine Love imaged in the *Bhāgavata* comes to the fore. The Krishna *tattva* is to show us the vision of an avatar of such Supreme Love.²

Dr. Suprasannacharya further says that the presence of Krishna of the *Bhagavata* marks a grand transformation which was on, on earth. The second chapter of the *Krishnopanishad* deals with the *vyuha* concept of Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Vasudeva is in the Milky Ocean. The other three are in the Amoda, Pramoda and Sammoda heavens. Sri Aurobindo too speaks of a triple mystic heaven:

Arisen beneath a triple mystic heaven
The seven immortal earths were seen, sublime:
Homes of the blest released from death and sleep
Where grief can never come nor any pang
Arriving from self-lost and seeking worlds
Alter Heaven-nature's changeless quietude
And mighty posture of eternal calm,
Its pose of ecstasy immutable.³

1. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 24, p. 569.

2. *Sri Krishnopanishad: Commentary* by Koveala Suprasannacharya (2011), p. 8. Text translated from Telugu by Prema Nandakumar.

3. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 672.

Trying to gaze at the immensities of documentation about Krishna, I can only confess that I have but forded a miniscule portion of it. All I can say is that whatever I have touched about Krishna has brought me a response of Ananda. Even if someone tries to take up Krishna for elucidating philosophy, he gets caught in his pearly net of mesmerising love and childhood games. I have before me a book published in 1961 titled *Sri Krishna Charitam*, a poem in Sanskrit. The author, A. N. Srinivasa Raghava Iyengar, argues that Krishna symbolises how the theistic tendency takes root in man's godward emotions. Attempts to curb this theistic tendency in man prove futile. Krishna is thus the indestructible theistic bent of mind. Yashoda is the desire for salvation; sage Garga is the process of Bhakti; Balarama is the process of involution. While lacking the persistence needed to understand the subtleties of philosophy, I enjoy re-enacting *Krishna-lila* in my mind. Iyengar comes to the tremendous legend of Krishna and the mortar, but with his philosophic weaponry blazing, taking his cues from *Krishnopanishad*:

This [Sri Krishna breaking the pot containing curds] is symbolic of the purification of the mind which is represented by the ocean of milk. The result is His being bound to the mortar, which represents Kashyapa, the mind, by a rope representing Aditi or Samastijnana.⁴

According to Iyengar, theism has now survived atheism and non-theistic approaches to the Divine. Once the personal god has been given a form, a local habitation and a name, it is all Ananda, of course. So we move to the next stage in Krishna's life: Brindavana which represents intense devotion. With the purification of the sensory and motor organs by the heavy rains sent by Indra, it is time for crowning Krishna as Govinda.

Rasakrida succeeding this refers to the enjoyment of bliss from the knowledge that Brahman is the pervading spirit in the Vedas represented by Krishna placing himself among the Gopis and in the centre of the circle.⁵

So his conclusion after all the ambling through Vedantic significations with a bit of molecular science thrown in is that Krishna is the Anandamaya in our experience. Krishna has the last laugh!

As I have been maintaining throughout, I haven't much patience for mere intellectual reasoning when it comes to Krishna. This is why my favourite works on Krishna are all steeped in the dramatic scenarios evoked by the intense bhakti of the poet. They are not meant for critical analysis. Krishna himself is awake and around all the time and when he sees that we try to lock him up in a stultifying philosophical

4. *Sri Krishna Charitam*, p. 47.

5. *Ibid.*

atmosphere, he escapes as he did from Kamsa's prison. But what a charming fellow he is, ready to be in the control of Surdas! He is perhaps gurgling and smiling when Yashoda puts him in a tiny swing, and he makes no attempt to break out:

The carpenter has made a baby-swing adorned with jewels, gems, and gold; there are many toys kept around it and strings of beautiful pearls are hanging at the four corners.

Mother Yashoda, having done the *ubatana* (application of pastes to cleanse the body) and bath of the baby, took Him in her lap. Then she kept Krishna in the baby-swing, put a blanket over Him, and smiled with happiness.

Krishna is seven days old at that moment and his lips, feet, and palms are red. O Surdas! Having seen the reddish appearance of Krishna, the children in Vraj felt joyful.⁶

This is a scenario all over the world, be it in Africa, Japan, New Zealand or Burma. It is such a mundane picture in our everyday lives. Yet, this mundane activity of placing a baby in its cradle is raised to divine planes of Ananda, bringing back the showers of Delight when we bathe the baby, dry him, dress him, feed him and tuck him in the cradle to sleep comfortably. Where else need we go for an explanation of Sri Aurobindo's favourite phrase, 'Delight of Existence'?

