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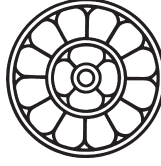
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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

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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE BIRTH OF THE WAR-GOD

Stanzaic rendering of the opening of Canto I¹

1

A god mid hills northern Himaloy rears
His snow-piled summits' dizzy majesties,
And in the eastern and the western seas
He bathes his giant sides; lain down appears
Measuring the dreaming earth in an enormous ease.

2

Him, it is told, the living mountains made
A mighty calf of earth, the mother large,
When Meru of that milking had the charge
By Prithu bid; and jewels brilliant-rayed
Were brightly born and herbs on every mountain marge.

3

So is he in his infinite riches dressed
Not all his snows can slay that opulence.
As drowned in luminous floods the mark though dense
On the moon's argent disc, so faints oppressed
One fault mid crowding virtues fading from our sense.

4

Brightness of minerals on his peaks outspread
In their love-sports and in their dances gives
To heavenly nymphs adornment, which when drive
Split clouds across, those broken hues displayed
Like an untimely sunset's magic glories live.

1. [Editorial note in CWSA: Around 1916-18, Sri Aurobindo made three separate translations of parts of the first two cantos of Kalidasa's epic *Kumarasambhava* under the title *The Birth of the War-God*. The first rendering, which breaks off after the twentieth verse, is in rhymed stanzas.]

5

Far down the clouds droop to his girdle-waist;
And to his low-hung plateaus' coolness won
The Siddhas in soft shade repose, but run
 Soon glittering upwards by wild rain distressed
To unstained summits splendid with the veilless sun.

6

Although unseen the reddened footprints blotted
By the new-fallen snows, the hunters know
The path their prey the mighty lions go;
 For pearls from the slain elephants there clotted
Fallen from the hollow claws the dangerous passing show.

7

The birch-leaves on his slopes love-pages turn;
Like spots of age upon the tusky kings
Of liquid metal ink their letterings
 Make crimson pages that with passion burn
Where heaven's divine Circes pen heart-moving things.

8

He fills the hollows of his bamboo trees
With the breeze rising from his deep ravines,
Flutes from his rocky mouths as if he means
 To be tune giver to the minstrelsies
Of high-voiced Kinnars chanting in his woodland glens.

9

His poplars by the brows of elephants
Shaken and rubbed loose forth their odorous cream;
And the sweet resin pours its trickling stream,
 And wind on his high levels burdened pants
With fragrance making all the air a scented dream.

10

His grottoes are love-chambers in the night
For the strong forest-wanderer when he lies
Twined with his love, marrying with hers his sighs
And from the dim banks luminous herbs give light,
Strange oilless lamps to their locked passion's ecstasies.

11

Himaloy's snows in frosted slabs distress
The delicate heels of his maned Kinnaris,
And yet for all that chilly path's unease
They change not their slow motion's swaying grace
[]

12

He guards from the pursuing sun far-hid
In his deep caves of gloom the fallen night
Afraid of the day's eyes of brilliant light:
Even on base things and low for refuge fled
High-crested souls shed guardian love and kindly might.

13

The mountain yaks lift up their bushy tails
And with their lashing scatter gleamings round
White as the moonbeams on the rocky ground:
They seem to fan their king, his parallels
Of symbolled monarchy more perfectly to found.

14

There in his glens upon his grottoed floors
When from her limbs is plucked the raiment fine
Of the Kinnar's shamefast love, hanging come in
His concave clouds across the cavern doors;
Chance curtains shielding her bared loveliness divine.

15

Weary with tracking the wild deer for rest
The hunter bares his forehead to the fay
Breezes which sprinkle Ganges' cascade spray
Shaking the cedars on Himaloy's breast,
Gambolling with the proud peacock's gorgeous-plumed array.

16

Circling his mountains in its path below
The sun awakes with upward-glittering wands
What still unplucked by the seven sages' hands
Remains of the bright lotuses that glow
In tarns upon his tops with heaven-kissing strands.

17

Because the Soma plant for sacrifice
He rears and for his mass upbearing earth
The Lord of creatures gave to this great birth
His sacrificial share and ministries
And empire over all the mountains to his worth.

18

Companion of Meru, their high floor,
In equal wedlock he to his mighty bed
The mindborn child of the world-fathers wed,
Mena whose wisdom the deep seers adore,
Stable and wise himself his stable race to spread.

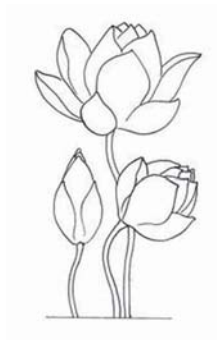
19

Their joys of love were like themselves immense
And its long puissant ecstasies at last
Bore fruit for in her womb a seed was cast;
Bearing the banner of her youth intense
In moving beauty and charm to motherhood she passed.

20

Mainac she bore, the ocean's guest and friend
Upon whose peaks the serpent-women roam,
Dwellers in their unsunned and cavernous home;
Mainac, whose sides though angry Indra rend
Feels not the anguish of the thunder's shock of doom.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translations, CWSA, Vol. 5, pp. 257-62)

SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS ON THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of September 2013)

THE MOTHER IN VISIONS, DREAMS AND EXPERIENCES

Seeing the Mother in Visions and Dreams

Recently I notice that before the Mother comes down from the terrace in the evening she stands there for a long time. I feel that at that time she gives us something specially, so I concentrate to receive and feel what she gives. But this evening suddenly I saw (while looking at her) that her physical body disappeared — there was no sign of her body, as if she were not there! Then after a few seconds her figure reappeared. I felt at that moment that she mixed with the ether and became one with all things. Why did I see like this?

The Mother makes an invocation or aspiration and stands till the movement is over. Yesterday she passed for some time beyond the sense of the body and it is perhaps this that made you see in that way.

29 August 1932

*

The day before yesterday I saw in a dream: The Mother is standing in a high place; before her there is a pillar with the Tulsi plant on it. What does it signify?

That she has brought down and planted Bhakti, I suppose.

Today while meditating in the Pranam hall before the Mother came down, I saw: From a high place the Mother is coming down in us, wearing a rosy coloured sari and having a "Divine Love" flower in her hair. What does this signify?

It is a symbol of the descent of Divine Love.

5 June 1933

*

I saw Mother's form in a dream last night. Was it real or merely an imagination?

What do you mean by real? It was the form of Mother in a dream experience. Imagination applies only to the waking mind.

3 July 1933

*

When I asked whether the form of the Mother in my dream was real or not, I meant: Was it the Mother herself or was it some false forces taking the form of the Mother?

If false forces take the form of the Mother, it will be with some bad object. If there is no attack or wrong suggestion, you need not suppose that it is false forces that have done it.

Of course it is always possible that something in your own consciousness has constructed a dream about the Mother or put her figure there when she herself was not there. That happens when it is only a dream, a number of ideas and memories etc. of the mind put together and not an experience on another plane.

5 July 1933

*

Today while meditating in the Pranam hall before the Mother came down, I saw in meditation: "The Mother is absorbed in deep concentration." Why did I see her like that?

The Mother is always in a concentrated consciousness in her inner being — so it is quite natural that you should see like that.

5 July 1933

*

About the dream of which I wrote yesterday, you have written, "It has a reality and a significance", but you have not written the significance. Will it be wrong if I ask it? The dream in short was that I saw the Mother standing on a high place, as if on a terrace. At first I could not see her because it was dark, but afterwards she held up a torch directing its rays to her face so I could see her smiling. Then the focus of the light was thrown by her on my face and what happened afterwards I did not remember.

The significance is plain — it refers to the difficulty in seeing the Mother within you because of the darkness in Nature and the Mother herself holds the light first so that you can see her and then so that the light can fall on you — a symbol of self-knowledge. It is a sort of promise for the sadhana.

13 July 1933

*

The day before yesterday, just before the Mother came down for her evening walk, I saw: The fire of aspiration is rising from my heart and its flame is slowly going upward as I constantly remember the Mother. Then I saw: The Mother, as we see her every day, is descending in the fire and filling my mind, vital and physical with peace and strength. In the second vision why did I see the Mother's image exactly as we see her every day?

It indicates an aspiration and an action for realisation in the external nature and not only in the inner being. When it is an inner action or action of another plane one can see the Mother in any of her forms, but for realisation in the physical her appropriate form is that which she wears here.

15 July 1933

*

Two days back I saw in a dream that I was lying in a bed in a room and the Mother entered with a big rosy coloured horse. Seeing the horse I told the Mother: "Mother, the horse is mad; he will bite me." The Mother told me: "No, the horse is not mad; he will not bite you." What is the meaning of this dream?

Rose is the colour of psychic love — the horse is dynamic power. So the rosy coloured horse means that the Mother was bringing with her the dynamic power of psychic love.

3 August 1933

*

Today while meditating in the Pranam hall I saw: The sky is filled with blue light. From the sky a long path is coming down on earth. The path is beautifully paved. On this path the Mother is slowly and joyfully coming towards the earth. Her whole body is white and full of golden light and this light is spreading out on all sides. When the Mother has come to the end of the path, her body will get mixed with the soil of the earth. Then I suddenly woke up from meditation. Was this a vision? What plane was it from?

Yes, it is a vision from the plane of mind (not ordinary, but higher mind). It indicates the descent of the Mother with her light of purity and Truth (white and golden) into Matter.

5 August 1933

*

This afternoon in a dream I rose up very high and entered a beautiful temple shining with bright white light. In that temple I felt the pressure of the divine consciousness. The Mother and I and others were there. Then at the temple gate I saw red pieces of paper; on each piece was written the name "Mira". Then X called me and brought me down to Y's room to learn a new song. After that, I again went up to the temple by a staircase, but it was a difficult climb. Inside the temple there was the full power of the divine consciousness. What is the meaning of my dream?

The temple is the Mother's consciousness into which you enter by sadhana (as in your other experience described today you entered into the world of the Mother's consciousness and saw things from there) and you come out of it when you turn to something outward but can ascend again at will once you have been there.

16 September 1933

*

I have heard that the colour of Kali is black and she has four hands. But I saw her with only two hands and her colour was bright white. Why did I see her like this?

The black Kali form is a manifestation on the vital plane of Mahakali — but Mahakali herself in the Overmind is golden. What you saw was the Mother herself in her body of light with the Mahakali power in her, but not the actual form of Mahakali.

26 September 1933

*

Last night I saw in a dream that Light from the Mother's body was coming down into my body and transforming it.

Good — it is the opening of the physical consciousness to the Mother.

30 September 1933

*

The bodies I wrote about this morning were like shadowy pictures, not distinct, and seemed to be like stones, not white in colour but black. Why was that?

It was probably the subconscious physical that you saw — that would explain the shadowy character; the stone indicates the material Nature.

30 September 1933

*

In the afternoon I went to sleep remembering the Mother. After a while I saw that my subtle mind, vital and body had risen up high into a beautiful world, profound and peaceful. Then I saw many saints, sages and Gods tirelessly calling the Mother in their meditations. The joy of that world was truly deep. What a beautiful world! Then I saw the Mother slowly descend into their midst; she had ten arms and a bright white complexion. Suddenly I woke up. But lying quietly on the bed, I realised that my outer mind, life and body were moving inside the Mother's circle. In this condition I looked at my body and saw that my gross body had a beautiful golden colour. All this time I kept calling the Mother quietly. Is all this true?

You seem to have ascended into a plane of the Higher Spiritualised Mind with a descent into it of Maheshwari bringing the power of the Divine Truth. The result in the physical consciousness was a perception of the One Consciousness and Life in all things and an illumination of the cells of the body with the golden light of the higher Truth.

October 1933

*

While looking at the Mother when she came on the terrace, I suddenly saw in her lap a baby whom I took to be Jesus Christ as it resembled his figure. The vision lasted for about a minute and I saw it with open eyes.

It may be so — as Jesus was a child of the Divine Mother.

25 November 1933

*

I saw the Mother in the colour of the flower we call "Detachment". Does it have any meaning?

It must mean that that was the force which she was offering to you or else which you needed from her.

10 January 1934

*

Could a vision of the Mother or seeing her in dream or in waking be called a realisation?

That would be an experience rather than a realisation. A realisation would be of the Mother's presence within, her force doing the work — or of the Peace or Silence everywhere, of universal Love, universal Beauty or Ananda etc. etc. Visions come under the head of experiences, unless they fix themselves and are accompanied by a realisation of which they are as it were the support — e.g. the vision of the Mother always in the heart or above the head etc.

12 March 1934

*

Watching the Mother while she was meditating on the terrace, I saw a white light coming down from the sky and passing through the crown of her head. The light was not bright white, but a little blue, like the colour of the flower "Krishna's Ananda".

The lights represent forces — I suppose you saw some force of Ananda coming down.

2 April 1934

*

Today while offering flowers to the Mother, I concentrated with my eyes shut. I saw the Mother's bright white form amidst a beautiful dazzling light whose colour I cannot describe.

It was the psychic light, I suppose, and the Mother in it.

6 April 1934

*

During my noon nap, I was in the Mother's lap. She put her transforming palm on my head. With her thumb she was pressing the Brahmic centre at the top of my head and opening it; I felt that something was being received from there. Then suddenly there was a shift of the consciousness into some world other than the terrestrial. A supraphysical light was experienced in the cells of the body, which was already flooded with the light. The physical itself was taken up. Can this experience be explained?

There is nothing to explain. It was what you describe. At once the raising of the consciousness to a higher plane and the descent of that into the physical.

5 September 1934

*

X told us today that on the Puja day the Mother was trying to bring down the personality of Durga.

There was no trying — it came down.

When I came for Pranam, the Mother's grandeur and magnificent appearance made me feel that she was Durga herself. I don't know whether such a feeling arose out of the association with the Puja on that day, or quite independently of it. But one cannot take such feelings seriously (perhaps you will rebuke me for saying that) . . .

All that is the silliness of the physical mind which thinks itself very clever in explaining away the inner feeling or perception.

because these feelings are so vague, abstract and momentary!

What else do you expect the first touches to be?

It is difficult to distinguish the borderline between imagination, intuition and feelings unless they are substantiated by something like a concrete vision. To give you one instance: I heard as if the Goddess Bhagawati were telling me, "I am coming" and many other things which I don't remember now.

These things are at least a proof that the inner mind and vital are trying to open to supraphysical things. But if you belittle it at once the moment it starts how can it ever develop?

26 October 1934

*

I had a dream in which the Mother seemed to be ill. Once when she smiled, I imagined that I saw all the worlds in her mouth, as Yashoda saw them in Krishna's mouth. Immediately after this, I felt myself being lifted up above the world and looking at it as a witness. But the sense of the Mother being ill made me wonder if it was really her or someone else — some other influence.

I don't think it was another influence. It reads like a very genuine experience.

19 June 1935

*

The other day while I was having a nap in the afternoon, I had a vision of a very beautiful woman (pardon me, more than a woman) sitting under the sun. The rays of the sun were either surrounding her or were emanating from her body — I can't precisely say which. The appearance and dress seemed to be European.

It is not a woman. A woman does not radiate and is not surrounded by rays either. Probably a Sun Goddess or a Shakti of the inner Light, one of the Mother's Powers.

20 December 1935

*

Just yesterday you wrote to me, "The next step is to be conscious in the samadhi" and today it actually took place. A great Holy Woman had come. Several of us went for her darshan. When my turn came, without looking at her face, I threw myself on her lap. She put her hands on my head, caressed me slowly, and gave me two spiritual powers. After a while, I raised my head and looked at the Holy Woman. Her face appeared like the Mother's. Then I said, "May I ask you a question?" She did not seem to like this, but as she had not refused, I repeated the question. She said, "No, I don't like questions." Then we entered into a trance together. After a long time we both came back to consciousness.

This whole thing is beyond my understanding. Please tell me: (1) Who was the Holy Woman? (2) Why did she grant me the gift of higher powers? (3) A trance within a trance?

Obviously the Holy Woman was the Mother herself in a supraphysical form. It was natural that she should not like questions — the Mother does not like mental questions very much at any time and least of all when she is giving meditation as she was doing in this experience. It is rather funny to ask "why" (your eternal why) higher powers should be given. People do not question the gifts of the Shakti or demand

reasons for her giving them, they are only too glad to get them. Trance within trance of course, since your sadhana was going on in the trance, according to the ways of trance. It is also in this way that it can go on in conscious sleep.

10 June 1936

*

Some months ago in a vision, I offered the Mother three flowers of "Divine Love". Has this any meaning for my sadhana?

It is not quite clear what this number 3 means in this connection. Possibly it is the aspiration for the Divine's love in the three parts of the being.

12 July 1936

*

The lotus you saw above the Mother's head was the highest centre of the embodied consciousness (where it communicates with the higher Truth) fully open with the golden light of the divine Truth pouring upon it and filling it. It is that full opening which the Mother was bringing down and which has to happen eventually in the sadhak.

