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



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXVI

No. 3

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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2 Corrections:

1. On p. 53 of the January 2013 issue it is mentioned that Sri Aurobindo read from his room the 15 August 1947 message for broadcast on the radio.

This is incorrect.

It was the Mother who read out the message for broadcast on the radio.

All efforts to trace the recording have, unfortunately, not been fruitful.

2. Also in the same issue, on p. 75 the sentence, “After the passing of Pavitra-da, Amrita-da too became gradually weaker and weaker” is evidently erroneous. Amrita-da passed away on 31 January 1969, while Pavitra-da passed away on 16 May of the same year.

We apologise for the bloopers. — Ed.

IN HORIS AETERNUM

A far sail on the unchangeable monotone of a slow slumbering sea,
A world of power hushed into symbols of hue, silent unendingly;
Over its head like a gold ball the sun tossed by the gods in their play
Follows its curve, — a blazing eye of Time watching the motionless day.

Here or elsewhere, — poised on the unreachable abrupt, snow-solitary ascent
Earth aspiring lifts to the illimitable Light, then ceases broken and spent,
Or on the glowing expanse, arid, fiery and austere, of the desert's hungry soul, —
A breath, a cry, a glimmer from Eternity's face, in a fragment the mystic Whole.

Moment-mere, yet with all Eternity packed, lone, fixed, intense,
Out of the ring of these hours that dance and die caught by the spirit in sense,
In the greatness of a man, in music's outspread wings, in a touch, in a smile, in a
sound,
Something that waits, something that wanders and settles not, a Nothing that was all
and is found.

SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo's note:

This poem on its technical side aims at finding a halfway house between free verse and regular metrical poetry. It is an attempt to avoid the chaotic amorphousness of free verse and keep to a regular form based on the fixed number of stresses in each line and part of a line while yet there shall be a great plasticity and variety in all the other elements of poetic rhythm, the number of syllables, the management of the feet, if any, the distribution of the stress-beats, the changing modulation of the rhythm. *In Horis Aeternum* was meant as a first essay in this kind, a very simple and elementary model. The line here is cast into three parts, the first containing two stresses, the second and third each admitting three, four such lines rhymed constituting the stanza.

(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, pp. 553, 557-58)

THE DELIGHT OF WORKS

In thy works there are always these three, the Master, the Worker and the Instrument. To define them in oneself rightly and rightly to possess them is the secret of works and of the delight of works.

Learn thou first to be the instrument of God and to accept thy Master. The instrument is this outward thing thou callest thyself; it is a mould of mind, a driving-force of power, a machinery of form, a thing full of springs and cogs and clamps and devices. Call not this the Worker or the Master; it can never be the Worker or the Master. Accept thyself humbly, yet proudly, devotedly, submissively and joyfully as a divine instrument.

There is no greater pride and glory than to be a perfect instrument of the Master.

Learn thou first absolutely to obey. The sword does not choose where it shall strike, the arrow does not ask whither it shall be driven, the springs of the machine do not insist on the product that shall be turned out from its labour. These things are settled by the intention and working of Nature and the more the conscious instrument learns to feel and obey the pure and essential law of its nature, the sooner shall the work turned out become perfect and flawless. Self-choice by the nervous motive-power, revolt of the physical and mental tool can only mar the working.

Let thyself drive in the breath of God and be as a leaf in the tempest; put thyself in His hand and be as the sword that strikes and the arrow that leaps to its target. Let thy mind be as the spring of the machine, let thy force be as the shooting of a piston, let thy work be as the grinding and shaping descent of the steel on its object. Let thy speech be the clang of the hammer on the anvil and the moan of the engine in its labour and the cry of the trumpet that proclaims the force of God to the regions. In whatsoever way do as an instrument the work that is natural to thee and appointed.

The sword has a joy in the battle-play, the arrow has a mirth in its hiss and its leaping, the earth has a rapture in its dizzy whirl through space, the sun has the royal ecstasy of its blazing splendours and its eternal motion. O thou self-conscious instrument, take thou too the delight of thy own appointed workings.

The sword did not ask to be made, nor does it resist its user, nor lament when it is broken. There is a joy of being made and a joy of being used and a joy of being put aside and a joy too of being broken. That equal joy discover.

Because thou hast mistaken the instrument for the worker and the master and because thou seekest to choose by the ignorance of thy desire thy own state and thy own profit and thy own utility, therefore thou hast suffering and anguish and hast many times to be thrust into the red hell of the furnace and hast many times to be reborn and reshaped and retempered until thou shalt have learned thy human lesson.

And all these things are because they are in thy unfinished nature. For Nature is the worker and what is it that she works at? She shapes out of her crude mind and life and matter a fully conscious being.

*

* *

Know thyself next as the Worker. Understand thy nature to be the worker and thy own nature and All-Nature to be thyself.

This nature-self is not proper to thee nor limited. Thy nature has made the sun and the systems, the earth and her creatures, thyself and thine and all thou art and perceivest. It is thy friend and thine enemy, thy mother and thy devourer, thy lover and thy torturer, the sister of thy soul and an alien and a stranger, thy joy and thy sorrow, thy sin and thy virtue, thy strength and thy weakness, thy knowledge and thy ignorance. And yet it is none of these things, but something of which they are attempts and imperfect images. For beyond all these it is an original self-knowledge and an infinite force and innumerable quality.

But in thee there is a special movement, a proper nature and an individual energy. Follow that like a widening river till it leads thee to its infinite source and origin.

Know therefore thy body to be a knot in Matter and thy mind to be a whirl in universal Mind and thy life to be an eddy of Life that is for ever. Know thy force to be every other being's force and thy knowledge to be a glimmer from the light that belongs to no man and thy works to be made for thee and be delivered from the error of thy personality.

When that is done, thou shalt take thy free delight in the truth of thy individual being and in thy strength and in thy glory and in thy beauty and in thy knowledge; and in the denial of these things thou shalt take delight also. For all this is the dramatic mask of the Person and the self-image of the self-Sculptor.

Why shouldst thou limit thyself? Feel thyself also in the sword that strikes thee and the arms that embrace, in the blazing of the sun and the dance of the earth, in the flight of the eagle and the song of the nightingale, in all that is past and all that is now and all that is pressing forward to become. For thou art infinite and all this joy is possible to thee.

The Worker has the joy of her works and the joy of her Lover for whom she works. She knows herself to be his consciousness and his force, his knowledge and his reserving of knowledge, his unity and his self-division, his infinity and the finite of his being. Know thyself also to be these things; take thou also the delight of thy Lover.

There are those who know themselves as a workshop or an instrument or the thing worked, but they mistake the Worker for the Master; this too is an error. Those

who fall into it can hardly arrive at her high, pure and perfect workings.

The instrument is finite in a personal image, the worker is universal with a personal trend, but neither of these is the Master; for neither is the true Person.

*

* *

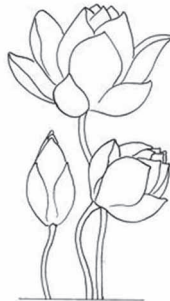
Know last the Master to be thyself; but to this self put no form and seek for it no definition of quality. Be one with That in thy being, commune with That in thy consciousness, obey That in thy force, be subject to That and clasped by it in thy delight, fulfil That in thy life and body and mentality. Then before an opening eye within thee there shall emerge that true and only Person, thyself and not thyself, all others and more than all others, the Director and Enjoyer of thy works, the Master of the worker and the instrument, the Reveller and Trampler in the dance of the universe and yet hushed and alone with thee in thy soul's silent and inner chamber.

The joy of the Master possessed, there is nothing else for thee to conquer. For He shall give thee Himself and all things and all creatures' gettings and havings and doings and enjoyings for thy own proper portion, and He shall give thee that also which cannot be portioned.

Thou shalt contain in thy being thyself and all others and be that which is neither thyself nor all others. Of works this is the consummation and the summit.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 163-66)



SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS ON THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of February 2013)

SECTION THREE

THE MOTHER AND THE PRACTICE OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA

Aspiration and Surrender to the Mother

Yoga, Sadhana, Dhyana

YOGA is union with the Divine, sadhana is what you do in order to unite with the Divine. You have to get away from the ordinary human consciousness and get into touch with the divine Consciousness.

For that call always on the Mother, open yourself to her, aspire and pray for her Force to work in you so as to make you fit — reject desire, restlessness, disturbances of the mind and vital. Dhyana means to make the mind and vital quiet and concentrate in aspiration for the Mother's Peace, the Mother's Presence, her Light, Force and Ananda.

10 October 1933

Aspiration

Nowadays I feel utterly disturbed and upset. Wherever there is disturbance or confusion I take my consciousness away from it. I have a kind of faith, but there is nothing regular or systematic in it. My mind has wandered very much trying to find the true way of doing sadhana.

It is only by constantly aspiring to the Mother's light and force that you can make true and steady progress. It is only by the constant repetition and persistence of the Mother's light and force that the habit of disturbance and lack of organisation can diminish and finally disappear. Only so can the lower being be prepared and the decisive descent of the Truth and Light be finally made possible.

23 August 1931

*

The Mother's Peace is above you — by aspiration and quiet self-opening it descends. When it takes hold of the vital and the body, then equanimity becomes easy and in the end automatic.

28 August 1933

*

O Mother, come down in me. So many times I have promised to offer myself to you, and every time the promise has been broken, leaving me suspended in the air. But if I am reminded of my unfitness, what shall I do? I can't do anything.

The fitness comes with the aspiration.

15 March 1934

*

Please give your Grace to this unfortunate lady, whose letter I enclose. Be kind enough to instruct me what I should write to her. She prays for your upadeśa and blessings.

But it is not by *upadeśa* that this sadhana is given or carried on. It is only those who are capable by aspiration and meditation on the Mother to open and receive her action and working within that can succeed in this Yoga.

21 June 1937

*

Let the power of the Mother work in you, but be careful to avoid any mixture or substitution, in its place, of either a magnified ego-working or a force of Ignorance presenting itself as Truth. Aspire especially for the elimination of all obscurity and unconsciousness in the nature.

Aspiration and the Psychic

Nowadays I often get psychic feelings and gratitude. Then the aspiration comes to concentrate above, as I was doing some days back. But from time to time I get the feeling that I should not change the form of my meditation and aspiration so frequently. Should I stick to one form of practice or should the form of practice be allowed to change naturally according to the Light that descends?

To be in contact with the Mother's Light and Force is the one important thing (fundamental) to which you must aspire. For this the psychic feeling is the indispensable condition; for it is through the psychic that this contact becomes easy and natural. It gives the psychic basis. Once the basis is there firmly established the rest can be done according to need and it will be much better done, because then there will be the safety from hostile attack and the right guidance.

12 November 1930

The Psychic Fire and Offering

I saw a fire in my heart and my offering falling into it like bits of paper. I heard someone say: "Offer everything into the fire!" But when obscurities and resistance arise, I feel a hesitation to offer them to the Mother. The thought comes: offer the best things to the Mother, not ugly things.

The fire is the purifying psychic fire. Offering to the psychic fire is not contrary to the worship of the Mother. To purify all in the psychic fire rather than throw the obscurities and resistance on the Mother is obviously the right way.

9 June 1936

Aspiration, Rejection, Surrender

What you say of sadhana is true. Sadhana is necessary and the Divine Force cannot do things in the void but must lead each one according to his nature to the point at which he can feel the Mother working within and doing all for him. Till then the sadhak's aspiration, self-consecration, assent and support to the Mother's workings, his rejection of all that comes in the way is very necessary — indispensable.

25 September 1936

*

It is quite true that aspiration, rejection and the remembrance of the Mother and surrender to her and union with her consciousness are the main means of the sadhana. It is also true that to seek the supramental for oneself by one's own means is a folly; that I have said from the beginning and emphasised it recently more and more. It is true also that to make the union with the Divine the cardinal aim and all the rest subsidiary and a consequence of it, not to seek progress, experiences, etc. for their own sake or for the sake of the ego is the proper attitude for the sadhak. It is true finally that meditation, vision and almost all else in the Yoga can be misused if the sadhak is self-centred, egoistic and obscure. But that does not mean that meditation, vision etc. are of no use and should be avoided in the sadhana.

The theory that once you remember the Mother always, everything you do flows from the Divine and therefore it does not matter what you do is rather a dangerous one. It may end by giving sanction instead of rejection to many things that ought to go out of the nature.

As for living a free outer life it cannot be said that that is good for everybody at every stage any more than living a retired life is good for everybody or at every stage. The disadvantage of a free jolly outward social life without restrictions is that one becomes entirely or mostly externalised and that all sorts of vital interchanges are part of it which can hamper the inner growth or the total self-consecration to the Divine. The disadvantage of too complete a retirement is that it makes the person one-sided and shut up in himself, subjective, without the stabilising contact with earth and consequently with the danger of morbidity and self-delusion. A middle path with the rule of living more and more within, standing back from outward things but not throwing them aside, looking at them with a new consciousness, a new view and acting on them from this inner consciousness is the best way. But there is need for some at some stages to minimise outward contacts without abolishing them during part of the process of this shifting of the consciousness. No absolute rule can be laid down in this matter.

14 October 1936

*

I always thought that in other Yogas seekers first had to undergo a rigorous disciplined period of 12 years of Brahmacharya, and only when the Guru certified their physical, vital, mental immunity were they allowed to enter into its practical course.

Never heard of this 12 years affair or of any certificate. Perhaps in European occultism there are noviciates, stages, ordeals, grades etc. In India the Guru gives a mantra as soon as he accepts a disciple and tells him to go ahead with it. We have no mantra except the Mother's name. But usually we give work, tell them to aspire, reject, open to the Mother. I don't know whether you call that the practical course. Anyhow people have got into difficulties here even without any practical course, most while doing their "twelve years" and in some cases we have had to push them into active sadhana as the only way to control the lower forces and get them out of it.

Here the merry lot fancy they can do all manner of things.

What things? I find only a small minority doing anything at all except gossiping, discussing, quarrelling, complaining etc. etc. A certain number do the aspiration, rejection, Motherward turn — but nothing more. They have enough difficulty with that even.

Even when strenuous measures are adopted for practising the nearest approximation to real Yoga, ought not there to be a question of a triple fitness first?

How are they to develop it without any sadhana? Just by sitting still? No one has it to start with.

20 October 1936

*

The effort demanded of the sadhak is that of aspiration, rejection and surrender. If these three are done the rest is to come of itself by the Grace of the Mother and the working of her force in you. But of the three the most important is surrender of which the first necessary form is trust and confidence and patience in difficulty. There is no rule that trust and confidence can only remain if aspiration is there. On the contrary, when even aspiration is not there because of the pressure of inertia, trust and confidence and patience can remain. If trust and patience fail when aspiration is quiescent, that would mean that the sadhak is relying solely on his own effort — it would mean, “Oh, my aspiration has failed, so there is no hope for me. My aspiration fails, so what can Mother do?” On the contrary, the sadhak should feel, “Never mind, my aspiration will come back again. Meanwhile I know that the Mother is with me even when I do not feel her; she will carry me even through the darkest period.” That is the fully right attitude you must have. To those who have it depression can do nothing; even if it comes it has to return baffled. That is not tamasic surrender. Tamasic surrender is when one says, “I won't do anything; let Mother do everything. Aspiration, rejection, surrender even are not necessary. Let her do all that in me.” There is a great difference between the two attitudes. One is that of the shirker who won't do anything, the other is that of the sadhak who does his best, but when he is reduced to quiescence for a time and things are adverse, keeps always his trust in the Mother's force and presence behind all and by that trust baffles the opposition force and calls back the activity of the sadhana.

26 October 1936

*

How long will it take for all the parts of my being to turn to and surrender to the Mother?

It depends on yourself — if there is a strong aspiration and quiet persistence, it can be done soon.

Surrender to the Mother

There is not much spiritual meaning in keeping open to the Mother if you withhold your surrender. Self-giving or surrender is demanded of those who practise this Yoga, because without such a progressive surrender of the being it is quite impossible to get anywhere near the goal. To keep open means to call in her Force to work in you, and if you do not surrender to it, it amounts to not allowing the Force to work in you at all or else only on condition that it will work in the way you want and not in its own way which is the way of the Divine Truth. A suggestion of this kind is usually made by some adverse Power or by some egoistic element of mind or vital which wants the Grace or the Force, but only in order to use it for its own purpose, and is not willing to live for the Divine Purpose, — it is willing to take from the Divine all it can get, but not to give itself to the Divine. The soul, the true being, on the contrary, turns towards the Divine and is not only willing but eager and happy to surrender.

In this Yoga one is supposed to go beyond every mental idealistic culture. Ideas and ideals belong to the mind and are half-truths only; the mind too is, more often than not, satisfied with merely having an ideal, with the pleasure of idealising, while life remains always the same, untransformed or changed only a little and mostly in appearance. The spiritual seeker does not turn aside from the pursuit of realisation to mere idealising; not to idealise, but to realise the Divine Truth is always his aim, either beyond or in life also — and in the latter case it is necessary to transform mind and life which cannot be done without surrender to the action of the Divine Force, the Mother.

To seek after the Impersonal is the way of those who want to withdraw from life, but usually they try by their own effort, and not by an opening of themselves to a superior Power or by the way of surrender; for the Impersonal is not something that guides or helps, but something to be attained and it leaves each man to attain it according to the way and capacity of his nature. On the other hand by an opening and surrender to the Mother one can realise the Impersonal and every other aspect of Truth also.

The surrender must necessarily be progressive. No one can make the complete surrender from the beginning, so it is quite natural that when one looks into oneself, one should find its absence. That is no reason why the principle of surrender should not be accepted and carried out steadily from stage to stage, from field to field, applying it successively to all the parts of the nature.