Bilwamangal's *Sri Krishnakarnamritam* has several scenes of baby Krishna. Bilwamangal is also known as Lilashuka because of his expert description of Krishna's play (*lila*) like Sage Shuka who delivered the *Bhagavata*. Hailing from Kerala, he lived in the 13th century. It may be mentioned here that Sri Ramakrishna's disciple Girish Chandra Ghosh who is known as the father of Bengali theatre wrote a drama on Bilwamangal which received high praise in those days. Chaitanya has written a commentary on this work.

The poem is strung with 308 slokas in Sanskrit each dripping with a nectarean experience. I guess my partiality for the work rises from its avoiding the Mahabharata Krishna. But when he does touch upon the subject, Bilwamangal sends waves of Ananda upon us. Here is Krishna looking after the horses as the charioteer of Arjuna:

His reddish hand holds the whip;
The garland, jewelled ear-rings
And golden waist-band sway;
His body, dark like the cloud
Is covered by drops of sweat;
This Supreme Brilliance is a jewel
For Arjuna's chariot.
May the Light guard us!

6. *Sri Krishna Baal Madhuri* (Gita Press, 2006).

Having made Arjuna's horses comfortable
 By rubbing them with his fingers,
 He bathes them daily by taking water
 In his cupped hands everyday.
 His chest is bare, his turban
 Has the whip tucked in it.
 His teeth hold the reins.
 Such is the result of Devaki's treasure
 Of good deeds. May He guard us!⁷

The soul-ravishing scenes of Krishna's childhood come through with a special force. Bilwamangal says that the concept (*vastu*) of the Delight of Existence is to be found as a baby in Gokula. All the limbs of Krishna flash delight. The figure of the Flute-Player is capable of drawing us away from the poison of material life. That withdrawal is due to the figure that unveils itself in our mind:

Eyes like the lotus bud,
 Cheeks that are smooth and clear
 As the mirror, the lotus-like face
 Filled with the honey of flute-music:
 May this lotus blossom forth
 In my mind.⁸

Bilwamangal never tires of the Delight that pervades him within and without, the moment he thinks of Krishna. Krishna is the very soul of his work, *mama vāṅgmaya jīvitam*. Ananda consciousness flows everywhere as the Sanskrit syllables tinkle and flash in rhythm:

Like the waves that rise from the ocean
 Of Ananda and blind the eyes with joy,
 He has put on the image of a young boy
 With loving gestures innumerable;
 His face is like the moon and is lit up
 With a smile of matchless Ananda;
 He is indeed an ocean of Ananda.
 May my mind ever keep following him.⁹

7. *Sri Krishnakarnamritam*. Translations by Prema Nandakumar.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

Krishna is an ocean of Ananda, *ananda samplavam*. It is impossible to catch him in the net of research, but he is easily bound by hoops of love. He is the very image of sweetness, compassion and purification. According to Bilwamangal, the mistakes committed by us in the course of our career as an orator or writer when serving Mahasaraswati would be forgiven if we speak of Krishna's greatness. As Bilwamangal gets excited thinking of Krishna's ways, we see many colour-slides of action that make us smile away with indulgence. Thus Krishna the butter-thief when he was caught red-handed by a cowherdess:

“Who are you, child?” “Balarama's brother.”
 “What do you want from here?” “I came here
 By mistake thinking it is my house.”
 “Well, why have you thrust your hand
 Into the pot of butter?” “Mother,
 I put my hand searching for a calf
 That is missing. Do not be in a hurry
 To accuse.” May Krishna who replied thus
 To a noble cowherdess guard us ever.¹⁰

This figure of utter beauty and absolute Ananda (*mahānanda sarvasvam*) is ideal for meditation. Lilashuka also brings to us a profound variation of the Krishna figure towards the end of *Sri Krishnakarnamritam*. It is now Krishna seen with his twin sister Maya, born to Yashoda in Gokula.

She is ornamented with garlands
 And the peacock's feather; she has tresses
 That ravish our hearts; she is showered
 With flowers of the forest; a tilak
 Of powdered redstone adorns her forehead;
 She is ever sweet to our hearts and is tuned
 To the nectarian streams of the flute's music;
 The very icon of beauty; young maiden;
 Dark like the tender shoots of green leaves;
 My salutations to this Divine Mother.¹¹

Krishna and Kali pervade Sri Aurobindo's life and yoga and writings. While the Gopalasundari image subsumes the terror of Kali into the Beauty of the Krishna figure, Sri Aurobindo contemplates on this *terribilita* of the Supreme which has two

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

ways of transforming man into a higher being. Hadn't he seen enough of the Dance of Kali in sculpting the new man through sorrow and pain? It was time for Krishna to reveal himself in the world-consciousness! Sri Aurobindo's expectation is understandable because of the gathering clouds of another disastrous World War on the horizon in 1939 when he wrote a sonnet:

Two measures are there of the cosmic dance.
 Always we hear the tread of Kali's feet
 Measuring in rhythms of pain and grief and chance
 Life's game of hazard terrible and sweet.