23 July 1936

*

Once in a vision I saw the Mother in the physical dressed in a red sari. What does it mean?

Simply the presence of the Mother in the physical consciousness. Red is the colour of the physical.

September 1936

*

I see a rough rock. Sunlight falls upon it and the rock changes: in the centre a hollow circle is made and rocks arrange themselves round the circle. In the centre of the circle appears a stone image of Shiva nearly two feet high. Afterwards, out of this image the Mother emerges. She is in meditation. The sunlight falls just behind the Mother's body. What does it signify?

Rocks = the physical (most material) being.

An opening in the material making room for the formation of the spiritual consciousness there.

Stone image of Shiva = the realisation of the silent Self or Brahman there (peace, silence, wideness of the Infinite, purity of the witness Purusha).

Out of this silence emerges the Divine Shakti concentrated for the transformation of the material.

Sunlight = Light of Truth.

12 October 1936

*

Whenever I have seen snakes in dream or anywhere else, I have had to go through many difficulties, so I have always believed that seeing snakes is not very auspicious. Is this true?

Serpents are energies — those of the vital are usually evil forces and it is these that are usually seen by people. But favourable or divine forces are also imaged in that form — e.g., the Kundalini Shakti is imaged in the form of a serpent. Serpents turning over or round the Mother's head would rather recall the Shivamurti and would mean numberless energies all finally gathered up into one infinite energy of which they are the aspects.

28 October 1936

*

Once I saw the Mother sitting on the peak of an icy mountain; a narrow path led there and I was gradually advancing towards that.

This is simply a symbol of the purity and silence of the higher consciousness which has to be reached by the path of sadhana. The narrowness symbolises the difficulty because one has not to slip to one side or the other, but go straight.

7 December 1936

*

I saw the Mother sitting on her seat. There was a cobra behind her with many hoods covering the Mother's head. The cobra was a shining golden colour with a shining red round spot in the centre of each hood. What did it signify?

The cobra is an emblem of Nature-Energy — golden = the higher Truth-Nature — many hoods = many powers. Red is probably a sign of Mahakali power. The cobra covering the head with its hoods is a symbol of sovereignty.

23 January 1937

*

Two years before I came here I had a vision one night: High above in the sky I saw two dark blue feet. So far as I remember they were adorned only with anklets. The soles were the colour of the red lotus. I concluded they were the Mother's lotus feet because that is how I felt and immediately saw a spotted cloth that is used in India in the Mother's worship descending from Her right side. Who could be this Mother?

There is here a general symbolism in the details of the figure, but it is clearly the same experience [*as in the next two visions*] at its first stage in the first contact.

The same night or the next, I had another vision. In front of me I saw a pure white staircase; it went up for countless steps until the top of it got lost in the sky. A white figure in a pure white gown (European style) rapidly descended the upper part of the stairs and, taking her stand on the staircase, opened her arms to me. Who was this Mother?

Here and in the next it is obviously the Mother here. The staircase is a very usual symbol seen by many and it meant the acceptance and call to the ascent.

A third experience I had when I came here for the first time. One night I heard something descending with a revolving motion above my head. No sooner did I hear the sound than I saw a smaller image of the above white Lady entering into me from above and stopping somewhere in the heart region. Who is this Power and Personality? How is she related to the second, the second to the first and all the three to you? How can I be true to her and to you?

By self-opening and an increasing self-giving to the Divine.

All these are visions of the Mother and it agrees with what she felt when she first saw you.

22 March 1938

*

Yesterday night in a dream I was in a garden — it was night perhaps; there was not much light. I was there with some other sadhaks and we were there to meditate with the Mother. I could not see Mother but I knew she was there, high up, waiting to give us meditation. But some of the sadhaks were careless, some were yawning, some were lying down. I was trying to meditate and I felt Mother's hand come down and touch my forehead for about a minute. Then I felt something in me being drawn up through my whole body as she slowly drew her hand back, and I felt something being taken away. But when I woke up, I did not know if it was a good or bad thing Mother took away. What was it?

It was certainly a true dream of the lower vital or perhaps subtle physical plane, where the laziness, indifference, frivolity of the sadhaks is a fact and the chief obstacle to the supramental descent into Matter. Because in your inner physical you were sincere and aspiring, the Mother's blessing came upon you and removed something there that was in the way. There is no indication in the dream as to what it was, but something in the lower vital or physical connected with this general defect.

Developing the Ability to See the Mother

Mother said she would try to make you see her because it is not always easy for people to see her even when she is near them. It is also easier to see with eyes shut than with eyes open — though this too is possible — because it is a sight within you that has to open in order to see her. It is not necessary to call her for any fixed number of hours. It is enough if you love her always, remember her often, sit every day a little time before her photograph and call her.

You must never doubt that Mother loves you and you need never weep for that, for her feelings towards you cannot and will not change.

Of course you can take the photographs given to you by the Mother and keep them with you there.

7 May 1935

*

It is not that because the Mother loves you she can show herself to your physical eyes at a distance. The physical eyes of men are not made so as to see in that way. It becomes possible only after long sadhana. First one sees with the eyes closed, because that is easier. When one is accustomed to see with the eyes closed, then afterwards it becomes more possible to see with the eyes open. So you should not

be too eager to see at once in the more difficult way. It will come in the end, if you want it, but it does not come at once. Don't mind if it takes time. You must grow first more and more able to feel the Mother near you; that you can do by thinking of her and calling her often. Then seeing will be more easy.

8 May 1935

*

Do not mind about the time that it will take — one can't fix the time of these things beforehand. When you feel the Mother's presence more and more, when you begin to see her with the inner sight, then it can come.

It is better not to speak of the Mother to your friends — they do not know her, therefore they can take no interest in her. The more you live close to the Mother in yourself, the less you will need to speak of her to others.

9 May 1935

*

To see you must be more quiet within — then after a little the sight begins to come. An inner sight opens, one begins to see what the outward senses cannot see — and it is then possible to see the Mother there.

Experiences of the Mother and Her Powers

In the morning I was feeling that the mind is quite empty. In the afternoon I saw an intense compact golden light there in front, at some distance outside the mind.

The golden light is the promise of the higher knowledge. For the coming of that knowledge the silence of the frontal exterior mind is necessary.

Today I felt that a part of the mind is or can be always open to the higher light, but realisation has to depend on what comes from below and accordingly change in its character and intensity. Remaining for some time in this condition is like seeing the Divine, now apparent in so many things and movements. I understood how it is to be done, but a long time is necessary in order to be established in this consciousness which has no end. Rising higher also becomes a part of this movement. I feel that all will be done, only time is needed for fixing the new consciousness.

Very good.

All that you write on this page is entirely sound and accurate; it shows that you are getting the *true* knowledge. Most in fact of the day's experiences are signs of the true consciousness coming. The Mother's consciousness with the wideness of the light, the white light in the vital, the golden light in the silence of the outer mind, the change in the vital, the quiet and natural trust and confidence are all signs and circumstances of this opening to the true consciousness. As you say, there must be established the fixing of this consciousness. The constant openness of part of the mind to the higher light will bring the silence of the whole mind and it is in the silent mind that the true knowledge will come — and indeed it has begun already to come. The change you note in the vital must also continue.

26 March 1930

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I remember that formerly at night I became conscious of the mind rising upward and then I saw many points all around rising up with aspiration, as if each point was aspiring in a different light that was guided by the Mother. Nowadays I think that if there is one aspiration, there will be constant contact.

Yes — one aspiration to live in the Mother's light and force which bring the true knowledge and the true power. If that aspiration is fulfilled, then all else needed can be fulfilled — all the other lights can be contained in the Divine Light.

17 February 1931

*

Today in meditation my entire body opened and spread out infinitely. I felt a slight uneasiness at first, but I could feel the Mother's force. It carried me deeper and deeper into dense darkness through immense worlds of disgust and depression. Though I felt no peace and joy on this long journey, I continued to walk steadily and swiftly. Someone seemed to say, "Do not be depressed. Walk on, proceed. You have to cross through still darker worlds of disgust and depression, but keep on going." Along with this experience, I felt a great force. My heart opened wide; peace and profound contentment descended into it and I saw white light playing everywhere. Crossing another dark world, I saw a vibrant golden light. How powerful and beautiful that golden light was! My body, mind and heart were satisfied. I felt a sense of fearlessness. A sadhak's life is like the life of a warrior. However long the struggle, whatever the obstacles, we will ascend to the Supreme Truth. Is this the right way to observe my problems and difficulties?

Yes, that is the attitude you have to keep. If it is kept, then there will be no disturbance or only a superficial unease. The experience itself was that of the descent of the Mother's light of Divine Consciousness into domains of being which are ignorant or inconscient and obscure. The Mother herself has descended into these domains and moved through them to bring light there.

10 September 1933

*

This morning during my meditation before the Mother, a very tender feeling rose from within me. She was sitting before us with an ocean of compassion and love which she wants to give away unconditionally and without reserve. But we cannot receive it; and instead of reproaching ourselves for our inability, we put the blame on the Mother, pouring our venom on her which she swallows and offers back to us as Amrita in return.

This experience brought me a mixed feeling of peaceful silence, self-reproach and a touch of sadness. It has remained with me all day, but now I apprehend a reaction; for usually my experiences recede, leaving me with depression or emptiness.

What you felt was an opening of the psychic being in your heart and the perceptions that came to you were perfectly true. The reaction you speak of does often come after an experience. But if the depression can be avoided, emptiness does not matter. Up to a certain stage the nature needs after an experience a quiescent period to assimilate experience. One has then not to be depressed but to remain quiet waiting and aspiring for more experience, more opening, a more continuous flow of the truth.

5 September 1934

*

Yesterday the whole day I felt an opening far above the head and there the individual Mother became wide and active. I felt the play of various ideas and forces and I felt her assurance that she would manifest in me. But also the intensity led to nervous disturbances. The pressure in my head-nerves was almost unbearable, and even today some disturbance in the physical is there. Is it due to some mistake I have made?

The Mother "manifesting" in you is an ambiguous expression — it is the Mother's consciousness, the higher consciousness with the light, strength that has to come down in each sadhak, with the Mother's presence always there. Along with this

experience there must have been an attempt at surrender or an initial answer in the lower vital, but as a reaction the nervous disturbance came back — the old lower vital nature not being ready to give up possession reasserted its disturbances which were about to abate.

6 November 1934

*

Sometimes when I sit in meditation, I find that instead of myself, the Mother is sitting. Even my body seems to be that. Pray let me know what it means.

Probably you became aware of some part of your being which feels united with the Mother.

24 August 1935

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From the morning I was feeling an intense aspiration to get lost in the Mother's consciousness. Then I felt my consciousness frequently rising and stationing itself above. Before Pranam I felt as if even the parts near the navel and below were being drawn upwards. After Pranam I experienced for some time a different kind of atmosphere almost concretely around me, so I imagined that the Mother may have put a strong spiritual influence on my subconscious and environmental consciousness.

It is very good. You are right about the subconscious and environmental, — for it is there that the influence must fall so that the consciousness may go upward and spread itself out widely in a free peace, light and joy connecting them down to the subconscious with the higher consciousness. It is then that the loss of the ego in the Mother's consciousness becomes possible.

25 September 1935

*

Over my head I see a plane of infinite and eternal Peace. The Mother is the Queen of this plane. From there I feel a ceaseless flow coming down towards me. It first touches the higher being and then the lower parts. When they are prepared, the Peace or silence descends like a current of water which passes through the Brahmic hole.

That is quite correct. In many however it descends in a mass through the whole head and not in a current through the Brahmic hole.

13 February 1936

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The experience of a concrete presence of the Mother in the photograph and the immediate effect on the health are things of the subtle physical acting on the physical mind and body — such things can happen only when the physical consciousness has begun to open — that is why I said it was a sign. Of course the full effects of the spiritual experiences can only come when the whole consciousness is entirely open and receives and responds to them. The presence of the Mother in all can be felt when one begins to have the widening of the consciousness in which it is not shut up in the personal self and the body but is extended everywhere. That comes usually with the descent of the higher consciousness from above. But one can also feel a beginning of it through the opening of the psychic. Then of course anger and jealousy do not remain — they fall away from the sense of spiritual oneness.

3 May 1936

*

X told me that she was in constant touch with the Divine Mother long before she came to Pondicherry. She saw her not only in meditation or vision but before her wide-awake eyes, in a concrete form. She often conversed with her; especially when some difficulty arose, the Mother would come and tell her what to do. If what she says is correct, she must be a very advanced sadhika. How much truth do you find in her experiences and visions?

She has not related them to us. But there is nothing improbable in it. It means simply that she externalised her inner vision and experience so as to see through the physical eyes also, but it was the inner vision that saw and the inner hearing that heard, not the physical sight or hearing. That is common enough. It does not indicate an “advanced” sadhana, whatever that phrase may mean, but only a special faculty.

I have heard that there are people here who feel the Mother's presence or open directly to her inner knowledge. But this is not the same as seeing her with the physical eyes or having conversations with her.

These things are extremely common among those who practise Yoga everywhere. In the Asram the sadhaks are too intelligent, sceptical and matter of fact to have much of that kind of experience. Even those who might develop it are repressed by the outward-mindedness and physical-mindedness that dominates the atmosphere.

2 July 1936

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The experience you had in your sleep was that of going into the vital world and meeting there one of the hostile vital beings who wished to menace or attack you, but could not attack you because of your call on the Mother. There are two things that must be acquired in these passages through the vital world — first this immediate call on the Mother's protection and, second, the throwing away of all fear. To those who do not fear them, these beings or forces can do nothing — in any meeting or conflict with them the Mother's name is a sure protection even if some fear should come.

The other experience was due to your mind dwelling in the state of the Mother's constant presence and its results. What you say is true, about these results, but it is not easy for the mind or vital or physical consciousness to get or keep the Mother's conscious presence — it is only the psychic that keeps it easily. So the thought brought down a pressure from above and a concentration within in the heart with a healing there and a pain of the yearning within followed by its sweetness. This pain is that of the psychic sorrow or perhaps rather of the psycho-vital sorrow and yearning — for the psychic sorrow itself is usually sweet and not painful.

2 August 1936

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Nowadays I get an inspiration to see all in the Mother and the Mother in all — to see the Vishwarupa in her as Yashoda saw it in Sri Krishna. Will I ever be able to have this vision?

To see all in the Mother and the Mother in all is a necessary experience in the Yoga. There is no reason why it should not happen.

29 April 1937

*

Kindly let me know the significance of my frequently coming to the Mother on the vital plane. I suppose the meeting was sometimes on the supraphysical plane. Did my vital come to the Mother for refreshing its energy, for purification, etc.?

This kind of vital coming to the Mother all the sadhaks have in their sleep and dreams, if they are a little conscious there. Even those who are not sadhaks or others who do not know her come, but they are not aware of it. The vital plane is a supra-physical plane — the vital moves about in its own plane and is not limited by the physical mind or its consciousness or experience.

13 July 1937

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Kindly enlighten me as to what is the object and what the result of my coming to the Mother on the vital plane during sleep or dream.

It may be for any object or without any specific object — there is no rule in such matters.

14 July 1937

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This morning I saw within me a flash of golden light and felt the vivid presence of the Mother. I felt myself to be within her. I felt all to be within me and this “me” was something wider than I as a man.

To have that is very important — to get into something wider than the I as a man — into one’s own cosmic Self and universal consciousness — in the Mother.

Hearing the Mother’s Voice

In the morning at Pranam while putting my head in the Mother’s lap, I heard some voice. I felt it to be the Mother’s. Did she really speak or was it an illusion?

It may have been that the Mother conveyed something to you. At this moment she does not remember.

27 April 1933

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When is one said to be ready to hear the Mother’s voice from within?

When one has equality, discrimination and sufficient Yogic experience — otherwise any voice may be mistaken for the Mother’s.

Can one rely solely upon the voice from within from the beginning?

If it is the Mother’s voice; but you have to be sure of that.

7 July 1933

*

Is it true that when one tries to do something which is contrary to the Divine's Will, the Mother tells him inwardly not to do it?

It is the discriminating mind or the psychic that tells.

Is it true that to hear the Mother's voice inwardly and to recognise it as hers is not difficult?

No, to hear and recognise the Mother's voice within is not so easy.

Is one who has gone far on the path able to hear her voice?

There is no rule.

8 July 1933

*

In Bases of Yoga one reads: "It is with the Mother who is always with you and in you that you converse." Could you tell me briefly how a sadhak converses with the Mother?

One hears the voice or the thought speaking inwardly and one answers inwardly. Only it is not always safe for the sadhak if there is any insincerity of ego, desire, vanity, ambition in him — for then he may construct a voice or thought in his mind and ascribe it to the Mother and it will say to him pleasing and flattering things which mislead him. Or he may mistake some other Voice for the Mother's.