*

It is necessary if you want to progress in your sadhana that you should make the submission and surrender of which you speak sincere, real and complete. This cannot

be as long as you mix up your desires with your spiritual aspiration. It cannot be as long as you cherish vital attachment to family, child or anything or anybody else. If you are to do this Yoga, you must have only one desire and aspiration, to receive the spiritual Truth and manifest it in all your thoughts, feelings, actions and nature. You must not hunger after any relations with anyone. The relations of the sadhaka with others must be created for him from within, when he has the true consciousness and lives in the Light. They will be determined within him by the power and will of the Divine Mother according to the supramental Truth for the divine life and the divine work; they must not be determined by his mind and his vital desires. This is the thing you have to remember. Your psychic being is capable of giving itself to the Mother and living and growing in the Truth; but your lower vital being has been full of attachments and sanskaras and an impure movement of desire and your external physical mind was not able to shake off its ignorant ideas and habits and open to the Truth. That was the reason why you were unable to progress, because you were keeping up an element and movements which could not be allowed to remain; for they were the exact opposite of what has to be established in a divine life. The Mother can only free you from these things, if you really want it, not only in your psychic being, but in your physical mind and all your vital nature. The sign will be that you no longer cherish or insist on your personal notions, attachments or desires, and that whatever the distance or wherever you may be, you will feel yourself open and the power and presence of the Mother with you and working in you and will be contented, quiet, confident, wanting nothing else, awaiting always the Mother's will.

6 January 1928

*

However hard the fight, the only thing is to fight it out now and here to the end.

The trouble is that you have never fully faced and conquered the real obstacle. There is in a very fundamental part of your nature a strong formation of ego-individuality which has mixed in your spiritual aspiration a clinging element of pride and spiritual ambition. This formation has never consented to be broken up in order to give place to something more true and divine. Therefore, when the Mother has put her force upon you or when you yourself have pulled the force upon you, this in you has always prevented it from doing its work in its own way. It has begun itself building according to the ideas of the mind or some demand of the ego, trying to make its own creation in its "own way", by its own strength, its own sadhana, its own tapasya. There has never been here any real surrender, any giving up of yourself freely and simply into the hands of the Divine Mother. And yet that is the only way to succeed in the supramental Yoga. To be a Yogi, a Sannyasi, a Tapaswi is not the object here. The object is transformation, and the transformation can only be done

by a force infinitely greater than your own; it can only be done by being truly like a child in the hands of the Divine Mother.

7 June 1928

*

A lady has written a letter to me. She has been attracted to follow this path. She seems to be in affliction and so she wants peace. Shall I reply to her?

You can write to her briefly — telling her that the life of sansar is in its nature a field of unrest — to go through it in the right way one has to offer one's life and actions to the Divine and pray for the peace of the Divine within. When the mind becomes quiet, one can feel the Divine Mother supporting the life and put everything into her hands — these are the first things to do, if she wants to have peace.

16 April 1933

*

In these moods the thoughts that assail you are so much out of focus! The essence of surrender is not to ask the Mother before doing anything — but to accept wholeheartedly the influence and the guidance, when the joy and peace come down to accept them without question or cavil and let them grow, when the Force is felt at work to let it work without opposition, when the Knowledge is given to receive and follow it, when the Will is revealed to make oneself its instrument. It is also, no doubt, to accept the guidance and control of the Guru who is at least supposed to know better than oneself what is or is not the Truth and the way to the Truth. All that is nothing very terrible, it is simple common sense. As to the particular kind of control you speak of, it is not imposed on anybody; it is only a few in the Asram who at all follow any such rule. X whom you mention would not have dreamed a year or two ago of asking the Mother before doing anything; if he does so now, it is not because the Mother told him to do so or “imposed” it on him, but because he felt the need for it for his sadhana. The Mother never imposed any rule on Y; he made his own rule of life of his own accord according to his own perception of the best way for him to concentrate and took the sanction of the Mother. You yourself were told by the Mother that you had no need to do what Z was trying to do in this respect at that time of her own motion — that for each it was only when he felt the need that he should do it. I do not see therefore why you should fear so much for your liberty — when in the whole Asram of 120 people there are hardly half a dozen who follow any such rule of strict external surrender. And I cannot understand what you mean by the reproach that we have made some people stiff and speechless. Who are they? X, Y, A? As far as I know, they are quite indefatigable and eloquent or fluent talkers.

I am guiltless of the crime you charge against me.

Another thing let me correct. It is not at all correct to say that we — in this instance the Mother, never warned *B* and *C* of their deterioration — they were warned and plainly warned and also of the influences from outside the Asram to which they were succumbing. The Mother had even foreseen from the beginning that this might happen and put them on their guard in due time. If they fell, it was because they preferred to follow their lower nature and side with the lower forces. The Divine can lead, he does not drive. There is an internal freedom permitted to every mental being called man to assent or not to assent to the Divine leading — how else can any real spiritual evolution be done?

If there is so serious an obstacle to your going forward, it consists only of two things, your vital depressions and your mental doubts which make you challenge even the experiences you have and belittle any progress you make. Never have we told you to be stiff and gloomy and speechless — on the contrary we have pressed upon the other side. Other obstacles or difficulties there are, but they could be overcome if these two things were out of the way or rejected and inoperative.

If I constantly encourage you, it is not because I see you deteriorating and want to hide it — I see nothing of the kind, — but because I have faith in your capacities and see the nobler *D* behind all outward weakness. I would not speak what I know to be false — that much credit you can give me.

P. S. What put this into your head that you are regarded as an untouchable and a bad influence? If every man who had difficulties were so regarded, the whole Asram would be an asylum of untouchables.

13 May 1933

*

Sometimes my mental, vital and physical beings work together in harmony. At other times one being dominates the others, and there is disorder. How can this disorder be removed?

The best way is to live in the psychic being, for that is always surrendered to the Mother and can lead the others in the right way. For control one has to centralise somewhere — some do it in the mind or above the mind, others do it in the heart and through the heart in the psychic centre.

11 June 1933

*

Now that you are here, try to enter into the higher ways of the sadhana. Withdraw from the vital and its demands and desires, make the inner heart and the psychic

being your centre and seek union with the Mother's consciousness through self-giving and surrender.

22 August 1933

*

You have to make your vital single-pointed towards the Mother, peaceful, without demands and desires, aspiring only for surrender and to be one with the Mother's consciousness and filled with her.

24 September 1933

*

I can only say — it is your vital you have to change. Make it perfectly straight and clear and pure. Make it free from all selfishness, blindness, insincerity, anger, abhiman, self-indulgence, vital desire — and give it as a pure offering to the Mother.

28 September 1933

*

The body as well as all else came from the Mother and has to be surrendered to her as an instrument. That is all that is needed.

15 November 1933

*

Surrender means to look to the Divine Mother only — to reject all desires and do only her will, not to insist on one's own ideas and preferences, but to ask for her Truth only, to obey and follow her guidance, to open oneself and become aware of her Force and its workings and to allow those workings to change the nature into the divine nature.

24 March 1934

*

At present my subnature is still resisting and it is difficult to bring it under permanent control. But why does this difficulty hold on when my lower vital has already put itself in the Mother's hands?

Yes, but it is not enough that the lower vital should put itself into the Mother's hands. The whole physical and subconscious and everything else must do likewise.

4 January 1935

*

Put all before the Mother in your heart so that her Light may work on it for the best.

21 April 1935

*

If I cannot concentrate or meditate, I simply imagine myself lying eternally in the Mother's lap and going out when she sends me out.

This is the best possible kind of concentration.

12 August 1935

*

It is the true attitude so to leave all to the Mother and trust entirely in her and let her lead you on the path to the goal.

2 March 1936

*

You have asked me, "How do you surrender to the psychic if you are not conscious of its action?" I do it in the same way that I surrender to the Force above. I simply imagine that there is the Force above or that there is a psychic being in the heart centre. Imagining so, I surrender myself to it.

It is then a *sañkalpa* of surrender. But the surrender must be to the Mother — not even to the Force, but to the Mother herself.

But I do not know whether surrender to the psychic is necessary at present. My being is not yet capable of surrendering to the Force and to the psychic simultaneously.

There is no need of all this complication. If the psychic manifests, it will not ask you to surrender to it, but to surrender to the Mother.

4 October 1936

*

I had said that the human vital does not like to be controlled or dominated by another and I said that that also was a reason why sadhaks found it difficult to surrender to the Mother. For the vital wants to affirm its own ideas, impulses, desires, preferences and to do what it likes, it does not want to feel another force than that of

its own nature leading or driving it; but surrender to the Mother means that it must give up all these personal things and allow her Force to guide and drive it in the ways of a higher Truth which are not its own ways: so it resists, does not want to be dominated by the Truth Light and the Mother's Force, insists on its own independence and refuses to surrender.

These ideas of breakdown and personal frustration are again wrong suggestions and the dissatisfaction with yourself is as harmful almost as dissatisfaction with the Mother would be. It prevents the confidence and courage necessary for following the path of the sadhana. You must dismiss these suggestions from you.

8 October 1936

*

Frequently when I put a strong suggestion or pressure upon you, your inner being becomes conscious of it and something of it comes to your surface perceptions; but also, usually, your external mind, which is always busy and active trying to take a hand in everything, gives it a wrong turn or twist.

What I wanted you to do was (1) to surrender wholly to the Mother, sincerely, simply and without any reserves of the ego, (2) to become conscious of the habitual defects of your external being and reject them, (3) to open these obscure parts to the light and change their movement.

This was the twist — the mental turn of giving up all reserve — interpreted not as a complete surrender to the Divine Shakti, but as giving yourself up to anything that came, which might very well be a wrong movement of the lower vital Nature or even a hostile force.

I have repeatedly said that this kind of passivity is not the meaning of surrender. You cannot surrender at the same time to the Divine Shakti and to the movements of the lower cosmic Nature. To allow everything as her movement is to contradict the very sense and object of this Yoga. To surrender to the Mother means that you stop giving yourself to these other forces. Therefore discrimination (by the psychic feeling and the seeing conscious mind, more even than by the thinking part) and rejection are necessary accompaniments and helps to consecration and surrender.

Naturally, with this wrong turn, the first result was that certain things in you to which the mind had refused free outward play but of which you had not been sufficiently conscious or else not able to reject from your nature got their chance and manifested in a very extravagant manner.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Mother with Letters on the Mother, CWSA, Vol. 32, pp. 133-49)

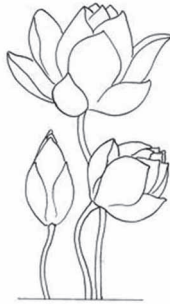
‘I ENTRUST TO THEE OUR ENTIRE DESTINY’

Pondicherry, March 29, 1914

O THOU whom we must know, understand, realise, absolute Consciousness, eternal Law, Thou who guidest and illuminest us, who movest and inspirest us, grant that these weak souls may be strengthened and those who fear be reassured. To Thee I entrust them, even as I entrust to Thee our entire destiny.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 112)



‘DARKNESS SHALL BE TRANSFORMED INTO LIGHT . . .’

March 30, 1914

IN the presence of those who are integrally Thy servitors, those who have attained the perfect consciousness of Thy presence, I become aware that I am still far, very far from what I yearn to realise; and I know that the highest I can conceive, the noblest and purest is still dark and ignorant beside what I should conceive. But this perception, far from being depressing, stimulates and strengthens the aspiration, the energy, the will to triumph over all obstacles so as to be at last identified with Thy law and Thy work.

Gradually the horizon becomes distinct, the path grows clear, and we move towards a greater and greater certitude.

It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance, He whom we saw yesterday is on earth; his presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth.

O Lord, Divine Builder of this marvel, my heart overflows with joy and gratitude when I think of it, and my hope has no bounds.

My adoration is beyond all words, my reverence is silent.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 113)



“DON’T FORGET, NOW!”

SOMETHING seems to have changed.

For a long time, several months, things were constantly on the brink, and dangerously so; I felt they could go either this way or that. Then on my birthday¹ something suddenly tilted. All at once a formation seemed to have been lifted, a formation weighing terribly on . . . I won’t say on what, because it appeared to be everything . . . it was lifted with the sweep of a hand, exactly the same movement Sri Aurobindo used for taking away illnesses.²

It has made a tremendous change for this body, as though I had abruptly gotten out of a very tight corner.

And in the afternoon, I had a funny experience at the Playground.³ When I got down from the car to go inside, I felt. . . . For close to a year now I have been saddled with (I mean it was imposed on me) a *useless* pair of legs: weak, awkward, old, worn out — worthless. I constantly had to will them to walk, and even then they were more than clumsy. And it was all swept away in the same manner (*sweeping gesture*). I literally almost danced! Imagine, getting rid of a pair of legs just like that! *Instantly* my legs felt the way they used to (I have always had strong legs) — that alert, solid, agile strength — and I had to restrain myself from cavorting about! “Ah, now we can walk!” “Keep calm,” I had to tell them, or they would have started skipping and prancing!

And they stayed that way, there was no relapse. I was waiting to see if it would last — it did. Something seems to be over with now.

But what was that formation?

I don’t know.

Because. . . . I’ve noticed there are always several ways of explaining things. But certainly one very common explanation would be that it was some type of magic spell — for my health too.

The last time X came, I was very ill the day he arrived and he was called to my room upstairs — actually I wanted him to come upstairs for several reasons, so he could see certain things. . . . But he didn’t see a thing, or if he did, he was reluctant to say so. “Oh, it’s a physical ailment,” he said (it isn’t true, I had no physical ailment — perhaps he didn’t want to say it), “it’s a physical ailment; something may

1. The Mother was 84 on February 21 1962.

2. The Mother used to say that when Sri Aurobindo cured somebody, one often saw a subtle hand come with a current of blue force and seize, as it were, the vibration of the illness or disorder between its fingertips.

3. On the afternoon of the 21st, the Mother went to watch a performance given by the children.

be acting from outside, but it doesn't amount to much." But it seems to me the formation was made a long time ago — "I was always feeling attacked — and it must have been skilfully made!"⁴

It was that or else, as I often thought, some necessary preparation for the work — something that had to be done.

It touched all the parts of my body and all the workings of the organs in succession — very, very methodically.

But is it necessary? Is all this disorganisation necessary? Perhaps I call it disorganisation when it isn't. . . . You know, we are totally ignorant in that realm. We have our old human ways of seeing, but when it comes to the body's functioning, we know nothing about what's good or not. Or even what's painful or not: the body's initial impulse is to feel the pain, but upon reflection and attentive observation, we see it is simply an intensity of sensation we're not used to. So it could well have been that. And if we were used to it (and especially if we didn't think of it as something troublesome), we would feel quite differently about it. In any case, it's not something unbearable — we can bear a lot of things, much more than we imagine.

I am not sure, you see. We keep going on with old notions, old routines and old habits — what can we possibly know!

Anyway, this thing had to follow its course and wind up somewhere.

I should mention that three or four days before my birthday something apparently very troublesome happened⁵ (it could have been troublesome, anyway), and it made me wonder: "Will I be able to do what I have to on the 21st?" I wasn't happy about it. "No," I said, "I can't let these people down when they're expecting so much from this day; that's not right." So throughout the 20th I stayed exclusively concentrated in a very, very deep, very interiorised invocation, not in the least superficial, far from all emotions and sentiments — something really at the summit of the being. And I remained in contact with That, for everything to be truly for the best, free from any false movement in Matter whatsoever. And that night I was *clearly* cured; I mean I followed the action and saw myself really and truly cured. When I got up in the morning, I got up cured. All the things I constantly had to do, all the tapasyas just to *keep going*, were no longer necessary — someone had taken charge of everything, and it was all over and done with. And on the morning of the 21st, with a crowd of two thousand and some hundred people, it went perfectly smoothly, without the slightest hitch. Then in the afternoon I had that very special experience for my legs.

So on the 21st morning I could say quite spontaneously and unhesitatingly, "Today the Lord has given me the gift of healing me." (I was speaking in English about the things people had given me, and I said, ". . . and the Lord has given me the gift of healing me.")

4. Since the black-magic attack in December 1958.

5. A heart attack.

This explanation is clear; and the healing was the result of tapasya. It’s self-explanatory. Something was even saying to my body, to the body’s *substance*, “O unbelieving substance, now you won’t be able to say there are no miracles.” Throughout all the work that was being done on the 20th, something was saying (I don’t know who, because it doesn’t come like something foreign to me any more, it’s like a Wisdom, it seems like a Wisdom, something that knows: not someone in particular, but “that which knows”, whatever its form), something that knows was insisting to the body, by showing it certain things, vibrations, movements, “From now on, O unbelieving substance, you can’t say there are no miracles.” Because the substance itself is used to each thing having its effect, to illnesses following a particular course and certain things even being necessary for it to be cured. This process is very subtle, and it doesn’t come from the intellect, which can have a totally different interpretation of it; it’s rather a kind of consciousness ingrained in physical substance, and that’s what was being addressed and being shown certain movements, certain vibrations and so forth: “You see, from now on you can’t say there are no miracles.” In other words, a direct intervention of the Lord, who doesn’t follow the beaten path, but does things . . . in His own way.

There was also that attack (it was rather serious and threw the doctor into a fit of anxiety) which took place, I think, the day before sari distribution.⁶ The next morning, throughout the distribution, someone else seemed to have taken possession of my body and to be doing what had to be done, taking care of all the difficulties; I was comfortable, serene, simply like a carefree spectator. I had nothing to worry about, someone was . . . (What “someone”? Someone, something, I don’t know, there’s no more difference, it’s not delineated like that any more; but anyway, it was a being, a force, a consciousness — perhaps a part of myself, I don’t know; none of this is clear-cut; it’s quite precise, but not divided, very *smooth* — *Mother makes a rounded gesture* — no breaks.) Something, then, a will or a force or a consciousness — plainly a power — had taken possession of the body and was doing all the work, looking after everything. I was witnessing everything, smiling. But it’s gone now.

It came specifically for that work (I was in pretty bad shape); when the work was over, it dissolved — it didn’t leave abruptly but it became inactive. Afterwards, I felt rather confident. “Well in any case,” I thought, “something similar could happen on the 21st, since it just happened now.”

