

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

MAY 2013

PRICE: Rs. 30.00

SUBSCRIPTIONS

INLAND

Annual: Rs. 200.00

For 10 years: Rs. 1,800.00

Price per Single Copy: Rs. 30.00

OVERSEAS

Sea Mail:

Annual: \$35 or Rs. 1,400.00

For 10 years: \$350 or Rs. 14,000.00

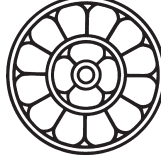
Air Mail:

Annual: \$70 or Rs. 2,800.00

For 10 years: \$700 or Rs. 28,000.00

All payments to be made in favour of *Mother India*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. For outstation cheques kindly add Rs. 15 for annual membership and Rs. 50 for 10-year subscription.

Subscribers are requested to mention their subscription number in case of any enquiry. The correspondents should give their full address in BLOCK letters, with pin code.



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.



All Rights Reserved. No matter appearing in this journal or part thereof may be reproduced or translated without written permission from the publishers except for short extracts as quotations.

The views expressed by the authors are not necessarily those of the journal.

All correspondence to be addressed to:

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India

Phone: (0413) 2233642

e-mail: motherindia@sriurobindoashram.org.in

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Founding Editor: K. D. SETHNA (AMAL KIRAN)

Editors: RAVI, HEMANT KAPOOR, RANGANATH RAGHAVAN

Published by: MANOJ DAS GUPTA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST

PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY 605 002

Printed by: SWADHIN CHATTERJEE

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No. R.N. 8667/63

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXVI

No. 5

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

Sri Aurobindo

‘TWO ARE THE ENDS OF EXISTENCE, TWO ARE THE DREAMS OF THE MOTHER . . .’ (Poem)	...	369
SRI AUROBINDO’S LETTERS ON THE MOTHER	...	371
‘THE WORLD IS MAKING ITSELF ANEW UNDER A GREAT SPIRITUAL PRESSURE . . .’	...	391

The Mother

‘. . . IN THE ACTIVITY OF EACH MOMENT . . .’	...	393
SOME LETTERS	...	394

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)

“GIFT-CYCLE” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO	...	400
--	-----	-----

Anilbaran

ESSENTIALS OF INDIAN CULTURE (with Sri Aurobindo’s Corrections)	...	401
---	-----	-----

Amrita

VISIONS AND VOICES	...	409
--------------------	-----	-----

Manoj Das

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI CHAPTER XXII: “THE TWO MUTUALLY COMPLEMENTARY MOVEMENTS”	...	411
---	-----	-----

Janina Stroka

A CAPTIVE OF HER LOVE	...	419
-----------------------	-----	-----

Ratri Ray

SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION IN SRI AUROBINDO	...	429
--	-----	-----

Charan Singh

MEDITATIONS ON MAN’S DIVINE POSSIBILITIES IN SRI AUROBINDO’S <i>SAVITRI</i>	...	435
---	-----	-----

Pramila Devi

THE LUMINOUS PAST	...	444
-------------------	-----	-----

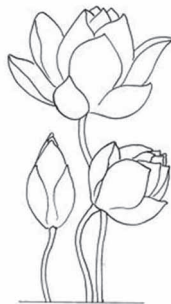
‘TWO ARE THE ENDS OF EXISTENCE, TWO ARE THE DREAMS OF THE MOTHER . . .’

. . . Two are the ends of existence, two are the dreams of the Mother:
Heaven unchanging, earth with her time-beats yearn to each other, —
Earth-souls needing the touch of the heavens peace to recapture,
Heaven needing earth's passion to quiver its peace into rapture.
Marry, O lightning eternal, the passion of a moment-born fire!
Out of thy greatness draw close to the breast of our mortal desire!
Is he thy master, Rudra the mighty, Shiva ascetic?
Has he denied thee his world? In his dance that they tell of, ecstatic,
Slaying, creating, calm in the midst of the movement and madness,
Stole there no rhythm of an earthly joy and a mortal sadness?
Wast thou not made in the shape of a woman? Sweetness and beauty
Move like a song of the gods in thy limbs and to love is thy duty
Graved in thy heart as on tablets of fate; joy's delicate blossom
Sleeps in thy lids of delight; all Nature hides in thy bosom
Claiming her children unborn and the food of her love and her laughter.
Is he the first? was there none then before him? shall none come after?
He who denies and his blows beat down on our hearts like a hammer's,
He whose calm is the silent reply to our passion and clamours!
Is not there deity greater here new-born in a noble
Labour and sorrow and struggle than stilled into rapture immobile?
Earth has beatitudes warmer than heaven's that are bare and undying,
Marvels of Time on the crest of the moments to Infinity flying.
Earth has her godheads; the Tritons sway on the toss of the billows,
Emerald locks of the Nereids stream on their foam-crested pillows,
Dryads peer out from the branches, Naiads glance up from the waters;
High are her flame-points of joy and the gods are ensnared by her daughters.
Artemis calls as she flees through the glades and the breezes pursue her;
Cypris laughs in her isles where the ocean-winds linger to woo her.
Here thou shalt meet amid beauty forgotten the dance of the Graces;
Night shall be haunted for ever with strange and delicate faces.
Music is here of the fife and the flute and the lyre and the timbal,
Wind in the forests, bees in the grove, — spring's ardent cymbal
Thrilling, the cry of the cuckoo; the nightingale sings in the branches,
Human laughter is heard and the cattle low in the ranches.
Frankly and sweetly she gives to her children the bliss of her body,

Breath of her lips and the green of her garments, rain-pourings heady
 Tossed from her cloud-carried beaker of tempest, oceans and streamlets,
 Dawn and the mountain-air, corn-fields and vineyards, pastures and hamlets,
 Tangles of sunbeams asleep, mooned dream-depths, twilight's shadows,
 Taste and scent and the fruits of her trees and the flowers of her meadows,
 Life with her wine-cup of longing under the purple of her tenture,
 Death as her gate of escape and rebirth and renewal of venture.
 Still must they mutter that all here is vision and passing appearance,
 Magic of Maya with falsehood and pain for its only inheritance.
 One is there only, apart in his greatness, the End and Beginning, —
 He who has sent through his soul's wide spaces the universe spinning.
 One eternal, Time an illusion, life a brief error!
 One eternal, Master of heaven — and of hell and its terror!
 Spirit of silence and purity rapt and aloof from creation, —
 Dreaming through aeons unreal his splendid and empty formation!
 Spirit all-wise in omnipotence shaping a world but to break it, —
 Pushed by what mood of a moment, the breath of what fancy to make it?
 None is there great but the eternal and lonely, the unique and unmated,
 Bliss lives alone with the self-pure, the single, the forever-uncreated.
 Truths? or thought's structures bridging the vacancy mute and unsounded
 Facing the soul when it turns from the stress of the figures around it?
 Solely we see here a world self-made by some indwelling Glory
 Building with forms and events its strange and magnificent story.
 Yet at the last has not all been solved and unwisdom demolished,
 Myth cast out and all dreams of the soul, and all worship abolished? . . .

SRI AUROBINDO
 'Ahana'

(*Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, pp. 477-79)



SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS ON THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of April 2013)

SECTION THREE

THE MOTHER AND THE PRACTICE OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA

The Mother's Presence She Is Always Present

Why do I sometimes feel myself far from the Mother? I want to be able to feel her constantly with me.

The Mother is always there with you. You have only to throw away the forces of Ignorance to feel her with you always.

1 August 1933

*

You have said: "Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you; because she is, indeed, always present."¹ Does this mean that the Mother knows all our insignificant thoughts at all times, or only when she concentrates?

It is said that the Mother is always present and looking at you. That does not mean that in her physical mind she is thinking of you always and seeing your thoughts. There is no need of that, since she is everywhere and acts everywhere out of her universal knowledge.

It seems to me that the more we communicate our thoughts to her, the more we open ourselves to her forces and the more effective becomes our surrender to her. Am I right?

Yes, quite right.

12 August 1933

*

1. This message of Sri Aurobindo was first hung in the dining hall of the Ashram on 28 March 1928. — Ed.

In what sense is the Mother “everywhere”? Is it because she has descended to the universal and has complete knowledge of the forces working there? I suppose the universal or “everywhere” includes the physical plane. If so, does the Mother know all the happenings and events on the physical plane?

Including what Lloyd George had today for breakfast or what Roosevelt said to his wife about their servants? Why should the Mother “know” in the human way all such happenings on the physical plane? Her business in her embodiment is to know the working of the universal forces and use them for her work; for the rest she knows what she needs to know, sometimes with her inner self, sometimes with her physical mind. All knowledge is available in her universal self to her, but she brings forward only what is meant to be brought forward so that the work may be done.

13 August 1933

*

I had a dream in which I was walking alone in the desert. Was the meaning of the dream that this sadhana is very dry and difficult?

No. It is perhaps how some part of the vital or physical consciousness figured it. But the path is not a desert nor are you alone, since the Mother is with you.

2 November 1933

*

My vital does not seem to have devotion for the Mother. Instead of loving her, it gets mixed with undivine forces. Protect me from these vital obstructions. I wish to feel that I am lying in the Mother’s lap.

The Mother is always with you. The vital has its desires and therefore does not believe in the Mother’s presence. You have to call down the Mother’s Force into it to remove its doubts and desires.

11 November 1933

*

The Mother is always with you. Put your faith in her, remain quiet within and do with that quietude what has to be done. You will become more and more aware of her constant Presence, will feel her action behind yours and the burden of your work will no longer be heavy on you.

21 April 1935

*

You have written: "Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you; because she is, indeed, always present." On the other hand, you wrote to me recently that it was not physically possible for her to be present everywhere. When I asked the Mother about this, she said that she could be present in many places. How to reconcile these contradictory statements?

If by physically you mean corporeally, in her visible tangible material body, it is obvious that it cannot be. When you asked Mother the question she did not understand you to mean that — she said she could be present everywhere, and she meant, of course, in her consciousness. It is the consciousness and not the body that is the being, the person; the body is only a support and instrument for the action of the consciousness. Mother can be personally present in her consciousness. The universal presence of course is always there and the universal and personal are two aspects of the same being.

25 August 1936

*

Sometimes the thought comes to me: "Outwardly and inwardly, I am very far from the Mother." Why does it come?

It is the feeling of the physical or outward being which is by its ignorance unable to feel the Mother's nearness.

How can I convince myself of the falsity of this thought and drive it away?

The Mother is always near and within, it is only the obscurity of mind and vital that do not see or feel it. That is a knowledge which the mind ought to hold firmly.