2 July 1936

Visions, Voices and Progress in Sadhana

One who can have faith without visions and voices is much farther on the true inner path than one who needs them to have faith.

Visions and voices are not meant for creating faith; they are effective only if one has faith already.

Visions and voices are often indulged in unnecessarily by people. Sometimes they interpret them wrongly or give them too much value. Thus they nourish their egos. But this capacity is by no means a sign of progress.

What do you mean by progress? The Mother spent many years entering the occult worlds and learning all that was to be learnt there. All that time she was making no progress? She sees things always when she goes into trance. Her capacity is a thing of no value? Because a great number of people don't know how to use these faculties or misuse them or give them excessive value or nourish their ego by them, does it follow that the faculties themselves have no Yogic use or value?

8 July 1936

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When I said, "But this capacity is by no means a sign of progress", I meant that the capacity by itself is not a sign of spiritual progress. I forgot to write "by itself" and this changed the whole meaning.

Even by itself, it is a progress in the development of the consciousness though it may not carry with it any spiritualisation of the nature.

9 July 1936

*

At a certain stage of the sadhana, everybody receives some occult opening or other: visions, voices, subtle smells or touches. I was told that each occult opening helps one, but none of them has helped me in my practical sadhana.

I do not know what you mean by practical sadhana. If one develops the occult faculty and the occult experience and knowledge, these things can be of great use, therefore practical. In themselves they are a proof of opening of the inner consciousness and also help to open it farther — though they are not indispensable for that.

Those who have the faculty of vision may not use it properly or take full advantage of it. Take X. She claims that the Divine Mother comes to her and tells her how to solve her difficulties. But if the Mother ever tried to interfere with those defects and imperfections, I suppose X would not like it.

I don't suppose she would — the supposition is rather gratuitous and assumes that she is false and insincere. Every sadhak has a good amount of defects and imperfections and the majority of them seem as unable to get rid of them as X.

9 July 1936

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, CWSA, Vol. 32, pp. 271-93)

**‘MAY ALL HEARTS FEEL VIBRATING WITHIN
THEM THAT SUBLIME LOVE,
SOURCE OF ALL TRANSFIGURATION’**

April 8, 1914

LORD, my thought is calm and my heart ingathered; I turn towards Thee with a profound devotion and a boundless trust: I know that Thy love is all-powerful and that Thy justice will reign over the earth; I know that the hour is near when the last veil will be rent and all iniquity disappear to give place to an era of peace and harmonious effort.

O Lord, with thought rapt within and the heart at peace, I approach Thee and all my being is filled with Thy divine Presence; grant that I may see Thee alone in all things and that all may be resplendent with Thy divine Light. Oh, may all hatred be appeased, all rancour effaced, all fears dispelled, all suspicions destroyed, all malevolence overcome, and in this city, in this country, upon this earth, may all hearts feel vibrating within them that sublime love, source of all transfiguration.

O Lord, how ardently do I call and implore Thy love! Grant that my aspiration may be intense enough to awaken the same aspiration everywhere: oh, may goodness, justice and peace reign as supreme masters, may ignorant egoism be overcome, darkness be suddenly illuminated by Thy pure Light; may the blind see, the deaf hear, may Thy law be proclaimed in every place and, in a constantly progressive union, in an ever more perfect harmony, may all, like one single being, stretch out their arms towards Thee to identify themselves with Thee and manifest Thee upon earth.

O Lord, with thought rapt within, the heart radiant with sunshine, I give myself to Thee without reservation, and the “self” disappears in Thee!

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, pp. 121-22)

‘A CLEAR PERCEPTION OF THE WHY AND HOW OF CREATION’

THIS morning about eight o’clock, I could have said many things. . . . Because there came a day when many problems had cropped up as a consequence of something that had happened, then this morning (towards the end of the night), I had the experience that was the explanation. And for two hours I lived in an absolutely clear perception (not a thought: a clear perception) of the why and how of creation. It was so luminous, so clear; it was irrefutable. It lasted at least for four or five hours and then it petered out; gradually the experience diminished in intensity and clarity. . . . I had just seen many people, then . . . it is difficult to explain now. But all had become so limp; all the contrary theories, everything was at the bottom (*Mother looks from above*), and all the explanations, all that Sri Aurobindo had said and also some things that Théon had said were seen as a consequence of the experience: each thing in its place and absolutely clear. At that time I could have said it, but now it will be a little difficult.

Is it not so? In spite of what one has read and all the theories and explanations, something was left (how to say it?) difficult to “explain” (it is not “explaining”: that is quite trivial). For example, suffering and the will to inflict suffering, that side of the Manifestation. There has been, of course, as though a prevision of the original identity of hatred and love, because the thing was going to the extremes, but as for all the rest it was difficult. Today it is so luminously simple, yes, it is that, so obvious! . . . (*Mother looks at a note which she had written.*) Words are nothing. And then I had scribbled with a pencil that wrote badly. . . . I don’t know if you can see the words. To me they represented something very exact: now they are nothing but words. (*The disciple reads:*)

Stability and change
Inertia and transformation . . .

Yes, in the Lord they were evidently identical principles. And it was particularly that, the simplicity of this identity. And now they are nothing but words.

Stability and change
Inertia and transformation
Eternity and progress

Unity = . . . (*The disciple is not able to make out the words.*)

It was not I who wrote it, that is to say, not the ordinary consciousness, and the

pencil . . . I do not know any more what I have put down. (*Mother tries to read the words, but in vain.*) It was the vision of the creation — the vision, the understanding, the how, the why, the whither, everything was there, the whole of it together, and clear, clear, clear. . . . I tell you, I was in the midst of a golden glory — luminous, dazzling.

Well, the earth was there as the centre representing the creation, and then there was the identity of the inertia of the stone, of what is most inert, and then . . . (*Mother tries once more to read the words.*)

I do not know if it will come.

(*Mother goes into a long concentration.*)

One might say like that . . . for the convenience of expression, I would say: the “Supreme” and the “creation”. In the Supreme, it is a unity that contains all the possibilities perfectly unified, without any differentiation; in creation, it is, so to say, the projection of all that makes up this unity by dividing the opposites, that is to say, by separating them (it is that which has been seized by someone who said that creation is separation): for example, night and day, black and white, good and evil, etc., etc. — all that, but it is our explanation. The whole of it, all together is a perfect unity, immutable and . . . indissoluble. Creation means separation of all that constitutes this unity — one might call it the division of consciousness. The division of consciousness starts from the unity conscious of its unity, in order to arrive at the unity conscious of its multiplicity *in the unity*. And then it is this path which, because of its fragments, is translated for us by space and time. For us, such as we are, it is possible for each point of this consciousness to be conscious of itself *and* conscious of the original Unity. And that is the work which is being done; that is to say, each infinitesimal element of this consciousness, while keeping this state of consciousness, is in the process of rediscovering the state of the total original consciousness — and the result is the original Consciousness conscious of its unity *and* conscious of the whole play, conscious of the innumerable elements of this Unity. This for us is translated into the sense of time: moving from the Inconscient up to this state of Consciousness. And the Inconscient is the projection of the first Unity (if one can say it; all these words are altogether senseless), of the essential unity which is only conscious of its unity — yes, that is the Inconscient. And this Inconscient becomes more and more conscious in beings who are conscious of their infinitesimal existence and *at the same time*, through what we call progress or evolution or transformation, become conscious of the original Unity. And that, as it was seen, explains everything.

Words are nothing.

Everything, everything from the most material to the most ethereal, *everything* finds its place there — clear, clear, clear, a vision.

And evil, what we call evil, has its *indispensable* place in the whole. It will not

be felt as evil the moment one becomes conscious of That — necessarily. Evil is this infinitesimal element looking at its infinitesimal consciousness; but as consciousness is essentially one, it resumes, regains the Consciousness of the Unity — the two together. It is that, yes, *it is that* which has to be realised. It is this wonderful thing, of this I had the vision at that moment. . . . And for the beginnings (are they the beginnings?), what is called in English the outskirts, what is farthest from the central realisation, that becomes the multiplicity of things, and the multiplicity also of sensations, of feelings, of all . . . the multiplicity of consciousness. It is this act of separation that has created, that is creating the world constantly and that is creating everything at the same time: suffering, happiness, everything, everything that is created through this . . . what might be called “diffusion”; but it is absurd, it is not a diffusion — we ourselves live in the sense of space, so we speak of diffusion and concentration, but it is nothing of the sort.

And I understood why Théon used to say that we were living at the time of “Equilibrium”; that is to say, it is through the equilibrium of all these innumerable points of consciousness and of all these opposites that the central Consciousness is rediscovered. And all that is said is stupid — at the same time as I say this, I see to what degree it is stupid. But one cannot do otherwise. It is something . . . something *so concrete*, so true, yes, so ab-so-lu-te-ly . . . *that*.

As long as I was living that, it was . . . But perhaps I could not have said it at that time. That (*Mother points to the note*), I was obliged to take up some paper and jot it down, and in such a way that I do not know any more what I jotted down. . . . The first thing written was this:

Stability and change

It was the idea of the original Stability (one could say), which is translated in the Manifestation by inertia. And the growth is translated by change. Then came:

Inertia and transformation

But it is gone, the sense is gone — the words had a sense.

Eternity and progress

They were the opposites (these three things).

Then there was a gap (*Mother draws a line under the triple opposition*), and once again a Pressure, and then I wrote this:

Unity = . . . (three illegible words follow)

And that was a much more true expression of the experience, but it is illegible — I think it was illegible deliberately. One must have the experience to be able to read it.

(The disciple tries to read the words:) It seems to me that there is a word “rest”?

Ah! It must be that. Rest and . . .

(Mother goes into concentration.)

Is it not “power”?

Ah! Yes, “Power and rest combined”.

Yes, that is it.

It was not I who chose the words, so they must have a special force — when I say “I”, I mean the consciousness that is there (*gesture above the head*); it is not that consciousness; it was something that was pressing down that compelled me to write. (*Mother recopies her note:*)

*Stability and change
Inertia and transformation
Eternity and progress*

Unity = power and rest combined.

The idea is that the two combined restored that state of consciousness which wanted to express itself.

It was on the universal scale — not on the individual scale.

I put a line between the two to mean that they had not come together.

But already, often, when you speak of this supramental experience, you say that it is a staggering movement and at the same time it is as though completely immobile. You have said it often.

But you know, most often I do not remember what I have once said.

You say: the vibration is so rapid that it is imperceptible, it is as though coagulated and immobile.

Yes. But this was really a Glory in which I lived for hours together this morning.

And then all, all, all notions, all of them, even the most intellectual, all became as . . . as though childishness. It was so obvious that one had the feeling: there is no need to speak of it!

All human reactions, even the highest, the purest, the noblest, appeared *so* childish! . . . There is a sentence written by Sri Aurobindo somewhere that was coming all the while to me. One day, I do not remember where, he had written something, a rather long sentence in which there was this: “And when I feel jealous, I know that the old man is still there.” It is now perhaps more than thirty years since I read it — yes, almost thirty years — and I remember, when I read “jealous”, I said to myself: How can Sri Aurobindo be jealous? And so after thirty years I have understood what he meant by being “jealous” — it is not at all what men call “jealous”, it was altogether another state of consciousness. I saw it clearly. And this morning it came back to me: “And when I feel jealous, I know that the old man is still there.” To be “jealous” for him did not mean what we call “jealous”. . . . It is this infinitesimal particle that we call the individual, this particle of infinitesimal consciousness which places itself at the centre, which is the centre of the perception, and which consequently perceives things coming like that (*gesture towards oneself*) or going like that (*gesture outward*) and all that does not come to it gives it a kind of perception that Sri Aurobindo called “jealous”: the perception that things are going towards diffusion, instead of coming in towards centralisation; it was that which he called “jealous”. So he said: When I feel jealous (this was what he meant to say), I know that the old man is still there; that is to say, this infinitesimal particle of consciousness can *still* be at the centre of itself; it is the centre of action, the centre of perception, the centre of sensation. . . .

(Silence)

Yes, I could notice — it is the time when I do all my physical work — I could notice that the whole work could be done without any alteration in the consciousness. It was not that which altered my consciousness; what veiled my consciousness was seeing people: it is when I began to be here and to do what I have been doing every day: projecting the divine Consciousness upon people. But it came back . . . (how can one say it?) on the borders; that is to say, instead of *being* within, I began to perceive it, when you asked me. But that feeling is no longer there — there was nothing *but that* any more! That alone was there, and everything, everything has changed — appearance, meaning, etc.

That must be the supramental consciousness: I believe that this is the supramental consciousness.

But one could conceive very well that for a consciousness wide and quick enough, if I may say so, capable of seeing not merely a bit of the path, but the whole path at the same time . . .

Yes, yes.

The whole would be a moving perfection.

Yes.

Evil is simply holding one's vision on one small angle; then one says, "It is evil", but if one sees the entire path . . . In a total consciousness, obviously there is no evil.

There are no contraries. No *contraries* — not even contradictions; I say: no contraries. It is that Unity, it is *living* in that Unity. And that cannot be translated by thoughts or words. I am telling you, it is . . . a vastness without limits and a light . . . a light without movement, and at the same time an ease . . . an ease not recognised as such. Now I am convinced that it is that, the supramental consciousness.

And necessarily, necessarily that must change the appearances gradually.

(Long silence)

There are no words that can explain the magnificence of the Grace, how the whole is combined so that all may go as quickly as possible. And individuals are miserable to the extent to which they are not conscious of it and take a false position in regard to what is happening to them.

But what is difficult to think is that at each moment it must be . . . it is the perfection.

Yes, that is it.

At each instant, it is the perfection.

At *each* instant. There is no other thing. . . . When I was there, there was no other thing. And yet, as I have told you, it was the time when I was physically extremely busy — all the work was being done, without disturbing *anything*; on the contrary, I believe I was doing things much better than usual . . . I do not know how to explain. It was not, as it were, a thing “added”: it was quite natural.

Life as it is can be lived in that consciousness — but it is then lived quite well! . . . Nothing needs to be changed, what is to be changed changes itself quite naturally.

I am going to give you an example. For a few days, I had some difficulty with . . . I will not name him; pressure had to be put on him to correct some of his movements. Today he was conscious of it in quite a different way from the usual, and in the end he said that he was on the way to change (that is true), and all that not only without a word,

but without any movement of the consciousness for putting pressure. There you are. That is a proof. . . . All is done automatically, as an *imposition* of the Truth without any necessity of intervention: simply to remain in the true consciousness, that is all, that is sufficient.

But then, in spite of everything, the body kept just a little consciousness of its needs all the while (although it was not busy with itself; I was always saying: It is not busy with itself, it is not interested). But that is what Sri Aurobindo used to say: I feel I am still the old man. I understood that this morning, for it was no longer there. Well, this sort of a very quiet perception of what is still not all right — a pain here, a difficulty there — very calm, very indifferent, but it is *perceived* (without its taking any importance), and even that gone, wholly swept away! . . . I hope it won't come back. It is really . . . this, I understand, it is a transformation. One is conscious in a golden vastness — my child, it is wonderful — luminous, golden, peaceful, eternal, all-powerful.

And how it is coming. . . . No word is there to express it indeed, this wonder regarding the Grace. . . . The Grace, the Grace is a thing that surpasses all comprehension, with its clear-seeing kindliness. . . . Naturally the body had the experience. Something had happened that I will not tell you and it had the true reaction; it had not the old reaction, it had the true reaction — it smiled, with the Smile of the supreme Lord — it smiled. That was there for a whole day and a half. And it was this difficulty which enabled the body to make the last progress, enabled it to live in this Consciousness: if all had been harmonious, things could have lasted still for years — it is wonderful, wonderful!

And how stupid men are! When the Grace has come to them, they push it away, saying, "Oh! What horror!". . . That I have known for a long time, but my experience is . . . dazzling.

Yes, each thing is perfectly, wonderfully what it ought to be at every moment.

Quite so.

But it is our vision that is not attuned.

Yes, it is our separated consciousness.

The whole has been brought with lightning rapidity towards the consciousness that will be the Consciousness of the point and of the all, at the same time.

(Long silence)

(Mother finishes recopying her note.) There, now I am writing today's date.

It is the 19th.

19 November 1969, supramental consciousness.

(Silence)

The first descent of the supramental force was a 29, and this is a 19. . . The 9 is something to note there. . . . So many things there are which we do not know!