The 19th was so-so, and on the 20th I was concentrated all day long: no contacts with anyone, nothing external, only an intense invocation . . . as intense and concentrated as when you’re trying to melt into the Lord at death. It was like that. The same movement of identification, but at its core a will for everything to work out in a good way here [on the material plane]. “In a good way” . . . I mean I said to the Lord, “*Your* Good, the true Good, not. . . . The true Good, a victorious Good,

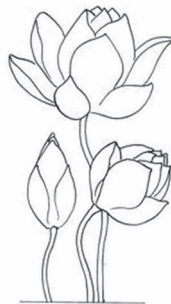
6. On February 18, the Mother distributed saris and handkerchiefs.

a real progress over the way life is usually lived.” And I stayed in this unwavering concentration the whole day, all the time, all the time: even when I spoke, it was something very external speaking. And then at night when I went to bed I felt something had changed — the body felt completely different. When I got up in the morning, all the pains and disorders and dangers had . . . vanished. “Lord,” I said, “You have given me a gift of health. . . .”

And with this change, the bodily substance, the very stuff of the cells, was constantly being told, “Don’t you forget, now you see that miracles *can* happen.” In other words, the way things work out in physical substance may not at all conform to the laws of Nature. “Don’t forget, now!” It kept coming back like a refrain: “Don’t forget, now! This is how it is.” And I saw how necessary this repetition was for the cells: they forget right away and try to find explanations (oh, how stupid can you be!). It’s a sort of feeling (not at all an individual way of thinking), it’s Matter’s way of thinking. Matter is built like that, it’s part of its make-up. We call it “thinking” for lack of a better word, but it’s not “thinking”: it is a material way of understanding things, the way Matter is able to understand.

THE MOTHER

(From the Mother’s conversation with a disciple on 24 February 1962)



**“NIGHT’S DAY” —
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO**

Sri Aurobindo —

Any good? And what plane?

When the air
With purple night [1]
Veils the wandering
Outer sight,

I feel You — Beauty
Void of blame! —
And my whole body
Sinks in shame.

But, with this falling
Worship-mood,
Falls from me
My humanhood.

A giant glow
the [2]
Honeys my heart:
Across each atom
Sun-rays dart

Within a hushful
Firmament
Deep-arching through
My figure bent

In dross-surrender
To Your sweet
Invisible
God-precious feet.

And when this Day
Of night is gone,
I call but darkness
Each new dawn.

[*Amal's question written in the right margin:*]

[1] or, "When the purple
Air of night"
"When the purple
Calm of night"

— Which is better?

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

[1] "purple Calm" seems to me best.

Very good. Intuition — but a little less intense in detail.

29 June 1935

[Version from *The Secret Splendour — Collected Poems of K. D. Sethna*
(*Amal Kiran*), 1993, p. 487:]

NIGHT'S DAY

When the purple
Calm of night
Veils the roving
Outer sight,

I feel You — Beauty
Void of blame! —
And my whole being
Sinks in shame.

But, with this falling
Worship-mood,
Falls from me
My humanhood.

A giant glow
Honies the heart:
Across each atom
Sun-rays dart

Within a hushful
Firmament
Deep-arching through
My figure bent

In dross-surrender
To your sweet
Invisible
God-precious feet.

And when this Day
Of night is gone,
I call but darkness
Each new dawn.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

The ordinary life consists in work for personal aim and satisfaction of desire under some mental or moral control, touched sometimes by a mental ideal. The Gita’s yoga consists in the offering of one’s work as a sacrifice to the Divine, the conquest of desire, egoless and desireless action, bhakti for the Divine, an entering into the cosmic consciousness, the sense of unity with all creatures, oneness with the Divine. This yoga adds the bringing down of the supramental Light and Force (its ultimate aim) and the transformation of the nature.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 669)

SWEET MOTHER

The Mother, Human and Divine

IN our human frailty we regard the Divine Mother as mother only, forgetting that she is also divine. We are apt to seize exclusively the last term of the great Name and ignore the other term which is equally important. We demand from her the same reactions of motherly love as we expect from a human mother. Our love for her is human, human in the ignorant way — full of passion and craving, hunger for appropriation, considering her as nothing else than food for our egoistic desires.

She is the mother indeed, but the Divine Mother. She wishes us to come to her in the divine way and not in the human way. For it is in the divine way that we rise to our highest and deepest stature and receive her fully and integrally, enjoy the plenitude of the delight in her Grace. A human way ties us down to the littlenesses and smallnesses of the human feeling. The human approach is more often than not that of a spoilt child. If there is one drop of true love at the bottom of the heart, the amount of ignorance and turbidity in which that is sunk is colossal. The dirt smears us and is cast upon the object of our love too.

And yet she is the mother in being the Divine. She is divine not in the sense that she is afar and aloof, cold and indifferent like the transcendent Brahman. Indeed, the Divine Mother is more motherly than the human mother can be. The human mother is only a faint echo, a far-off shadow, at times a travesty of the true Mother in the archetypal world.

The Divine Mother even in being transcendent leans down to our human dimensions, becomes one of us, is within us as our own self and with us as comrade and guide. She takes us by the hand, and if we only allow it, teaches us how to transcend the little humanity we are made of and grow into her own nature and substance through the miracle of her love — if our love responds to it adequately.

It is only by remembering her twofold truth, the two arms of her love with which she enfolds us and cherishes us that we can hope to be her true children.

A Canadian Question

Question:

It is written in *A Practical Guide to Integral Yoga*:

The physical nearness to the Mother is indispensable for the fullness of the sadhana on the physical plane. Transformation of the physical and external being is not possible otherwise.

My question is: How are we to interpret these words in the light of the Mother's recent passing? Does this mean that a full transformation is no longer possible to the aspirant? Or has discipleship on the material level in the path of the Integral Yoga come to an end?

Answer:

Obviously, the immediate programme of a physical transformation is postponed — not cancelled.

But what we have been given is not less of a miracle. Mother has prepared for us her new body in the inner world, in the subtle physical which is as living and tangible as her physical body even though not as concrete. In one of her last *Notes*¹ she refers to this new transformed body and she describes it as presented to her vision. That body she has built up in her long arduous labours, built up in a complete form and left with us and with humanity.

This new body of hers, prepared behind the material curtain, she sought to infuse into the material form, even press into it or force into it this new element; but Matter and man's physical nature were not yet ready: Earth still considered it as an intrusion, as something foreign. The material casing broke down in consequence — perhaps not broke down, rather broke through: but that must be another story.

But it is there living and glorious in its beauty and power and is still at work within us, and around us in the world, incessantly, towards the final consummation of its material embodiment.

What is expected of us is to see this golden Mother within us and try to become, as she always wanted, her golden children, within and without.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of an inner mind, an inner vital, an inner physical. Only the other day the passage was read out at the playground-meditation.² The golden body, the new body, is formed out of an inner mind, an inner vital and an inner physical, renewed and reshaped. We can show our love for her, requite the debt that we owe to her Grace by admitting her Presence into our physical being and allowing her to do the work she has undertaken to do.

(2)

For us now it is time to make amends for the lapses of the past — there were lapses, indeed, grievous lapses. So long her physical body was our protection; we did not suffer the full consequences of our Karma because her body acted as buffer: it broke the force of the impact of the karma and reduced its evil effects to a minimum. Her body bore our burden and relieved us of the misery otherwise due to us. Mankind,

1. "Notes on the Way": Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education – August 1972 (Notes of 25-3-72).

2. Sri Aurobindo: *Letters on Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 22, pp. 307-08.

the world even, does not know the saving Grace that her material frame brought to them. They would have gone down to destruction and dissolution but for the presence of the Divine Body.

The world has survived, mankind has an assured future, that is the work done by her body. It aimed at a little more, to show us something of the concrete form of the future, but evidently that was not to be, because something from us also, from the world and mankind, some helping hand in the labour was needed — we remember her ringing words: *Si l'humanité consentait à être spiritualisée*³ — well, that is the minimum, that minimum was also not granted to her body. Her body was made so easily available to all without any trouble and effort on our part that we lost all sense of the precious things brought to us, brought to our very door. We did not know how to make use of it and have the true benefit out of it. Many a time she did say something to us to that effect regretfully, we wasted a treasure like the pampered prodigal son.

It is regrettable but she has left no cause for our regret. She has left with us the true source of her protective power, her living Consciousness concretised in the earth's atmosphere, in the personal atmosphere of each one of us. We have only to open our grateful eyes and see it. The ladder has been taken away, but she has come nearer to us and a little uplift will replace us within her arms.

Since we have no longer the support of her body on which we depended almost exclusively, we are compelled to seek the true support, the support of her consciousness, the inner reality — her inner presence, her living Person within — which her body represented, whose acquaintance we were not careful enough to cultivate. Now we are thrown upon the only alternative available. The way will be arduous; we could have much more easily mounted up the ladder of consciousness with the aid of her body, almost playfully like children. Now a little bit of austerity will be needed to go on our own, the austerity will be needed to bring our external life and physical consciousness in line with her own consciousness, to prepare them, to make them ready. Her material body offered an unconditional help and protection, now all that will be conditional — conditional upon our willing co-operation, our happy and conscious collaboration — of course the Grace will be always there. Once she asked us point-blank, for the crisis was upon us — Are you ready? Almost unthinkingly, in a gesture of bravado and gallantry, many answered “Yes, we are.” But we were not in fact.

The task then for us and for the world is to make ourselves ready, that is to say, make our physical being and consciousness free of the old reactions, instilling into them the consciousness that she is, with which she still embraces us — so that when the next call comes, although the call is always there, we may answer with truth on our lips — “We are ready.”

3. If 'only' mankind consented to be spiritualised.

The Mother Abides

If it is a 'pralaya', even a 'mahapralaya', all is not lost, all is not washed away. Something remains, untouched, deathless, the divine part in you, the Mother's part in you, the consciousness incarnate and articulate.

Indeed it was your soul that she salvaged out of the inconscience and established in you as a living reality. That was her first and primary task and She has fulfilled it. It was there always, true; but it was a far-off, very distant and almost inactive point of light, an unknown and an uncharted star not yet come into the ken of human measure and potency. She has brought it nearer home and established in our living and dynamic consciousness. She has buoyed it up from the unconscious depths, or brought it down from vague, ethereal, nebulous regions, gradually developed it and nourished it and given it a firm dwelling in our inner regions. She moulded it into a personality with a name and a form. If we do not recognise it often or always, it is because the outer shell of the senses has not yet been fully opened to it. But it is still there as our inner ruler and guide in spite of and through all obscurities and aberrations.

Exactly the next step, the second part of her work was to build around this soul, the inner being, a body, a material vehicle to express it. To give a concrete divine shape to this sole reality was her labour at this point. The soul was there, but a god has to come and inhabit it; this godhead, that is to say, a Power, a form of the Mother's own personality has to be brought down and the soul integrated into it. Apparently it was left off at that point and not completed.

The purpose and aim being not an individual realisation or even a realisation in a few individuals, but an achievement of the human race which means a large or a significant part of it, the effort has had to be directed to that end. The level of the human consciousness has to be lifted up to an extent that it might be capable of holding and embodying the inflatus that was coming into it for the change. Otherwise an individual representing the human level and forming part of the material consciousness would not be able to do it. Not only the earth-consciousness but the material constitution of the earth has to be transfigured. For the human body to pass through and complete the stages of transformation must have parallel echoes in other individuals — not necessarily the whole of humanity, but as I said, presumably a sizeable part of it. Otherwise the purpose of the change, a global, collective change will not be fulfilled. An isolated individual supramentalised body upon earth would be a freak of Nature, a forced miracle as it were, an anomalous object in Nature, and a humanity even at its topmost rung would not find any relation or kinship with it.

So, the earth-nature has to be prepared for that end in view, first of all the earth-consciousness in the physical substance and then the raw substance itself. This has to be done as our immediate and urgent business of life.

(2)

I said the earth-consciousness was not quite ready yet for the final transformation of the Mother's body, that is to say, the material substance of the body. Therefore it could not accommodate the incoming transforming force — and it broke: in breaking it must have broken through, through the hard dense outermost crust of matter — with what results, time will show.

As for us who survive, let us begin from the beginning. Let us start from a scratch as it were. We remember Mother's own story, what she had done for herself when she came to Sri Aurobindo. She effaced altogether her old personality, her achievements and accomplishments, made a clean slate of her consciousness and laid herself at the feet of Sri Aurobindo like a new-born babe, innocent of the past. Let us also in the same way face the day with our baby-soul in front, for that little being is the Mother's Presence in us, still aglow with her consciousness.

(3)

“You know, I was very hesitant to read this to you.

In one way it is all right, but because. . . .

In fact it is a mental and intellectual presentation of a phenomenon which goes beyond all intellectual and mental measure. This phenomenon is not only extra-intellectual, supramental but also supracosmic, the sense and bearing of which will be unveiled in the course of time.

Meanwhile, I think the best thing to do would be to remain quiet with a serene trust, with all the aspiration of our soul, our soul which is the concrete presence of Mother Herself in us which we carry within us always.”⁴

“Words, Words, Words . . .”⁵

While coming to you, I saw your beautiful display of excerpts and quotations from the writings of Mother and Sri Aurobindo on the walls all around. Yes, it was a beautiful picture — and the sayings and mottoes and lines of poetry were, needless to say, precious treasures dear to us. But — left at that, to see, admire and pass on, well — they are dead things — words, words, words — lifeless skeletons. They have a meaning and they serve their purpose only when you come in contact with the life and consciousness in them, when you live them with your own life and be the consciousness that is there.

4. This comment was made in French as it was a French class.

5. A talk to young children given on 12 August 1974.

You know the well-known phrase: the letter kills, the spirit saves. Without the spirit, the word is only a dead shell, even a mantra is a dead thing — a mere jumble of sounds if it is not enkindled, enlivened with the spirit. Now I say you are to breathe your own spirit into the apparently dead or lifeless forms. For children are nothing but spirit: spirit means new consciousness, living light, it is not a tall claim I make on your behalf. I will explain.

You children who are here, who have been here for sometime, are a privileged class of human beings. You do not know it but you will know one day. You must have seen the Mother, many perhaps had her physical touch, while there are others who continue to breathe in the atmosphere where her body still endures. You have within you the rare thing hardly found elsewhere, the spark of which I was speaking — it is a particle of the Mother's own consciousness, her own life and her own subtle body-consciousness. You have imbibed it in you with your breath and are still imbibing.

It is there, you have to be conscious of it and realise the full benefit out of it. You are to be the living, not merely echoes and imprints but embodiments of the Word of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. You are now only an embryo, a rudimentary particle of the new life — but it is there — you have in you the thing needed essentially — I only remind you to make you conscious of it. Even as you have budding gymnasts and athlete among you, the playground makes you conscious of it, offers you the opportunity to cultivate and develop and bring it to fruition.

Now in a general way children all over the world are a privileged class. They possess what old age, even mature age does not possess or has lost. I mention two essential qualities pre-eminently belonging to the green age or to the “salad days”: Happiness — a child is ever happy — in spite of its occasional weepings and wailings — and happiness means a radiant smile. To the old people I have often said, “Always smile. Mother has taught us how to smile in all circumstances.” Well, that is the natural gift of the young. A smile makes your life's journey smooth. In no other way can you remove so successfully the obstacles that beset you. And also that is the lever to lift up your consciousness — it has a mysterious power that automatically relieves you of much of the burden of life, lightens you and leads you into a higher sphere. For smile is a divine quality. Next to Happiness, the natural virtue of a child-consciousness is Freedom. It does not find any barrier anywhere, it can do anything.

These two characteristic virtues of childhood themselves spring from another fundamental quality of young nature — simplicity, a spontaneous outflow of energy without any thinking of before or after — none of mind's complexities and hesitations.

In this sphere too, we have here for the play of these natural youthful qualities opportunities and advantages that are not easily available elsewhere. The atmosphere of freedom that we enjoy is *incomparable* — Mother herself told us once.

As you grow, you must carry with you these fundamental qualities and you will remain ever young.

Now, to carry over — that is the trouble. And that problem Mother has solved for us here. This is what I was telling you just now — the special privilege that we enjoy here, granted to those who are here. Added to the fundamental natural virtues of youthfulness, we have been given a supplementary boon, that of consciousness, Mother's own consciousness. It is this additional element that has given a special turn and temper in the atmosphere here and has brought about a change not only in the degree but in the kind of the ordinary youthful qualities. I am speaking of your soul-consciousness. I say you may not know it or recognise it by your mind and intellect, but it is there. And I say also, you will never lose it, whatever happens to your outer life. That will lead you ultimately to the Supreme Realisation, Immortal Life on Earth. It may be clouded for the outer mind, but it is always there behind.

Exactly so, I come back to the point from where I started. The mottoes — the writings displayed on the wall — are also to be displayed as living entities in your being — in your consciousness, and in your life, even in your body. That is the better part of your work — indeed, the essential part.

Today a new consciousness is abroad. The earth-atmosphere is filled with the new spirit. But here the Mother has left with us not merely her consciousness but a conscious being — a part of her living personality in us, that is the divine legacy we enjoy. We must not simply be proud of it but try to prove ourselves worthy of it. The Divine Personality will grow everywhere but the path-finders, forerunners are among you.

Naturally there will be formations of the new life in all climes and countries, but the patterns, the norms will have been set by you for the Mother was here in her physical material body.

So the Mantras you declare as divine words, you must make them living powers, gods themselves embodied in you. The basis is here: the Mother has laid the foundations here for her creation — the roots from where the shoots and branches are to emerge and spread out abroad and everywhere. In any case, here or elsewhere, as the Mother has announced in her own voice:

Built is the golden tower, the flame-child born.*

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta, Vol. 5, pp. 85-94; 98-100)

* The author is referring to the Mother's reading of a portion from Book Eleven of Sri Aurobindo's Savitri. —Ed.