29 April 1937

Feeling the Mother's Presence

Live always as if you were under the very eye of the Supreme and of the Divine Mother. Do nothing, try to think and feel nothing that would be unworthy of the Divine Presence.

16 April 1930

*

The constant presence of the Mother comes by practice; the Divine Grace is essential for success in the sadhana, but it is the practice that prepares the descent of the Grace.

You have to learn to go inward, ceasing to live in external things only, quiet the mind and aspire to become aware of the Mother's workings in you.

2 July 1930

*

How and when can one feel the Mother's concrete presence all the time?

It is a matter, first, of the constant activity of the psychic and secondly of the conversion of the physical and its openness to inner supraphysical experience. Apart from the vital and its disturbances the physical is the chief difficulty in establishing a continuity of Yogic consciousness and experience. If the physical is thoroughly transformed — opened and conscious — then stability and continuity become easy.

16 October 1933

*

It is quite necessary to realise the Mother in her formless presence and not only in her form.

December 1933

*

But I do not see why you call the feeling sentimental or think that your sense of the presence of the Mother in the heart-beats etc. was unreal. It was your psychic being that suggested it to you and the response showed that the consciousness was ready. Mother felt that something was happening in you and felt that it was the beginning of a realisation — she was encouraging it and did not discourage. If it had been a wrong or vital movement she would not have felt like that.

13 August 1934

*

We believe that it is the Mother who does the sadhana in us, but we scarcely feel it. I suppose there must be some veil in us.

It is a veil which disappears when the Mother's working as well as her presence is consciously felt at all times.

7 January 1935

*

Is there any difference between the Mother's Presence and the Divine Consciousness?

One can feel the Divine Consciousness impersonally as a new consciousness only. The Mother's Presence is something more — one feels herself there present within or above or enveloping one or all these together.

8 July 1935

*

The feeling of the Mother's Presence or nearness does not depend on whether you write or do not write. Many who write often do not feel it, some who write seldom feel her always close.

11 June 1936

*

You write: "One can feel the Divine Consciousness impersonally as a new consciousness only"² but that the Mother's presence is something more. You also wrote in another letter that the Divine Presence in the heart is much more than the consciousness. In what way is the Presence more than the consciousness?

I meant that one can feel the divine consciousness as an impersonal spiritual state, a state of peace, light, joy, wideness without feeling in it the Divine Presence. The Divine Presence is felt as that of one who is the living source and essence of that light etc., a Being therefore, not merely a spiritual state. The Mother's Presence is still more concrete, definite, personal — it is not that of Someone unknown, of a Power or Being, but of one who is known, intimate, loved, to whom one can offer all the being in a living concrete way. The image is not indispensable, though it helps — the presence can be inwardly felt without it.

2 July 1936

*

2. See letter of 8 July 1935 above. — Ed.

There is no such necessary precedence as that first one must feel the Presence and then only can one feel oneself the Mother's; it is more often the increase of the feeling that brings the Presence. For the feeling comes from the psychic consciousness and it is the growth of the psychic consciousness that makes the constant Presence at last possible. The feeling comes from the psychic and is true of the inner being — its not being yet fulfilled in the whole does not make it an imagination; on the contrary, the more it grows the more is the likelihood of the whole being fulfilling this truth; the inner *bhāva* takes more and more possession of the outer consciousness and remoulds it so as to make it a truth there also. This is the constant principle of action in the Yogic transformation — what is true within comes out and takes possession of the mind and heart and will and through them prevails over the ignorance of the outer members and brings the inner truth out there also.

16 September 1936

*

What stands in the way is the recurring circle of the old mixture. To break out of that is very necessary to arrive at an inner Yogic calm and peace not disturbed by these things. If that is established, it will be possible to feel in it the Mother's Presence, to open to her guidance, to get, not by occasional glimpses but in a steady opening and flowering, the psychic perception and the descent of the spiritual Light and Ananda. For that help will be with you.

7 March 1937

*

It is quite right and part of the right consciousness in sadhana that you should feel drawn in your heart towards the Mother and aspire for the vision and realisation of her presence. But there should not be any kind of restlessness joined to this feeling. The feeling should be quietly intense. It will then be easier for the sense of the presence to come and to grow in you.

*

I feel some movement coming down from above and as if it was broadening my head and face. The whole movement is towards the Mother. What can this be? Has it any direct relation with my artistic creations?

Yes. It is the result of the pressure put by the Mother to see and do things in the true light. What you feel coming down is the true consciousness with the presence and action of the Mother.

*

Mother gave me a quiet mind today. Ever since pranam I have been feeling her atmosphere; some force which I feel to be hers is upon my head and around me. My restlessness is much less, almost gone.

It is the Mother's touch that you feel upon you — and that indicates her presence. In the state of the consciousness it is the Force working on the system which brings what is needed or aspired to, peace or light or happiness and the psychic opening.

Peace, quiet, followed by a happy state and a psychic opening is what you need — let that grow always.

Spiritual Possibility due to the Mother's Presence

How much freedom is given to every sadhak here! But how many of us know what is meant by a Guru and how to respect him and treat him?

Certainly very few seem to realise what a possibility has been given them here — all has been turned into an opportunity for the bubbling of the vital or the tamas of the physical rather than used for the intended psychic and spiritual purpose.

7 March 1936

*

You write, "Certainly very few seem to realise what a possibility has been given them here." What precisely do you mean by "possibility" — possibility of what?

I was not speaking of any particular thing — but the whole spiritual possibility due to the Mother's presence here. Very few realise what that means and even those who have some idea of it take little advantage and allow their lower nature to block the progress.

9 March 1936

The Mother's Presence and the Adverse Forces

X writes: "One thing I do not understand. Though I feel the Mother so near to me, these forces still dare to come and disturb me. How is this possible?" Please tell me what to reply to him.

The forces can always be there so long as there is not the transformation of the whole nature. They manifest themselves whenever they can. But if the Presence of the Mother can always be felt vividly and continuously, then one need not be troubled by their endeavours; one can face and repel them in the full consciousness of the Mother's grace and protection.

1936

The Mother's Presence and Human Imperfection

Do doubt and ego continue even after one has the realisation of the Divine Consciousness and the Mother's Presence?

No doubt can remain if there is the realisation of the Divine Consciousness and the Mother's Presence. Imperfections may remain in the outer being, but they do not trouble the inner being and can be got rid of quietly.

*

In your letters you say always that the Mother has withdrawn from you and you think she does it deliberately because of some fault or defect in your nature. This is an error. The Mother is always present with you; she does not withdraw. But if you believe otherwise, if you always expect her to withdraw, it will cloud your perception and prevent you from realising her presence. On the contrary, have the faith that, whether you feel it or not, her presence and her protection are always there. When old feelings or attachments rise from the subconscious, call her force and light in to clear all that is obscure, for they are there always ready to act. Do not admit any thoughts or ideas that lead to despondency or any kind of tamas.

6 May 1930

*

It is quite true that if the consciousness remains always centred in the Mother, then there would be no place for any kind of obscuration or disturbance; but that is not easy for the human mind and vital to get at once. One has to go on perseveringly till one has reached it.

The quickness with which the consciousness changes is a feature of the ordinary action of the physical consciousness when it is active and not inert. But many of the things you now feel (of which you speak in your letters), e.g. the idea of the Mother's presence and her regard on you, the reference in what you think and do to her with the idea of her approval or disapproval, are signs that the psychic is acting in your lower vital and physical mind and increasing its rule over their movements.

The forms that came before your eyes are sometimes glimpses of the things on other planes, sometimes symbols; e.g., the golden water, golden tree, rising moon. At certain stages of the inner opening such things come in great number before the inner vision. The feet of which you saw the golden footprints must have been the Mother's in one of her divine forms descending from the higher plane. The pricking and the heat are both of them signs of an action of the Force taking place within and so affecting the body.

The psychic relations I spoke of are those which men form in life which help the power of the psychic to grow and prepare it for the time when it will be ready to come forward and govern the mind, vital and body instead of allowing the mind or the vital to lead the rest. There is a difference between the psychic and the self. The self is the Atman above which is one in all, remains always wide, free, pure, untouched by the action of life in its ignorance. Its nature is peace, freedom, light, wideness, Ananda. The psychic (*antarātmā*) is the individual being which comes down into life and travels from birth to birth and feels the experiences and grows by them till it is able to join itself with the pure Atman above.

9 April 1936

The Mother's Emanations

I saw the Mother in an experience. Is it an emanation of hers that I saw or is it her whole body and whole consciousness?

An emanation. How can her physical body be seen in a dream experience?

7 July 1933

*

The Mother when she works in the supra-physical levels goes out in a different emanation to each sadhak.

11 December 1933

*

During the afternoon sleep I often come in contact with the Mother. Is it the Mother who sends her emanation?

Yes. Or rather something of her is always with you.

14 December 1933

The Mother's Knowledge and Her Emanations

In the case of X, I was under the impression that Mother could at once know of such things. Some even say that she knows everything — all that is material or spiritual.

Good Lord! you don't expect her mind to be a factual encyclopaedia of all that is happening on all the planes and in all the universes? Or even on this earth — e.g. what Lloyd George had for dinner yesterday?

Others maintain that she knows when the question of consciousness is involved . . .

Questions of consciousness of course she always knows even with her outermost physical mind. Material facts she can know but is not bound to do it. The matter however is too complex for answer in a short space.

but as for material details, she does not know.

What would be true to say, is that she can know if she concentrates or if her attention is called to it and she decides to know. I often know from her what has happened before it is reported by anyone. But she does not care to do that on a general scale.

But if she does not know, what is the meaning of your message: "Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you; because she is, indeed, always present"?

It is the emanation of the Mother that is with each sadhak all the time. In former days when she was spending the night in a trance actively working in the Asram, she brought back with her the knowledge of all that was happening to everybody. Nowadays she has no time for that.

This question of Mother's knowledge became even more interesting for me today. She gave me the flower signifying "Discipline". I began to wonder why this particular flower was given; then I remembered that yesterday I had not observed the right discipline by taking a little hot khichari with Y and Z.

In this respect the Mother is guided by her intuitions which tell her which flower is needed at the moment or helpful. Sometimes it is accompanied by a perception of a particular state of consciousness, sometimes by that of a material fact; but only the bare fact, usually — e.g. it would not specify that it was hot khichari that was cooked or how Y or Z came in. Not that that is impossible, but it is unnecessary and does not happen unless needed.

Anyway, please tell me how far Mother and you know about our physical, material affairs.

In this case it was a general hint with no special reference to khichari.

16 July 1935

*

What you say about emanations is very interesting. The Mother then has about 150 emanations; adding 150 of yours, we find that we are each protected by one god and one goddess.