(Silence)

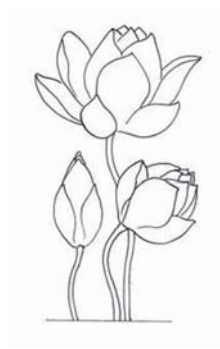
I have already had the experience, partially, that when one is in this state of inner harmony and no part of the attention is turned towards the body, the body works perfectly well. It is this . . . “self-concentration” which upsets everything. And this I have observed many times, many times. . . . In reality one does *make* oneself ill. It is the narrowness of consciousness, the division. If you let it work, there is . . . everywhere there is a Consciousness and a Grace that do everything so that all may go well, and it is because of this imbecility that all goes wrong — it is strange! The ego-centric imbecility, it is that which Sri Aurobindo calls “the old man”.

It is truly interesting.

19 November 1969

THE MOTHER

(Notes on the Way, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 11, pp. 197-207)



“THE CRESCENT OF BEAUTY” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

I have written what may be called a nursery rhyme for the soul.

THE CRESCENT OF BEAUTY

“Whence astray
Across the dark
Vain waters of living death
Com’st thou, unbidden, O burning barque
With sails of ecstasy?”

“Blown by the luminous breath
Of a secret sun of eternity,
Dream-light they bear
To thy blind despair
Till, perfect, rises the heart-hidden Day!”

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

Yes, it is good.

14 April 1933

[Version from *The Secret Splendour* —
Collected Poems of K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran), 1993, p. 428:]

THE CRESCENT OF BEAUTY

“Whence astray
Across the dark
Vain waters of living death
Have you, unbidden, come, O burning barque
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“Blown by the luminous breath
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To your blind despair
Till, perfect, rises the heart-hidden Day!”

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

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

Sri Aurobindo

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

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of September 2013)

Chapter: XXVI

The Hour of God in the Life of a City

Almost overnight . . . how very different we became from what we had been as individuals! We used to be just humdrum creatures, most ignorant and inert; now we became conscious and alert, our lives acquired a meaning, an aim, a purpose. We used to move in the traditional ruts, dull and desperate. Instead of that our lives now got a cohesion, an orientation. Borne along the current and driven with the crowd, the most one could hope for in the past was to become a Deputy Magistrate or Professor, a Doctor or Advocate, worldly men of sufficient means. In a moment, all this got topsy-turvy, our lives were rent in twain as if by an earthquake. There lay across the chasm the deathlike life of the dead past, and here loomed a life of the present that faced the future with new duties.

Nolini Kanta Gupta¹

While the call for Swadeshi and a surge of nationalist feelings that inevitably accompanied it could be sensed in most of the British Indian States and several territories ruled by Princes, it assumed massive proportions in both the Bengals; in Calcutta, the capital of India, it appeared to have marked the dawn of a new era. Here is a student's impression of the atmosphere that dominated the city in 1905:

Calcutta was at the time in the throes of a great turmoil. The press and the platform were loud with cries of "Freedom" and "Boycott": the British must be driven out, India must be rid of the Britisher. In the parks and wherever there was an open space, crowds would gather to listen to lectures and orations, crowds mostly of the boys from the schools and colleges — the girls had not yet come out and joined. Swadeshi, boycott, national education, rural uplift — these were the slogans dwelt upon everywhere. And with it all there went on, in secret, underground preparations for revolution and revolt and armed attack.²

At least some of the public addresses and writings in those days were more than just calls for agitation, they were presentation of facts justifying the calls.



Nolini Kanta Gupta

Probably the foremost among the thought-provoking dissertations published during this time was *Deshar Katha* by Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar (1869-1912), a Maharashtra scholar residing in Bengal and acknowledged as an outstanding Bengali author and thinker.

First published in 1904, the book went into several editions and sold ten thousand copies during the first three years, an unsurpassed record for a book of such serious nature.³ Each copy had numerous readers as the book was a must for the members of the secret societies and branches of the Anushilan Samiti. The government proscribed the book in 1910.⁴ Sri Aurobindo wrote much later, that it was

. . . a book compiling all the details of India's economic servitude which had an enormous influence on the young men of Bengal and helped to turn them into revolutionaries.⁵

The book made a number of shocking revelations. The school textbooks unflinchingly paid glowing tributes to the British rule in India and unabashedly proclaimed that the condition of the people had greatly improved under the British rule. Deuskar showed that while the occupation of the country was achieved through physical war and other treacherous means by the colonial power, the economy of the country had been completely ruined through a "Trade-war". The rulers claimed that anarchy dominated the country in the 18th century before the British consolidated their authority. Deuskar asserted that while in the 18th century India suffered only four famines which were confined to different localities, with the consolidation of the British rule in the 19th century, famines became a most familiar feature of the national life. Between 1801 and 1825 a million died of starvation. The next quarter recorded the death of half a million for the same reason.

Then, between 1850 and 1875 (the post-Mutiny era was supposed to have ushered in sound administration as asserted by the rulers) the nation suffered, according to the official report, half a dozen famines — claiming five million lives. And in the fourth quarter of the 19th century India experienced eighteen famines, bringing death to 26 million! The last decade of the quarter alone claimed one million — a horror which made William Digby, a great friend of India, exclaim, "You have died, you have died uselessly!"⁶

Brilliantly marshalling facts and figures Deuskar proved that the famines were the direct outcome of the defeat treacherously inflicted by the foreign rulers on India's trade and commerce. He said:

It is generally believed that nothing claims more lives than wars. But a study of the history of Indian famines gives the lie to this impression. Mr. Digby shows that from 1793 till 1900, a period of 107 years, no more than five million people were killed by wars in the entire world whereas during the same period

twelve and half million people starved to death in India. . . .

Because the country's trade and commerce are destroyed, most of the people depend on agriculture alone. If the crop fails because of drought the people are left with no money to buy their food from elsewhere. If they had the means, millions of tons of rice and other stuff could not be exported while they were dying slowly.⁷

Deuskar's work succeeded in disillusioning a good number of educated youths about the beneficence of the British rule. Many among those eligible to join were eager to enrol in the National College, the talk of which was in the air. Before long, in a meeting held at the Town Hall on the 14th of August 1906 the National Council of Education announced the opening of the College which began functioning on the very next day, the 15th of August, with Sri Aurobindo as the Principal. We do not know if the organisers chose the date keeping in mind its significance. If a coincidence, it was a happy one indeed.

The institution secured the service of competent men who that joined it at considerable personal sacrifice and many on mere subsistence allowance. The institution had four Departments — Literary, Scientific, Technical and Commercial. The names of the following among many other teachers may be mentioned — Aurobindo Ghose, Sakham Ganesh Deuskar, Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Bhiksu Purnananda, Benoy Bhushan Sarkar, V. K. Paranjypte and B. R. Ranade.⁸

Sri Aurobindo had to devote much of his time to the college. But he had already extended his collaboration to the *Bande Mataram* at Bipin Chandra Pal's sudden request only a few days ago — on the 5th of August to be precise. Pal had such a strong faith in his collaborator that he quietly left on a tour of East Bengal as soon as the very first issue of the newspaper had rolled off the machine on the 6th of August.

Back from the college and the newspaper office in the evening, at the residence of Raja Subodh Mullick Sri Aurobindo would often engage himself in the problems regarding the orientation he visualised for politics of the time — in discussion with his host and other compatriots. Before long would emerge what became known as the Nationalist or the Extremist Party, though it was not a party in the prevailing sense of the term but a progressive and cohesive group within the National Congress. A study of the history of the Congress *vis-à-vis* the colonial government clearly brings out the fact that it is the emergence of this dynamic force within the Congress that kept the rulers on tenterhooks; it can also be said that but for this new element shaking and at the same time rejuvenating the organisation itself, who knows if Curzon's wistful dream would not have materialised, for he had prophesied, way back in November 1900,

My own belief is that the Congress is tottering to its fall, and one of my greatest ambitions while in India is to assist it to a peaceful demise.⁹

It is precisely the signs of unrest within the Congress itself that created a great deal of unrest in the ruling hierarchy, the top brass anxious to sabotage its growth and influence:

The government felt the great necessity of weakening the Congress before it was too late. If the Congress was a solid organisation representing the educated part of the population, some other organisations representative of political consciousness could arise. Produced by the direct or indirect efforts of the Government such organisations would be of great use.¹⁰

On 28 May 1906 Governor-General Lord Minto wrote to the Secretary of State for India Lord Morley, needless to say, most confidentially:

I have been thinking a good deal lately of a possible counterpoise to Congress aims. I think we may find a solution in the Council of Princes; or on an elaboration of that idea a Privy Council not only of native rulers, but a few other big men to meet, say once a year, for a week or a fortnight, at Delhi for instance. Subject for discussion and procedure would have to be very carefully thought out, but we should get different ideas from those of Congress, emanating from men already possessing a great interest in the good government of India. I have wondered too, if it would ever be possible to start a small club, probably at Delhi, for British and Indian members. I do not see the impossibility of it, but I am very ignorant about the rules of caste. Still Scindia, Bikanir, some of the leading zemindars, and the Viceroy might be able to set it on foot.¹¹

Unlike the strategy to promote communal divisiveness — which took a stride a few months after this letter was written, when a Muslim delegation met the Viceroy on the 1st of October 1906, (the first conference of the Muslim League followed on the 31st of December) — this proposal for an alternative to Congress could not be materialised. That was probably because before long in several Princely states there were clear signs of mass discontent against the native rulers and also the allegiance of some of the leading rulers such as the Gaekwad of Baroda could not have been ensured. One audacious voice of dissent would foil the whole purpose of the proposed elitist club.

It is difficult to imagine how Sri Aurobindo was coping with the demands of divergent nature on his time and energy with no access to easy transport or telephone and his financial means dwindled to the bare minimum. Of the uncertain and irregular monthly remuneration of one hundred and fifty rupees he would receive from the

college, a handsome amount had to be used for the *Bande Mataram* at the early phase of its publication, even though Raja Subodh Mullick was generous in financing it.

In mid-October 1906 the management of the newspaper was registered as a joint-stock company. Its circulation was ever on the increase and its popularity was the envy of the pro-colonial or Anglo-Indian press. Before the end of the year Sri Aurobindo had become not only the sole spirit of the paper, but also its administrator, for Bipin Chandra Pal withdrew from it because he could not get on with two of the most important members of the staff, Hemendra Prasad and Shyamsundar. However, the mutual respect and affection between Pal and Sri Aurobindo remained unaffected.

Advised by Sri Aurobindo, the Nationalists — who had meanwhile spontaneously found in Sri Aurobindo their most dependable leader — treated the paper as their mouthpiece and the articles written by Sri Aurobindo and one or two of his assistants who had succeeded in imbibing his flair to an uncanny degree of perfection were eagerly awaited by the intelligentsia and with anxious misgivings by the bureaucracy. As a veteran journalist of the time, S.K. Ratcliffe, Editor of *The Statesman* reminisced in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* of 26 December 1950, soon after Sri Aurobindo's passing, that the *Bande Mataram* had “struck a ringing new note in Indian journalism” and he recollected further:

It was in 1906, shortly after Curzon's retirement that Sri Aurobindo and his friends started *Bande Mataram* (Hail to the Mother). It had a full-size sheet, was clearly printed on green paper, and was full of leading and special articles written in English with brilliance and pungency not hitherto attained in the Indian press. It was the most effective voice of what we then called nationalist extremism.¹²

Only once did Sri Aurobindo's name appear as its Editor — when he was ill — but he took to task those who did it in their misplaced enthusiasm and it was never repeated.

Meanwhile the Swadeshi waves were rolling in full force — hundreds of meetings taking place all over Bengal, in Maharashtra, in South India and sporadically in Punjab and elsewhere, boycott of British goods impressive if not total, more and more secret societies coming into existence and the Anushilan Samiti opening numerous branches particularly in East Bengal.

Sri Aurobindo's public appearance was of course rare, first, because he always preferred to be in the background and second, because he felt diffident to lecture in Bengali though he could do so with an anglicised accent. But even though he spoke in English which many in the audience could not follow, they heard him without a murmur. Here is an impression:

I myself attended a number of meetings, particularly at Hedua, . . . At one of those meetings in Panti's Math, I had a view of Rabindranath as a leader and high-priest of nationalism, . . . On another day I chanced to see, in the fading twilight of evening at a meeting in College Square, Sri Aurobindo. He was wrapped in a shawl from head to foot — perhaps he was slightly ill. He spoke in soft tones, but every word he uttered came out distinct and firm. The huge audience stood motionless under the evening sky listening with rapt attention in pindrop silence. I can now recall only these few words of his: it was a matter of shame and regret for him that he was unable to speak in his native tongue, his early training and environment had been such as compelled him to express himself in a foreign language; he was asking to be pardoned by his countrymen. And the other thing I remember was the sweet musical rhythm that graced the entire speech. This was the first time I saw him with my own eyes and heard him.¹³

Sri Aurobindo remained extremely preoccupied with the college, the newspaper and the mobilisation of the nationalist group to face the Moderates in the forthcoming Congress sessions and prepare the organisation to take courageous resolutions towards complete independence. (Such exertions were partly responsible for his falling ill more than once during this period.) His philosophy of revolution was understood only by a few. But for many he became a symbol of the collective aspiration for liberation. In his autobiography written in the 1940's a prominent leader of the Anushilan Samiti of Dacca, Pulin Bihari Das, who had no direct contact with Sri Aurobindo and who even seems to have nursed some prejudice against him, evidently because of the dislike he developed for Barin while both were prisoners in the Andamans Cellular Jail, though for different reasons, recalls:

The impact of the name of Aurobindo was no doubt considerable. Even though the separate groups of revolutionaries scattered over Khulna, Jessore, Midnapore, Bankura, Rangpur etc. functioned independently, they sang the glory of Aurobindo and though they went their own way, spoke as if they were following Aurobindo! . . .

It was the influence of Aurobindo that made the working talents of the *Yugantar* group collect arms and ingredients for making bombs. While Ullaskar found out the method of bomb-making (his father was the Principal of Shivpur Engineering College), Hem Das of Midnapore got the knowhow through a visit to Europe.¹⁴

The crowded Muraripukur which today constitutes an interior part of the huge city of Calcutta, was a part of the northern outskirts of the city in the first decade of the twentieth century. A spacious ground with a building, a pond and a small jungle

that was called a garden, belonged to Dr. K. D. Ghose and it lay totally neglected amidst a thinly populated and almost desolate part of Muraripukur, known as Maniktolla. But it sprang to life with Barindra Kumar adapting it as the working laboratory of his secret society as well as the residence of most of its active members. They studied, along with the Gita and other select scriptures, literature regarding revolutions and their exponents, as well as formulae for making bombs. Along with physical exercises, they practised shooting and tried to master various techniques of using arms.

There is no evidence that Sri Aurobindo personally knew the campers at Maniktolla Gardens excepting a few of them and that too only casually. There is no evidence of his ever having been to the place, though once he was expected to pay a visit to it, according to the following reminiscence of one who was a member of the group. The narrator is none other than Nolini Kanta Gupta (1889-1984), an accused in the Alipore Conspiracy Case who later joined Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry and acquired the stature of a scholar-author of exceptional merit and was the Secretary of Sri Aurobindo Ashram till his death:

It was during my stay at the Gardens that I had my first meeting and interview with Sri Aurobindo. Barin had asked me to go and see him, saying that Sri Aurobindo would be coming to see the Gardens and that I should fetch him. Maniktolla was in those days at the far end of North Calcutta and Sri Aurobindo lived with Raja Subodh Mullick near Wellington Square to the South. I went by tram and it was about four in the afternoon when I reached there. I asked the doorman at the gate to send word to Mr. Ghose — this was how he used to be called in those days at the place — saying that I had come from Barin of the Maniktolla Gardens. As I sat waiting in one of the rooms downstairs, Sri Aurobindo came down, stood near me and gave me an inquiring look. I said, in Bengali, “Barin has sent me. Would it be possible for you to come to the Gardens with me now?” He answered very slowly, pausing on each syllable separately — it seemed he had not yet got used to speaking Bengali — and said, “Go and tell Barin, I have not yet had my lunch. It will not be possible to go today.” So, that was that. I did not say a word, did my *namaskāra* and came away. This was my first happy meeting with him, my first Darshan and interview.¹⁵

We do not quite know at how many other centres how many young men, inspired by the ideal of waging war against the foreign rulers or liberating the motherland through violent armed struggle sacrificed their lives at the preparatory stage, but here is one first-hand narration of an experiment in that direction carried on by a few restless but brilliant youths of this Maniktolla group — one of several tragic incidents, a few reported and many unreported:

The bomb was ready, I said, a real live bomb. It was mainly Ullaskar's handiwork, we others had acted as assistants. It was now decided that the testing would be done on top of a hill known as Dighiriya — it was not much of a hill but only a low range of hillocks. . . . Of an afternoon the five of us made for the hill. It fell to my lot to carry the bomb. I carried it along with due care no doubt, but I had no idea about the risks I carried. . . .