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of January 2013)

Chapter XX

Ideal, Action and Anarchy

The future is not in our hands. When so huge a problem stares us in the face, we become conscious of the limits of human discernment and wisdom. We at once feel that the motions of humanity are determined by forces and not by individuals and that the intellect and experience of statesmen are merely instruments in the hands of the Power which manifests itself in those great incalculable forces. In ordinary times, we are apt to forget this and to account for all that happens as the result of this statesman's foresight or that genius' dynamic personality. But in times like the present we find it less easy to shut our eyes to the truth. We do not affect to believe, therefore, that we can discover any solution of these great problems or any sure line of policy by which the tangled issues of so immense a movement can be kept free from the possibility of inextricable anarchy in the near future. Anarchy will come. This peaceful and inert nation is going to be rudely awakened from a century of passivity and flung into a world-shaking turmoil out of which it will come transformed, strengthened and purified.

Sri Aurobindo in *Bande Mataram*, 5 March 1908¹

C. C. DUTT was not the only member of the Indian Civil Service to be involved in the network of secret revolutionary organisations. We know of at least one more officer of this class who helped the movement. He was Govind Dinanath Madgavkar, Sri Aurobindo's batch-mate at the Entrance examination for the I.C.S.² In the first decade of the 20th century he was a judge of the Bombay High Court and later the acting Chief Justice. There had to be a backdrop to his daringly associating himself with this underground political adventure. Was he influenced by the radical views of Sri Aurobindo expressed openly in the meetings of the Indian Majlis, or elsewhere? We do not know.

While in Mumbai, the judge had put himself up in the Taj Mahal Hotel for a while and his room was the venue for a meeting of the organisers of the secret

movement in December 1902. Sri Aurobindo and Barindra attended that meeting. Among other resolutions, a decision was taken to send Madhavrao, a younger brother of Sri Aurobindo's trusted friend Khaserao Jadav, to Japan for military training. The judge gave a thousand rupees towards the expense and it is certain that Sri Aurobindo was remitting money to Madhavrao from time to time.

The effort to get Jatindranath and Madhavrao trained in military discipline indicates that the revolution envisaged by Sri Aurobindo and his compatriots was not a haphazard outburst of violence and terrorism; they intended it to be an organised revolution — a militant uprising supported by other equally important, not mere auxiliary, application of the ideals we have already referred to. These leaders had no hesitation in asserting that a nation subjugated by force and deceit had every right to use force to achieve freedom. In fact that was the right, natural and historically proven way.

Was a national uprising feasible? It may not be irrelevant here to say that gripped by the glory of the last phase of our struggle, proclaimed to be non-violent and which alone, as repeatedly suggested, won for us freedom, Post-independence India has ignored the fact that the country indeed had the potential strength to overthrow the imperial yoke through force, by putting into practice the principles laid down in the manifesto of the Nationalists of the earlier era. Even though some of the principles were retained by the captains of the last phase of our struggle, the original thrust had been tranquilised and the spirit behind them had thawed. We have rarely wondered if such deviations were not responsible for the disfigured form in which freedom came, trailed by large-scale massacres, misery, division and sub-division of the country and persistent communal hostility and succession of clashes. An utterly misplaced sense of morality seems to have inhibited us from remembering the native valour that had shaken the colonial authorities time and again and from recognising the possibility that a united manifestation of that valour could have achieved the greater goal.

This author is not referring to the numerous confrontations between the East India Company that was expanding what can be called the biggest ever Zamindari in history mostly through treachery supported by brute force, and its immediate victims, the native rulers. Beginning from the battles of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764) struggles of lesser dimension between the greedy Company and the aggrieved feudal lords continued till the eve of the famous "Sepoy Mutiny". This author is referring to those numerous rebellions where the common people participated in a collective rage against the Company rule, even when some of them were led by princes such as Veera Pandian and Marudhu brothers of Tamil Nadu. But examples of uprisings led entirely by commoners were not few.

A great rebellion that followed the devastating famine of 1769-70 was organised by the most unlikely group of people — the Sannyasis and Fakirs (Hindu and Muslim ascetics respectively), led by Bhavani Pathak and Majnu Shah, in northern

Bengal. It continued for more than thirty years and Governor Warren Hastings admitted in his memoirs that the active rebels numbered more than fifty thousand and they destroyed several battalions of the Company's army.³ The desperate Company then took recourse to massacring thousands of men, women and children and completely burning down village after village. The captured leaders were lined before a row of cannons and blasted at a whistle.⁴

Several insurgencies followed, for example the Choar uprising of 1799 spread over Medinipur, Bankura, Birbhum and Dhalbhum in Bengal mainly by peasants, the Bhil Mutiny (1817-1846) spread over Khandesh, Malwa and the adjoining areas led by a potter named Sheoram, the rebellion by the valiant Paiks (constituting the military hierarchy of the kings of Kalinga) led by Buxi Jagabandhu in the latter part of the 18th century, a prolonged rebellion by the peasants of Bundelkhand area in Central India led by Nana Pundit and Sheikh Dalla, an uprising by the Jaths of Haryana, the Koli rebellion of Gujarat, the Khasi rebellion of Meghalaya, followed by the most prominent of them all — the Santhal rebellion of 1855-1856. The tribal residents of what was known as the Santhal Pargana not only set an example in unity and valour, but also tried to execute a plan of administration under which the land was to be considered as belonging to all and one was entitled to the yield from the area one could till, without paying any tax to any agency.⁵

The common target of all these movements was the government run by the East India Company. Leaders in practically all these rebellions emerged from the masses and the courage and the spirit of sacrifice shown by them are well-documented by the men of the ruling class. Well-documented too are the episodes of deceit and brutality with which they were crushed. Even though such documents were never brought into the gamut of textbooks in history, folk songs and ballads on the themes of these events were widely popular in the affected areas and beyond.

It is the 'Sannyasi Vidroh' that formed the backdrop of Bankim Chandra's magnum opus, *Anand Math* (a considerable part of which was rendered into English by Sri Aurobindo), containing the epoch-making lyric, *Bande Mataram*. According to Jadunath Sarkar, the historian, the political and social conditions depicted in the novel accurately reflect the reality.⁶

The last in the chronicle of rebellions was the great uprising of 1857, that was for long referred to as the "Sepoy Mutiny", a name imposed on it by the historians of the colonial era but later considered by many as the First War of Independence, though with different qualifications added to the descriptive name. None of the scholars now dispute the fact that if not literally national, it was to a great extent a nation-wide uprising.

Practically every such revolt had an immediate local or limited cause, but the one dominant passion that marked all of them was the will to get rid of the foreign rule. The revolutionaries of the first decade of the 20th century believed that the innate will in the mind of the people could now be resurrected and nationally

coordinated with the ideal made more specific and the principles of the struggle spelt out clearly. The ideal was to carry on a revolution to win freedom. Employment of force being indispensable for a revolution, violence had its role to play. The connotation of terms like ‘terrorism’ or ‘militancy’ changes according to the ideal pursued and the situation warranting it.

In Sri Aurobindo’s scheme for India’s struggle for freedom, as we have already seen, was included a programme for an armed insurrection — a far cry from terrorism as it is understood today. But all those who were inspired by the basic ideal had their own interpretations of the method prescribed by him. Hundreds of secret societies had been founded in Maharashtra, Bengal, and various places of north India, thousands swearing by the ideal. But coordination among them was not easy, primarily because secrecy was a must. Clash of ego between those thought capable of explaining the ideal was a formidable hindrance to unity among them. Several of them were excited with the idea of eliminating the individuals who acted as direct instruments of colonial oppression — as if that was the royal short-cut to liberation. But Sri Aurobindo would restrain them from taking such steps.⁷ The principal aspects of his vision for a free and resurgent nation were rarely understood. At the pragmatic plane it called for radical changes in the economic and industrial condition of the country. It was a most pleasant surprise that he could make Sir Sayajirao Gaekwad pronounce such ideas at the inauguration of an Industrial Exhibition at Ahmedabad that preceded the Eighteenth Conference of the Indian National Congress in that city. The speech written for him by Sri Aurobindo squarely blamed the acquisition of political power by the East India Company and “the absorption of India in the growing British Empire” for the misery to which India had been reduced. The audience was also told, “. . . until you realise that the ultimate remedy lies in your own hands and that you have to carry it out by yourselves, no external reform can help you.”⁸ There is no example of any other contemporary prince of India having uttered anything that could come closer to such open criticism of the ruling establishment.

We can appreciate how daring was the proposition if we compare and contrast it with the spirit of the Presidential Address at the Congress delivered a week later by Sir Surendranath Banerjee:

We are already sufficiently loyal, sufficiently attached to the British connection. But we are anxious for the permanence of British rule — for our permanent incorporation into the great confederacy of the Empire.⁹

Since this was the state of the mind of the elite of the country, we can evaluate with some empathy the impatience of the comparatively handful of youths ignited with the dream of driving away the British, to take violent actions to highlight their opposite goal. But the irony is, not many among these enthusiasts understood that efforts for freedom and its achievement demanded several other lines of preparation.

The people had to be reawakened to the cause of freedom. They had to be convinced that it was their indispensable right and they could recover it if they were determined to do so.

Before proceeding to sketch whatever is known of the secret revolutionary activities of this period carried on in different parts of the country, this author thinks it necessary to deviate from a chronological survey of events and clearly focus on Sri Aurobindo's outlook on a vital issue that was intricately woven with the nationalist movement of the period — the issue of political assassination. Confusions galore seem to have prevailed in this regard, in the form of legends, exaggerations and if not prejudiced, highly subjective interpretations.

For example, here is one from a lighter genre of the lore: it was rumoured that while Sri Aurobindo was at Baroda, he received a bomb-making formula from abroad which he passed on to his revolutionary followers! As recently as in October 2012 we read:

A few old staffers of the city public libraries like to tell a particular story. When the letter carrying the formula arrived in the city, the postman faced a peculiar problem — he could not read the address because it was written in French. Since Aurobindo was probably the only person in the city known to be proficient in several foreign languages, people directed the postman to him for help. “And so the letter managed to reach its intended destination by sheer providence,” says author Sapna Rangaswamy who was told this story by a librarian many years ago.¹⁰

The unknown author of this otherwise interesting anecdote had been rather unkind towards the postman, for he must have known the English alphabet and as such could very well have read the addressee's name even if that was in French.

Sri Aurobindo's attitude to violence by the aggrieved against the perpetrators of violence by agents of a basically evil and oppressive power would not lend itself to be measured by the yardstick of moral principles. But that did not mean that he approved killings. Let us refer to a first-hand report, greatly relevant to this question, left by Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya (1882-1962). The young man, a most faithful lieutenant of Sri Aurobindo, was living with him in the building of the *Navashakti* Office and was arrested along with him, implicated in the Alipore Conspiracy Case. He narrates a dialogue that took place between Sri Aurobindo and Barindra:

When Barindra planned to eliminate Leon Tardival, the Mayor of Chandernagore and informed Sri Aurobindo about it sometime in 1908, the latter asked, “Why?”

“He broke a Swadeshi meeting and has tortured and harassed the local people,” replied Barin.

“Must he be killed for that? How many can you kill in this manner? I cannot

consent to this. Nothing will come of such actions,” asserted Sri Aurobindo.

But Barindra argued that unless the fellow was punished other oppressors would never learn their lesson. “Do it if that is your thinking,” said Sri Aurobindo.

Barin announced to his followers who were waiting downstairs that Sri Aurobindo had sanctioned the project, without of course reporting the full dialogue.¹¹

Sri Aurobindo knew very well that Barindra would have his way notwithstanding his objection. That was unfortunately Barindra’s style of functioning. In a letter (1906) Sri Aurobindo had informed his father-in-law who resided in Shillong, “Barin has fallen ill. I suggest that he may go to Shillong for a change. If he goes, I am sure you will take care of him. Barin is somewhat erratic. He is specially fond of knocking about in a spasmodic fashion . . . I have learnt not to interfere with him in this respect. If I interfere and try to check him, he is likely to go off at a tangent and become worse.”¹²

There is a story that along with C. C. Dutt and Subodh Mullik, Sri Aurobindo had passed his judgment in favour of eliminating Kingsford. Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya records his doubt about Sri Aurobindo’s involvement in the decision.¹³

Sri Aurobindo evidently viewed all such things in a wide perspective. He wrote in an article entitled ‘The Morality of Boycott’ in 1908 but it remained unpublished probably because he was arrested before he had time to touch it up and send it to the press:

Ages ago there was a priest of Baal who thought himself commissioned by the god to kill all who did not bow the knee to him. All men, terrified by the power and ferocity of the priest, bowed down before the idol and pretended to be his servants; and the few who refused, had to take refuge in hills and deserts. At last a deliverer came and slew the priest and the world had rest. The slayer was blamed by those who placed religion in quietude and put passivity forward as the ideal ethics, but the world looked on him as an incarnation of God.

*

A certain class of minds shrink from aggressiveness as if it were a sin. Their temperament forbids them to feel the delight of battle and they look on what they cannot understand as something monstrous and sinful. “Heal hate by love, drive out injustice by justice, slay sin by righteousness” is their cry. Love is a sacred name, but it is easier to speak of love than to love. The love which drives out hate, is a divine quality of which only one man in a thousand is capable. A saint full of love for all mankind possesses it, a philanthropist consumed with the desire to heal the miseries of the race possesses it, but the mass of mankind do not and cannot rise to that height. Politics is concerned with masses of mankind and not with individuals. To ask masses of mankind to act as saints, to rise to the height of divine love and practise it in relation to

their adversaries or oppressors, is to ignore human nature. It is to set a premium on injustice and violence by paralysing the hand of the deliverer when raised to strike. The Gita is the best answer to those who shrink from battle as a sin and aggression as a lowering of morality.¹⁴

His view on the issue comes out unambiguously clear in a letter he wrote in July 1911 — not long after his leaving active politics:

Be very careful to follow my instructions in avoiding the old kind of politics. Spirituality is India's only politics, the fulfilment of the Sanatan Dharma its only Swaraj. I have no doubt we shall have to go through our Parliamentary period in order to get rid of the notion of Western democracy by seeing in practice how helpless it is to make nations blessed. India is passing really through the first stages of a sort of national Yoga. It was mastered in the inception by the inrush of divine force which came in 1905 and aroused it from its state of complete tamasic ajnanam. But, as happens also with individuals, all that was evil, all the wrong sanskaras and wrong emotions and mental and moral habits rose with it and misused the divine force. Hence all that orgy of political oratory, democratic fervour, meetings, processions, passive resistance, all ending in bombs, revolvers and Coercion laws. It was a period of asuddha rajasic activity and had to be followed by the inevitable period of tamasic reaction from disappointed rajas. God has struck it all down, — Moderatism, the bastard child of English Liberalism; Nationalism, the mixed progeny of Europe and Asia; Terrorism, the abortive offspring of Bakunin and Mazzini. The latter still lives, but it is being slowly ground to pieces. At present, it is our only enemy, for I do not regard the British coercion as an enemy, but as a helper. If it can only rid us of this wild pamphleteering, these theatrical assassinations, these frenzied appeals to national hatred with their watchword of Feringhi-ko-marō, these childish conspiracies, these idiotic schemes for facing a modern army with half a dozen guns and some hundred lathis, — the opium visions of rajogun run mad, then I say, "More power to its elbow." For it is only when this foolishness is done with that truth will have a chance, the sattwic mind in India emerge and a really strong spiritual movement begin as a prelude to India's regeneration. No doubt, there will be plenty of trouble and error still to face, but we shall have a chance of putting our feet on the right path. In all I believe God to be guiding us, giving the necessary experiences, preparing the necessary conditions.¹⁵

(To be continued)

References and Notes

1. *Bande Mataram*; CWSA, Vol. 7, pp. 904-05.
 2. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar: *Sri Aurobindo: A biography and history*; Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.
 3. *Muktir Sandhane Bharat* (Bengali); a Government of West Bengal Publication.
 4. Narahari Kaviraj; *Swadhinatar Sangrame Bangla* (Bengali); National Book Agency; Kolkata and J. M. Ghose: *Sannyasi and Fakir Raiders in Bengal*; Punthi Pustak, Kolkata.
 5. K. K. Datta: *The Santhal Insurrection of 1855*; University of Calcutta.
- There are several accounts of the rebellion by other authors some of whom were Englishmen. There were tragic incidents showing great courage of the rebels mixed with pitiable innocence. They would never retreat but keep standing, shooting arrows against bullets and falling one by one. One day, towards the end of the rebellion — as the British army entered a village, they faced arrows bursting out of the interior of a mud house. The soldiers surrounded the house and carved holes in the walls and began shooting into the house. After a while the captain called out to the rebels to surrender. In response another volley of arrows met them. This went on for sometime. By and by the number of arrows was becoming less and less. At last came only one arrow and then there was no arrow. The soldiers broke open the door and entered the house. So many lay dead or were dying. Amidst them stood only one old man. His right hand had been blown off after he had shot the last arrow. "Surrender!" shouted the captain as he went closer to him, happy to capture at least one rebel alive. Suddenly there flashed a dagger and the captain's head rolled off his shoulders. The old veteran's left hand was still intact, after all! A dozen guns boomed and the old man fell down amidst his compatriots. He was probably the last archer in the rebellion. By then some 25 thousand Santhals had been killed. (*Contours of Courage*, National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi.)
6. "Anand Math" by Jadunath Sarkar; *Jadunath Sarkar Rachana Sambhar*; M. C. Sarkar & Sons, Kolkata.
 7. C. C. Dutt: *Purano Katha – Upasamhar*.
 8. *Early Cultural Writings*; CWSA, Vol. 1, p. 718.
 9. *Congress Presidential Addresses*; G. N. Natesan & Co., Madras.
 10. "Mystery of Sri Aurobindo's Revolutionary Bomb" by Ramaninder K. Bhatia; Times News Network, 14 October 2012.
 11. "Aurobindo" by Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya; *Galpa Bharati*, Kolkata.
 12. Letter read out by C. R. Das during the Alipore Trial, quoted by Jotish Chandra Ghose; Atmashakti Library, Kolkata.
 13. "Aurobindo" by Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya; *Galpa Bharati*, Kolkata.
 14. *Bande Mataram*; CWSA, Vol. 7, p. 1117. We do not know whether Sri Aurobindo wrote this for the *Bande Mataram* or any other forum. This was a response to Tagore's statement describing boycott as an act of hate. Sri Aurobindo explained that "the boycott is not an act of hate. It is an act of self-defence, of aggression for the sake of self-preservation."
 15. *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*; CWSA, Vol. 36, pp. 170-71.