I am not aware of any emanations of mine. As for the Mother's, they are not there for protection, but to support the personal relation or contact with the sadhaka and to act so far as he will allow them to act.

16 July 1935

*

Kindly tell us a little more about emanations. How do they support the personal relation or contact the Mother has with us? I thought that all personal relations were with the Mother direct, not through a deputy!

It is terribly difficult to write of these things, for you are all as ignorant as blazes about these things and misunderstand at every step. The Emanation is not a deputy, but the Mother herself. She is not bound to her body, but can put herself out (emanate) in any way she likes. What emanates, suits itself to the nature of the personal relation she has with the sadhak which is different with each, but that does not prevent it from being herself. Its presence with the sadhak is not dependent on his consciousness of it. If everything were dependent on the surface consciousness of the sadhak, there would be no possibility of the divine action anywhere; the human worm would remain the human worm and the human ass the human ass for ever and ever. For if the Divine could not be there behind the veil, how could either ever become conscious of anything but their wormhood and asshood even throughout the ages?

When X says that he feels the Mother's physical touch or approach, with whom does he have the contact — the Mother or the emanation?

With the Mother, the emanation helping — which is its business.

19 July 1935

The Mother's Awareness of Thoughts and Actions

The Mother can know our thoughts, but can she also know the exact words in the thoughts?

If the mind of the person is very clear, yes: otherwise it may be only the substance that comes or a part of the thought or some general idea.

19 May 1933

*

In the case of X, the Mother fined the servant boy on such apparently insufficient grounds that it looks illogical. I cannot help thinking that she acted on a strong intuition which she felt and knew to be correct.

Mother acted on her inner perception about the whole affair; she does not act only on the outer facts but on what she feels or sees lying behind them.

29 August 1935

*

What you write about X is true. She does not realise that Mother knows all these things by other means and any information given to her only adds certain physical precisions to what she knows already.

How can she be open when she has such ideas against the Mother? They must necessarily shut her up to the Mother's influence.

Mother has written to her that Y had said nothing and that she knew things about X, independently of any information, from X's inner being itself which comes to her constantly and tells her or shows her what is in the nature.

The Mother besides sees things in vision and receives the thoughts of the sadhaks at Pranam and other times. Only the Mother never acts on these supraphysical intimations, unless there is a physical confirmation like the letter itself in this case. For nobody would understand her action — the sadhaks living in the physical mind would state her action unfounded and those affected would deny loudly — as many have done in the past — their secret thoughts, feelings and actions. I tell you all this in confidence so that you may understand what is the real cause of Mother's letters to X.

10 September 1936

*

Are our physical movements reflected in the Mother's mind and seen by her as images, or do they occur in her consciousness at the same time as we do them? But that would be very puzzling. The movements of two hundred people would appear before her eyes every minute or occur in her consciousness. Besides, it would be a very material kind of telepathy.

It would not be worthwhile. Mother can see what people are doing by images received by her in the subtle state which corresponds to sleep or concentration or by images or intimations received in the ordinary state; but much even of what comes to her automatically like that is unnecessary and to be always receiving everything would be intolerably troublesome as it would keep the consciousness occupied with a million trivialities; so that does not happen. What is more important is to know their inner condition and it is this chiefly which comes to her.

29 June 1937

Feeling the Mother's Presence and Seeing Visions

Is it true that when the Presence (image) is seen in the heart all the habits and movements of the lower nature will disappear and there will be no more disturbances from it?

The image and the Presence are not the same. One can feel the Presence without seeing the image. But to produce the results you speak of, the Presence in the heart is not sufficient, there must be Presence in the whole consciousness and the Force of the Mother governing all the action of the nature.

*

You wrote yesterday in regard to X's visions: "Openness is not reckoned merely by visions." Quite so. But to have a fusion of the rays of the sun and moon on each side of the body, and to feel the descent and the Mother's presence in, behind and above oneself, is this not an exceptional vision and experience? Can it occur without sufficient opening to the Mother?

Why should it be exceptional to see the Sun and Moon on each side or to feel the Mother's presence everywhere around? There are plenty of sadhaks who have had these or equivalent experiences. What would be exceptional is to feel the Mother's presence like that always. But occasional experiences like these many have had.

15 September 1936

Feeling the Mother's Presence through a Photograph

When I sit in meditation before the Mother's photographs or the painting of her feet, I get more Force than when I sit at a distance — on my easy chair, for example. I have noticed that this happens invariably and I suppose it is not subjective merely. But I want to know the real truth from you.

No, it is not subjective merely. By your meditating near them, you have been able to enter through them into communion with the Mother and something of her presence and power is there.

14 July 1934

*

Your experience about the photograph was a very fine and true experience. The Mother's presence can be felt through the photograph by one who regards it with devotion towards her. It was her true presence that was there, her subtle physical presence and all you felt was true. It shows that your physical mind is opening to the true consciousness. It is quite sure that this will grow and the remnants of the old movements are bound to disappear.

2 May 1936

Remembering the Mother and Feeling Her Presence

Today I felt that the only thing important is the Divine, nothing else. I tried to keep this experience all day long, but just before I sat down to write, I felt depression and confusion coming. But still I remembered my experience.

That is what should always be done. If, instead of yielding to the depression and confusion when they come, you immediately remembered and turned to the Mother, calling the Light and Force, remembering the Divine, rejecting everything else, then these lapses would diminish and light would come into the whole nature.

1 July 1930

*

It is the outer nature that is obscure and when it is at ease, feels no necessity of remembering the Mother — when the difficulty comes, then it feels the necessity and remembers. But the inner being is not like that.

11 May 1933

*

There must be something soiled in human love — otherwise why should I feel like this? After some problem with X in which he told me some unpleasant things, my vital got disturbed and my mind got confused. I kept remembering the incident over and over instead of remembering the Mother. I have come here for her — why then do my mind and vital want to make contact with human beings and acquire their narrow love and affection? Tell me now what I should do.

These are the usual weaknesses of the human nature when it makes relations with human beings — there are always these clashes and difficulties and turmoil in the vital. If you want to be free from them, do what we have already told you — look on all with a kindly feeling, as children of the Mother, but without any special relation and without any expectation from anybody. Yoga demands an equanimity of mind towards all things and persons.

17 November 1933

*

What you have seen as the thing to do is quite correct. To remember the Mother always and to offer up to her all that comes is just the thing to do. There must come a condition in which you live within in the psychic consciousness with the feeling of the Mother's constant presence, while all the outer activities go on only on the surface and the Mother's Force acts on them to change them into more and more true psychic and spiritual action. The way you speak of is the best for bringing about that condition. Offer all to the Mother in complete confidence and do not be troubled or anxious about the difficulties that rise, but go on calmly and patiently till they pass.

28 March 1936

*

I will be seeing the Mother tomorrow, but I would also like some message from you. Please tell me something which I can always turn to for help and contact during my stay in Bombay. I pray that I may feel the presence of the Mother and yourself throughout my days far away and come back safely to my home here at your feet.

Remember the Mother and, though physically far from her, try to feel her with you and act according to what your inner being tells you would be her will. Then you will be best able to feel her presence and mine and carry our atmosphere around you as a protection and a zone of quietude and light accompanying you everywhere.

12 December 1936

*

It is quite possible for you to do sadhana at home and in the midst of your work — many do so. What is necessary at the beginning is to remember the Mother as much as possible, to concentrate on her in the heart for a time every day, if possible thinking of her as the Divine Mother, to aspire to feel her there within you, offer her your works and pray that from within she may guide and sustain you. This is a preliminary stage which often takes long, but if one goes through it with sincerity and steadfastness, the mentality begins little by little to change and a new consciousness opens in the sadhak which begins to be aware more and more of the Mother's presence within, of her working in the nature and in the life or of some other spiritual experience which opens the gate towards realisation.

22 February 1937

The Psychic and the Mother's Presence

The Mother's presence is always there; but if you decide to act on your own — your own idea, your own notion of things, your own will and demand upon things, then it is quite likely that her presence will get veiled; it is not she who withdraws from you, but you who draw back from her. But your mind and vital don't want to admit that, because it is always their preoccupation to justify their own movements. If the psychic were allowed its full predominance, this would not happen; it would have felt the veiling, but it would at once have said, "There must have been some mistake in me, a mist has arisen in me," and it would have looked and found the cause.

25 March 1932

*

When I am alone I feel a sweet flow of love for the Mother and surrender to her welling out from my heart. But when I am in her physical presence I do not feel this love. Why does this happen?

It is when you live in the psychic that there is this feeling — but the psychic commands at present only a part of the mind and vital — it does not yet control the most external parts, that is why you do not feel it when in the Mother's physical presence.

25 December 1933

*

If you feel the Mother's presence for the greater part of the day, it means that it is your psychic being that is active and feels like that — for without the activity of the psychic it would not be possible. Therefore your psychic being is there and not at all far off.

14 March 1935

*

What you feel is not imagination. You have been going more and more into the psychic consciousness deep within you. When one is in the psychic, one begins to feel the presence of the Mother always with one and this becomes more and more frequent, constant, vivid and real as the psychic develops its power. This presence is felt in different ways by different sadhaks, but it is a true experience of the sadhana. It is what we mean when we say that the sadhak must come to feel always the presence of the Mother in his heart or within him. For in fact she is there always, only her presence is veiled by the ordinary movements of the mind, vital and physical, but when these become quiet and the psychic unveils itself, then one feels the presence of the Divine within.

29 February 1936

*

He must go into himself and find the presence of the Divine Mother within and the psychic behind the heart and from there the knowledge will come and also the power to dissolve the inner obstacles.

21 December 1936

*

It is good that you have come out of the bad condition. It is true that before the darshan or at that time attacks are apt to be violent — for the forces that oppose are very conscious and use their whole strength to spoil the darshan if they can. What has to be gained is the constant prominence of that part which is always aware of the Mother — it is of course the psychic — for that though it can be covered over for the time being cannot be misled by the contrary suggestions. Once it is awake, it always re-emerges from obscurity — that is the guarantee of the final arrival at the goal, but if it can be maintained in front or even consciously felt behind in all conditions, then the stages of the way also become comparatively safe and can be passed with greater ease and security.

6 February 1937

*

In the evening meditation, there was an intense movement of surrender from the heart. I had the feeling of Mother's presence immediately in front of me and aspiration rose up from below. There was a willing and loving surrender from the heart, from the entire being, as if for fulfilment. I suppose the psychic being came to the front.

You had the psychic condition there and that means a coming of the influence of the psychic being to the front.

But why did I feel the Mother's presence in front of me and not within me?