The ordeal of the veiled Initiate,
 The hero soul at play with Death's embrace,
 Wrestler in the dread gymnasium of Fate
 And sacrifice a lonely path to Grace,

Man's sorrows made a key to the Mysteries,
 Truth's narrow road out of Time's wastes of dream,
 The soul's seven doors from Matter's tomb to rise,
 Are the common motives of her tragic theme.

But when shall Krishna's dance through Nature move,
 His mask of sweetness, laughter, rapture, love?¹²

When indeed? Sri Aurobindo has voiced the anguished cry of humanity. Another world war has not happened but terror all over has become an everyday fare. It is not surprising then that we turn to Krishna's dance over the evil Kaliya, the sweetness of his ravishing figure, the laughter of his presence as he feeds his friends and cats with stolen butter, the rapture of yogic togetherness with the flute-player when in meditation, understanding the significance of divine love known as bhakti yoga. There is abundance for us in these regions.

However, this should not be mistaken as running away from the battleground, an ostrich trying to shy away from reality by burying its head in sand.¹³ Devotees following the yoga of divine love are also part of the universal forces which are steadily moving towards a higher plane of consciousness in the evolutionary march upwards. Sri Aurobindo holds bhakti as the culminating point of the integral yoga of transformation:

12. 'The Cosmic Dance', *Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 590.

13. This is a myth, of course; ostriches do not bury their head in sand!

But works fulfil themselves in knowledge; all the totality of works, says the Gita, finds its rounded culmination in knowledge, *sarvaṁ karmākhilam jñāne parisamāpyate*. By union in will and works we become one in the omnipresent conscious being from whom all our will and works have their rise and draw their power and in whom they fulfil the round of their energies. And the crown of this union is love; for love is the delight of conscious union with the Being in whom we live, act and move, by whom we exist, for whom alone we learn in the end to act and to be.¹⁴

So to Krishna I go leaving the muddled pathways of unbelief. As I work physically, as I study, struggling with my intellect, I rest in peace because of this sadhana of Divine Love that the Krishna concept has brought to mankind. It could be a massive epic like *Harivamsam*, a devotion-drenched Purana like the *Bhagavata*, the nectarean flow of *Sri Krishnakarnamritam* or the lilting waves of Narayana Teertha's *Krishna Lila Tarangini*, *dāmodaram akhila kāmākaram* . . .

Damodara. One with his stomach bound. Krishna bound to the mortar by Yashoda. In her last days, my mother who had been bravely and silently fighting great pain used to listen to my reading out cantos chosen from the *Bhagavata*. One day I happened to be reading the ninth canto of the tenth Book. Beyond the racking pain, her face glowed with youthful joy, as I went on with the churning of curds by Yashoda, Krishna troubling her, her running into the kitchen as milk was boiling over and Krishna breaking the pot. Yashoda came back, found out the mischief of Krishna and pursued him as he had hidden himself. This went on till she did catch up with him.

Finally, seeing his mother perspiring, with her hair disheveled and flowers falling from it, Krishna took pity for her exertions, and allowed himself to be tied up out of kindness to her.¹⁵

The cowherdess had bound him to a mortar: *gopikolūkhale dhāmna babandha!* A clear whisper came from the bed, as from nowhere: "Did she really bind the child to the mortar? Oh, the poor thing!" My mother's face glowed as an innocent, young cowherdess as she broke out into a smile, all ananda. It is said that listening to the legend of Krishna being bound to the mortar releases a person from bondage. This was to be the last reading session with my mother for me.

They say one becomes a young maiden in the presence of Krishna. Certainly evocation of Krishna in our consciousness creates that welcome space of Ananda in a world criss-crossed by a million worries, duties, sicknesses and inhuman cupidity.

14. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 24, p. 545.

15. *Bhagavata*.

Once we do inclose ourselves in contemplating the Flute-Player of Brindavan, we slip into that Krishna-space with electrical speed. Savitri seems to have done it!

Amidst a laughter of unearthly lyres
 She heard around her nameless voices cry
 Triumphant, an innumerable sound.
 A choir of rushing winds to meet her came.
 She bore the burden of infinity
 And felt the stir of all ethereal space.
 Pursuing her in her fall, implacably sweet,
 A face was over her which seemed a youth's,
 Symbol of all the beauty eyes see not,
 Crowned as with peacock plumes of gorgeous hue
 Framing a sapphire, whose heart-disturbing smile
 Insatiably attracted to delight,
 Voluptuous to the embraces of her soul.¹⁶

(Concluded)

16. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 711.

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

The boy with the flute is Sri Krishna, the Lord descended into the world-play from the divine Ananda; his flute is the music of the call which seeks to transform the lower ignorant play of mortal life and bring into it and establish in its place the Lila of his divine Ananda. It was the psychic being in you that heard the call and followed after it.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 392)

Material things are not to be despised — without them there can be no manifestation in the material world.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, pp. 716-17)

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(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 716)

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