We broke through the thickets and chose a spot right on top of the hill. There we came across a huge boulder rising steep and straight on one side about breast-high and on the other sloping gradually to a distance of some ten or twelve yards. The plan was that Prafulla would take his shelter behind the steep and abrupt side as he threw the bomb at the sloping rock and sit down behind the slab as soon as he made the throw, so that no splinters might hit him after the explosion, as the bomb was to explode only on the slope by friction of the impact. Ullas was to stand by Prafulla to see that everything got on well and both were to duck behind the slab right after the throw. I climbed up a tree a little farther away so as to have a clear view of the whole scene. Barin and Bibhuti took their positions around. As we lay in wait, — my eyes were glued to the boulder, — suddenly I saw a spark of fire flash out over there with a puff of smoke and such a terrific noise! The whole sky seemed to be getting broken up into bits, and waves of sound went echoing forth from one end to the other as if in a hundred simultaneous claps of thunder. Never again have I heard a noise like that. I was of course beside myself with excitement and joy. With great glee I climbed down the tree and ran towards the boulder, shouting at the top of my voice, "Successful, successful!"

But how is this? What is this? What a gruesome spectacle! Prafulla lay limp on Ullas's chest, Ullas held him in his arms. Slowly the body was laid down. . . . At last Barin said, "It is all over, there is not a hope." . . .

We had thought that the explosive would catch fire only after the bomb touched the ground and rubbed against a hard surface. But instead of that, the explosive had been so powerful, that is, so easily inflammable that it caught fire as soon as it came into contact with air on being thrown up. I said I had been carrying it in my hands: it might have caught fire and exploded even by that slight swing. . . .

We started down the hill, with not a word on our lips, our throats all choked with emotion, our minds stunned. . . . I once blurted out with a suppressed feeling, "We were five when we came, only four are now returning." Barin gave me a rebuke, "No sentimentality, please."¹⁶

Later they returned to the scene:

But how strange! Where was the body? There was not a trace of it anywhere. We searched about here and there but did not find even a shred of clothing. . . . The whole thing remained a mystery.¹⁷

(To be continued)

MANOJ DAS

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16. *Ibid.*, pp. 351-53.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 354.

Our history is the sacred biography of the Mother. Our philosophies are the revelations of the Mother's mind. Our arts — our poetry and our painting, our music and our drama, our architecture and our sculpture, all these are the outflow of the Mother's diverse emotional moods and experiences. Our religion is the organised expression of the soul of the Mother. The outsider knows her as India.

Bipin Chandra Pal
'India the Mother' in *Soul of India* (1911)

HYMN TO THE MOTHER OF RADIANCES

[This 'Hymn to the Mother of Radiances' was written by Amrita in January 1927.

Later, Amrita's drafts were revised by Sri Aurobindo and arranged to make a three-part hymn.

The revised version was also copied out in Sri Aurobindo's own hand.]

1

AN inner fullness has come in like the coming in of light in dark caves. It fills, it illumines, it vibrates the multiple strings of life; it has found the contact with the forgotten achievements of the past to enable me to start the new ones of the future on the basis of the changing formations of the present. The currents of life well up to meet the descending rays of light from the upper heavens for transmutation of the base and the dark into the luminous and the true, for transmutation of the ugly and the wrong into the beautiful and the right.

O Mother of Radiances, you have dawned in the narrow horizons of my mind. Out of its depthless rigidities, in the midst of its walled-up spaces you have created a heart-like something that will live its eternal life. You have revealed to me a chamber alive and warm within the mind's substanceless polar regions and there I can safely retire and find in you my refuge.

The lower network of moving forces remains, but I feel your presence in its midst. The higher network of moving forces remains, and here you have stepped in also shedding a warmth of life that was not there before, you have turned the dull grey luminosity into a brilliance of living waters. Your active and living presence is everywhere; you have heeded my words of aspiration, the fire of my demand for your omnipresence. More than what I ignorantly sought for, you have revealed to me. You are intimate and one with me when in truth and in law and yet away and far off from me when in error and in falsehood.

When there are no more darkening shadows about me; when you see me bared of all shams and shows in every part of the being; when you see in every cell of my body an eternal home for you and an eternal temple; when you see me one with you in identity and still worshipping you; when you melt the compact gold of knowledge in the living and running waters of devotion; when you break my earth and release the energies; when you turn my pride into power in your hands and my ignorance into light, my narrowness into wideness, my selfishness into a true gathering together of forces in one centre, my greed into a capacity of untiring search after the truth for

the attainment of its substances, my egoism into the true and conscious instrumental centre, my mind into a channel for you to descend, my heart into your hearth of pure fire and flame, my life into a pure and translucent substance for your handling, my body into a conscious vessel for holding what of you is meant for me; then, O Mother of Radiances, my aim in life now and hereafter will be fulfilled in the true and right and vast way. Aspiration wakes in me! Achieve in me all that I flame for!

2

Create in me a state of consciousness in which whatever I hear from you may at once turn into an intimate knowledge, a self-revelation, an expression of identity, an awareness at once of the within and the without. O Mother, whatever I gather from you, let it be of the deep vasts of the within which is omnipresent. May I be one with you in every way to have the supreme Delight, yet separate from you to stream forth devotion to you, one and yet separate like life and its movements, like heat and light, like power and its expression, like true knowledge and its effecting force. Let what you give me be not a treasure to me but as if a thing of my own self-discovered.

Wipe out the division in my consciousness that I may see and listen to you as part of yourself. The life-energies in me aspire for the knowledge that comes from identity, for the vision that is born of identity, for the listening that takes its orientation in identity, — the identity that is yourself.

May I be the manifestation of a portion of you in your limitless and shining spaces.

3

Increase my fires of aspiration, make the surrender in me possible at once and in every way; widen my openness and receptivity; remove the coverings that delay the workings of the psyche deep within; take away, O Mother, from me what I have and what I have not. . . .

The cells of my body, the filaments of my nervous coat, the five streams of my prana, the fires of my heart, the powers of my mind, — all make their unconditioned surrender to you, O Mother of Radiances, that there may not be falsehood in existence, division in consciousness, death in the living waters, want of harmony and misery in the nerve-coils, disease in the body . . .

Thy voice replies to me:

“By the fivefold powers of surrender in the physical, by the quiet intensity of

the psychic urge that is behind you centrally, increase ever and ever the inherent Ananda and the hidden opulences of your consciousness. First of all, become conscious of what I have willed in you; be, next, that of which you have become conscious. Know at once and for ever, 'In me is your all.' ”

AMRITA

(*Amrita Birth Centenary* — 1995, Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry, pp. 4-6)

The ascent to supermanhood will be a radical change of consciousness, force and bliss-power, a potent building of all that is necessary to manifest the new godhead in mind, life and body. There will be at once an inner revelation and an outer transformation. Something will be born that was not here or was latent and hidden in its own invisible radiances and at the same time there will be a metamorphosis and reversal in our existing structure.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 372)

1.

An inner fullness has come in like the coming in of light in dark caves. It fills, it illumines, it vibrates the multiple strings of life; it has found the contact with the forgotten achievements of the past to enable me to start the new ones of the future on the basis of the changing formations of the present. The currents of life well up to meet the descending rays of light from the upper heavens for transmutation of the base and the dark into the luminous and the true, for transmutation of the ugly and the wrong into the beautiful and the right.

O Mother of Radiances, you have dawned in the narrow horizons of ~~the~~ ^{my} mind. Out of its depthless rigidities, in the midst of its walled-up spaces you have created a heart-like something that will live its eternal life. You have revealed to me a chamber alive and warm within the mind's substanceless polar regions and there I can safely retire and find in you my refuge.

The lower network of moving forces remains, but ~~now~~ I feel your presence in ~~the~~ its midst. The higher network of moving forces remains, and here you ^{have} stepped in also shedding a warmth of life that was not there before; you have turned the dull grey luminosity into a brilliance of living waters. Your active and living presence is everywhere; you have heeded my words of aspiration, the fire of my demand for your omnipresence. More than what I ignorantly sought for, you have revealed to me. You are intimate and one with me when in truth and in law and yet away and far off from me when in error and in falsehood.

When there are no more darkening shadows about me; when you see me bared of all shams and shows in every part of the being;

when you see in every cell of my body an eternal home for you and
 an eternal temple; when you see me one with you in identity and
 still worshipping you; when you melt the compact gold of knowledge
 in the living and running waters of devotion; when you break my
 earth and release ~~the~~ energies; when you turn my pride into power in
 your hands and my ignorance into light, my narrowness into wideness,
 my selfishness into a true gathering together of forces in one centre, my
 freed into a capacity of untiring search after the truth for the attain-
 -ment of its substance, my egotism into the true and conscious instrument-
 -al centre, my ~~old~~ mind into a channel for you to descend, my heart
 into your hearth of pure fire and flame, my life into a pure and
 translucent substance for your handling, my body into a consecrated
 vessel for holding what ^{of you} is meant for me; then, O Mother of Radiances,
 my aim in life now and hereafter will be fulfilled in the true and
 right and vast way. Aspiration awakes in me! Achievement is in me
 all that I flame for!

2

Create in me a state of consciousness in which whatever I hear from you may at once turn into an ^{intimate} ~~immediate~~ knowledge, a self-revelation, an expression of identity, an awareness at once of the within and the without. O Mother, whatever I gather from you, let it be of the deep roots of the within which is omnipresent. May I be one with you in every way to have the supreme Delight, yet separate from you to stream forth devotion to you, one and yet separate like life and its movements, like heat and light, like power and its expression, like true knowledge and its effecting force. Let what you give me be not a treasure to me but as if a thing of my own self-discovered.

Wipe out the division in ^{my} consciousness that I may see and listen to you as part of yourself. The life-energies in me aspire for the knowledge that comes from identity, for the vision ^{for the brotherhood} that takes its orientation ^{of} identity, — that is born of identity, ^{the identity that is yourself.}

May I be the manifestation of a portion of you in your limitless and shining spaces.

3

Increase my fire of aspiration, make the surrender in me possible at once and in every way; widen my openness and receptivity; remove the coverings that delay the workings of the psyche deep within; take away, O Mother, from me what I have and what I have not

The cells of my body, the filaments of my nervous coat, the five streams of my prana, the fire of my heart, the powers of my mind, — all make their unconditional surrender to you, O Mother of Radiances, that there may not be falsehood in existence, division in consciousness, death in the living eaters, want of harmony and misery in the nerve coils, ~~and~~ disease in the body...

~~some~~

My voice replied to me:

a By the fivefold powers of surrender in the physical, by the great intensity of the psychic urge that is behind you continually, increase ever and ever the inherent Ananda and the hidden opulence of your consciousness. First of all, become conscious of what I have willed in you; be, next, that of which you have become conscious. Know at once and for ever, "In me is your all."

SOME WRITINGS

[In this year of Gangadharan's centenary, we reproduce some of his writings translated from the original Tamil. — Ed.]

FLOOD OF GRACE AND GOLDEN LIGHT

Visions and Experiences

It is by Grace that I came into contact with the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in my youth when she visited my village Veerampattinam, four miles off Pondicherry, in 1928. She poured Her looks of Grace into my heart. I was soon attracted to join the Ashram in my twentieth year which fell in 1933. I come from a poor and uneducated family. I had only completed the lower standards of school education. All the Sadhana or spiritual discipline that I did and am still doing is wholly centred upon the work which She gave to me. I work in the sanitary service of the Ashram.

By doing the work with sincerity and devotion as the Mother's own work, I began to get experiences. By Her Grace my soul or psychic being opened after five years of Ashram-life. Since then, the psychic has been my guide and I feel always the Mother's Presence in my heart. From time to time various kinds of spiritual experiences have come, one after another. In my 63rd year, I had a flood of spiritual experiences and visions soon after I had sat in meditation in Sri Aurobindo's room on my birthday, along with fellow disciples and devotees whose birthdays coincided with mine. Then in the next year, when I meditated in my own room on my 64th birthday (24-7-76) at 12 noon, the Grace of our Divine Mother descended and entered into the depth of my mid-forehead. She came in the form of a Luminous Young Child — Bala, in the same form as when She had been about seven years old — and opened the “chakra” on the top of the head, the Sahasrara, giving rise to wonderful visions and experiences.

I feel that these are purely a gift of the Grace of our Divine Mother, and not at all due to my merits or qualifications or Sadhana. The experiences have continued and developed since then and especially in my midnight meditation between 2 and 3 a.m. Soon after the experiences, the Grace comes in the form of Tamil poetry in which they get expressed. Below I am giving in English some recent experiences in the order in which they came.

The Divine Mother lit the Light of a Lamp burning in the middle of my forehead. It is a Light that extended, with its flaming heat, in all directions.

In the depth of a silence beyond mind and heart, I found the pure flame of Truth blazing in its intensity. As the bud blossoms unfolding its petals all around, so the inner consciousness blossomed and expanded in that profound silence.

In lonely silence again, I realised the Divine Mother, the Consciousness of all consciousnesses, manifesting Herself as a luminous young child — Bala. I became one with Her in consciousness.

My uvula curved upwards and tasted the oozing Amrita (Nectar) of Grace. The thousand-petalled lotus opened itself. I sensed its subtle fragrance full of Grace.

The lid of Brahmarandhra (Aperture of Brahman), opened itself. The last vestige of the ego was dissolved. A flood of Light entered in from above. I became absorbed in Bliss, the most precious gift of the Mother. The infinite pure Consciousness and the Self were realised.

The bond of birth and death has been broken and with that the dualities of pleasure and pain, sorrow and happiness were cancelled. The being has become free by realising the Light of Consciousness which is the source of the Vedas.

Mother Bala gave by Her Grace the Eye of Knowledge to see and realise the Truth. By surrendering to Her Lotus-Feet one can receive the supreme fulfilment of life as Her gift.

After the rending of the lid on the top of the head, and being surrounded by Light, I quickly rushed through wide spaces of heavens. Heavens within heavens were entered. The consciousness moved both upwards and inwards. It crossed six overhead planes which had been screening the Truth. Then I entered into the experience of the Void, the Sunya of Nothingness. But this was not the end. I felt I was near the Vast Realm of Light which is the Home of Mother Bala who has manifested to me in Her splendour of Light. The ascending path to the Home of Grace and Peace was seen. The Golden Door opened. I trod the interior path to the Heaven of Mother Bala and quickly entered into the vast Realm of Truth-Knowledge. I saw Mother Bala seated in Her Form of dynamic and vibrating golden Light in Her own supreme and universal Heaven of Light. I had wonderful visions of Truth; and Bliss coursed through and overflowed my whole being.

Cascades of intensities of the pure golden Light spread in all directions, and all the spaces were flooded with the golden Light. The Light within the inner

Light was realised and I became one with the consciousness of Light and partook of the Amrita of Bliss.

I entered into the vast Golden Truth-world and realised its vast golden Light of Truth-knowledge. There was an enjoyment of the dynamic play of the Lord, His play of the beginningless and endless Bliss. I realised the supreme Lord with His Shakti Uma as the Two-in-One in the vast Golden Realm of Truth, which even the great gods fail to see. I realised Him as the Lord of my soul and self, present everywhere and bestowing His Grace on the devoted faithful in the depth of their hearts.

I saw the supreme Lord, realised union with Him, and became verily Himself. The birth, maintenance and destruction of the universe taking place in the Heart of the supreme Lord was seen. My being got fused and absorbed in the eternal Ananda which is beginningless and endless, and verily became that.

There, all the crores of heavens and worlds and the physical cosmic bodies, namely, the sun, planets, earth, moon and stars, were seen whirling like atoms. I saw them with the eye of Grace.

I realised the vast and supreme golden Light of Grace in its own Home of Truth which is without beginning and end. I became the pure Consciousness of the dynamic golden Light of Truth. The source of the secret Truth of the Vedas was found, and that without one's learning to know of it. I realised the supreme Light (*shuddha param Jyoti*) spreading, from far beyond above, in all directions.

In the supreme and pure infinity of existence which is without day and night the unity of the all-containing supreme Existence (*eka poorna*) was realised. It was realised also as the one infinite and eternal Bliss of the supreme Consciousness.

The world of play of Truth-knowledge is found in the depth of silence. The whole universal movement is the play of the Lord of the Truth-world, the play of Knowledge-Will, the play of the beginningless and endless Ananda. The earthly life shall get changed into a play of Bliss when one annihilates the ego and realises the supreme Lord who has extended Himself as the universe.

The Golden Sun of Truth-knowledge rose up in that supreme world of Peace and Silence, and in the midst of the vibrating ocean of Ananda, spreading the flood of golden Light everywhere and illuminating, sustaining and nourishing

the earthly world of ours. With the rising of the Sun of Truth-knowledge, the darkness disappeared everywhere and the golden Light pervaded the whole universe and the earth too became golden.