It is when there is a complete psychic opening within that there is the presence within. The Presence in front means that it was with you, but had still to enter within.

13 July 1937

Feeling the Mother's Presence in Sleep

Is what X writes in his poem possible? He says:

*"Even in sleep-depths I am wide awake
To thy sweet Presence that is always there."*

That does happen, but usually only when the psychic is in full activity.

27 September 1934

*

It [*feeling the Mother's presence during sleep*] follows naturally the presence in the waking state, but it takes a little time.

11 January 1935

Feeling the Mother's Presence at Work

It is for most people not easy to feel the Mother's presence with the work — they feel as if they are doing the work, the mind getting busy and not having the right passivity or quietude.

Union with the Mother

You write যতদিন না আমার psychic being জাগে.³ But your psychic being is already awakened, if it were not, you would not have these experiences. The inner being which you feel in union with the Mother is the psychic being. As you probably have

3. "As long as my psychic being is not awakened." — Ed.

not quite understood what I wrote to you, it might be better if you show Nolini my letter and ask him to explain to you the difference between the three layers (স্তর) of the being about which I have spoken in the letter —

(1) The inmost psychic being which is now awakened in you.

(2) The external being which you feel doing work while the inner (psychic) is in union with the Mother.

(3) The inner mental, vital and physical consciousness which connects the two, but of which you are not as yet conscious.

9 April 1931

*

Is it true that one should feel that it is the Divine Presence which moves one and does everything for one? Would it be possible to feel it without a union with the Divine Mother?

No — that is itself a union with her — to feel the Divine Presence above or in you and moving you.

14 July 1933

*

Nowadays I feel that even my blood flow is united with the Mother. When I breathe in, it is the Mother breathing in me and when I breathe out it is she who breathes out of me. Please tell me how my sadhana is proceeding.

It is going on all right. The more the union with the Mother increases, the better for the sadhana.

2 October 1933

*

I do not understand what some sadhaks mean by union with the Mother. Sometimes one feels a nearness, but that does not give one the same perception that the Mother has or her knowledge, purity, wideness. In what way can it be called a union?

I suppose they are trying to feel the Mother's presence, so if they get some sort of feeling of nearness, they call it union. But of course that is only a step towards union. Union is much more than that.

5 March 1934

*

While sitting in the meditation hall, I felt a sort of oneness with the Mother's consciousness. But these days it is not possible to go deep in meditation at all. Perhaps it is not even necessary if there is receptivity in the waking state.

What is most important is the change of consciousness of which this feeling of oneness is a part. The going deep in meditation is only a means and it is not always necessary if the great experiences come easily without it.

8 April 1934

*

Yes, that is the true basis. In the perfect equality wholly united with the Mother — so the higher consciousness can be lived and brought even into the outermost parts of the nature.

22 May 1934

*

I wrote a prayer to the Mother. Her answer to it was: "Open your heart and you will find me already there." What exactly did she mean by "already there"?

What Mother meant was this that when there is a certain opening of the heart, you find that there was always the eternal union there (the same that you experience always in the Self above).

2 July 1935

*

I saw in a vision a basket full of the flower "Gratitude". What does it symbolise?

It is the gratitude to the Divine that it indicates — which will come as the soul opens to the Light and Truth and gets the experience and the joy of union with the Mother.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Mother with Letters on the Mother, CWSA, Vol. 32, pp. 169-91)

‘THE WORLD IS MAKING ITSELF ANEW UNDER A GREAT SPIRITUAL PRESSURE . . .’

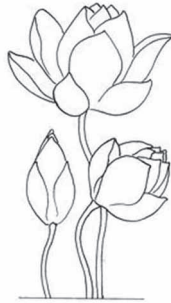
. . . the East has always had in its temperament a greater constant nearness to the spiritual and psychic sight and experience and it is only a more perfect turning of this sight on the whole life of man to accept and illuminate that is needed for the realisation of that for which we are still waiting. On the other hand the West has this advantage that though it is only now emerging not so much into the spiritual light as into an outer half-lit circle and though it is hampered by an excessive outward, intellectual and vital pressure, it has at present a more widely ranging thought and a more questing and active eye, and if these once take the right direction, the expression is not so much encircled by past spiritual forms and traditions. It is in any case the shock upon each other of the oriental and occidental mentalities, on the one side the large spiritual mind and inward eye turned upon self and eternal realities, on the other the free inquiry of thought and the courage of the life energy assailing the earth and its problems that is creating the future and must be the parent of the poetry of the future. The whole of life and of the world and Nature seen, fathomed, accepted, but seen in the light of man's deepest spirit, fathomed by the fathoming of the self of man and the large self of the universe, accepted in the sense of its inmost and not only its more outward truth, the discovery of the divine reality within it and of man's own divine possibilities, — this is the delivering vision for which our minds are seeking and it is this vision of which the future poetry must find the inspiring aesthetic form and the revealing language.

The world is making itself anew under a great spiritual pressure, the old things are passing away and the new things ready to come into being, and it may be that some of the old nations that have been the leaders of the past and the old literatures that have been hitherto the chosen vehicles of strong poetic creation may prove incapable of holding the greater breath of the new spirit and be condemned to fall into decadence. It may be that we shall have to look for the future creation to new poetical literatures that are not yet born or are yet in their youth and first making or, though they have done something in the past, have still to reach their greatest voice and compass. A language passes through its cycle and grows aged and decays by many maladies: it stagnates perhaps by the attachment of its life to a past tradition and mould of excellence from which it cannot get away without danger to its principle of existence or a straining and breaking of its possibilities and a highly coloured decadence; or, exhausted in its creative vigour, it passes into that attractive but dangerous phase of art for art's sake which makes of poetry no longer a high and fine outpouring of the soul and the life but a hedonistic indulgence and dilettantism of the intelligence. These and other signs of age are not absent from the greater

European literary tongues, and at such a stage it becomes a difficult and a critical experiment to attempt at once a transformation of spirit and of the inner cast of poetic language. There is yet in the present ferment and travail a compelling force of new potentiality, a saving element in the power that is at the root of the call to change, the power of the spirit ever strong to transmute life and mind and make all young again, and once this magical force can be accepted in its completeness and provided there is no long-continued floundering among perverted inspirations or half motives, the old literatures may enter rejuvenated into a new creative cycle.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Future Poetry*, CWSA, Vol. 26, pp. 304-05)



‘. . . IN THE ACTIVITY OF EACH MOMENT . . .’

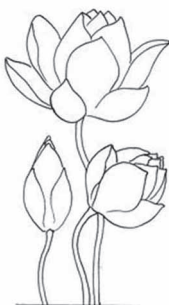
April 2, 1914

EVERY day, when I want to write, I am interrupted, as though the new period opening now before us were a period of expansion rather than of concentration. It is in the activity of each moment that we must serve Thee and identify ourselves with Thee rather than in deep and silent contemplation or in meditation, written or unwritten.

But my heart does not tire of singing a hymn to Thee and my thought is constantly filled with Thee.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 115)



SOME LETTERS

YOUR letter has been communicated to me and the questions you ask in it were for me, at a certain state of my development, of such intense interest that I shall take great pleasure in replying to them. Nevertheless, a reply which is formulated mentally, however complete it may be, can never be *the reply*, the one which silences every doubt and quiets the mind. Certitude can only come with spiritual experience, and the most beautiful philosophical works can never equal or replace a few minutes of Knowledge that is lived.

You say: "Should a man of average development, who is no longer tormented by earthly desires and who is linked to the world only by his affections, renounce the hope of not reincarnating? Is there not, beyond the human state, a less material state where one goes when one is no longer recalled by desire into the human state? This seems strictly logical to me. Man cannot be at the summit of the scale. The animals are very near to him; is he not very near to the following state?"

First of all, what maintains the relation with the earth is not only vital desire but any specifically human movement, and affections certainly form part of this. One is bound to the necessity of reincarnation as much by one's affections, by one's feelings, as by one's desires. However, in the matter of reincarnation as in all things, each case has its own solution, and it is certain that a constant aspiration for liberation from rebirth, together with a sustained effort towards the elevation and sublimation of the consciousness, should have the result of severing the chain of earthly existences, although it does not for all that put an end to individual existence, which is prolonged in another world. But why think that his existence in another, more ethereal world should be the "following state" which, relative to man, would be what man is to the animal? It seems to me more logical to think (and a deeper knowledge confirms this certitude) that the following state too will be a physical one, although we may conceive of this physical as magnified, transfigured by the descent, the infusion of Light and Truth. All the ages and millennia of human life that have elapsed so far have prepared the advent of this *new state*, and now the time has come for its concrete and tangible realisation. That is the very essence of Sri Aurobindo's teaching, the aim of the group he has allowed to form around him, the purpose of his Ashram.

For your second question,¹ I intended to send you the translation of a few extracts from Sri Aurobindo's works. But when I told him that I wanted to translate

1. "The divine spirit, having embodied itself in form, has therefore foreseen and willed everything. But then why does it seem to pursue a goal, a consciousness, since it could have realised this at the very outset? Why has it allowed pain and evil which exist in its essence? If human evil can be attributed to men, the injustice that smites animals and plants can only be attributed to the divine order. Why has the divine order not organised everything in delight? Pain does not always lead us to perfection; more often, it casts us into incurable despair."

some passages from *The Life Divine* to send to you, he told me that I would have to translate no less than two chapters if I wanted to convey a fairly complete reply to you. Seeing my perplexity, he of himself decided to write some new pages on this subject;² he gave them to me very recently and I immediately began the translation.

I do not wish to spoil the freshness of the beautiful pages that I shall have the privilege of translating, but in the meanwhile, until I am able to send them to you, I shall give you, if I may, my too simple and succinct view of the problem.

It seems beyond question to me that the universe in which we live is not one of the most successful, particularly in its outermost expression; but it is also beyond question that we are part of it and that consequently, the only logical and wise thing for us to do is to set to work to perfect it, to extract the best from the worst and to make it into the most marvellous possible universe. For, I would add, not only is this transfiguration possible, but it is certain. May the peace and joy of Knowledge be with you.

14 June 1933

*

Friend, sister of former days and always,

In your letter of the 9th June which has just arrived, you write that the Buddha “is smiling with gentle irony”, but the Buddha’s smile can only be a smile of perfect understanding before a luminous accomplishment.

And in this state in which physical life has already lost for you so much of its concrete reality, whether you are in the solitude of the Himalayas or in the solitude of a house on the road to N, it should be equally easy to live in the deep peace of the immense Buddhist compassion.

*

Well, I suppose I shall be the first person to tell you that I do not find you so different from the others; of course I mean in a *special* way — for each one is different in a way from all the others, but it is certainly not of that difference that you are speaking.