There are those who have done the lawyer's work with the Mother's force working in them and grown by it in inward consciousness. On the other hand religious work can be merely external and vital in its nature or influence.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, pp. 674-75)

ESSENTIALS OF INDIAN CULTURE

(Continued from the issue of January 2013)

[We continue with the reproduction of a few pages in two versions — the first indicating the changes Sri Aurobindo made, (~~strike through~~ to indicate deletions and *italics* to indicate additions) then the final version after the changes.]

INDIAN religion while recognising that all human beings are portions of the Divine, evolving souls journeying towards salvation, drew a distinction in actual life between three principal types which vary in their adhikara, their openness to the religious or spiritual influence. These types represent three stages of the growing human consciousness: one crude, ill-formed, still outward, still vitally and physically minded; another more developed, more receptive, a riper make of manhood gifted with a more conscious[,] rational, aesthetic and ethical power of nature; a third, the most developed of all, is ready for full spirituality, fit to receive the pure highest truth of God and of man's being and to tread the summits of divine experience.

For the first type ~~was~~ *were* provided external ceremonies and rituals, forming and indicative [of] things which work upon the mind consciously or unconsciously and prepare it for an entry into the significance of the *much* greater things that lie behind them. And for him too, for the vitally minded being, is all in the religion that calls on man to turn to a divine Power or powers for the satisfaction of his desires and his interests, kama and artha, but subject to the right and the law, the dharma.

The second stage, *the intermediate* type starts from these things, but gets behind them and is capable of understanding more clearly and consciently the psychical truths, *the* conceptions of the intelligence, the aesthetic indications, the ethical values and directions which Indian religion took care to place behind its symbols. This ascending type of humanity claims all that large and opulent middle region of philosophic, psycho-spiritual, ethical, aesthetic and emotional religious seeking which is the larger *and* more significant portion of the wealth of Indian culture.

But all these things opened and climbed to the luminous grandeurs of spiritual truth and its practice was kept ready and its means of attainment provided for the third and greatest type of human being, the third and loftiest stage of spiritual evolution. The complete light of spiritual knowledge when it emerges from veil and compromise and goes beyond all symbols and middle significances, the absolute and universal divine love, the beauty of the All-beautiful, the noblest dharma of unity with all beings, universal compassion and benevolence, calm and sweet in the perfect purity of the spirit, the upsurge of the psychical ~~being~~ *nature* into ~~the~~ spiritual

unity or the spiritual ecstasy, those divinest things were the heritage of the human being ready for divinity and their way and call were the supreme significances of Indian religion and Yoga. He reached by them the fruits of his perfect spiritual evolution, an identity with the Self and Spirit, a dwelling in *God* or with God, the divine law of his being, a spiritual universality, communion, transcendence.

These three types respectively correspond to ~~the~~ three stages in the evolution of Indian culture and civilisation. The first was the Vedic stage in which religion took its formal stand on the natural approach of the physical mind of man to the Godhead in the universe, but the initiates guarded the sacrificial fire of a greater spiritual truth behind the form of outward religious worship and conception. The second was the Purano-Tantric stage in which religion took its outward stand on the deeper approach of man's psycho-physical mind to the Divine in the universe, but a greater initiation opened the way to the most intimate truth and living of the spiritual life in all its profundity and infinite possibility of uttermost sublime experience. The third stage *still to be* is the coming stage of completion which has long been in preparation but not yet successful, which will call the community of men to live in the greatest light of all and to found their whole life on some fully revealed power and grand uplifting truth of the spirit.

The distinction *thus made* between types of humanity according to adhikara or natural capacity was not *indeed* absolute since the actuality or potentiality of the three powers co-exist in all men. The approaches to the highest status were not ~~absolutely~~ *entirely* denied to any man, in spite of certain prohibitions. *All these rules in fact were for firmness in the foundation and building of the general scheme of development and experience; it was well understood that the power of the Spirit could enforce its own exceptions and no rules of sama, assama or adhikara would prevent its touching whomsoever it pleased and lifting him into its light and freedom.*

In India this complex system of religious development was linked on to the general culture of the life of the people through the Shastras which were addressed to the mind, to the reason and intellect of man. The business of the ancient Rishi was not only to know God, but to know also the world and life and to reduce it by knowledge to a thing well-understood and mastered with which the reason and will of man could deal on assured lines. Shastra was not a mere religio-social system of injunctions, as it is understood now; ~~but~~ *for* in ancient India Shastra meant any systematised teaching, *and* science and each department of life had its science or Shastra. The smallest and the greatest things were examined with equal care and attention and each *was* provided with its art and science.

No Indian religion is complete without *three necessary elements*, its outward form of preparatory practice, its supporting philosophy and its yoga or system of inward practice or art of spiritual living. Most even of what seems irrational in it to a first glance has its philosophical turn and significance. It is this complete understanding and philosophical character which has given religion in India its

durable security and immense vitality and enabled it to resist the acid dissolvent power of modern sceptical enquiry.

Not only spiritual truth but the arts, the social and political and military, the physical and psychic sciences, all were taught by the Rishis. All knowledge was woven into one and led up by degrees to the one highest knowledge. The whole right practice of life founded on this knowledge was Dharma in the view of Indian culture.

Not only Every man, but every thing and activity, has its Dharma, the true law of its functioning in its own nature, but the most important Dharma was considered to be the culture and order of the ethical nature of man the human being. The Dharma, as fixed by the wise in the Shastra, is the true rule of action and not the satisfaction of desires. A man must live according to the law of his nature harmonised with the law of his social type or class doing his work for the nation and for humanity society, for the race, pursuing the stream of his own experience from life to life. But Behind all dharma there was placed a religious sanction, a spiritual and an ideal of ultimate salvation release into the spirit.

Indian ethics did not put a ban, as has often been done by other Puritan or religious systems of morals, on the aesthetic or even on the hedonistic being of man, on his vital movement towards beauty and pleasure. Indian thought considered that man was justified in satisfying a certain right satisfaction of his desires, since that is necessary for the growth and expansion of life, but not in obeying the dictates of desire as the dominant law of his being nature. ~~The~~ In the many-sided development of his life Shastra should be taken as providing the true rule of his action until this even is transcended by rising and he rises into the liberty of the immortal dharma of the divine nature.

The most outwardly vital life parts of existence, the political and social life ~~also was~~ were strenuously taken up in hand by Indian culture and ~~was impressed by~~ given the impress of its own ideals and conceptions. ~~Its method was to build~~ There were built up great shastras of social living, duty and enjoyment, military and political rule and conduct and economical well-being. The rules and ideals, the discipline constituting the formulation of the Dharma in this field, were made very stringent and it was linked up at every possible point with the religious idea as. *This stringency was dictated by a recognition of the evident truth that this vital aspect of life is the one which most powerfully moved by interest and pleasure, most easily draws us drawn outward and away from the inner self and the divine aim of living and therefore most in need of a constant self-mastery and remembrance of the higher aims of existence. . . .*

~~Such a~~ A very rigorous law and discipline ~~was were~~ imposed therefore on this aspect of life, as compared with, contrasting strongly with the freedom allowed in the spiritual and intellectual or artistic spheres that in ancient India. In the end it became this rigidity was greatly exaggerated, turned into a cramping bondage,

depressed unduly the individual's liberty of expansion and movement and prevented the expansion growth of the society into new forms more suitable for the need of the spirit of the age, the Yugadharma. However, a door of liberty was opened to the community by the provision of an automatic permission validity accorded to changed customs which became authoritative by persistence and to the individual in the adoption of the religious life with its own higher discipline or freedom outside the ordinary social weft of binding rule and injunction.

Thus the whole general character of the application of Indian ideals to life became throughout of this one texture, the constant, subtly graded, subtly harmonised preparation of the soul of man for its spiritual being. First, the regulated satisfaction of the primary being nature of man subjected to the law of the Dharma and the ethical idea and besieged at every moment by the suggestions of religion. Then, the higher steps of the developed reason and the psychical, ethical and aesthetic powers. Finally, each of those powers in man was made on its own line of approach a gateway into divine being — a Yoga of Knowledge, a Yoga of Works, a Yoga of love and bhakti, as also a Yoga of the psychical being parts — Yogas which could be practised in separation or with some kind of synthesis.

II

(Final Version)

Indian religion while recognising that all human beings are portions of the Divine, evolving souls journeying towards salvation, drew a distinction in actual life between three principal types which vary in their *adhikara*, their openness to the religious or spiritual influence. These types represent three stages of the growing human consciousness: one crude, ill-formed, still outward, still vitally and physically minded; another more developed, more receptive, a riper make of manhood gifted with a more conscious, rational, aesthetic and ethical power of nature; a third, the most developed of all, ready for full spirituality, fit to receive the pure highest truth of God and of man's being and to tread the summits of divine experience.

For the first type were provided external ceremonies and rituals, forming and indicative of things which work upon the mind consciously or unconsciously and prepare it for an entry into the significance of the much greater things that lie behind them. And for him too, for the vitally minded being, is all in the religion that calls on man to turn to a divine Power or powers for the satisfaction of his desires and his interests, *kama* and *artha*, but subject to the right and the law, the *dharma*.

The second stage, the intermediate type starts from these things, but gets behind them and is capable of understanding more clearly and consciently the psychical truths, the conceptions of the intelligence, the aesthetic indications, the ethical values

and directions which Indian religion took care to place behind its symbols. This ascending type of humanity claims all that large and opulent middle region of philosophic, psycho-spiritual, ethical, aesthetic and emotional religious seeking which is the larger and more significant portion of the wealth of Indian culture.

But all these things opened and climbed to the luminous grandeurs of spiritual truth and its practice was kept ready and its means of attainment provided for the third and greatest type of human being, the third and loftiest stage of spiritual evolution. The complete light of spiritual knowledge when it emerges from veil and compromise and goes beyond all symbols and middle significances, the absolute and universal divine love, the beauty of the All-beautiful, the noblest dharma of unity with all beings, universal compassion and benevolence, calm and sweet in the perfect purity of the spirit, the upsurge of the psychic nature into spiritual unity or the spiritual ecstasy, those divinest things were the heritage of the human being ready for divinity and their way and call were the supreme significances of Indian religion and Yoga. He reached by them the fruits of his perfect spiritual evolution, an identity with the Self and Spirit, a dwelling in God or with God, the divine law of his being, a spiritual universality, communion, transcendence.

These three types respectively correspond to three stages in the evolution of Indian culture and civilisation. The first was the Vedic stage in which religion took its formal stand on the natural approach of the physical mind of man to the Godhead in the universe, but the initiates guarded the sacrificial fire of a greater spiritual truth behind the form of outward religious worship and conception. The second was the Purano-Tantric stage in which religion took its outward stand on the deeper approach of man's psycho-physical mind to the Divine in the universe, but a greater initiation opened the way to the most intimate truth and living of the spiritual life in all its profundity and infinite possibility of uttermost sublime experience. The third stage still to be is the coming stage of completion which has long been in preparation but not yet successful, which will call the community of men to live in the greatest light of all and to found their whole life on some fully revealed power and grand uplifting truth of the spirit.

The distinction thus made between types of humanity according to *adhikara* or natural capacity was not indeed absolute since the actuality or potentiality of the three powers co-exist in all men. The approaches to the highest status were not entirely denied to any man, in spite of certain prohibitions. All these rules in fact were for firmness in the foundation and building of the general scheme of development and experience; it was well understood that the power of the Spirit could enforce its own exceptions and no rules of *sama*, *assama* or *adhikara* would prevent its touching whomsoever it pleased and lifting him into its light and freedom.

In India this complex system of religious development was linked on to the general culture of the life of the people through the *Shastras* which were addressed to the mind, to the reason and intellect of man. The business of the ancient Rishi

was not only to know God, but to know also the world and life and to reduce it by knowledge to a thing well-understood and mastered with which the reason and will of man could deal on assured lines. Shastra was not a mere religio-social system of injunctions, as it is understood now; for in ancient India Shastra meant any systematised teaching, and science and each department of life had its science or Shastra. The smallest and the greatest things were examined with equal care and attention and each *was* provided with its art and science.

No Indian religion is complete without three necessary elements, its outward form of preparatory practice, its supporting philosophy and its yoga or system of inward practice or art of spiritual living. Most even of what seems irrational in it to a first glance has its philosophical turn and significance. It is this complete understanding and philosophical character which has given religion in India its durable security and immense vitality and enabled it to resist the acid dissolvent power of modern sceptical enquiry.

Not only spiritual truth but the arts, the social and political and military, the physical and psychic sciences, all were taught by the Rishis. All knowledge was woven into one and led up by degrees to the one highest knowledge. The whole right practice of life founded on this knowledge was Dharma in the view of Indian culture.

Not only every man, but every thing and activity, has its Dharma, the true law of its functioning in its own nature, but the most important Dharma was considered to be the culture and order of the ethical nature of the human being. The Dharma, as fixed by the wise in the Shastra, is the true rule of action and not the satisfaction of desires. A man must live according to the law of his nature harmonised with the law of his type or class doing his work for the society, for the race, pursuing the stream of his own experience from life to life. But behind all dharma there was placed a religious sanction, and an ideal of ultimate release into the spirit.

Indian ethics did not put a ban, as has often been done by other Puritan or religious systems of morals, on the aesthetic or even *on* the hedonistic being of man, on his vital movement towards beauty and pleasure. Indian thought considered that man was justified in *a* certain right satisfaction of his desires, since that is necessary for the growth and expansion of life, but not in obeying the dictates of desire as the dominant law of his nature. In the many-sided development of his life Shastra should be taken as the true rule of his action until this even is transcended and he rises into the liberty of the immortal dharma of the divine nature.

The most outwardly vital parts of existence, the political and social life were strenuously taken in hand by Indian culture and given the impress of its own ideals and conceptions. There were built up great shastras of social living, duty and enjoyment, military and political rule and conduct and economic well-being. The rules and ideals, the discipline constituting the formulation of the Dharma in this field, were made very stringent and it was linked up at every possible point with the

religious idea. This stringency was dictated by a recognition of the evident truth that this vital aspect of life is the one most powerfully moved by interest and pleasure, most easily drawn outward and away from the inner self and the divine aim of living and therefore most in need of a constant self-mastery and remembrance of the higher aims of existence. . . .

A very rigorous law and discipline were imposed therefore, contrasting strongly with the freedom allowed in the spiritual and intellectual spheres in ancient India. In the end this rigidity was greatly exaggerated, turned into a cramping bondage, depressed unduly the individual's liberty of expansion and movement and prevented the growth of the society into new forms more suitable for the need of the spirit of the age, the Yugadharma. However, a door of liberty was opened to the community by the provision of an automatic validity accorded to changed customs which became authoritative by persistence and to the individual in the adoption of the religious life with its own higher discipline or freedom outside the ordinary social weft of binding rule and injunction.

Thus the whole general character of the application of Indian ideals to life became throughout of this one texture, the constant, subtly graded, subtly harmonised preparation of the soul of man for its spiritual being. First, the regulated satisfaction of the primary nature of man subjected to the law of the Dharma and the ethical idea and besieged at every moment by the suggestions of religion. Then, the higher steps of the developed reason and the psychic, ethical and aesthetic powers. Finally, each of those powers in man was made on its own line of approach a gateway into divine being — a Yoga of Knowledge, a Yoga of Works, a Yoga of love and bhakti, as also a Yoga of the psychic parts — Yogas which could be practised in separation or with some kind of synthesis.

(To be continued)

ANILBARAN ROY

In our yoga the Nirvana is the beginning of the higher Truth, as it is the passage from the Ignorance to the higher Truth. The Ignorance has to be extinguished in order that the Truth may manifest.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 59)

A CAPTIVE OF HER LOVE

(Continued from the issue of January 2013)

1.4.1958

I HAVE given Her my mind and now I am without mind. Every time the mind wants to work the rejection brings it quietude and I see the futility of all these millions and millions of thoughts that used to fill my life, make me miserable, upset me, made me think how I shall do this or that or what will happen next. And I also understand what She means by wasting, squandering oneself — it is just all this turning and turning of useless stuff being produced instead of one single turning to Her and giving and giving oneself and all the centres and all one is and all one has. Every day is for me a new revelation in this process of self-giving because it seems to be without end and goes on and on deepening itself. I think that everything, just in deepening itself, becomes simpler. It was awful what this mind was doing with me and my life — it complicated everything. And every time I give Her something from myself completely, She flows into me. What will life be then, oh! when I really give Her all of myself — as I feel I shall?

This feeling of being without mind is so overwhelming that it changes life completely. Quietude, happiness and confidence in Her can now grow and do grow without being hampered at every step. So, I go on. I give Her all my emotions and She takes them and makes me free — I give Her all the desires and my physical being — and I remain without anything. This will now be the essence of my life, repeating and repeating these acts, more and more generously and more and more freely. How can I think, when She is thinking in my mental centre, arranging, rearranging, destroying, creating there as She likes? Of course, now it is all obscured by the dirt in my mental being, but She will slowly remove that. It was the first time that I went to Her for the distribution (on the first of the month) without wanting anything. I did not want Her to look at me, to give me anything, to fill me. I just prostrated myself in my inner being at Her feet and I was giving and giving all I could and I never knew before that I can give so much to God. Or it probably seems to be much . . . oh, you mind, go away — you do not belong to me.

I received what I had applied for: four cakes of washing soap, one cake of toilet soap and two rolls of toilet paper, yes madam! These articles we receive in small wooden boxes. It is marvellously organised and it goes quickly. It is all done in the office upstairs. Mother sits in an armchair and we first pass by Her. Once She gave a message, another time a toothbrush, then a small cake of soap and today a

tiny bunch of herbs!¹ But I do not know if they are to be eaten. I shall ask. My servant Subramani says that they are to be put in my hair, just as the Indian women do. So I did it and they look and smell like thyme. Maybe it is thyme? After having passed Mother we move on to where Pavitra hands us the boxes. They are being handed to him by sadhaks who watch who is entering through the door.