The pure golden Light descended from the vast Heaven of Truth-knowledge like the raining of waters. The earth, being flooded with the descending golden Truth-Light of Grace, changed into a golden earth, shining in its golden luminosity. A golden world is seen born, and men too become golden in the mental, vital and physical levels of existence. With the descending force of the golden Light of Truth on the earth, a new era has begun and the earth has woken up with a new consciousness which is seen vibrating with a new awakening of life at all levels of human existence. The human race is awakening everywhere with a new life.

Carried by the force of the flood of the descending golden Light, I came down to the earthly consciousness when I entered into my body through the Brahma-randhra.

I hear the *Omkara-nada* vibrating in me and, along with it, the Golden Truth-Light infiltrates into my adhara. The heart is filled with the consciousness of Grace which is indeed the golden Light of Grace. The ego has been completely effaced. The golden Light of Truth also descended into me, into my mind, life and body and made them golden. The golden Light entered into all the cells of the body, into the bones, muscles, tissues, brain and nerves, blood and its cells, skin and even the hairs, from the root to the end, and made them appear golden with a tinge of red. The whole body appeared a beautiful golden red body.

I saw even the Sun of golden red Light rising up over the earthly sky, spreading its golden red Light of Truth into the whole material earth. The golden red Light of Truth is verily the concrete physical form of the highest supreme consciousness. The descending golden Light becomes the golden red Light when reaching into matter and the material world and the material body.

The phenomenal universe which is derived and born from the supreme eternal Truth of Bliss, Light and Peace moves to reach and become the Truth of Bliss, Light and Peace again, by enjoying the endless Bliss.

Man shall realise the eternal Truth and become That and he shall live the immortal life here on the earth by attaining a deathless body.

The golden Light of Truth is waiting above the head to descend and enter in man through the opening of the Sahasrara when one, being awakened to the psychic being, remains in undisturbed silence and peace. The golden Light is seen to rush into the whole adhara and into the body and shall transform man.

(*Mother India* March 1977)

* * *

A VISION

At 2 a.m. on Wednesday 17-10-1979 I was sitting and meditating in my room as usual. I had a vision in which I suddenly heard the continuous sound of our Divine Mother's car-horn. In a hurry I went down to the ground floor and reached the front door. The car was standing in front of my house.

Pavitra very respectfully opened the door of the car. The Mother got out and smiled. Closely following her was Chinmayi. From the front portion of the car (i.e., from the driver's side) Amrita got out. I was standing in front of the Mother with folded hands and my heart was full of gratitude. The Mother addressed me in French, saying, "Is Urmila inside? I want to see her." I respectfully replied, "Mother, she is inside, but the staircase leading to her room is very narrow and the way to it very dirty. If the Mother approves I will go up to her room and bring her here in a minute."

Amrita told the Mother that my suggestion might be accepted. But the Mother said, "No, no, today is her birthday. I want to see her in her own room." So saying she entered the house and started climbing the staircase. We climbed after her in the following order: Chinmayi, Pavitra, Amrita and myself.

The Mother stood in front of my room and, looking at me, asked, "Are you staying in this room?"

I replied, "Yes, Mother," and at the same time I rushed into my room and came out with a few dried tulsi leaves that were there and devotedly offered them at the sacred feet of the Mother and made Pranam. The Mother blessed me by putting her hands on my head. A feeling of great joy spread through my body like an electric current.

I felt I had obtained the fruit, the total result of all my spiritual yearning through all my previous lives. I was truly fortunate.

My mind became calm like a sea without waves. Tears of joy poured from my eyes.

A face full of compassion, eyes shedding grace, as if all divine beauty had burst out as a divine smile on her lips, the Mother once again put her hands on my

head and blessed me, and gave two huge lotuses, one red and the other white. In a graceful voice sweeter than nectar she addressed this unworthy being and enquired whether I was comfortably lodged in that small room. "Mother, all my wants are fulfilled by Thy Grace, I am very happy and contented here." On that, Amrita said, "He is one who is always overflowing with joy, Mother."

All present, including the Mother, laughed so loudly that it seemed as if the whole building shook to its foundations. I was astonished and delighted to see my few dry tulsi leaves offered at the sacred feet of the Mother change into fresh green leaves with golden hues and beautiful forms.

The clothes that the Mother, Chinmayi, Pavitra and Amrita were wearing, the car in which they had come, their footwear — all were golden. All the people were young, full of health and beauty as I had seen them 25 years earlier. The supreme divine delight was playing in their visages. Their clothes were of golden silk. The Mother had golden anklets of exquisite craftsmanship.

The Mother said, "Let us go to the second floor", and went up the very narrow staircase to Urmila's room. We followed her.

(Urmila is a young sadhika from Orissa. She had stayed at Shantiniketan for many years and studied there. It is only three years since she came to the Ashram and has been working at Ganpatram's. One month ago she came to live in the same building as I.)

Urmila received the Mother with great love and joy and devotion and offered two very big roses at her feet and did Pranam. On touching the divine feet, the two roses, one white and the other red, were suddenly transformed into marvellous and extremely beautiful flowers of a golden hue.

The Mother blessed Urmila by putting her hands on her head and gave her two very big lotuses, one white and the other red. They were emitting golden light.

In Urmila's room there was now a new, fine, rare and extremely pleasant scent which had not been there at any time before.

Peace and silence pervaded the whole atmosphere. Like the singing of a bee in a garden the transcendent 'OM' sound was continuously ringing. There was the Mother's immortal nectar like the piano-music that she used to play at midnight on every New Year's Day for blessing the world.

The consciousness was raised to the infinite transcendental plane and was steeped in Ananda and Divine Consciousness. At that time a marvellous sound woke me up from meditation. It was 3 a.m.

After this vision I find and feel the Mother's concrete physical presence inside the Ashram building.

One day in the Ashram meditation hall, in front of the Mother's sacred bed (the bed on which her pure and holy physical sheath had been kept for some days after she had assumed the inner golden body), I was meditating. With open eyes and not in an inner vision, I saw the Mother sitting on the bed with a glowing divine

golden body which looked most concretely physical beyond a shadow of doubt.

(*Mother India* June 1980)

* * *

OM

(A Vision on 13 March 1981)

The background is sometime before the Mother left her physical body. A film was being shown at the playground. It was “Bhakta Dhruva”. The Mother was present at the show.

The scene came in which Bhakta Dhruva is sitting under a tree and chanting the mantra “Om Namo Narayanaya” with a great aspiration in his heart. As he goes on repeating it, he passes into deep meditation.

Suddenly one felt the whole playground was filled with a deep, vast and immobile silence. The Mother also seemed to be in a trance. Her face was radiating a divine peace. Her lips were constantly moving and those who were near could hear her uttering the same mantra in a sweet and melodious voice almost inaudible.

Next day the news of this spread in the whole Ashram. A member of the Ashram made a slight change in the wordings of the Mantra, and with the help of some sadhikas gifted with musical talent and sweet voices made a tape-recording of the mantra-japa, and submitted it to the Mother.

The Mother heard the recording and was very pleased. She had it played several times. The changed Mantra was as follows:

“Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Aravindaya”

An old sadhak who had been very close to the Mother related this interesting incident to a friend of mine and that friend told me about it two days back.

I too was present when that picture was being shown and I had felt the full impact of that mantra of Dhruva on the atmosphere of the playground. A vivid memory of the spiritual atmosphere thus created came to my mind now.

* * *

On 13 March at 2 a.m. when I started my usual meditation I was irresistibly caught by that *mahamantra* and I went on chanting “Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Aravindaya” continuously. My whole being got charged with the fire of a great aspiration and an

intense devotion. I went into a deep meditation for more than an hour.

My mind became absolutely still like a waveless sea. There were no thoughts at all. A vast silence descended over the whole universe. The whole universe appeared to be in a state of meditation.

Peace, peace, peace, oceanic peace enveloped all creation and in that peace was heard the non-stop reverberating subtle sound of “Om”, slowly pervading all the world and there was a flood of golden light everywhere.

In the deep silence of the Cave of the heart a fire was seen burning upwards to heaven.

The inner consciousness was awakened and it rose up to higher and higher states.

All the inner centres opened up as lotus buds open in the sun, and they were flooded with light from above.

The nectar of immortality started dropping down from the thousand-petalled lotus which had fully opened out its petals at the top of the head! There was a feeling that a great obstruction at the top of the head had got removed, and immediately thereafter the golden light from above flooded the whole being. Now, everywhere there was nothing but the golden light, inside and out.

The delightful Divine Presence pervading the whole atmosphere was unmistakable.

This experience of divine Grace was felt as something very concrete and very clear.

The light, the delight and the sound, which were at first distinct and separate, now combined into a single deep divine consciousness.

The golden light descended further into the dark cavern of the dense Inconscient and lit up that entire field. The Inconscient was transformed into a consciousness full of the divine white light, and there too the concrete divine Presence was felt. There was a revelation that the Inconscient itself was nothing but the Divine who had assumed that form for the purposes of the play of creation.

In a few minutes the whole scene changed. There appeared to the vision the divine golden compassionate form of Sri Aurobindo exuding Grace, Love and golden Light. Then appeared our Mother in her most wonderful golden form of divine beauty, radiating Light and Bliss.

A little later the Mother's form merged in the form of Sri Aurobindo and became One with it. Then Sri Aurobindo also disappeared from the vision leaving behind an all-pervading Supreme Silent Consciousness of Sat, Chit and Ananda. In the nerves as well as in all the pores of my body ran a strong current of divine Ananda. My heart was full of Ananda.

The meditation stopped when I heard some sound. It was 4.30 a.m. As the experience was something very concrete and lasted for a fairly long duration, its effect continued afterwards for the whole day.

(Mother India August 1981)

IN THE SILENCE

(A Meditation)

I. Self-Knowledge is Bliss; the confusion, due to ignorance, is sorrow.

II. To comprehend in a deep seated silence the real existent, — as it is, — is the best way to enjoy the happiness and to become free from the misery.

III. There is a Reality, wide as the sky, which acts in and through all beings. All are its becoming and manifestation. There is nothing but that. That is all.

It manifests at the same time as the One and the many, in and beyond creation, as the moving and the motionless. It is that which has been worshipped as God by the religions. It is not a mere guess or fantasy, but a reality that can actually be experienced. When, as a result of a life of tapasya, there is a blooming of the inner life and when desire and ego are destroyed, this supreme Reality can be realised, in a deep silence, by all aspirants.

IV. The presence of the Divine is there always, at all places, continuous and full. It is the egoistic individual consciousness that stands as the main stumbling block in realising it; and when the ego is destroyed, none else but the Divine can be seen in this world.

V. The Real is integral.

Every philosophy, which declares the Real as a unity or as a multiplicity, a void, Maya, or nothing else but the visible Nature, and so forth, — whatever be its brilliance or boldness, — does not explain the integral nature of the Divine. What we call the Divine, our idea of the Divine in its full stature includes all the truths found separately in the different religions of the world, philosophies, spiritual codes, the teachings of the ancient texts, all the truths realised till now and those which are going to be realised hereafter in their entirety.

VI. It is not by a study of the texts, or by philosophical arguments, or by diligently observing certain religious disciplines, that the supreme truth can be realised. “This is the truth. Such and such is its nature.” Clear-cut statements like these cannot be made by anyone. The supreme Truth cannot be known by the sense-organs. It can only be known as a high spiritual experience.

VII. Like an artist who gives shape to his piece of work, from deep layers of thought, we give a form to Truth, with what we have seen, heard, experienced, read and talked about as the basis. We then try to concretise this imaginary form of truth;

and still more we declare that this is the supreme Truth and that there is and can be nothing else beyond this. Such a belief may be useful, to a certain extent, to the sadhak at the early stage. But this may lead far away from his goal the sadhak who, with the awakening of his inner being, is intensely in quest of the spirit. Our ideal is not to concretise our fancies and imaginations: it is to see the Real as it is. Is it possible to experience, by means of the mind and its formations, the supreme Truth, which can be realised only in a consciousness beyond that of the mind?

The mind is narrow and restless and, only within certain limits, is able to dissect and analyse events. How is it possible, then, to comprehend, with its help, the ever-living, limitless, infinite, supreme Reality?

If we want to have a full experience of the supreme Truth, the ever-present and ever-living, we must go beyond the mental concepts, thoughts, ideas, likes and dislikes. We must be free from the clutches of what we have seen, heard and talked about; we must be pure as the sky, without any of the mental constructions, and without being affected by anything. We should not determine beforehand the what and how of Truth. We shall only be cheating ourselves by such preconceived notions. Our heart must become calm and firm like a rock which is not affected by anything. It will be enough if we make our subtle and physical organs worthy enough to experience the supreme Truth, accept what is experienced, and manifest it in life. In course of time, we shall realise, — according to our state of preparation, — what is the supreme Truth.

We shall also find a thorough change of all our present conceptions of the Divine. We shall realise, by experience, that the Divine is not someone sitting high above the sky, but an omnipresent, all-becoming supreme Reality.

VIII. Though all worldly appearances emerge out of the one supreme Being, we cannot conclude that each is the same as the other. Though the fundamental reality behind each is the same, there is a great difference in the growth of each and in manifestation of the reality lying within. The seed and the tree cannot be absolutely the same. The ordinary human being lives in the surface consciousness and, separated as he is, by his egoistic individual consciousness, is whirled in the darkness of ignorance and struggles in the storm of desire. He cannot in any way become equal to the seer who, as a result of a life of tapasya and the descent of the Grace from above, becomes pure, egoless, calm and immersed constantly in the bliss of the Divine. As the sweet smell emerges only out of a full-blown flower, the supreme reality that lies dormant in all manifests in a truly realised soul — then, one with the Divine, he becomes a pure vessel of His Light and Power.

(*Mother India* March 1953)

CHURCHILL'S MISSION

It does not happen often that events in the occult history are confirmed by an impartial objective source. This makes it worthwhile to report the following testimony, directly related to a crucially important phase in the history of the 20th century and of humanity.

In my book on *Hitler and His God — The Background to the Nazi Phenomenon* (Rupa & Co., New Delhi) I have written:

Hitler did not invade England [after the surrender of France] and neither did Great Britain collapse, as was generally expected. The reason was one man: Winston Churchill . . . “In Churchill Hitler found something more than an antagonist. To a panic-stricken Europe the German dictator had appeared almost like invincible Fate. Churchill reduced him to a conquerable power.” (Joachim Fest)

Before the invasion of France Sri Aurobindo had already said in passing: “England is quite unreliable under her present leadership,” and that he and the Mother were looking for a suitable person. If the Asura had his instrument in one camp [Adolf Hitler], the White Forces needed theirs in the opposite camp once their decision had been made to engage actively in the battle. It is now mostly forgotten what a chancy affair the coming to power of Winston Churchill actually was . . .¹

Several passages from Churchill's speeches indicate his awareness of the spiritual support provided to him, for instance: “. . . Without victory there is no survival . . . no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages, that mankind will move forwards to its goal.” Or: “If we stand up to Hitler, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age.” And also: “I will say that he must indeed have a blind soul who cannot see that some great purpose and design is being worked out here below, of which we have the honour to be the faithful servants.”² These were unusual words for a man in Churchill's position and under the given circumstances; they expressed a vision going far beyond the cant of nationalistic or jingoistic exhortations, and carried overtones echoing Sri Aurobindo's statements about the fundamental values at stake in the Second World War.

1. Georges Van Vrekhem: *Hitler and His God*, p. 440.

2. *The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, pp. 154, 177 and 233.

It should be remembered that those words were spoken at a time when, according to Sri Aurobindo, Hitler had “a fifty per cent chance” of winning the war. France had collapsed, and Great Britain stood alone to confront an apparently invincible enemy, practically without defence after Dunkirk, except for its fleet.

Moreover, Great Britain suffered defeat after depressing defeat, and was bombed relentlessly by the *Luftwaffe*. London was bombed on seventy-five consecutive nights in which forty thousand people died. No wonder that Churchill felt an immense relief when, because of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, the United States of America was finally forced to enter the war on its side. Fully realising the power of this new ally, he considered the war won from that very day. “Our history would not come to an end . . .” he wrote.

An even stronger formulation of Churchill's awareness of a spiritual support is this passage from a speech in the House of Commons on 13 October 1942: “I sometimes have a feeling, in fact I have it very strongly, a feeling of interference. I want to stress that I have a feeling sometimes that some guiding hand has interfered. I have the feeling that we have a guardian because we serve a great cause, and that we shall have that guardian so long as we serve that great cause faithfully. And what a cause it is!”³ Many political leaders have invoked God Almighty in times of crisis or catastrophe. This is something quite different: a spiritual presence and force concretely interfering in the most drastic historical events to save a great cause. And that cause, also according to Churchill (and Sri Aurobindo, of course), was no other than keeping the future open for the evolution of humankind.