I suppose also that the impression of being “different” which you gave to your people and generally to those with whom you lived comes from the fact that you are *unconventional*. This is generally considered as the sign of a great “difference” in the nature and temperament. It is only the sign that one has reached a certain inner freedom which liberates you — at least partially — from the collective suggestion and the social rules — and that inner freedom is one of the signs of a grown-up

2. Published in *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 24-32.

psychic being. But to have a grown-up psychic being is not, after all, something so very exceptional among the people who are upon earth *now*.

It seems to me that you received from us your share of encouragements like the others, but you have perhaps overlooked it as it might have been not exactly what you expected or wished for.

There was certainly an egocentric pride that had to be broken before any good spiritual progress could be made. But now the thing has been mostly done there is no need of being anxious for the future.

This is all I can say for the moment.

My help, love and blessings are always with you.

23 October 1939

*

Dear Madam,

Your letter has just reached me and I hasten to answer. Here are the replies to your questions.

The acute stage of your sister's illness was very brief and she did not suffer very much. For the last days she was saying that all the time she was feeling a great light and force upon her and the end was very tranquil. She did not know that she was going to die, we ourselves were fighting to the last to keep her and nothing was told to her of the greatness of the danger. Only once she had the impression that she was going to pass away, and then she wanted to write to you telling her will about her material affairs, money, property, etc. She informed me of what she wanted to write, but when it came to the actual writing she felt too weak and gave it up. At that moment she worried very much about you and wondered what you would do without her — several times before she expressed the wish that you should come and live with her here — more than once she asked that my force and protection should be with you and I promised her that whenever you wished for them they would be there.

We would have been very pleased to erect the grave-stone at our own expense, but I understand your feeling about it and it shall be as you wish. For the plan I had been relying on our architect; he and your sister had been close friends and she loved his work very much. But he has received a commission in the army in India and is now far away and too busy to make the plan. To save time I thought that you might yourself arrange for the design and send it to me for execution; only it must be very simple, otherwise it would be difficult to have it made here. I may say that she would not have liked to have a cross on her tombstone. I propose to put an inscription (in French, as it is a French graveyard):

Ci-gît la dépouille mortelle de X
 (Here lie the mortal remains of X)
 (Date of birth — Date of death)

We intend to erect the memorial stone as close as possible to the anniversary of her passing away, so I need the design as soon as possible. You will find enclosed a note giving the measurement of the ground — the monument must be smaller than the ground.

Faithfully yours.

1944

*

(About letters written to two high-ranking government officials)

I have read your letter to X and I am sorry I had not the opportunity of reading the one you wrote to Y.

The very fact that you wanted to despatch these letters without showing them to me ought to have put you on your guard concerning the origin of the impulse which you were obeying, as obviously it could not be a divine origin.

This said, I must add that there is nothing essentially wrong in the letter itself. What you say is correct, but surely it is not meant for the person to whom you wanted to send it, nor to any similar person, that is to say, someone in a prominent political position. Statesmen believe only in their own knowledge and power and, moreover, they receive hundreds of letters from people who think they have found a solution to the world situation, and, as in general these political leaders have no power of discernment, they cannot distinguish between what is true and what is false — and they believe that such letters are the product of the heated brain of religious fanatics. We cannot allow ourselves to be mixed up with them and for that it is better to keep a dignified silence.

In any case there is more than a ninety-nine per cent chance that your letter would never reach its destination and might fall into undesirable hands.

11 June 1954

*

Certainly to do the right thing is not cruel or selfish. What is cruel and selfish is to follow blindly one's weakness and thus to drag another with oneself into a pit from which it is always difficult to come out and never without losing much of one's time and energy, if not much more and much worse. So do not worry; try now seriously to find out the meaning and the aim of your life and prepare yourself to carry it out thoroughly and sincerely.

*

Do not worry. It will pass.

It is the vital's *amour-propre* that has received a fine knock on the face; it is vexed and has gone on strike. When it starts understanding that this is foolishness and that it leads to nothing, it will become reasonable again and listen once again to the wise advice of the psychic which tells it to be quiet and do its work well, that nothing of true value is lost, that true love is always there, immutable, and that only those movements which were not in conformity with the Divine Work have been destroyed.

For it is to the Divine Work that one must exclusively belong because it alone can, in our life, give us true happiness.

*

What has happened was more or less expected. Each one in life acts according to his own nature, and those who are not steady in their faith cannot be steady in their love either.

Surely I am not angry with you and my help is always there whenever you want it. As for doing anything wrong, all human beings do wrong things so long as they live in this world of ignorance, because even if they wish to do right, they do not know what is the right thing to do until their consciousness is transformed, and for transformation the first thing needed is complete sincerity; not only to speak the truth (this, it goes without saying, is an indispensable elementary condition) but to be always true to oneself and the Divine.

*

The whole thing is so powerfully symbolical and expresses so clearly how dangerous it is to be under the leading of an arrogant and ignorant human mind which relies on its own power alone and refuses the help of the Divine's Grace.

I do not need to enter into any detailed explanations; for with this clue you can easily understand the whole affair. Do you remember that I was asking you with some insistence *who* was driving the car and when you told me it was your driver, I felt relieved. But it was *not* your driver who held the steering wheel and the poor fellow suffered for the change.

What makes the whole thing much more striking is just the conversation I had with X. I asked him if he was interested in yoga. He said it interested him as philosophical speculation, but not as a thing to be lived. On my remark that it might come to him later on, he said, "Oh no! I am an atheist, you see, I do not believe in God." I asked smilingly, "Then how do you arrange *your* universe?" He felt the irony and replied: "I have taken a scientific attitude: I deny nothing but I believe in nothing." I felt the danger for Y and said with some force: "But, I suppose, you do

not interfere with the beliefs of others and you will leave Y free to think and feel as she likes.” “Certainly,” was his answer, but I did not believe him.

Tell Y to keep her faith intact, whatever pressure may be put upon her to change her mind and attitude. She may have to meet some difficulties, but she must never forget to call on the Divine’s Grace with confidence and the protection and help will surely be with her.

As for yourself, do not worry or apprehend dangers for Y. Her difficulties — and life is never without them — are not likely to be of the more external kind, and the others she can, by keeping her faith, meet and overcome.

*

Tell your mother to go deep inside her heart and she will feel that the Divine Grace is with her. I am sending her a card with my blessings. You can translate for her what is written upon it. You can tell her also that the consciousness of your father had left his body at the time of the accident. That is why he did not move or speak, there is nothing astonishing in that and no reason to be especially sorry about it.

*

I did not reply because her mind was in such a confusion as a result of her desires, that she would not have been able to understand what I would have written. Since then, I have tried to work on her mental and vital being to make it a little more open and receptive, so that she may understand that love for children and the growing hope for the future that they represent in the creation, does not mean that each and everybody must have children. To each one I disclose what is the best for him or her according to their nature and their spiritual need. But surely it is not always in keeping with the desires.

October 1960

*

X is a very refined girl, and she is extremely sensitive, easily hurt. Never scold her or speak harshly to her or force her to do anything. I find her very nice. But she looked so frightened — I don’t know who could have told her about me that she should feel like that. Tell her that I found her very nice. She is very refined but somehow she has been living all tightened up. Let her feel quite free, don’t try to put any ring around her. Let her feel completely relaxed and free here, and tell her that she should relax and just feel as if she were all the time in sunshine.

16 September 1968

THE MOTHER

(*Words of the Mother – III*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 15, pp. 244-52)

**“GIFT-CYCLE” —
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO**

Sri Aurobindo —

A song written in the wee sma’ hours, between 2 and 3 this morning:

GIFT-CYCLE

From her each pore as from a womb
Is born a soul-spark richening
My consciousness of mortal gloom
With buds of an ethereal Spring.

And through that mystic blossoming
My body grows a god in whom
Each thought is a pure petalling
Star-loveliness of trance-perfume.

But though divinest dye illumine
My life, it seems so poor a thing
Unless her gift of skiey bloom
Go back to her, feet-garlanding.

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

It is wee and sma’ but good.

26 September 1933

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

ESSENTIALS OF INDIAN CULTURE

(Continued from the issue of April 2013)

[We continue with the reproduction of the last 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.]

Chapter III — The Result

THE ancient and mediaeval life of India was not at all wanting in any of the things that make up the vivid interesting activity of human existence. On the contrary it was extraordinarily full of colour and interest. In philosophy and spirituality her achievement cannot be questioned. In science she went ahead of all other countries, anticipated many modern discoveries and through the Arabs initiated Europe in physical science. Especially in mathematics, astronomy, chemistry and medicine her achievements were very high. Her literature also is undoubtedly great. Apart from the Vedas and the Upanishads and the Gita, *unique works* the like of which is ~~seen~~ *we find* nowhere else on earth, we have the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and the romantic literature of her classical epoch. The decadence of Sanskrit literature was followed by a continuous vigour of creation in the different provincial vernaculars. The long tradition of her architecture, sculpture and painting testifies at least to a continuous creative activity. And creation is proof of life, and great creation of greatness of life.

In things of the mind *then* India ~~may have been~~ *was always alive, powerful, creatively active, .* ~~But~~ *was not her outward life—dull vitality, her practical action, her social existence depressed, dull, poor, gloomy with the hues of asceticism, void of will-power and personality, ineffective, null?* But literature and art do not flourish in a void of life. And the facts show that India was great also in *her outward life: living and in the action that masters the external world. Through thousands of years she has* warred and ruled, traded and colonised and spread her civilisation; built polities and organised communities and societies, ~~done~~ *did* all that makes the outward activity of great peoples. ~~Though~~ *It is true, however, that* she never built an empire by bringing other countries by force under ~~her~~ *subjection to her military rule or assuming and never assumed* the “trusteeship” of other unfortunate peoples ~~so that she might exploit them in every way for her own profit.~~

And India produced also numerous takes a front rank too in the number of her great individual personalities in their quality and the significance of their lives. In

Make the comparison with Europe and you will see that will power and personality have ~~not~~ never been wanting in India; but the direction preferably given to them and the type most admired are of a different kind. While egoistic self-assertion is most valued in Europe as a sign of vitality and personality force, India prizes ~~more~~ the self-effacing personality more. In India the greatest names are those of great spiritual men because this was the line of action most congenial to ~~its~~ her temperament and expressive of ~~its~~ her leading idea. But there has been ~~also~~ no lack too of the remarkable achievements of great statesmen and able rulers. In ancient India there was ~~the~~ a teeming life of republics, oligarchies, democracies, small kingdoms of which ~~no~~ we have evidence, though the detail of their history ~~now~~ no longer survives. Afterwards came the long effort at empire-building, the colonisation of Ceylon and the archipelago, the vivid struggles that attended the rise and decline of the Pathan and Mogul dynasties, the Hindu struggle for survival in the South, the wonderful record of Rajput heroism and the great upheaval of national life in Maharashtra penetrating to the lowest strata of society, the remarkable episode of the Sikh Khalsa; even on the point of utter collapse and in the midst of unspeakable darkness, disunion and confusion India could still produce Ranjit Singh and Nana Fadnavis and oppose the inevitable march of England's destiny. Afterwards came the night and a temporary end of all political initiative and creation. The lifeless attempt of the last generation to imitate and reproduce with a servile fidelity the ideals and forms of the West, has been no true indication of the political mind and genius of the Indian people. But India of the ages is not dead and though her horizon is still enveloped with in much darkness, the signs of a coming dawn are apparent everywhere, ~~all gloom will be dispelled and Indian will again shine with a fresh glory.~~ Always her reverses and misfortunes have preceded a new outburst of activity and fresh glories.