You have not written for a long time. I would not know when Easter is this year but for the groups of Catholic women and children going home from church with palm branches. In the Ashram, Sunday is half and half a holiday.

I got a letter from Katowice from Jadwiga and one from Zosia from Krakau. Her letter is charming, she writes that her heart swells in her when she feels how happy I must be having reached the country of my dreams. It is nice that she has no difficulties in writing to me. Happy Easter to you, my dear ones!

* * *

2.4.1958

Oh, this can only be compared to changing the element in which one lives, from water, for example, to air. Everything is new. And the essence of my life changes. Because now there seems to be really nothing more than sacrificing continuously. This will be the main occupation, probably the only one. I do not know. She often gives me new realisations. This one withdraws and comes back and so it goes. But I am born anew, I am the divine child that returns to the Father. Of course there is the adhara which She will go on purifying and later transforming. How long? I do not know — it is Her work, not mine.

* * *

6.4.1958

The divine child cannot go back to the Father with empty hands — and nothing less than all will do. Now I really feel it. Every movement, even the tiniest, belongs to Her and I just go on, first stating and beginning to feel that each thought, feeling, action in me is Hers and then immediately giving it, offering it to Her. And all this She is doing in me, She Herself. I feel like smiling at everything and everybody, as if I were living in a new world and I aspire for my birthright to be realised — realised fully — and to become Herself in all my being. And as it is She who aspires in me, it will become a reality.

Today I learned from the Hindu servant how I can easily remove the skin from

1. Sweet marjoram (*Origanum majorana*), which Mother named “New Birth”.

the meat, holding the knife between two toes. The knife must be placed on a heavy object and remain immobile, then it is well done. Don't you admire my capacities? I hope that after some time I shall do it quicker than today. Tripura's husband gets meat every day and his wife (Brahmin) gets sick at the sight of meat, so I have to do it. The doctor asked me today to cook a double portion in the pot, one for another patient. Maybe I shall become the specialised meat cook in Pondicherry!

I have a boy friend, the so-called "latrine man" from the lowest caste. He walks as if a kingdom belonged to him and never leaves the Nursing Home before I come out on the veranda and send him a smile! We have more and more flowers and they look lovely in the small yard in the flower-pots with the white walls at the back. Subramani, the permanent servant, seems to have been charmed by them too. Anyway he is not so lazy as before.

Let me know if you have got the *Bulletin* issues of 1956. There are a number of very inspiring talks by the Mother. I often go to our beautiful library, sit on a big veranda with a view of the sea, in the shade of course, and read these old issues. It is as if She is actually instructing me. It really is so. Often I feel Her order to get up and leave everything at the Nursing Home and go to the library and read. This is more than reading. The August 1957 *Bulletin* has helped me today a lot. And often the part I have to read is "given to me" with the omission of other talks. My inner contact grows into a greater and greater intimacy. How could it be different? The time will come when my aspiration is so strong that nothing, nothing else will matter.

Today is Easter, but nothing reminds one of it, although there is a Catholic community which has bought the best meat today and Tripura's husband had only the leftovers from the Easter shopping.

I firmly believe that all these changes in me are the result of the working of the Supermind in matter. It is easier and quicker since 1956 and I feel that I am not allowed to stop for a moment. I never look back, but walk forward and forward and in this walking She gives me rest. I call Her my eternal holiday. All my life I have been longing for such repose and now — since the worst burden, the mind, has lost its supremacy over me — I just feel as if I am being carried in Her arms.

* * *

8.4.1958

I cannot grasp it all, but it does not matter. It is all so simple and natural. She really accepted me as Her child, coming home, with all the load of ego and ignorance still on me. She, the Highest and Purest, has done it. Now I feel at last why self-giving destroys all barriers and limits. This Highest Purity purifies almost automatically — if I may say so — all that consciously gives itself to Her completely. And so the impure becomes Purity too. This is the Grace.

The husband of Tripura does not seem to be able to stand my presence any more and Tripura would like to get rid of me — of course under cover of all sorts of reasons. Yes, dear, here also the life is very “human”. It would be too long a story to tell, but it may be that I shall be cooking for them now in my Nursing Home. This evening I shall put it all under Her Light through Pavitra. I am of course holding it all the time in Her Light.

The next Darshan (24th April) — Her second coming to Pondicherry, after which She never left again — is already attracting many people who come for a few weeks as visitors. There is not a day without people coming.

* * *

11.4.1958

Today is the 11th and still there is no letter from you, but I shall post mine. She is leading me farther now through the tiny little things of everyday work, which I have to perform, knowing and feeling Her working and vibrating in them. I am so thankful that She has not given me until now any other work but just this simple cooking and keeping the house clean and harmonious. Being alone in this big house only with Her is something for which I can never be thankful enough. There are still no patients, ever since the last one left at the beginning of February. The servants come at 7 a.m. They leave at 12 and one of them comes from 2 to 5 p.m. so that the house and flowers can be kept properly.

* * *

12.4.1958

Rain!! Lovely rain — like European summer rain. Now we will have to bear the summer heat for a few months. I am so thankful that I do not seem to suffer from the heat at all. When I am bathed in perspiration I feel contented and quite comfortable. I told myself: “This has to be accepted as something normal and even pleasant.” But this does not change the fact that rain is wonderful and that not perspiring is quite welcome!

All my life is now centred on my soul’s contact with Her, with God. The vital, mostly the conceited offended person, succeeds in making me fall down from my seat from time to time, but it is She who teaches me to become more and more detached in my soul from the adhara and not to get upset when, for example, the vital is angry with Her for a stupid reason. What I have grasped is that when even an awfully dirty wave rises in my being I must (1) immediately “run” with it to Her, (2) immediately feel immense joy that Her Grace is purifying me. Then there is no

depression, no suffering. I immediately restore the balance and am in Her. This is not easy; but I shall go on and on.

* * *

13.4.1958

I feel that I should not resist — in a way — any wave. I mean, when Mother sweeps this house I must keep myself transparent and accept all the dirt and dust — accept but not hold it, even for a moment — only immediately pass it on, which means to Her. Almost automatically and with great speed. It is like physical exercises or a game. If I do not do it quickly enough, She cannot go on “throwing” it at me, like balls — because I would suffer under a pyramid of products of my own ego from which She wants to free me. So I must throw the balls back to Her for purification continuously. And if I do it quicker and quicker, She can throw more and more at me. So I feel now that it is much better to learn it, because the process of yoga will go much quicker. What has helped me most is the experience of throwing back the ball with great joy. But this I can still do only seldom. But I do not worry, I will learn it, it is like tennis.

Oh! if you could see our second servant at work! When he wipes the floors he puts the pail of water as far away as possible, to be able to take a long walk with the floor-cloth in his hand — which means less wiping, of course. And he is so stupid! His movements are exactly like those pictures in the movies, in slow motion. His name is Armogom and he looks like a poor, old dog.

* * *

15.4.1958

You ask about the bed I sleep on. It is comfortable, probably American, with iron springs — and an arrangement for a mosquito net, but this I will use when there is more rain. And my dresses? All are useful in a way — I mean the summer dresses, although I was told that it can be quite cold in winter, so I shall probably need the summer jacket as well.

I have now terrible “fights” with unconsciousness and inertia, but this picture of the tennis game helps me so much. Only now I feel it differently. My partner stretches Herself into a Sea of Grace into which I throw back the balls. And as the number of balls and the number of strokes is not infinite but limited, the time will come when one by one the balls will not come back at me from the Sea of Grace, but disappear in it. Seeing it so, I get force to go on and I feel it is better to do as much as I can and not wait for the future.

But no real progress is possible without equality. The time comes when this has to be learned definitely and to me most new things come through love. It is not real Love for the Divine if it is still without equality. So I feel that She will teach me equality now, through love for Her in all people, things, events. I aspire and aspire for equality. If I could apply the same wonderful way I always use when I feel pain, to all other happenings! Loving Her immediately in each fact, being, movement, as I love Her when I feel pain. It is real Grace that I can feel it so. Almost always the pain disappears, as if it melted away in love. Now I have had it with my liver again — since two days ago. I do not give in, even in the smallest things. I eat normally, do exercises and at such times there is always a moment She finds to give me more courage. Yesterday She did it when we were marching in group in front of Her. I felt so much Love in Her eyes when She looked at me that again nothing mattered. Of course, She does it with everybody when it is needed. But I always feel that it is connected with my inner fights and often it is formulated in words. But it is often terrible to discover how strong the ego and the desire soul still are. Of course, it should not be terrible for me, I should have equality, but I still do not have enough of it. I felt awfully hurt when She did not sanction all my projects to arrange the garden in the Nursing Home and this upset me. Thank God, I begin to be thankful when dirt and nonsense show themselves — as I said, it is better for it to be now, as early as possible. They must come out sometime, but still it upsets me.

* * *

17.4.1958

Yes, She will do it. This morning during Darshan I got the assurance. I shall learn to love Her in everybody and everything and then equality will come by itself. When I think that all I am going through now is only the first, tiny little beginning of spiritual life, I realise how deep the ego hypnosis is. For seventeen years I have known — and felt too — the existence of the Truth and yet the crust is still so hard.

I must tell you what kinds of flowers and fruits we have here. All the flowers we have in Europe and others too. There is a special garden with roses, many zinnias, gaillardias, sunflowers and even violets. I did not see any wallflowers. We have verbena, but without fragrance, jasmine bushes and lovely creepers, like bougainvilleas in different colours and flowers I have not seen in Europe; I shall describe them when I know their names. Here we know them by names given to them by Mother. As for the fruits there are many bananas, lemons and papayas, oranges and of course coconuts from which we drink the liquid.

In the morning and early afternoon I wear dresses, especially those with wide skirts for sitting cross-legged and which are not transparent, as I do not like to wear

petticoats — they are too hot. In the evening, when I go to the playground I wear shorts and a shirt. There is such happiness in me.

* * *

28.4.1958

My life is changing continuously — and my being almost from hour to hour. As She is the Most Holy who has descended here, I am just living and acting in a temple all the time. What was before as if, is now the beginning of reality. Before, I knew from Sri Aurobindo's books that each most common act has to assume the sublime character of a sacrifice in a temple — but now I really perform the sacrifice before Her Presence. It cannot be told what unspeakable felicity it brings to feel that She is present everywhere. Humility, adoration, gratefulness grow and grow and deepen. And there are really no other things that can drag me from Her, for I begin to feel Her in everything. It is no longer vague. I do not think; I do not try to imagine what will come next as I used to do before. Every time I did that, I landed in a corner. So She was teaching me. No, I have to let Her carry me in Her arms and feel the glorious joy of the unexpected. My trust in Her grows and grows and She becomes to me Something so close and so precious and dear that I just cannot describe it. Now I know that it will not be human beings I shall love but Her — and Her only — in everybody and everything. This morning I tried to express for you how thankful I am to Her, but I could not. Maybe it could be compared with the gratefulness of a most miserable leper towards one who would wash him and clean his wounds. Oh! She purifies me and delivers me from all evil.

(To be continued)

JANINA STROKA

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

If the spirit of divine love can enter, the hardness of the way diminishes, the tension is lightened, there is a sweetness and joy even in the core of difficulty and struggle. The indispensable surrender of all our will and works and activities to the Supreme is indeed only perfect and perfectly effective when it is a surrender of love.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Synthesis of Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 165)

THE DESCENT INTO NIGHT

(*Savitri*: Book II, Cantos 7 and 8)

PART I

*I made an assignation with the Night;
In the abyss was fixed our rendezvous:
In my breast carrying God's deathless light
I came her dark and dangerous heart to woo.*

Sri Aurobindo

'The Pilgrim of the Night' (*SABCL*, Vol. 5, p. 132)

SRI AUROBINDO is a poet and yogi combined. He puts forward the concept of a new poetry for the future. It must be a formulation of a complete spiritual realisation and must have the power to remould and transform the individual and the race; it must infuse in man a higher consciousness and thereby build the evolving soul in "the perfection of the unborn" and be "capable of linking our consciousness to the Divine".¹ A total and integral change of consciousness and nature is the high and difficult mission that Sri Aurobindo sets before his Yoga. The method is not as was professed or realised in old systems of yoga. He writes:

I have not found this method (as a whole) or anything like it professed or realised in the old Yogas. If I had, I should not have wasted my time in hewing out a road and in thirty years of search and inner creation when I could have hastened home safely to my goal in an easy canter over paths already blazed out, laid down, perfectly mapped, macadamised, made secure and public. Our Yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.²

And Sri Aurobindo leaves to posterity his unique and breathtaking Yoga of Transformation. Transformation, as he says, is not the central object of other paths as it is of this Yoga; the object is "a full descent of a new consciousness into the whole nature from top to bottom to transform life here". The Yoga of Transformation is not a world-shunning yoga, nor is it for individual salvation:

. . . we are here to do what the Divine wills and to create a world in which the Divine Will can manifest its truth no longer deformed by human ignorance or perverted and mistranslated by vital desire.³

“Savitri”, as the Mother says, “is a Mantra for the transformation of the world.” Sri Aurobindo writes,

The door that has been shut to all but a few may open; the kingdom of the Spirit may be established not only in man’s inner being but in his life and his works. Poetry also may have its share in that revolution and become part of the spiritual empire.⁴

PART II

The Law of Existence in the infinite Indeterminate works by twin aspects, the fundamental reality and an effectual reality.

The Being is the fundamental reality; the Becoming is an effectual reality: it is a dynamic power and result, a creative energy and working out of the Being, a constantly persistent yet mutable form, process, outcome of its immutable formless essence.⁵

The Conscious Force as it manifests from ‘some divine principle’ of the Being descends in Time and Space, fragments its energy and

. . . becomes more and more diminished and diluted, — dense indeed by its coarser crudity, but while that crudity of consistence compacts the stuff of Ignorance, it admits less and less the substance of light; it becomes thin in pure substance of consciousness and reduced in power of consciousness, thin in light, thin and weak in capacity of delight; it has to resort to a grosser thickness of its diminished stuff and to a strenuous output of its obscurer force to arrive at anything . . .⁶

Descending from breadths immeasurable, the Consciousness-Force becomes darker, less conscious and less intense in power and ultimately plunges into utter and dark unconsciousness, the Inconscient. This devolution is the result of the Being’s delight of self-creation, His insistence on His “own infinite diversity”, “an eternal pluralism”. The phenomenal lapse of the Conscious-Force results in the total unconsciousness of the Inconscient.

Divinity’s lapse from its own splendours wove
The many-patterned ground of all we are.

Savitri, p. 99

The Inconscience is an inverse reproduction of the supreme superconscience: it has the same absoluteness of being and automatic action, but in a vast involved trance; it is being lost in itself, plunged in its own abyss of infinity. Instead of a luminous absorption in self-existence there is a tenebrous involution in it, the darkness veiled within darkness . . . which makes it look like Non-Existence; instead of a luminous inherent self-awareness there is a consciousness plunged into an abyss of self-oblivion . . . ⁷

The Inconscient is the Superconscient's sleep.

Savitri, p. 600

Or,

The eternal Consciousness became the home
Of some unsouled almighty Inconscient

Savitri, p. 455

Sri Aurobindo says,

. . . it carries in it the awareness of all the truths of existence hidden in its dark infinite and, when it acts and creates . . . everything is arranged with the precision and perfection of an intrinsic knowledge. . . . All this state and action of the Inconscient corresponds very evidently with the same state and action of pure Superconscience, but translated into terms of self-darkness in place of the original self-light.⁸

The Realm of the Inconscient extends everywhere in creation; it is in the general universal Nature and in the heart of man. Life as it emerges from its unconscious sleep state is ensnared by “the blindness and the pang, the seal of tears, the bond of ignorance” —

The worlds are built by its unconscious Breath

Savitri, p. 202

The Inconscient like the Superconscient is a seed-state of immense activities, that is, from here emerge all the grades of consciousness involved therein, from Matter to the supreme Consciousness. But this is “a violent, fierce and formidable” emergence, “an eternity of disastrous absolutes”, “an immense negation of spiritual things”. The waking state of the Being is one of Truth Consciousness Infinite while the other is “a false or negative Infinite”. Here a question looms large before us: why can't the emergence of life, if all is being enacted in the self of the Being, be a deliberately

slow and beautiful efflorescence of the Divine? Why is there so much of ugliness and evil and the spirit's degeneration spoiling the beauty, truth and delight of creation? Sri Aurobindo sees the stark unconsciousness of the omnipotent Inconscient as the cause of the world's pain and suffering, evil and death —

The black Inconscient swung its dragon tail
Lashing a slumberous Infinite by its force
Into the deep obscurities of form

Savitri, p. 79

Or,

Inflicting still its habit on the cells
The phantom of a dark and evil start
Ghostlike pursues all that we dream and do.

Savitri, p. 140

It is true that spiritual realisation in itself as practised by earlier systems of yoga does not bring transformation of the being as a whole; "it may bring only an opening or heightening or widening of the consciousness at the top so as to realise something in the Purusha part without any radical change in the parts of Prakriti." In earlier paths of yoga, says Sri Aurobindo, "One may have some light of realisation at the spiritual summit of the consciousness but the parts below remain what they were."⁹ Ascension to higher planes of consciousness is only the first step of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga of Transformation. The second step of this Yoga is descent, bringing down the Light and Power from the higher planes, attained by the Ascension, into our mind, life, body and into the very depths of the inconscience:

A Power that lives upon the heights must act,
Bring into life's closed room the Immortal's air
And fill the finite with the Infinite.

Savitri, pp. 315-16

Then is it possible "to break earth's seal of ignorance and death".