But the strongest confirmation comes from a man who was not a politician and still less spiritual-minded. He was a down-to-earth, athletic detective in Scotland Yard's Special Branch, “physically tough and unafraid of almost anything”, whose name was Walter Thompson. His years with Churchill are recorded in *Churchill's Bodyguard — The Authorised Biography of Walter H. Thompson*, written by Tom Hickman (Headline Book Publishing Ltd. 2006).

Thompson was appointed Churchill's bodyguard in 1921 and would remain so, with one interval, till 1944. At the time of his appointment Churchill was Minister of Air and Secretary of State for the Colonies. The young policeman accepted his task with little enthusiasm, for he knew from colleagues that “the impossible Mr. Churchill” was a fickle and egoistical man, a headache for anybody who had to look after him or work for him.

What made Churchill still more difficult to protect was his love of danger. “He longed to confront danger,” and “appeared to have no permanent sense of personal safety.” After all, he had fought in five campaigns, one of them during the First World War, when he had been a battalion commander in the muddy trenches in Flanders' fields.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

Churchill required Thompson's constant attention and thus the policeman from "the Yard" became the person closest to him during the critical years. The Prime Minister's life was in permanent danger wherever he went for conferences, meetings or inspections — Cairo, Algiers, Casablanca, Washington . . . — for he was the prime target for assassination by the secret agencies of the Axis countries. (He was reported dead on several occasions.) Besides, at the time of the bombardments, in the summer of 1940, he wanted to show the population that their bald-headed, round-bellied Prime Minister with the big cigar stood by them, and he went out in the streets even during bombardments. "I have asked the people of this country to carry on in their homes, in the streets, in the factories, everywhere," he said to Thompson. "If you think I am going to hide in an air-raid shelter, not for you or anyone else will I do it."

One day he sent his car away and went on foot "around St. James's Park by way of the Mall, where many incendiary bombs had been dropped. My plea to him not to do so fell on deaf ears," remembers Thompson. Suddenly there was a tremendous explosion. Churchill went back to see what had happened: where he had been walking a few seconds earlier was now a huge crater made by a thousand pound bomb.

That night Churchill took hold of his bodyguard's arm. He said: "Thompson, when you came to me in 1939 [after an interval during which the policeman had been replaced by another bodyguard] I told you something unusual. Do you remember?" Thompson said he did and repeated his words: "You said: I have something to do." — "Those are the words I wanted, Thompson," Churchill said, "because we have come to the second phase. There is somebody looking after me besides you, Thompson." — "Do you mean Sergeant Davies?" asked Thompson. Davies was a colleague of his who at times had to assist him. But "Churchill's finger went heavenwards in a characteristic gesture. 'No, Thompson, I have a mission to perform and That Person will see that it is performed.'"⁴

The bodyguard and his protégé had developed a sort of routine for getting in and out of the car. Thompson would hold the left door open for the Prime Minister, who would step in and sit behind him. On an inspection tour "something curious" happened. When getting into the car, Churchill "looked at me, then opened the door [on the right side] himself, got in and shut it," something he had never done before. And the car took off "as usual travelling fast." Suddenly a bomb exploded close by. "It lifted all four wheels from the road surface and we ran on two wheels for many yards before rocking back. Our speed probably prevented the car from turning over. Winston was not disturbed in the slightest."

Afterwards Churchill and Thompson talked about the incident. "Walter asked him why he'd got into the car on the side he never did. Churchill told him: 'I saw

4. *Churchill's Bodyguard*, p. 106.

you with the door open, but when I reached the other side something seemed to say “stop” and it appeared to me that I was to get in on the other side, which I did.’ Again Churchill’s finger went heavenwards: ‘That mission has to be carried out, Thompson.’”⁵

On 30 June 1944, detective Walter Thompson’s time as bodyguard of Winston Churchill came to an end. Scotland Yard had decided to replace him. “Walter had lived in Churchill’s home almost as a member of the family. On occasions he’d run Churchill’s baths, picked up his clothes, sat beside him when he couldn’t sleep, carried him when he was ill . . . [Churchill had had at least two heart attacks during the war.] There was unquestionably a friendship between the pair — never on an equal footing, of course, but a friendship nevertheless.”

After all they had gone through, the adieu was “an emotionally charged scene,” in which both men tried to master their feelings. Walter, puzzled that Churchill had not once looked into his face, went to the door, saying “Goodbye.” — “Suddenly Churchill looked up, his head and a finger raised in a gesture Walter knew well: ‘When you came to me in August 1939,’ he said, ‘I told you I had something to do. Subsequently I said that I had a mission to perform. Now, Thompson, before you go . . . that mission has been accomplished.’” And the sturdy policeman concludes: “No words of mine could express adequately my pride at having worked at his side, and there was a huge lump in my throat as we parted.”⁶

Winston Churchill has been buried by a mourning nation with full honours, and is generally recognised as one of the great figures of modern history — rightly so. Few know about “That Person”, of whose presence and support he was so vividly aware, and about the real import of his “mission”.

GEORGES VAN VREKHEM

(*The Advent*, August 2009. Included in *The New Spirituality*)

5. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

A Note:

When Georges Van Vrekhem passed away on 31st August 2012, he left behind a number of unpublished essays. Some of these were planned to be used for his talks in Auroville at the end of 2011, when he was to embark on a second series of eleven lectures on a wide variety of topics related to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It was our intention to publish these lectures as a sequel to the book *Preparing for the*

Miraculous, which contains his first series of eleven lectures at Auroville.

Cyclone Thane, which hit Auroville on 30th December 2011, disrupted these plans and his talks were postponed; they were delayed again in the second quarter of 2012 due to his health condition. Georges planned to restart the lectures in September 2012 but, unfortunately, his passing decided differently.

The New Spirituality (Published by Stichting Aurofonds, Auroville. Price: Rs 300) contains eleven unpublished essays on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, two articles on how to write about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, three on Auroville and two on World War II. It also has two 'In Memoriam' (Satprem and Amal Kiran), and four autobiographical texts. Some of the articles were previously published in the magazines *Auroville Today*, *Mother India* and *The Advent*, and in the book *The Journeying Years* by Dianna Bowler.

The essays reveal fairly unknown aspects of the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Very touching are Georges' texts about his own development, such as 'Moments that do not fade — Meeting The Mother.'

CAREL THIEME AND GUY RYCKAERT

Power means strength and force, Shakti, which enables one to face all that can happen and to stand and overcome, also to carry out what the Divine Will proposes. It can include many things, power over men, events, circumstances, means etc. But all this not of the mental or vital kind, but by an action through unity of consciousness with the Divine and with all things and beings. It is not an individual strength depending on certain personal capacities, but the Divine Power using the individual as an instrument. It has no special relation to occult siddhis.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 28, p. 26)

RHETORIC IN SRI AUROBINDO'S PROSE

(Continued from the issue of September 2013)

IV

Mixed metaphor is usually a matter of joke and it stands out from the context because of its inappropriateness. Sometimes however it is used so smoothly that the incongruity does not strike us. Thus Hamlet says: "To take up *arms* against a *sea* of troubles," but the mixing of metaphors does not bother us, such is the seriousness and intensity of the thoughts expressed. The same is the case with one such used by our writer:

More generally, poetry always sways between two opposite trends, towards predominance of subjective vision and towards an emphasis on objective presentation, and it can rise too beyond these . . .¹

I am sure that, unless it is pointed out, the reader will not realise that the metaphor has become mixed here: poetry being compared with a pendulum first, and next to something that can rise upward, perhaps a bird. But the seriousness of the context is such that the incongruity is not even dimly felt. The reader is far too busy trying to understand *what* is being said to bother with *how* it is being said.

Now about hidden metaphors. This metaphor is, as is obvious from the name, not clearly given. It is implied or hidden. In the example given below the writer is talking about musical but rather superficial poetry. According to him such poetry has:

. . . no surprise for the inner ear, no danger of the soul being suddenly seized and carried away into unknown depths.²

Here poetry is a deep sea and the soul of the reader is a bather or a swimmer in that sea. To be a bit irreverent, I do not at all think that the soul is meant to be seized and carried off by a crocodile or anything like that. What is meant is a strong current. But the entire comparison, — the sea and the swimmer, is not mentioned. It is a hidden metaphor.

Now let me point out another kind of metaphor about which I have not read anything anywhere in books of rhetoric. Someone must have written something

1. *The Future Poetry*, pp. 9-10.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

about it somewhere. I shall be very grateful if the reader points it out. Meanwhile it is a metaphor which, I have called an expanded metaphor — the equivalent of a Homeric simile. I have often come across a metaphor expanded through several clauses or sentences and I will give the reader a truly remarkable example. He is talking about rhymed verse — verse which has not attained the status of poetry:

. . . it is nothing more than an effective jog-trot of Pegasus, a pleasing canter or a showy gallop. It has great staying-power . . . it carries the poet easily over his ground, but it does nothing more.³

This is a wonderful sentence, with many figures of speech in it, one of which is a metaphor. I shall have occasion to refer to it many times later on. The reader will notice that the metaphor of the divine horse is carried on through three phrases and two clauses, spread over two sentences. Had it been a simile, it could have been called a Homeric simile, but it is a metaphor of which I do not know the name. So I have called it an expanded metaphor.

There are some literary genres based on narration that are usually included within the group of figures based on resemblance. Out of these I have chosen the allegory because this is a mode that has been used by our writer. Now allegory is a narrative with two or more levels of meaning. The characters are imaginary and a moral is implied in the story, not explained by the writer. This brief description does not really clarify the character of an allegory, therefore let me explain it a little.

First of all, allegory is a technique, it has nothing to do with the genre. It can be drama (mediaeval allegorical plays), poetry (*The Faerie Queene*), novel (*The Pilgrim's Progress*), or story (*The Selfish Giant*). There is no limitation as to form, or genre.

Secondly it can be very long or very brief. *The Faerie Queene* which remains unfinished after hundreds of pages, is one of the most important poems in English. On the other hand we have C. G. Rossetti's *Uphill*, a short poem of just five quatrains.

The characters in an allegory are all imaginary ones, not ordinary characters from ordinary life as in parables, or animals as in fables. They usually have names indicative of their nature — like Everyman, Mr Worldly-Wiseman etc.

What is most important is that the moral is not explained by the writer as in parables, nor is it briefly pointed out at the end as in fables. The reader has to understand it himself.

Keeping these points in mind I shall give an instance of allegory as used by our writer. But before that, let me give what he has to say about it. He is writing about the modern (as opposed to the classical) tendency to teach, of which he does not approve as it falsifies the aim and the nature of poetry:

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

For the impulse to teach is upon us, the inclination to be an observer and critic of life . . . Allegory with its intellectual ingenuities, its facile wedding of the abstract idea and the concrete image, shows a tendency to invade again the domain of poetry.⁴

He thus objects to allegorical writing in poetry. It, like parables and fables, is a story that teaches a moral. So it comes under scrutiny and is found wanting. But probably he had no objections to allegories written in prose.

(To be continued)

RATRI RAY

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

What would the Johnsonian critic say to Shakespeare's famous lines

*Or take up arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them?*

He would say, "What a mixture of metaphors and jumble of ideas! Only a lunatic could take up arms against a sea! A sea of troubles is a too fanciful metaphor and, in any case, one can't end the sea by opposing it, it is more likely to end you." Shakespeare knew very well what he was doing; he saw the mixture as well as any critic could and he accepted it because it brought home, with an inspired force which a neater language could not have had, the exact feeling and idea that he wanted to bring out.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Poetry and Art, CWSA, Vol. 27, pp. 29-30)

TWO REVIEWS

I

'As Firm as a Rock' — *Narendra Nath Dasgupta*, compiled, edited and published by Prof. Supriyo Bhattacharya. 97 pp. Rs. 50.

ON 23 May 1961 at 9.30 in the morning, one of Sri Aurobindo's most faithful disciples left his physical body at the age of sixty-seven. Born on 11 July 1894, a double M.A. from Calcutta University who had won a gold medal in Experimental Psychology, he worked as Professor of Philosophy in Feni College located in the district of Noakhali (now in Bangladesh). He was also an active participant in the freedom struggle of India and was an associate of the illustrious revolutionary Jatindranath Mukherjee better known as 'Bagha Jatin'. At the same time he was also inclined towards spirituality and had visited Pondicherry in 1925 to meet Sri Aurobindo. Twenty years later he joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram with his entire family. He was made the manager of the Ashram Press and later was Head of the Department of Philosophy when Sri Aurobindo International University Centre was established. Sri Aurobindo had described him as being "firm as a rock" and the Mother too — in one of her conversations recorded in the *Agenda* — described him as "a man who lived his whole life with the idea of serving Sri Aurobindo." In the same conversation, she had further remarked about him:

... he died clasping my photo to his breast. This was a consecrated man, very conscious, with an unflinching dedication, and all the parts of his being well organised around the psychic. The day he was going to leave his body little M. was meditating next to the Samadhi when suddenly she had a vision. She saw all the flowers of the tree next to the Samadhi gathering themselves together to form a big bouquet, and rising, rising straight up. And in her vision these flowers were linked with the image of N.D. She ran quickly to their house and he was dead.

I only knew about this vision later but on my side, when he left, I saw his whole being gathered together, well united, thoroughly homogenous in a great aspiration and rising, rising without dispersing, without deviating, straight up to the frontier of what Sri Aurobindo has called "the higher hemisphere" — there where Sri Aurobindo in his supramental action presides over earth. And he melted into that light.

Some time before his heart attack he said to his children: "The gown is old, it must be thrown away." (*As Firm as a Rock*, p. 87)

Such was Narendra Nath Dasgupta!

The present generation hardly knows anything about him. Those researchers or scholars who would take the trouble of browsing the old issues of the quarterly *Bartika* (published by Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, Kolkata) would come across his thought-provoking articles in Bengali. But fortunately for us Prof. Supriyo Bhattacharya has published a book on him through which Narendra Nath Dasgupta has been reintroduced to the present generation. In the book compiled and edited by Prof. Bhattacharya, we come across the life-story of this extraordinary follower of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This book comprises a number of interesting documents, among others, two unpublished letters of Barindra Kumar Ghose written to Narendra Nath, two letters of Narendra Nath written to Sri Aurobindo, a review of *The Life Divine*. It also has selected portions from Priti Dasgupta's (Narendra Nath's daughter) well-known memoirs *Abismaraniya Muhurto* in which she had reminisced about her late father. However, the most interesting document which acts as a set of priceless jewels in this book is the text of five conversations Narendra Nath had had with Sri Aurobindo during his visit to Pondicherry in 1925. Narendra Nath had kept a meticulous and faithful record of these talks in which we find Sri Aurobindo speaking in English and Bengali. Through these conversations one can get a glimpse of the compassionate aspect of Sri Aurobindo's personality.

Prof. Bhattacharya deserves to be congratulated for conceiving this book, collecting the priceless documents and presenting the story of this sincere soul who always preferred to avoid the limelight.

II

Madhumoyee Ma: Antare Bahire, by Dr. Ananda Reddy. Published by Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research (SACAR), Pondicherry. 145 pp. Rs. 130.

Dr. Ananda Reddy requires no formal introduction in the Aurobindonian circle. One of the best exponents of Aurobindonian philosophy, he is one of those rare orators who can keep the audience spellbound for hours. One can never complain of a dull moment when he speaks. Just as his books are held in high esteem by critics, his lectures too are quite popular among the English speaking audience. However, his Bengali readers always wished to have an anthology of his writings in Bengali. Their wish has been granted recently by Dr. Reddy who has presented to them his new publication — his very first book in Bengali titled *Madhumoyee Ma: Antare Bahire*. Dedicated to those who are keen to know the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, this book is a collection of six lectures in Bengali by Dr. Reddy and transcribed with utmost care and compiled by Swapan Kumar Bhattacharya.

In the first six lectures, Dr. Reddy has reminisced about his unique association

with the Mother from 1958 to 1973 and beyond. These lectures inform us that though the Mother is not physically present among us she is watching her children all the time and guiding them when they need her the most. One need not be disappointed for not being able to “see” her for one can definitely reach her if one genuinely loves her. Love is the best possible way of reaching the Mother. After all:

... Love is the bright link twixt earth and heaven,
Love is the far Transcendent’s angel here;
Love is man’s lien on the Absolute.

(*Savitri*, p. 633)

In these lectures Dr. Reddy has beautifully illustrated the human side of the Mother. Through a number of anecdotes, he has described how the Mother worked as the architect of the destinies of her children and led them to Light and Bliss before and after leaving her physical sheath.