~~This~~ It was ~~not~~ a surely no nation void of life which ~~maintains~~ could maintain its existence and culture and still lives on and ~~broke~~ break out constantly into new revivals under the ever increasing stress of continually adverse circumstances. It is the sign of life to resist death and flower always into new life and in this kind India has shown a vitality that seems almost eternal and inexhaustible.

But was not the great activity of life and glory in India confined only to the higher classes? Were not millions of people deliberately kept down, "depressed" so that a few people in the top might enjoy the blessings of culture and civilisation? The charge that the Indians culture neglected or deliberately suppressed the masses has no support in history; cannot stand a moment's scrutiny and it has been grossly exaggerated is a gross exaggeration of a characteristic it shared with other ancient [cultures]. It is quite true that the Indians it did not regard all people men as equals; ~~they~~ it recognised different stages of development, different natures; ~~thus~~ there were higher and lower orders and society was organised accordingly on a hierarchic scale. But this division was not based on the exclusive rights and privileges of certain classes, it was based on adhikara, the differing natural capacity of a man;

men in the rising scale. ~~m~~Men were assigned places in society according to their adhikara, their ~~merits and capacity, function and merit~~. As the doctrine of heredity had a strong hold on the Indian mind, this organisation gradually tended towards stereotyped classes known as castes. But no one was denied the opportunity of developing his soul and *the powers of his nature to the utmost capacity in his own degree.* ~~No doubt that with the~~ *There was a decline in the culture, the its forms became more and more artificial and unfairness and injustice has been the result the inequalities that exist in all societies took a more and more unjustified and sometimes indefensible form.* But this is a phenomenon which is not peculiar to India. The European ideal of democracy is that every one should be given the fullest chance to develop the possibilities *in of his nature is not only of yesterday, but.* ~~But this ideal~~ is nowhere found realised in practice. ~~What is~~ *The form called a democracy in Europe is only a covering up of the inequalities that really exist, removing or lessening some, creating or increasing others; it is not a raising of all to the same level.* The Indian idea was *founded on the principle of hierarchy as distinguished from democracy and not on a single democratic level.* ~~In~~ the Indian system the lowest man in the scale knew the course of life, the dharma he had to follow in order to develop his possibilities and every facility was given to him to follow his dharma. ~~And through it develop his soul and rise up in the social scale.~~ *Means were found to bring a certain amount of knowledge and culture in one form or another to the meanest door; there was widespread elementary education, caste was fixed but in practice there were plenty of facilities for rising by wealth and other means in the social scale.* The present deplorable condition of the masses and the “untouchables” does not justify at all a ~~wholesale~~ condemnation of Indian culture. ~~What with the~~ *The decline of the life in the race in general, what with and a relentless exploitation by a foreign rule and a foreign culture, the and the increasing resultant poverty and the perturbations created by the forceful infiltration of a foreign political system, foreign economic forces, a foreign culture, have levelled downward the whole people* (.), ~~how beginning~~ *Almost all from the Brahmin at the top down to the pariah at the bottom have come to great misfortune; and naturally those have suffered most who were lowest in the scale have suffered most.* But if we consider the life of the masses in India in earlier times we find that ~~the whole nation~~ *all had their shared of the benefits of the common life and the masses lived intensely though the higher classes were naturally the leaders.* The religious life of the masses ~~of India~~ *haves* always been more intense *in India* than ~~that of~~ *in any other country.* There were *worshipped saints and teachers* even among the outcastes. The common people everywhere on earth generally live on externals and ceremonies and have ~~no~~ *little* realisation of the inner truths of religion and spirituality. But the peculiar *spiritual* culture of India penetrated even the masses and made ~~the its people of India~~ *different from others in this respect; they can understand and grasp spiritual matters better than peoples of truth with an ease unexampled in other countries* lands. Where else could the

lofty, austere and difficult teachings of a Buddha have seized so rapidly on the popular mind or the songs of a Tukaram, a Kabir, the Sikh Gurus, the chants of the Tamil saints with their fervid devotion but also their profound philosophy ~~found~~ *find* so speedy an echo and formed a popular religious literature?

And not only in religious life but also in political life the masses of India had their share; they held their villages as little self-administered republics; in the time of the great kingdoms and empires they sat in the municipalities and urban councils and the bulk of the typical royal council was composed of commoners, Vaishyas, and not of Brahman Pundits and Kshatriyas. The people had their share too in art and poetry, their means by which the essence of Indian culture was disseminated through the mass, the pathshalas (village schools), popular songs, popular lectures (*kathakata*), popular dramatic performances (e.g. *jatra*, *kalu*, *jhumus*) etc. Life in India was not ~~at all~~ ascetic, gloomy or sad, ~~though as some foreign critics vainly imagine; it was in some directions~~ quiet and grave, ~~Indian life was in others~~ glad and vivid, and even now laughter, humour, elasticity and equanimity are *its* marked features.

India has lived much, but has not sat down to record the history of her life. The art of history ~~was~~ developed by Greece and ~~adopted~~ *learned from her* by modern Europe, ~~Yet was not so well developed in ancient or even in mediaeval India.~~ Still there is much evidence which proves beyond the least doubt the intense life of ancient India. And ~~India~~ *that intensity of life is not yet exhausted or fallen sterile; India* of the ages is not dead nor has she spoken her last creative word; she lives and has still something to do for herself and the human peoples. And that which is seeking now to awake is not an Anglicised oriental people, a docile pupil of the West and doomed to repeat the cycle of the Occident's success and failure, but still the ancient immemorable Shakti *who shall recovering her deepest self, lifting once more her head towards the supreme Source of light and strength and turning to discover* ~~the~~ *a completer meaning and a vaster form of her eternal Dharma.*

(Concluded)

ANILBARAN ROY

II

(Final Version)

Chapter III — The Result

The ancient and mediaeval life of India was not at all wanting in any of the things that make up the vivid interesting activity of human existence. On the contrary it was extraordinarily full of colour and interest. In philosophy and spirituality her achievement cannot be questioned. In science she went ahead of all other countries, anticipated many modern discoveries and through the Arabs initiated Europe in physical science. Especially in mathematics, astronomy, chemistry and medicine her achievements were very high. Her literature also is undoubtedly great. Apart from the Vedas and the Upanishads and the Gita, unique works the like of which we find nowhere else on earth, we have the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and the romantic literature of her classical epoch. The decadence of Sanskrit literature was followed by a continuous vigour of creation in the different provincial vernaculars. The long tradition of her architecture, sculpture and painting testifies at least to a continuous creative activity. And creation is proof of life, and great creation of greatness of life.

In things of the mind then India was always alive, powerful, creatively active. But was not her outward vitality, her practical action, her social existence depressed, dull, poor, gloomy with the hues of asceticism, void of will-power and personality, ineffective, null? But literature and art do not flourish in a void of life. And the facts show that India was great also in her outward living and in the action that masters the external world. Through thousands of years she warred and ruled, traded and colonised and spread her civilisation; built polities and organised communities and societies, did all that makes the outward activity of great peoples. It is true, however, that she never built an empire by bringing other countries by force under subjection to her military rule and never assumed the “trusteeship” of other unfortunate peoples that she might exploit them for her own profit.

And India takes a front rank too in the number of her great individual personalities in their quality and the significance of their lives. Make the comparison with Europe and you will see that will power and personality have never been wanting in India; but the direction preferably given to them and the type most admired are of a different kind. While egoistic self-assertion is most valued in Europe as a sign of vitality and personality force, India prizes the self-effacing personality more. In India the greatest names are those of great spiritual men because this was the line of action most congenial to her temperament and expressive of her leading idea. But there has been no lack too of the remarkable achievements of great statesmen and able rulers. In ancient India there was a teeming life of republics, oligarchies,

democracies, small kingdoms of which we have evidence, though the detail of their history no longer survives. Afterwards came the long effort at empire-building, the colonisation of Ceylon and the archipelago, the vivid struggles that attended the rise and decline of the Pathan and Mogul dynasties, the Hindu struggle for survival in the South, the wonderful record of Rajput heroism and the great upheaval of national life in Maharashtra penetrating to the lowest strata of society, the remarkable episode of the Sikh Khalsa; even on the point of utter collapse and in the midst of unspeakable darkness, disunion and confusion India could still produce Ranjit Singh and Nana Fadnavis and oppose the inevitable march of England's destiny. Afterwards came the night and a temporary end of all political initiative and creation. The lifeless attempt of the last generation to imitate and reproduce with a servile fidelity the ideals and forms of the West, has been no true indication of the political mind and genius of the Indian people. But India of the ages is not dead and though her horizon is still enveloped in much darkness, the signs of a coming dawn are apparent everywhere. Always her reverses and misfortunes have preceded a new outburst of activity and fresh glories.

It was surely no nation void of life which could maintain its existence and culture and still lives on and break out constantly into new revivals under the ever increasing stress of continually adverse circumstances. It is the sign of life to resist death and flower always into new life and in this kind India has shown a vitality that seems almost eternal and inexhaustible.