The Inconscient's "dark and potent nescience was earth's start". This domain is "the mother of our ignorance" and its opposition "clogs the march of the soul". To know the "thought that moves the demon act", to know "the falsehood lurking in earth's crooked dreams", the world-redeemer "must travel Hell the world to save". He must enter the "eternity of Night" and experience the Law of Pain which the Inconscient's unconscious and dark state has imposed on this mortal life, or how could he cure its ills:

For this he must go down into the pit,
For this he must invade the dolorous Vasts.

Savitri, p. 450

Pain, misery, suffering, evil, falsehood, death stalk this earth-nature. There is no way to get rid of these dark universal Powers. It is by entering into the domains of their origin and bringing into their depths the Light and Power of the highest Consciousness that the dark powers of the abysses can be transformed into their higher divine counterparts, says Sri Aurobindo. This is the high mission Sri Aurobindo sets for his Yoga. This “grandiose urge” made him walk “by his own choice into hell’s trap”.

Let us see what the Mother says in regard to this entry into “hell’s trap”:

It is to enter into the domain of death deliberately and consciously while one is still alive, and then to return from this region and re-enter the physical body, resuming the course of material existence with full knowledge. But for that one must be an initiate.¹⁰

PART III

The Descent:

Beneath our material mortal life Sri Aurobindo sees two nether worlds from where the human being and his nature emerged. The perpetrators of evil, sin, suffering and death entered into human life from these nether depths. These two realms are the Subconscient and the Inconscient. Sri Aurobindo’s descent into Night has two stages, first descent into the subconscient and the second is his descent into “the hidden heart of Night”, the Inconscient, in which the former has its origination.

Ascending to the highest Consciousness, the Supramental, and armed with its Light, Power, Peace and Knowledge, Sri Aurobindo prepares to plunge into the eternity of Night to transform it into its divine counterpart:

A mind absolved from life, made calm to know,
A heart divorced from the blindness and the pang,
The seal of tears, the bond of ignorance,
He turned to find that wide world-failure’s cause.
Away he looked from Nature’s visible face
And sent his gaze into the viewless Vast,
The formidable unknown Infinity,
Asleep behind the endless coil of things

Savitri, p. 202

The veil was rent that covers Nature's depths:
 He saw the fount of the world's lasting pain
 And the mouth of the black pit of Ignorance

Ibid.

Sri Aurobindo confronts “the evil guarded at the roots of life” rising from the pit of Ignorance, “the Abyss whence our beginnings rose”. This is not a region of total unconsciousness but “a tenebrous awakened Nescience”, “a hidden Puissance conscious of its force”. This is the realm of the subconscious from where rose all evils and sufferings in human life. Our outer being “has depended on it for thousands of lives — that is why the outer being and physical consciousness's habit of response to the subconscious can be a formidable obstacle to the progress of the sadhana . . .”¹¹ towards divinity. Sri Aurobindo says,

The subconscious is a dark and ignorant region, so that it is natural that the obscurer movements of the Nature should have more power there.¹²

From the hollow bosom of “a grey carved mask of Night”

A fatal Influence upon creatures stole
 Whose lethal touch pursued the immortal spirit,
 On life was laid the haunting finger of Death
 And overcast with error, grief and pain
 The soul's native will for truth and joy and light.

Savitri, p. 203

It is from this “subconscious moonless cave” that

Inferno surges into the human air
 And touches all with a perverting breath.

Savitri, p. 480

and in man

The dreadful powers held down within his depths
 Become his masters or his ministers;
 Enormous they invade his bodily house . . .

Ibid.

These dreadful powers, “the Anarchs of the formless depths”, arose in life, and unaccustomed to the common light of earth, they enter the cells of the body “remote from Heaven's controlling eye”. The processing of the cells and functions of the organisms are controlled and regulated by them; they become the

Impatient architects of error's house,
 Leaders of the cosmic ignorance and unrest
 And sponsors of sorrow and mortality . . .

Savitri, p. 220

I. Descent into Subconscious (Canto 7):

In his descent into the subconscious Night Sri Aurobindo confronts these “messengers of evil's absolute” engendering a brute principle of life, the fashioners of life's sorrow and suffering, bale and death. Man is completely and helplessly under the control of these subconscious forces. Sri Aurobindo says,

As there are Powers of Knowledge or Forces of the Light, so there are Powers of Ignorance and tenebrous Forces of the Darkness whose work is to prolong the reign of Ignorance and Inconscience. As there are Forces of Truth, so there are Forces that live by the Falsehood and support it and work for its victory . . .¹³

These “Invisible Personalities and Powers” lure men into subjection to the undivine principle of Darkness and Falsehood and Evil.

The subconscious is a dark and ignorant region and where ignorance is there pain, suffering and death must be. It is a veritable hell. Sri Aurobindo “walks by his own choice into hell's trap”. (*Savitri*, p. 440)

This earth is full of the anguish of the gods;
 Ever they travail driven by Time's goad,
 And strive to work out the eternal will
 And shape the life divine in mortal forms.

Savitri, p. 444

But “a power came in to veil the eternal Light” and divert “the messages of the infallible Word”.

As Sri Aurobindo descends into subconscious Night, “antagonist forces crowd across his path”. One who intends to cure the cosmic malady must know how and whence evil and falsehood arise and what the remedy is. He says,

There can be no artificial escape from this problem which has always troubled humanity and from which it has found no satisfying issue. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil with its sweet and bitter fruits is secretly rooted in the very nature of the Inconscience from which our being has emerged and on which it still stands as a nether soil and basis of our physical existence; it has grown visibly on the surface in the manifold branchings of the Ignorance which is still the main bulk

and condition of our consciousness in its difficult evolution towards a supreme consciousness and an integral awareness. . . . It would follow that there can be no final solution until we have turned our inconscience into the greater consciousness, made the truth of self and spirit our life-basis and transformed our ignorance into a higher knowledge. . . . A mental control can only be a control, not a cure; a mental teaching, rule, standard can only impose an artificial groove in which our action revolves mechanically or with difficulty . . . A total change of consciousness, a radical change of nature is the one remedy and the sole issue.¹⁴

How do the manifold branchings of the Ignorance in the nether soil of our origin have their origination? Inconscience is the cause.

As in a dark beginning of all things,
A mute featureless semblance of the Unknown

Savitri, p. 1

the dark and unconscious Inconscient

Repeating for ever the unconscious act,
Prolonging for ever the unseeing will,
Cradled the cosmic drowse of ignorant Force
Whose moved creative slumber kindles the suns
And carries our lives in its somnambulist whirl.

Ibid.

Regarding the birth of Ignorance from the Inconscient the poet says,

A seed was in that nether matrix cast,
A dumb unprobed husk of perverted truth,
A cell of an insentient infinite.
A monstrous birth prepared its cosmic form
In Nature's titan embryo, Ignorance.

Savitri, p. 222

The lines continue,

Then in a fatal and stupendous hour
Something that sprang from the stark Inconscient's sleep
Unwillingly begotten by the mute Void,
Lifted its ominous head against the stars;
Overshadowing earth with its huge body of Doom

It chilled the heavens with the menace of a face.
 A nameless Power, a shadowy Will arose
 Immense and alien to our universe.

Savitri, pp. 222-23

The Birth of Ignorance, the “awakened Nescience”, the subconscious realm, from the Inconscient is of utmost significance for the terrestrial evolution. It is thus that total unconsciousness of the Inconscient rose to partially awakened state of the subconscious. This birth “teased the Inconscient to wake Ignorance” (*Savitri*, p. 2) otherwise the Consciousness-Truth would remain involved in the Night and there would be no way for its upward rising to the Transcendent plane. This is the method Nature adopted for the great and tremendous release of the consciousness. It is because the Ignorance is based on the original obscurity, on “an imperfect and divided consciousness and because we live in that obscurity and division that wrong knowledge and wrong will are possible”. It is in the return of Inconscience towards consciousness that they (falsehood, error, wrong and evil) can be seen taking their formation and it is there (the subconscious) that they seem to be normal and even inevitable to man. All these have grown visibly on the surface of our life and are still “the main bulk and condition of our consciousness in its difficult evolution”. Thus

On life was laid the haunting finger of Death
 And overcast with error, grief and pain
 The soul’s native will for truth and joy and light.

Savitri, p. 203

The manifold branchings of the Ignorance “held in thrall a miserable world” (*Savitri*, p. 229). The world-redeemer descends “into hell’s trap”:

In Night he plunged to know her dreadful heart,
 In Hell he sought the root and cause of Hell.

Savitri, p. 230

Sri Aurobindo plunged into the black pit of Ignorance and from that womb obscure he saw “emerge the body and visage of a dark Unseen” and

Grey foul inventions gruesome and macabre
 Came televised from the gulfs of Night.

Savitri, p. 212

Thus begins the world-redeemer's journey into the subconscious region where work the manifold branchings of the Ignorance, and inflict their little pigmy law and curb the mounting slow ascent of man; "Then his too scanty walk with death they close." (*Savitri*, p. 163) The invisible Personalities and Powers of the subconscious that Sri Aurobindo sees are our suffering's cause:

A peril haunted now the common air;
The world grew full of menacing Energies

Savitri, p. 205

He confronts the tenebrous awakened Nescience with its menacing Energies that rise in our life and control it. These menacing Energies that engender Falsehood and Evil are many.

1. Deception:

"A tract he reached unbuilt and owned by none"; there all could enter; it is "a no man's land of evil air". Unreality, pretence, ambiguity, deception rule and regulate the life in general:

A vast deception was the law of things;
Only by that deception they could live.

Savitri, p. 206

The poet gives a detailed picture of this tract:

The Fiend was visible, but cloaked in light;
He seemed a helping angel from the skies;
He armed untruth with Scripture and the Law;
He deceived with wisdom, with virtue slew the soul
And led to perdition by the heavenward path.

....

The air was full of treachery and ruse;
Truth-speaking was a stratagem in that place;
Ambush lurked in a smile and peril made
Safety its cover, trust its entry's gate:
Falsehood came laughing with the eyes of truth;
Each friend might turn an enemy or spy,
The hand one clasped ensleaved a dagger's stab
And an embrace could be Doom's iron cage.

Savitri, pp. 207-08

Truth was exiled from that region lest it should dare to hurt the heart of darkness with its light.

2. 'A city of ancient Ignorance':

This is a tract "founded upon a soil that knew not Light".

There each in his own darkness walked alone:
Only they agreed to differ in Evil's paths,
To live in their own way for their own selves
Or to enforce a common lie and wrong

Savitri, p. 208

It was a tract where collective or group Ego controlled our surface life.

There Ego was lord upon his peacock seat
And falsehood sat by him, his mate and queen:
The world turned to them as Heaven to Truth and God.

Savitri, p. 209

And

Injustice justified by firm decrees
The sovereign weights of Error's legalised trade,
But all the weights were false and none the same

Ibid.

Ethics "knobbed with scriptural rules" became a seeming table of "high Heaven's sacred code". And

A formal practice mailed and iron-shod
Gave to a rude and ruthless warrior kind
Drawn from the savage bowels of the earth
A proud stern poise of harsh nobility,
A civic posture rigid and formidable.
But all their private acts belied the pose

Ibid.

They lived in their own way for their own selves to enforce a common lie and wrong: "Beaks pecked and talons tore all weaker prey." (*Ibid*) Power and utility were their goal, their Truth and Right.

Inconscient traders in bundles of contraries,
 They did what in others they would persecute;
 When their eyes looked upon their fellow's vice,
 An indignation flamed, a virtuous wrath;
 Oblivious of their own deep-hid offence,
 Moblike they stoned a neighbour caught in sin.

Ibid.

In that "city of ancient Ignorance"

A pragmatist judge within passed false decrees,
 Posed worst iniquities on equity's base,
 Reasoned ill actions just, sanctioned the scale
 Of the merchant ego's interest and desire.

Savitri, pp. 209-10

Behind the ruthless cult of each group-ego there existed "a zealot fervour":

All faith not theirs bled scourged as heresy;
 They questioned, captived, tortured, burned or smote
 And forced the soul to abandon right or die.
 Amid her clashing creeds and warring sects
 Religion sat upon a blood-stained throne.

Savitri, p. 210

And in such tyrannical nature and action all groups were united upon "fraud and force". "The ideal was a cynic ridicule's butt"; and spiritual seeking was rejected, "lost in the circuits of the Ignorance". The world redeemer must pass slowly and with courage that perilous space:

Only were safe who kept God in their hearts:
 Courage their armour, faith their sword, they must walk,
 The hand ready to smite, the eye to scout,
 Casting a javelin regard in front,
 Heroes and soldiers of the army of Light.

Savitri, p. 211

(To be continued)

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5. Sri Aurobindo: *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol. 19, p. 659.
6. Sri Aurobindo: *Ibid.*, pp. 938-39.
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10. The Mother: *On Education*, CWM, Vol. 12, p. 87.
11. Sri Aurobindo: *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 24, p. 1593.
12. Sri Aurobindo: *Ibid.*
13. Sri Aurobindo: *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol. 18, p. 603.
14. Sri Aurobindo: *Ibid.*, pp. 627-28.

The mystical poet can only describe what he has felt, seen in himself or others or in the world just as he has felt or seen it or experienced through exact vision, close contact or identity and leave it to the general reader to understand or not understand or misunderstand according to his capacity. A new kind of poetry demands a new mentality in the recipient as well as in the writer.

Another question is the place of philosophy in poetry or whether it has any place at all. Some romanticists seem to believe that the poet has no right to think at all, only to see and feel. This accusation has been brought against me by many that I think too much and that when I try to write in verse, thought comes in and keeps out poetry. I hold, to the contrary, that philosophy has its place and can even take a leading place along with psychological experience as it does in the Gita. All depends on how it is done, whether it is a dry or a living philosophy, an arid intellectual statement or the expression not only of the living truth of thought but of something of its beauty, its light or its power.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Poetry and Art, CWSA, Vol. 27, p. 316)

THE TRUTH OF HARMONY

“When all is in agreement with the one Truth or an expression of it, that is harmony.”

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 560)

WE understand from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that each individual carries a spark, a unique aspect of the Divine Truth within, and it is our work here to realise our mode of divinity and its expression here in harmony with others. Similarly, a well-formed group, a community, a culture, a nation or race carries a unique aspect of the Divine and needs to find and express it for the sake of a complete manifestation in harmony with the other groups.

Sri Aurobindo called this indwelling divine element the Psychic being, the evolving seed of divinity in each individual. This being is actually the hidden leader of our journey here and has the capacity to purify, integrate and turn all our parts and personalities towards the Divine. It is also inherently aware of our real purpose and role in the world and our relations with it, and to realise it is given to us as our first priority. To work in the world is largely a means to work within ourselves and make this discovery first before our works begin to truly reflect the Divine Will in the world. To work collectively, to create a place or an environment or a community can help towards this only when each one understands that each has its own truth to live and express and while asserting one’s mode of being, respects the modes of others. To exercise respect, humility and sincerity towards others further helps in the realisation of the inner divine. And to learn to accommodate others’ views and ways while growing in one’s own helps one’s own growth and contributes towards developing a greater harmony for the collectivity.

Unsolved discords

This being our aspiration we also need to consider our limitations and frequent failures and find ways to deal with them. For as our inmost being, the Psychic being is determined to work towards the fulfilment of our highest aspiration; our outer and instrumental being — mind, life and body — has usually a long way to go before becoming responsive to the inner guidance; and unless there is a strong and lasting realisation of the Psychic being, which also necessitates a general purification of our egoistic nature, it is next to impossible that our outer being will be able to express the inner truth, or be able to appreciate the truths of others and work out things in the required harmony!

Therefore, when we are actually struck by disharmony amongst ourselves, we need to step back in consciousness, at times to step back from life and action, to concentrate, contemplate and find a guiding principle, a light that can harmonise all viewpoints and lead us further. As this stepping back to seek a higher harmony is an indispensable part of each one's inner work so also, to respond to the developing situations, each collectivity needs to step back, contemplate and contribute towards a harmonising solution.

To a growing consciousness differences are not perceived as problems as they challenge us to find a greater harmony, provide an opportunity to discover greater depths and heights of our being and uncover subconscious elements influencing our life which otherwise would remain hidden from our conscious mentality.

For all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony. They arise from the perception of an unsolved discord and the instinct of an undiscovered agreement or unity. To rest content with an unsolved discord is possible for the practical and more animal part of man, but impossible for his fully awakened mind, and usually even his practical parts only escape from the general necessity either by shutting out the problem or by accepting a rough, utilitarian and unilluminated compromise. For essentially, all Nature seeks a harmony, life and matter in their own sphere as much as mind in the arrangement of its perceptions. The greater the apparent disorder of the materials offered or the apparent disparateness, even to irreconcilable opposition, of the elements that have to be utilised, the stronger is the spur, and it drives towards a more subtle and puissant order than can normally be the result of a less difficult endeavour.

Sri Aurobindo
(*The Life Divine*, pp. 4-5)

Conflict resolution

There are stages to the conflicts and the resulting disharmony — difference, argument, quarrel, war etc. These roughly correspond to the descending levels of our psychology — perception, ideology, sentiments, physicality — and at each descending level our involvement in the gross and unconscious nature increases. Thus, as the disharmony grows and the consciousness slips to the lower levels it becomes more difficult to step back from the raging energy, to look at the situation from the depth of our being or from the height of our consciousness where reigns a greater unity, to find and introduce into the conflict a truer solution that can harmonise all the viewpoints. However, as the Yoga proceeds, the need to step back and concentrate in order to contact the higher consciousness grows less, for through successive stages of development one is able to experience the higher and higher grades of spiritual consciousness, allowing each to descend, to get established and express itself in

and through one. For each ascending grade of the higher consciousness is also a greater and more powerful witnessing and a uniting consciousness.

The perception of difference is an indication that the interest of a party is not in harmony with that of another or life in general. Tuning interests by the contact and influence of the soul-uniqueness of each one can solve the difference; and this already asks of us an effort to turn inwards. The levels of argument, quarrels and war are respectively levels of mind, vital and physical and on each level the impurities of that particular plane come into action.