The second part of the book comprises three lectures based on the themes *Friendship with the Divine* and *Various Aspects of Devotion*. It also has an evaluative comparison of Krishna with Sri Aurobindo. It would, however, be an error to assume that these articles are meant strictly for philosophers. On the contrary, this entire book is a gift for each and every seeker who loves the Mother. For the Bengali readers, the book is certainly a stupendous treat.

ANURAG BANERJEE

This, in short, is the demand made on us, that we should turn our whole life into a conscious sacrifice. Every moment and every movement of our being is to be resolved into a continuous and a devoted self-giving to the Eternal. All our actions, not less the smallest and most ordinary and trifling than the greatest and most uncommon and noble, must be performed as consecrated acts. Our individualised nature must live in the single consciousness of an inner and outer movement dedicated to Something that is beyond us and greater than our ego.

Sri Aurobindo

(*The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 111)

AMID THE LEAVES THE INMATE VOICES CALLED

(Continued from the issue of September 2013)

2. A Web of Homilies

HAVING been a translator all my life, I wonder often about the Italian condemnation of our tribe: *traduttore, traditore*, translators are traitors. This is certainly true to some extent but the translator-traitor is not a hateful traitor but a loveable traitor, an indispensable turncoat to keep the human community together. So the translators have gone on with their job merrily, daring to grin while crossing gulfs, ravines, deserts. Interestingly enough, the results have been welcomed with varied degrees of satisfaction. Welcome is the key word. We might get to have perfectly literal translations of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*. But where is the *sahridaya*-hero who would jettison Edward Fitzgerald's version? Ralph Waldo Emerson speaks for us when he refers to it as a free translation: "In the *Omar*, admittedly the highest in quality of his works, he undoubtedly took considerable liberties with his author, and introduced lines, or even entire quatrains, which, however they may breathe the spirit of the original, have no material counterpart therein." Emerson gives several examples to underline "Fitzgerald's capacity for conveying the spirit rather than the very words of the original":

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

Emerson contrasts it with the translation (literal, it is said) in the Ouseley Manuscript of 1460 A.D. he found in the Bodleian Library at Oxford:

From the Beginning was written what shall be
Unhaltingly the Pen writes, and is heedless of good and bad;
On the First Day He appointed everything that must be,
Our grief and our efforts are vain.

Not surprisingly we vote for the traitor Fitzgerald! Sri Aurobindo also was in favour of translating the spirit of the original rather than creating a parallel dictionary. "A translator is not necessarily bound to the original he chooses; he can make his

own poem out of it, if he likes, and that is what is generally done.”¹ Could Sri Aurobindo read Old English? Of course, he was a student of Greek and Latin and could effectively put into those languages a piece of modern poetry as these lines from an English madrigal which he seems to have translated for a scholarship or just as training:

The witless boy that blind is to behold
 Yet blinded sees what in our fancy lies
 With smiling looks and hairs of curled gold
 Hath oft entrapped and oft deceived the wise.
 No wit can serve his fancy to remove,
 For finest wits are soonest thrall'd to love.²

As a young doctoral student I was quite irritated by some of our academicians who used to criticise Sri Aurobindo’s poetry. Among other things, they disapproved of his word-combinations.

And took each wisp-fire for a guiding sun . . .
 Sense-pleasures and sense-pangs soon caught, soon lost . . .
 In the passion and self-loss of the Infinite . . .
 Being became the Void and Conscious-Force . . .
 Existences half-real and half-dream . . .
 In war and clasp these life-wants joined the All-Life . . .
 And conquest of life-room for self and kin . . .³

With my head still full of Old English literature and grammar, I wondered at this criticism. This is exactly what we encountered in Anglo-Saxon poems. Old English grammar described these words as ‘kennings’ and traced them to Old Norse. They have a base-word along with a word that qualifies it. Indeed, the kenning seems to have been employed only in Old Norse and Old English poetry. They make for a condensed statement which nevertheless contain large circles of silent

1. Letter to Dilip Kumar Roy. Quoted by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar in his *The Indian Contribution to English Literature* (1945), p. 67.

2. *Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, (Notes on the Texts), p. 729.

3. A few lines drawn at random from *Savitri*, Book II: pp. 136, 137, 140, 141, 142, 145, 149.

explanation. I felt that Sri Aurobindo would have drawn from this technique since his admiration for English poetry, old and new, was great. In my doctoral dissertation on *Savitri*, I put down my thoughts with much enthusiasm (perhaps garnished with as much pomposity):

The effects intended seem to be deliberate, for such expressions (recalling sometimes the practice of a poet like Hopkins) come so frequently that they cannot be explained away as chance occurrences. Might it be that Sri Aurobindo found the need to hammer out these word-combinations much as the old Anglo-Saxon poets felt the need to coin their ‘kennings’? According to Douglas C. Collins, “In essence a kenning is a metaphorical expression: it is because the Anglo-Saxon mind did not make the comparison in the obvious way that there are few similes. The comparison is much closer: the Anglo-Saxon poet saw the comparison not as *like* something else but *as* something else — the idea was completely assimilated.” The poet thus aimed at a ‘unity of meaning’, as in *sund-hengestas* (ocean-steeds) and *ydhmearas* (stallions of the waves); sometimes with a hyphen, sometimes without, the unity was effected by telescoping two words to yield a new meaning.

Remembering those days, and taking up the old English epic *Beowulf* in hand, I see the power of these kennings in conveying the terror and tragedy of an age long gone by. The sea-monster Grendel has been killed and now Grendel’s old mother comes ashore to avenge her son.

Arrived at Heorot, the Ring-Danes she found
Asleep in the hall. Soon was to come
Surprise to the earls when into the hall
Burst Grendel’s dam. Less grim was the terror
As terror of woman in war is less

The fury of maidens, than full-armed men’s,
When the blood-stained war-blade with wire-bound hilt,
Hard and hammer-forged, hurtling through air,
Hews the boar from the helmet’s crest.⁴

It is a harsh tale, rendered in simple, straightforward words. But this is not all. The various colours and contours of the English language and the varied changes in mood due to the coming of Christianity make the Anglo-Saxon poems memorable. Even though I had but a short encounter with it (just three years), the titles have

4. Translated by J. Duncan Spaeth, *Old English Poetry* (1922), p. 40.

remained with me. When I realise that Sri Aurobindo had a special place for Norse mythology, I become absolutely sure that I am reading poems which must have been read by him long, long ago in the original and subsumed in his wonderful English style. Freya (Goddess of love); Odin (Lord of gods); and Thor (God of thunder). Can we ever forget the march of the children of Odin (Wotan) within our living memory, exploding in Sri Aurobindo's poem? What a violent question and answer session!

“Where is the end of your armoured march, O children of Wotan?
Earth shudders with fear at your tread, the death-flame laughs in your eyes.”
“We have seen the sign of Thor and the hammer of new creation,
A seed of blood on the soil, a flower of blood in the skies.
We march to make of earth a hell and call it heaven.
The heart of mankind we have smitten with the whip of the sorrows seven;
The Mother of God lies bleeding in our black and gold sunrise.”⁵

As one reads the poem, all those atrocities unleashed upon innocent human beings by the Nazi soldiers rack our psyche. How they loved to kill women walking out with their babies in prams, tie up the legs of women who went into labour till they choked to death, hurling the innocents into the gas incinerators, starving them to death: oh no! Twenty million uniformed soldiers of Hitler, these children of Wotan! Sri Aurobindo had sensed all that in distant Pondicherry and sent his divine shakti to save the world. ‘The Children of Wotan’ is an accurate picture of those days, but spares us the excruciating details of stark, recorded history:

“Have you seen your fate in the scales of God, O children of Wotan,
And the tail of the Dragon lashing the foam in far-off seas?”
“We mock at God, we have silenced the mutter of priests at his altar.
Our leader is master of Fate, medium of her mysteries.
We have made the mind a cypher, we have strangled Thought with a cord;
Dead now are pity and honour, strength only is Nature's lord.
We build a new world-order; our bombs shout Wotan's peace.”⁶

That Norse mythology had a major hand in Sri Aurobindo's creative writings is clear from his choice of the theme for his drama, *Eric*. We have as yet no idea from where Sri Aurobindo drew the story for his drama, *Eric*. He always believed in using an existing legend to write his drama and perhaps he went to the Icelandic Eddas to give us this play where heroism and love bring about the turn from Thor to

5. *Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 641.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 642.

Freya. A stark background, the language equally direct. The resolution is almost a prayer for embattled nations all over the globe. The transformation is indicated by Eric's words to Aslaug:

Some day surely
The world too shall be saved from death by love.
Thou hast saved Swegn, helped Norway. Aslaug, see,
Freya within her niche commands this room
And incense burns to her. Not Thor for thee,
But Freya.⁷

This is the sort of change indicated by the coming of Christianity to the pagan shores of Britain. Of this group of poems in Old English literature, 'The Wanderer' seems to reflect Sri Aurobindo's own feelings at that time, a self-exile in an alien land pursuing 'modern' knowledge, so far away from the place to which he belonged. By nature he was withdrawn and the thoughts in the poem make us see him in the cold country, Britain:

He who experiences (it) knows how cruel is sorrow as a companion to him who has few friendly protectors for himself. The path of exile attends him, not twisted gold, a mournful spirit, not earthly prosperity.⁸

Sleep brings some respite, dreaming of the past joys in one's country. But soon it is time to wake up in the alien shores:

It seems to him in his mind that he is embracing and kissing his lord and laying his hands and head on his knee, as he sometimes formerly in the days of yore enjoyed the gift-throne (i.e., the throne where his lord sat dispensing gifts). Then the friendless (lordless?) man awakens again, sees before him the dark waves, (sees) sea-birds bathe (and) spread their feathers, (sees) hoar-frost and snow fall mingled with hail. Then the wounds of the heart are the more severe, painful (with longing) for a loved one.⁹

Actually, there is not much of Anglo-Saxon poetry that has come down to us. Most of the poems we have are from the Exeter Book, a reminder of the great work done by the monks in the early days of Christianity. Leofric, the first bishop of the Exeter Cathedral is said to have given it to the cathedral library. Some of them are

7. *Collected Plays and Stories*, CWSA, Vol. 4, p. 591.

8. Translations from 'The Wanderer' are by Robert E. Diamond.

9. *Ibid.*

very interesting and when we realise that more than a thousand years have passed by since these poems were set down, a rare humility seizes us. We have here Cynewulf's account of the martyrdom of St. Juliana of Nicomedia.

With Tamil as my mother-tongue, I have loved the genius of alliterative verse and alliteration we have aplenty in Anglo-Saxon poetry. *Juliana* by Cynewulf may have been intended as a religious tract to underline the self-sacrifice of pagans who had converted to Christianity in its early days. Juliana was the daughter of Africanus of Nicomedia and does not want to marry the pagan Eleusias. Was she not already married to God? The father is angry and gives a free hand to the suitor to punish the girl who has publicly shamed them. She is stripped, hung from a tree by her hair, and is beaten with rods for hours. As she does not die, she is thrown into a prison where the Devil visits her in the guise of an angel. Her pious inner voice tells her that this is a demon who would like her to utter blasphemies. There is a war of words and ultimately Juliana wins and the Devil gets shamed in Hell among his companions! Juliana is victorious but her betrothed, Eleusias is angry. He tries to burn her at the stake but she survives. Finally he beheads her. Though the young girl dies, she gets elevated as a martyr and henceforth is known as St. Juliana.

I have fondly sought a distant inspiration in the long struggle between Juliana and the Devil in Cynewulf's poem for the extended struggle between Death and Savitri in Sri Aurobindo's epic. Interestingly it is a battle of words, a discussion where the Devil offers temptations, but Juliana rejects them. The poem has been termed an unequivocally psychological statement, "thematically, linguistically, didactically" (Antonina Harbus). There are other woman-centric poems in Old English which did draw my attention long ago. *Judith* was somewhat difficult to digest. To save her natal city Bethulia from Assyrian attack she had decapitated the Assyrian general Holofernes. Cynewulf has written a poem on the subject. The scene of the gory act was pretty unnerving for me as an undergraduate student. The story is Biblical and scholars have not come to any conclusion about the actual site of Bethulia. Apparently Judith was a heroic woman to be worshipped for pious people. And if one dies unbaptised, hell for ever!

Not yet was he dead,
Thoroughly lifeless; struck she then earnestly,
The maiden brave-minded, a second time
The heathen hound, that his head rolled off
Forth on the floor: the foul corpse lay
Lifeless behind, went the spirit elsewhere
Beneath the deep earth, and there was disgraced,
In torment bound ever thereafter,
Surrounded with serpents, with tortures encompassed,
Strongly enchained in the fire of hell

After his death. He need never hope,
 Enveloped with darkness, that thence he may go
 Out of that worm-hall, but there shall he dwell
 Ever for ever without end henceforth
 In that dark home, of hope-joys deprived.¹⁰

With in-depth study of Latin and close acquaintance with Old English poetry, the poem *Phoenix* must have engaged Sri Aurobindo even as a student. It is a simple Biblical narrative in Latin by Lactantius that was translated into Anglo-Saxon, probably by Cynewulf. Some passages were delightful, though my understanding was not keen at that time. It was about a bird in flight, going to the heavens above from the earth, the Holy Spirit who had come to help the pious go up to Paradise.

When he sets out from this earth to seek the expanses of his ancient dwelling-place, as the bird flies he reveals himself to the nations, to the multitudes of men throughout the world. Then they gather from south and north, from east and west, in flocks; from far and near they journey in troops of peoples to where they gaze upon the Creator's beauteous gifts in the bird, according as the true King of victories in the beginning ordained for him a rarer nature and fairer embellishments beyond the family of birds. Then people throughout the earth wonder at his form and stature, and their writings proclaim it and they depict it by hand in marble, when the day and the hour reveal to the nations the ornate beauties of the swift-flighted bird.¹¹

I could never make a proper connection to the Anglo-Saxon *Phoenix* whose Latin original Sri Aurobindo may have known well. But the sheer joy of watching a bird in flight as it rose from below to go above the distant trees and get lost in the immense blue of the sky above the Bay of Bengal was a familiar experience for me in those far-off days. And if it was early morning or late evening when the skies were streaked with shining *gerua*, Father would invariably begin reciting, as we walked:

As some bright archangel in vision flies
 Plunged in dream-caught spirit immensities,
 Past the long green crests of the seas of life,
 Past the orange skies of the mystic mind
 Flew my thought self-lost in the vasts of God.
 Sleepless wide great glimmering wings of wind
 Bore the gold-red seeking of feet that trod
 Space and Time's mute vanishing ends. . . .¹²

10. Translated by James M. Garnett.

11. Translated by S.A.J. Bradley.

12. *Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 562.

Why should poetry be understood? Is it not enough just to experience it, allow it to send ripples through the cells of one's being? "Orange skies of the mystic mind"! This is mantra!

If the "very little" of Old English poetry that has come down to us contains so many tarns of experience, it is sheer victory for the Muses. Did I have any favourite in my prescribed text, *An Anglo-Saxon Reader* edited with notes and glossary by Alfred J. Wyatt? Except for a few prescribed chapters, the book remained a stranger. 'The Chronicle' which led the way, especially its opening lines have been burnt into my memory because of the agony of those days.

Her Cynewulf benam Sigebyrht his rices and Westseaxna wiotan for unryhtum
daedum, buton Hamtunscire . . .

Is this English?

The chapter, 'The Alfredian Bede' was welcome because of the story content; 'Leechdoms' because it gave cures for baldness, footsoreness, and for backache, leaving the Professor to look more and more severe as we giggled away to our heart's content. 'Charms' was, for me, the easiest and most inviting, probably because of 'For Betwitched Land'. When the land did not yield properly the farmers had prayers and certain rituals like the mudras in Vedic religions. This particular 'charm' has detailed descriptions.

Before sunrise the farmer would bring four pieces of sod from the four corners of the field. Oil, honey, yeast, and milk (ele ond hunig ond beorman, aelces feos meolc) were gathered along with a variety of wood and herbs (with certain exceptions) upon which holy water was sprinkled while the farmer chanted: 'wax well and multiply.' The sods were then taken to the Church for being blessed, and brought back in the evening, followed by prayers to saints. Ploughing begins with the prayer, "Erce, erce, erce, eorthan modor" (Yield plenty, O Mother Earth!)

An Anglo-Saxon *Bhu-Sukta* surely! The description of 'eorthan modor' (earth mother) reminds us of the Vedic hymn in which the Earth Goddess is described as *hiranyagarbhini* (one who has gold in her womb) and *prasuvari* (one who gives birth to superior things). She is the base of all creation. For earth's children, she is everything, the Mother of many glories:

samudravati savitri anodevi mahyangi
maho dharani maho vyathishtaah

One who has the oceans as her garment, possessor of the Sun, Consort of the Supreme, lovely-limbed, glorious Mother of all living beings, Divine Mother!

(To be continued)



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