But was not the great activity of life in India confined only to the higher classes? Were not millions of people deliberately kept down, "depressed" so that a few in the top might enjoy the blessings of culture and civilisation? The charge that Indian culture neglected or deliberately suppressed the masses is a gross exaggeration of a characteristic it shared with other ancient [cultures]. It is quite true that it did not regard all men as equals; it recognised different stages of development, different natures; there were higher and lower orders and society was organised on a hierarchic scale. But this division was not based on the exclusive rights and privileges of certain classes, it was based on *adhi-kara*, the differing natural capacity of men in the rising scale. Men were assigned places in society according to their *adhi-kara*, their capacity, function and merit. As the doctrine of heredity had a strong hold on the Indian mind, this organisation gradually tended towards stereotyped classes known as *castes*. But no one was denied the opportunity of developing his soul and the powers of his nature to the utmost capacity in his own degree. There was a decline in the culture, its forms became more and more artificial and the inequalities that exist in all societies took a more and more unjustified and sometimes indefensible form. But this is a phenomenon which is not peculiar to India. The European ideal of democracy that every one should be given the fullest chance to develop the possibilities of his nature is not only of yesterday, but is nowhere found realised in practice. The form called democracy in Europe is only a covering up of inequalities,

removing or lessening some, creating or increasing others; it is not a raising of all to the same level. The Indian idea was founded on the principle of hierarchy and not on a single democratic level. In the Indian system the lowest man in the scale knew the course of life, the *dharma* he had to follow in order to develop his possibilities and every facility was given to him to follow his *dharma*. Means were found to bring a certain amount of knowledge and culture in one form or another to the meanest door; there was widespread elementary education, caste was fixed but in practice there were plenty of facilities for rising by wealth and other means in the social scale. The present deplorable condition of the masses and the “untouchables” does not justify at all a condemnation of Indian culture. The decline of life in the race in general, and a relentless exploitation and the increasing resultant poverty and the perturbations created by the forceful infiltration of a foreign political system, foreign economic forces, a foreign culture, have levelled downward the whole people. Almost all from the Brahmin at the top down to the pariah at the bottom have come to great misfortune; and naturally those have suffered most who were lowest in the scale. But if we consider the life of the masses in India in earlier times we find that all had their share of the benefits of the common life and the masses lived intensely though the higher classes were naturally the leaders. The religious life of the masses has always been more intense in India than in any other country. There were worshipped saints and teachers even among the outcastes. The common people everywhere on earth generally live on externals and ceremonies and have little realisation of the inner truths of religion and spirituality. But the peculiar spiritual culture of India penetrated even the masses and made its people different from others; they can understand and grasp spiritual truth with an ease unexampled in other lands. Where else could the lofty, austere and difficult teachings of a Buddha have seized so rapidly on the popular mind or the songs of a Tukaram, a Kabir, the Sikh Gurus, the chants of the Tamil saints with their fervid devotion but also their profound philosophy find so speedy an echo and formed a popular religious literature?

And not only in religious life but also in political life the masses of India had their share; they held their villages as little self-administered republics; in the time of the great kingdoms and empires they sat in the municipalities and urban councils and the bulk of the typical royal council was composed of commoners, Vaishyas, and not of Brahman Pundits and Kshatriyas. The people had their share too in art and poetry, their means by which the essence of Indian culture was disseminated through the mass, the pathshalas (village schools), popular songs, popular lectures (*kathakata*), popular dramatic performances (e.g. *jatra*, *kalu*, *jhumus*) etc. Life in India was not ascetic, gloomy or sad, as some foreign critics vainly imagine; it was in some directions quiet and grave, in others glad and vivid, and even now laughter, humour, elasticity and equanimity are its marked features.

India has lived much, but has not sat down to record the history of her life. The

art of history developed by Greece and learned from her by modern Europe, was not so well developed in ancient or even in mediaeval India. Still there is much evidence which proves beyond the least doubt the intense life of ancient India. And that intensity of life is not yet exhausted or fallen sterile; India of the ages is not dead nor has she spoken her last creative word; she lives and has still something to do for herself and the human peoples. And that which is seeking now to awake is not an Anglicised oriental people, a docile pupil of the West and doomed to repeat the cycle of the Occident's success and failure, but still the ancient immemorable Shakti who shall recover her deepest self, lift once more her head towards the supreme Source of light and strength and turn to discover a completer meaning and a vaster form of her eternal Dharma.

(Concluded)

ANILBARAN ROY

A nation is building in India today before the eyes of the world so swiftly, so palpably that all can watch the process and those who have sympathy and intuition distinguish the forces at work, the materials in use, the lines of the divine architecture. This nation is not a new race raw from the workshop of Nature or created by modern circumstances. One of the oldest races and greatest civilisations on this earth, the most indomitable in vitality, the most fecund in greatness, the deepest in life, the most wonderful in potentiality, after taking into itself numerous sources of strength from foreign strains of blood and other types of human civilisation, is now seeking to lift itself for good into an organised national unity. Formerly a congeries of kindred nations with a single life and a single culture, always by the law of this essential oneness tending to unity, always by its excess of fecundity engendering fresh diversities and divisions, it has never yet been able to overcome permanently the almost insuperable obstacles to the organisation of a continent. The time has now come when those obstacles can be overcome. The attempt which our race has been making throughout its long history, it will now make under entirely new circumstances. A keen observer would predict its success because the only important obstacles have been or are in the process of being removed. But we go farther and believe that it is sure to succeed because the freedom, unity and greatness of India have now become necessary to the world.

Sri Aurobindo

(Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 3)

VISIONS AND VOICES

(Continued from the issue of April 2013)

A VISION AND A VOICE

I

The Vision

A BRIGHT circular disc of water surging with something that it does not know, filled with ripples that break the thousand images of the Sun of Truth, appeared suspended in mid-air. And it looked too like a vast moon. Over this vast but finite disc a shower of rays, resembling the rays of the sun, and each and every ray carried in it a truth. The rays were brilliant near their source, the Sun; but they diminished gradually in their brilliancy as they descended down into the bright and rayless disc. All this was seen above the disc. Below from the fathomless depth arose a huge and thick surge of darkness, a darkness of various and many streams. The denseness of their shadows diminished gradually as they rose up higher and still higher. They, the several streams of the darkness of the fathomless night, seemed to carry along with them a mysterious something that they must needs deliver up to the angels of the Sun of Truth, who appeared to be awaiting that great but secret burden. Night below pregnant with the truth she hides, a mediating light between subdued to its mission, the perfect day of Truth above that is to be here and is there forever, Truth in her imperial and immortal beauty, Truth in her delightful and imperishable splendour.

II

The Voice

The ranges of the mind

The growing powers of the mind are covered by the lids of two infinities — one, a series of darknesses growing gradually in intensity below the mind; another, a series of light also growing gradually in intensity above the mind. The first blind the mind by the dark power of their ignorance; the others blind it too, but by the dazzling puissance of their luminous knowledge. The mind of a man may be likened to a buffer state, now enveloped by the besieging powers of the darknesses and now overpowered by the strength of the luminous forces. It is a field where sometimes *Dasyus*, sometimes *Devas*, sometimes both wage their battles and play out their amusements according to their likes and their dislikes.

The field of mind is a field of finiteness — one side of this finite terminating in impenetrable ignorance, the other terminating in a knowledge as powerfully impene-

trable. The powers of the mind — the power of perceiving and judging, the power of guessing and imagination, the power of reasoning and arranging and the power of remembering and piecing together — are all powers of the finite, of a partial ignorance, which are not sure of what they see, guess, arrange or remember. There is an amount of certainty because there is the play of light in the mind, and there is also an equal amount of uncertainty because there is the play of the darkness in it. The mind is a field where forces of various kinds that have their sources in opposite poles play their doubtful game and cause the powers of the mind to see, guess, arrange and remember doubtful issues. The mind is a vast but finite region where uncertain possibilities of many sorts, varying in kind and degree, float chaotically and pass and return for ever.

The mind perceives a portion of a truth whose head and feet are made invisible to it by the lids of the two opposing infinities. That little portion of the truth which the mind is able to see is imagined in a grotesque and fanciful form by one of its powers, and again it is cut into a thousand pieces and arranged in a series by another of its powers, and finally the missing link is supplied by its power of memory. At the end it generally happens that the partial truth which was caught by the mind is cut and arranged altogether out of shape — it is given a shape which it originally had not. At their best the powers of the mind know very well how to misrepresent the portions of the truth they perceive.

The self-effort of the powers of the mind leads them into a vague perception of the infinities that contain nothing if not the nothingness itself. But when they allow themselves to rest in the hands of the luminous truth beyond, they outgrow themselves and are transformed into powers of the truth-consciousness. In the hands of the forces of the lower darkneses, the powers of the mind grow either completely blind with the little light in them put out or grow animal in nature. When the powers of the mind find the upward urge that is within them and coalesce with it, then the power of perception of the mind will appear in its true nature stripped of its darkness as self-revelation; the power of imagination as inspiration; the power of reasoning as the rhythms and standards of the truth or truth in its various harmonies and orders; and the power of memory as the continued knowledge of the immortal truth in its eternity comprising in itself the past, the present and the future in an ordered and rhythmic succession without the break that blinds the mind and cuts up into sections the unity of the divine progression.

(To be continued)

AMRITA

*(Amrita Birth Centenary Commemorative Volume, September 1995,
Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry, 1995, pp. 49-53)*

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of April 2013)

Chapter XXII

“The Two Mutually Complementary Movements”

There are two mutually complementary movements; in one the inner being comes to the front and impresses its own normal motions on the outer consciousness to which they are unusual and abnormal; the other is to draw back from the outer consciousness, to go inside into the inner planes, enter the world of your inner self and wake in the hidden parts of your being. When that plunge has once been taken, you are marked for the yogic, the spiritual life and nothing can efface the seal that has been put upon you.¹

Sri Aurobindo

To a question “When did you begin Yoga?” Sri Aurobindo’s answer was, “Sometime in 1905.” But to the next question, “How did you begin?” his answer is at once intriguing and significant:

God knows how! It began very early perhaps. When I landed in Bombay a great calm and quiet descended upon me. Then there was the experience of the Self, the Purusha. Later there were other characteristic experiences — at Poona on the Parvati hills, and in Kashmir on the Shankaracharya hill — a sense of great infinite Reality was felt. It was very real.²

In a letter to Pavitra Sri Aurobindo wrote:

My yoga begun in 1904 had always been personal and apart; those around me knew I was a sadhak but they knew little more as I kept all that went on in me to myself. It was only after my release that for the first time I spoke at Uttarpara publicly about my spiritual experiences.³

Again, commenting on an observation “Thus it may be said that Aravind Babu started taking interest in Yoga from 1898-99”, he stated, “No. I did not start Yoga till about 1904.”⁴

It is obvious that even though Sri Aurobindo took a conscious step towards the practice of Yoga sometime in 1905 — it will be difficult to ascribe a date to it like the day one begins learning the alphabet or swimming. If a prominent sign of Yoga Siddhi is having esoteric experiences, they seem to have come to Sri Aurobindo spontaneously, glimpses of which we get from reminiscences he casually uttered during conversations or what he wrote much later out of necessity. What is radically unusual — and what is an essential clue to our comprehension of Sri Aurobindo's exposition of spirituality, is that these spiritual experiences he was having

were not divorced from this world but had an inner and intimate bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies.⁵

Further, in the same tone, as if it did not merit any emphasis, he informed us,

At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with influences and an effect from them upon the material plane, so I could make no sharp divorce or irreconcilable opposition between what I have called the two ends of existence and all that lies between them.⁶

We have seen how, in the early phase of his stay at Baroda, while he “sat behind the dance of Danger's hooves” — that is, when his horse-drawn carriage was about to meet with an accident — a Being of Light emerging from him took control of the situation and what seemed inevitable was averted. In mid-1903, on the Shankaracharya Hill or the Takht-i-Sulaiman in Srinagar, Kashmir, he had the “realisation of the vacant Infinite” — a condition that is the summit or the final Siddhi of several traditional schools of Sadhana. One can feel at least a touch, however distant of the state of Advaita-consciousness if one concentrates on the sonnet he wrote down later:

I walked on the high-wayed Seat of Solomon
Where Shankaracharya's tiny temple stands
Facing Infinity from Time's edge, alone
On the bare ridge ending earth's vain romance.