Difficult as this may be, at any given stage of a conflict, it is wise to avoid nurturing the sprouts of the next degrading stage; the solution is to remain turned to a higher way and to a growing harmony. By getting agitated or excited, by losing one's temper and one's faith, by getting hurt or by being aggressive and thus throwing ourselves to the mercy of our surface nature, we only close ourselves from the influence of the higher workings and open ourselves to the ordinary or lower forces.

The true basis of progress

Harmony and not strife is the law of yogic living.

Sri Aurobindo
(*Letters on Yoga*, p. 803)

I take this opportunity to assure you that spiritual progress and the service of Truth are based on harmony and not on division and criticism.

The Mother
(*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 184)

Only in an environment of harmony and not in an aggressive, distrustful and mutually painful atmosphere can the greater harmony evolve. The aim of a divine life upon earth can be reached progressively only when the individual and the collectivity are both able to grow together and support each other. It is to learn to give space, encouragement and means to others to develop in their own modes that we are here together, and also to find the same for ourselves.

And when one or the other person or some action is perceived as compromising one's freedom of movement, it is not by creating a greater disharmony that we fix the out-of-tune movement, but by contemplating, living and suggesting harmonious solutions that can set things right for one and all.

In fact, I insist that the more difficult things are, the more you must remain quiet, and the more should you have an unshakeable faith. Of all things this is the most important.

Usually, as soon as things become difficult, human beings get agitated, become irritated, get terribly excited and they make the difficulties ten times more difficult. So I am warning you right away that this is not to be done, that you must do the opposite . . .

The Mother
(CWM, Vol. 6, p. 453)

Choosing the side of the Divine:

In the same talk, the Mother next reads her next year's message:

No human will can finally prevail against the Divine's Will. Let us put ourselves deliberately and exclusively on the side of the Divine, and the Victory is ultimately certain.

The Mother
(*Ibid.*, p. 454)

We are asked to choose the Divine and be on His side! Essentially it means that we are here to concentrate on the Divine, to consecrate our life to his presence and service, to live only for the Divine, win his victory in ourselves and work for his unity and harmony in the world. And yet, since life is all about making the right choice, we often find ourselves on one or the other side of a conflict. In such a case one needs to understand what it means to choose the side of the Divine!

The choice is there at every minute; every minute you are faced with a choice: the choice to climb up or go down, the choice to progress or go backwards. But this choice does not imply that you prefer things to be like this or like that; it is a fact of every moment, an *attitude* you take.

The Mother
(CWM, Vol. 8, p. 407)

If we choose to make the inner discovery, it should be an unflinching choice because it refers to changing the way we aspire to experience life and contribute to the world. But the choice made regarding any external motive cannot be held on to as the ultimate choice, for it would then become a bias and a preference and in the scenario of an ever-changing situation we are required to choose freely, again and again, the side of the Truth!

The Mother further explains,

. . . if you have preferences, you will choose through preference in one way or another, your preference will distort your choice: it will be calculation,

bargaining, you will act with the idea that a particular thing must happen because this is what you prefer and not because that is the truth, the right thing to do. Preference is attached to the result, acts with a view to the result, wishes things to be in a particular way and acts to bring about its wish; and so this opens the door to all kinds of things. Choice is independent of the result. And certainly, at every minute you can choose, you are faced with the necessity of choosing at every second. And you do not choose really well, in all sincerity, unless it is the truth of the choice which interests you, and not the result of your choice. If you choose with the result in view, that falsifies your choice.

The Mother
(*Ibid.*)

Having a consciousness free from preferences is a state of inner freedom from the narrowness of mind and having it, the inner consciousness can freely perceive the situation and call down the higher consciousness and its alchemy and find the appropriate applications of the higher truth.

The Mother adds,

You may — or you ought to if you can't — aspire to have the same deep attitude of understanding, unity, love, perfect compassion for all that is in the universe; but this very attitude will be applied to each case in a different way, according to the truth of that case and its necessity. What could be called the motive or rather the origin of the action is the same, but the action may even be totally and diametrically opposite in accordance with the case and the deeper truth of each case.

The Mother
(*Ibid.*, p. 408)

The rules of the game:

While it is true that at times one has to speak up and stand up by the deeply-felt truth, the way one takes to bridge the gap will determine one's relation with the Divine Mother and will facilitate or hamper the manifestation of her will in the world.

From the point of view of a spiritual life, it is not what you do that matters most, but the way in which it is done and the consciousness you put into it.

The Mother
(*CWM*, Vol. 14, p. 36)

To be able to choose, to be sincere, inwardly to put oneself on the side of the Divine! This also means that one will be able to come out of one's preferences and seek the truth, be able to perceive the concerns of each and what aspect of the Divine each represents, be able to place all the viewpoints in the true perspective and be able to find a harmonising solution.

It [harmony, delight and love] is in you and when it is like that it spreads out in the atmosphere — but naturally only those can share who are open and sensitive to the influence. Still everyone who has peace or love in him becomes an added influence for its increase in the atmosphere.

Sri Aurobindo
(*Letters on Yoga*, p. 835)

The Integral Yoga is challenging, the practice is on the individual as well as the collective level. Spirituality turning towards life is a novel adventure, the treading of the Yoga is in unknown territories and we are still to develop the tools to work with the problems that were never faced before. But, if for any reason, if we find ourselves in the middle of a conflict and must find the way to a greater harmony, we will need to take care to see that the energy we use, the means we employ, the attitudes we take to create such tools are also true and pure! We have to build on the deeper qualities of our consciousness — invocation, sincerity, truthfulness, humility, respect, openness, generosity, forgiveness, love, compassion, wisdom, surrender etc. And these cannot be compromised.

The words of the Mother, explaining an aphorism of Sri Aurobindo give us a guiding light to work in this direction:

‘Only those thoughts are true the opposite of which is also true in its own time and application; indisputable dogmas are the most dangerous kind of falsehoods.’

If one element of this totality is taken separately and affirmed as the only true one, however central or comprehensive it may be, it necessarily becomes a falsehood, since it denies all the rest of the Total Truth.

This is precisely how indisputable dogmas are created and this is why they are the most dangerous kind of falsehood — because each one asserts that it is the sole truth to the exclusion of all other truths which, in their innumerable and complementary totality, express progressively, in the becoming, the infinite, eternal, absolute Truth.

The Mother
(*CWM*, Vol. 10, pp. 66, 67)

To open ourselves only to the Divine

Many things deemed true and high from an ordinary viewpoint cannot stand the test of the vision of the Life Divine. For instance, the known phrase, “all is fair in love and war”, may have a validity in normal life but when the choice is not just about the result but also and mainly about the growth into the higher consciousness, it will not do to indulge in the ways of the ordinary or lower consciousness! The experience, vision and discipline of keeping always in front the truth of harmony for the sake of the Divine’s work allows us to keep adjusting, even losing and sacrificing, if that is required, in order to gain the ultimate victory for the Divine. In fact, most of the time it is those who know how to sacrifice their interests and lose their personal battles are the people who really help secure victory for the Divine Mother!

To grow in an all-inclusive unity and harmony is our goal and our life a means of service to the Supreme Mother. We are also asked to grow in the one self, in unity with all by the growth of consciousness and to replace our lower Nature by the Higher Nature. An exclusive concentration on the Supreme Consciousness is given to us as our means to grow in the higher consciousness.

It is a fact always known to all yogis and occultists since the beginning of time, in Europe and Africa as in India, that wherever yoga or Yajna is done, there the hostile Forces gather together to stop it by any means. It is known that there is a lower nature and a higher spiritual nature — it is known that they pull different ways and the lower is strongest at first and the higher afterwards. It is known that the hostile Forces take advantage of the movements of the lower nature and try to spoil through them, smash or retard the siddhi.

Sri Aurobindo
(Letters on Yoga, p. 1730)

Apart from ignorance and ego, it is the influence and action of the subtle adverse forces that are at the root of the quarrels. And it is important to note that wherever there is an attack of the hostile forces, all the people involved in the quarrel and those who are able to influence it, directly or indirectly are under attack and will manifest forces of disintegration whenever anyone from any side is careless and insincere in following the purest truth.

However, there is always something to be done from our end, and for the most part, that alone must be our concern.

I have noticed one thing, that in at least ninety-nine cases out of a hundred this [attack by adverse forces] is an excuse which people give to themselves. I have seen that practically almost all who write to me: “I am violently attacked by adverse forces”, give this as an excuse. It is because there are many things

in their nature which do not want to surrender, so they put all the blame on the adverse forces.

The Mother
(*CWM*, Vol. 15, p. 345)

Reliance on the Grace

Fortunately, the Grace of the Divine Mother is with us and it is always possible to go to the root of the problem or simply offer the entire problem to her while focusing our energies in her service, preferably through selfless work. Though it becomes difficult in the later stages of quarrels, if we can open to the Mother, we can always find a way to a lasting peace and unity.

This too the supreme Diplomat can use,
He makes our fall a means for greater rise.

Sri Aurobindo
(*Savitri*, p. 34)

By surrendering our will to the Mother, we are actually invoking Her Will and power to deal with our situation. And that also prepares an environment in us to receive her consciousness in us. It is seen that whenever there is a conflict and the play of restless subconscious energies, in the absence of a decisive and permanent psychic or spiritual realisation, it is safer to turn exclusively towards the Mother and open to her influence, to rely on her care, offer selflessly our works to her, love her, contemplate her presence and service in the world, read the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in order to come in contact with their consciousness and transforming power etc; this done and allowed its time, the answers gradually emerge from them. It is also seen that the answers can be in the form of words, but most of the time they come as a presence and a grace and an influence that remoulds our consciousness and gives us the experience of a deep and vast harmony that begins from within ourselves.

When one feels the Divine and feels others in the Divine, then the real harmony comes. Meanwhile what there can be is the goodwill and unity founded on the feeling of a common divine goal and the sense of being all children of the Mother. . . . Real harmony can come only from a psychic or a spiritual basis.

Sri Aurobindo
(*Letters on Yoga*, p. 814)

ASHESH JOSHI

THE LUMINOUS PAST

(Continued from the issue of January 2013)

Now the main person on whom we could rely was Nolini-da. It was to him that I turned with all my big and small problems related to work. One day, suddenly, the Registrar of the School came and informed me, “The Mother has said that measles and mumps are contagious diseases. From today your boarding will be closed for fifteen days. Don’t let the children go to School or the Playground from today.”

“But we have another doctor who is treating the children,” I said.

“These diseases are contagious, so the doctor at the dispensary will look after the children,” he said.

When the children came back from school and heard the news, they were disappointed and were sitting around silently. I served them lunch and went to see Nolini-da. At four o’clock, he called Dr. Dasgupta and gave him the paper signed by the Mother and told him to inform at the School that Jhunjhun Home wouldn’t follow the quarantine. The Mother had said, “Children who are not unwell can continue going to the School and to the Playground. Only those children who are unwell will not go out.” In this context, Nolini-da recounted to us an anecdote that he had heard from the Mother. It was an episode from the Mother’s childhood which she had told Nolini-da that very morning.

The Mother’s brother, Mattéo, was in bed with mumps. His dear little sister (the Mother) was not able to go near her brother. Her mother had tucked the son in bed where he was comfortable under a mosquito net¹ and warned the daughter not to touch Mattéo. Even going near him was forbidden. She was not even allowed to go inside the room. Now, the little sister was used to giving her brother a good night kiss. Before going to bed, she was feeling very uneasy. She just could not shut her eyes. The little girl entered her brother’s room silently, and raising the mosquito net, saw that her brother was still awake. She showed her affection to him with all her heart. She caressed his throat where it was hurting and hugged him. Then, coming out, she tucked the mosquito net. After this, she tiptoed away before her mother could get an inkling of what was going on and she got into bed again. She prayed so that her brother would get well. Next morning, when the Mother got up, she pressed her own throat. But there was no pain or uneasiness anywhere.

“I don’t believe that these illnesses are really contagious,” she thought. “It’s enough to be very careful.”

1. Translator’s note: We are not sure that there was really a mosquito net in the Mother’s house in France. Presumably, this is the way Pramila Devi imagined the scene to have happened.

After hearing this story, we were more reassured. The doctor came and sent the children to the Playground. Then the doctor went to the School and showed them the paper signed by the Mother. He told them what Nolini-da had said, “The children of Jhunjhun Home will not be quarantined. The children will go to the School and the Playground as usual.” How happy the students were! The joy of freedom!

*

After Pavitra-da passed away, the first order we got from the School was to ask me to stop cooking for the students. In our boarding the children used to get meat and fish. I used to cook tasty and healthy dishes for them. I was against sending the children to the Corner House.² Once again, in 1972, which was the year of Sri Aurobindo’s centenary, the Registrar asked me to stop cooking. The Mother said that the boarding had to be reorganised according to new rules. Until then, boys and girls used to live together in the boardings. From that year boys and girls were separated, and lived in separate boardings. Since our boarding was very close to the Ashram, it became a girls’ boarding. The boys were transferred from Jhunjhun Home. Since things were a bit disorganised during this period, the School authorities stalled the decision to stop the cooking. I too was relieved for a while.

On the boarding’s anniversary on 9th December, the Mother called us in the afternoon. What a beautiful and sweet reunion it was when I took the children with me and went to see her. Along with everyone else I was sitting on the staircase. A little four-year-old boy, all of a sudden, wanted to know whether our Mother was really the Divine Mother. As soon as I told him that indeed she was, he started saying that now he was afraid. When I asked him why he was afraid, he replied, “I have been naughty. The Divine Mother will be angry.” What a terrible situation! I quickly reassured him by caressing his head and back. He agreed to go in after covering his head with the end of my *sari*. It was our turn to go into the Mother’s room. Even after entering the Mother’s room, he remained covered as he was.

When the Mother saw this scene she winked and laughed like a little girl. She was absolutely delighted to see the children. She slipped her hand under the cover made by my *sari* and started tickling the little boy’s ears and throat. Then she parted the cloth and made a gesture to ask him if he was afraid. He came out from under the end of my *sari* and looking at the Mother’s hand, shook his head to say that he wasn’t afraid. He crouched down at the Mother’s feet and did a *pranam*. The Mother showed freely her affection for him. When everyone had finished their *pranams*, this time too the Mother gave me a tin of chocolates. As soon as we were downstairs, the boy told me, “Didi, you suffer from asthma, so you shouldn’t eat chocolates.

2. Translator’s note: The students’ canteen.

You should give your share to me. Don't you think so?"

I will never forget the joy of going to the Mother with the children.

*

From 16th December 1972, Jhunjhun Home became a boarding only for girls. With this, my classes at the School also came to an end. The School authorities wanted me to take the classes in the boarding. I wrote and informed the Mother. She did not give me the permission to teach this group made up of boys and girls inside an all-girls' boarding. I did not want the girls to leave the boarding and teach my class. I wrote to the Mother asking her permission to take classes for adults after the girls had gone to the Playground. The Mother wrote back that I should teach adults in the evening. From that time on, I taught adults for six years.

*

The Registrar of the School asked me once again to stop cooking in the boarding. This time I took Counouma's permission and went to meet André-da in his office. I was charmed by the way he looked at me affectionately. His manners were quite similar to the Mother's. As soon as he saw me, he said, "Come, let us begin our talk." He already knew me from before.

Right at the beginning, he said, "Please tell me freely about all your difficulties. What actually is your objection to send the children to eat in the Corner House?"

"My objection is for a simple reason," I said. "There are two girls in the boarding who have lost their mother, and their father has specially requested me, saying that if they eat in the Corner House, their fragile health will never be able to take it. He wanted me to be near them and to be very careful about what they ate. I had promised their father that I would feed them according to his instructions. But, I will do as the Mother says. He will understand."

It was time for me to leave. As André-da accompanied me to the door, he said, "You may continue with your cooking."

(To be continued)

PRAMILA DEVI

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

In the Upanishads, in the inspired scripture of the most ancient Vedanta, we find the affirmation of the Absolute, the experience-concept of the utter and ineffable Transcendence; but we find also, not in contradiction to it but as its corollary, an affirmation of the cosmic Divinity, an experience-concept of the cosmic Self and the becoming of Brahman in the universe. Equally, we find the affirmation of the Divine Reality in the individual: this too is an experience-concept; it is seized upon not as an appearance, but as an actual becoming. In place of a sole supreme exclusive affirmation negating all else than the transcendent Absolute we find a comprehensive affirmation carried to its farthest conclusion: this concept of Reality and of Knowledge enveloping in one view the cosmic and the Absolute coincides fundamentally with our own; for it implies that the Ignorance too is a half-veiled part of the Knowledge and world-knowledge a part of self-knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Life Divine, CWSA, Vol. 22, pp. 661-62)

The Isha Upanishad insists on the unity and reality of all the manifestations of the Absolute; it refuses to confine truth to any one aspect. Brahman is the stable and the mobile, the internal and the external, all that is near and all that is far whether spiritually or in the extension of Time and Space; it is the Being and all becomings, the Pure and Silent who is without feature or action and the Seer and Thinker who organises the world and its objects; it is the One who becomes all that we are sensible of in the universe, the Immanent and that in which he takes up his dwelling. The Upanishad affirms the perfect and the liberating knowledge to be that which excludes neither the Self nor its creations: the liberated spirit sees all these as becomings of the Self-existent in an internal vision and by a consciousness which perceives the universe within itself instead of looking out on it, like the limited and egoistic mind, as a thing other than itself. To live in the cosmic Ignorance is a blindness, but to confine oneself in an exclusive absolutism of Knowledge is also a blindness: to know Brahman as at once and together the Knowledge and the Ignorance, to attain to the supreme status at once by the Becoming and the Non-Becoming, to relate together realisation of the transcendent and the cosmic self, to achieve foundation in the supramundane and a self-aware manifestation in the mundane, is the integral knowledge; that is the possession of Immortality. It is this whole consciousness with its complete knowledge that builds the foundation of the Life Divine and makes its attainment possible.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Life Divine, CWSA, Vol. 22, p. 662)

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