Around me was a formless solitude:
All had become one strange Unnameable,
An unborn sole Reality world-nude,
Topless and fathomless, for ever still.

A Silence that was Being's only word,
 The unknown beginning and the voiceless end
 Abolishing all things moment-seen or heard,
 On an incommunicable summit reigned,

A lonely Calm and void unchanging Peace
 On the dumb crest of Nature's mysteries.⁷

About two years later, sometime in early 1905, he who till then gave no importance to idols, suddenly realised the "living presence of Kali in a shrine on the banks of the Narmada", in a stone sculpture:

In a town of gods, housed in a little shrine,
 From sculptured limbs the Godhead looked at me, —
 A living Presence deathless and divine,
 A Form that harboured all infinity.

The great World-Mother and her mighty will
 Inhabited the earth's abysmal sleep,
 Voiceless, omnipotent, inscrutable,
 Mute in the desert and the sky and deep.

Now veiled with mind she dwells and speaks no word,
 Voiceless, inscrutable, omniscient,
 Hiding until our soul has seen, has heard
 The secret of her strange embodiment,

One in the worshipper and the immobile shape,
 A beauty and mystery flesh or stone can drape.⁸

Sri Aurobindo refers to these two experiences in a letter:

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

architecture, but in a moment mysteriously, unexpectedly there is instead a Presence, a Power, a Face that looks into yours, an inner sight in you has regarded the World-Mother.⁹

But such experiences cannot be unusual for one who has entered supraphysical worlds and planes and observed their effect on the human or mundane plane even before consciously taking to Yoga. Unfortunately no questions seem to have been put to him about these occult encounters of his with the worlds beyond or hidden within the world we know, though we can learn much about them from the vast treasure of spiritual literature he has left for us.

We observe in this phase of Sri Aurobindo's life a remarkably calm co-existence of such profound experiences and realisations with external activities of such serious nature that in the life of even an intellectually well-balanced person these must claim all his attention. In his characteristic quiet way he was getting more and more involved in political activities — visiting Bengal whenever the need arose. All the facts — not their interpretations — available to us clearly show that he expected his followers to pursue the lofty ideal he kept before them using their own genius. He would not coerce their nature to be moulded into a fixed pattern, but would wish them to grow in their own way to be worthy servitors of the ideal. In the rift between Barindrakumar and Jatindranath, there is nothing to suggest, as some authors had hinted, that it was the former who received his support. In fact, on his visit to Kolkata to dissolve the rift he stayed not with his brother but with Jatindranath. Here is a glimpse of that visit left by Abinash Bhattacharya who before long became his closest assistant for a time:

From the house No. 86 Upper Circular Road, Jatin Babu, Barin and myself continued our efforts to recruit youths for the secret society. After the evening set in we read and discussed varieties of books on revolutions and the lives of Garibaldi, Cavour, Mazzini and others. Jatin Babu was older than us and he was handsome and robust-looking. At first he used to remain a bit grave. He began to work among the lawyers and barristers and the affluent while Barin and I would work with students at the College Square or the parks. There was a rather wide open ground in front of our lodge. The first club for the practice of lathi-play, cycling, riding etc. was opened there. As the number of youths increased Satish Babu was given the task of opening new centres at different places, according to Barrister P. Mitra's advice . . . Satish Babu organised several such associations at different places thereby rendering commendable service to the country.

After working for six months together there developed personal discordance — not ideological difference — between Jatin Babu and us. Barin and I moved into a rented house at Madan Mitra Lane and continued working from there. Jatin

Babu moved from the house at Circular Road to one at Sitaram Ghose Street.

Barin wrote to Sri Aurobindo about our separation. It was early in 1903. Sri Aurobindo informed Barin that he would visit Calcutta and try to resolve the problem.

Aurobindo Babu arrived as scheduled. He put up with Jatin Babu. "Come, Abinash, let me introduce you to my Sej-da," proposed Barin. Very happy, I accompanied Barin. There was a mat spread on the floor. I found Aurobindo Babu and Jatin engaged in conversation and laughing together.

I bowed to them and sat down facing them. "Sej-da, this is Abinash Bhattacharya, the first ever worker in Bengal." "No," protested I. "I'm not the first. Jatin Babu is first, you're second and I'm third."

"No," said Barin, "Jatin Babu and I were initiated at Baroda and came to Bengal. You're the first one in Bengal to plunge into our mission giving up everything else. Hence you're the first one in Bengal."

Aurobindo Babu kept his eyes fixed on me for quite some time. I was about to lose balance and collapse; I felt as if he was squeezing my deepest interior out. Neither could I shut my eyes nor could I divert them. My heart palpitated loud . . . He then said, "Your first selection has been good. He is determined, trustworthy and a silent worker." I felt resurrected, as if through some elixir of life.¹⁰

As we have already seen, the stuff Barindrakumar was made of was too stubborn to yield to sensibility of a different order. However, the political situation was fast changing, at least in Bengal, with the Governor-General Lord Curzon's decision to divide that State. We will focus on that in the subsequent chapter.

Sri Aurobindo attended the 20th session of the Indian National Congress held in Mumbai beginning on the 26th of December 1904. We observe that by then even the pro-colonial Press had begun to be contemptuous of the Congress and was expecting from it a somewhat better performance. *The Statesman* wrote editorially on the eve of the event under the sarcastic title — "That Hardwar Family":

The Twentieth Indian National Congress which opens at Bombay tomorrow, is an event of somewhat unusual importance. "For the last four or five years," said our Allahabad contemporary (*Pioneer*) the other day, "the proceedings of the National Congress have had as much interest to the outside world as the proceedings of the bathing fair at Hardwar". The observation is not without a measure of truth, but it certainly cannot be made to apply to the forthcoming session. The organisers so far have been singularly fortunate. Bombay for many reasons is the best city for the Congress to meet in and the presence of Sir Henry Cotton and Sir William Wedderburn gives necessarily a more representative character to the gathering than usual.¹¹

What is curious, it was not for a colonial mouthpiece alone to feel certain that the Indian National Congress will gain “a more representative character” because of two distinguished Englishmen’s participation in it, but when Sir Henry himself said apologetically at the beginning of his Presidential Address, “I must be always aware that one of your own body would more worthily and adequately discharge the function of the office and am conscious that it must be more appropriate for an Indian to preside at the Indian National Congress than an Englishman”, the audience shouted “No, No!”¹²

But this friend of India bluntly commented on several issues which an Indian President probably would not have done. Said Sir Henry:

India is the field where British capital is invested, but all the interest that is reaped therefrom passes to the pocket of the investor, and he takes it to England . . . But how can it be denied that it would be vastly more beneficial if the wealth produced in the country were spent in the country? India is poor and there are those who believe that in consequence of its political conditions it is becoming poorer; but the ambition of your people is to take their place among other nations in the future federation of the world. Your opposition to the exploitation of your country by foreigners is based upon the conviction that this exploitation is a real obstacle to your progress, and you do not need to be assured by me that the prosperity of your country depends on the diminution of its economic drain and the conservation of its resources for ultimate development by indigenous agency.¹³

The Government’s plan to divide Bengal and transfer the eastern areas of the State to Assam had been announced in December 1903. The Governor-General of British India, Lord Curzon, “a vain man”¹⁴ had no compunction to openly launch the communal strategy of divide and rule undertaking a long tour of Eastern Bengal. In Dacca, for example, he said in 1904 before the scheme was notified:

. . . the proposed transfer would make Dacca the centre, and possibly the capital of a new and self-sufficing administration . . . which would invest the Mohammedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the Mussalman Viceroys and kings . . .¹⁵

What Sir Henry said in his Presidential Address in regard to the scheme was of immense importance:

A word, too, I wish to say on a subject which is so justly agitating the minds of my old friends in Bengal; I allude to the proposed partition of that province. We shall recognise that this is a matter of more than local interest when we recall that the sinister aspect of the proposal is to shatter, if it be possible to do

so, the unity, and to undermine the feelings of solidarity which are so happily established among the members of a compact and national branch of the Empire. The idea of the severance of the oldest and the most populous and wealthy portion of the province, and the division of its people into two arbitrary sections, has given a profound shock to the Bengali race. I do not think I ever remember popular sentiment to have been more deeply stirred than it has been by this scheme for the separation of one-half of Bengal from the capital of the province and its amalgamation with Assam. It has been suggested that there should be a new Lieutenant Governorship with all its expensive paraphernalia of a large secretariat and separate departments; a scheme which is not without its attraction to the members of an autocratic bureaucracy, who see before them the prospect of additional offices and emoluments. But it is repugnant to the last degree to the inhabitants of the country affected, who are aghast at the idea of their exclusion from a province to which they are attached by all historic material, social and sentimental associations.¹⁶

But the divisive forces worked determinedly. Later, Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the first and the last Lieutenant-Governor of East Bengal waxed uncannily romantic and declared that he had two wives, the Hindu and the Mohamedan, but that the Mohamedan was his favourite wife! Observed Sir Surendranath Banerjea: “A ruler who could publicly indulge in a display of offensive humour of this kind was clearly unfit for the high office he held. The Civil Service took their cue from him, and his administration was conducted upon lines in the closest conformity with the policy which he had so facetiously announced.”¹⁷

Thus was heralded the macabre march of communalism in the 20th century to wreak havoc on the nation.

(To be continued)

MANOJ DAS

References and Notes

1. Sri Aurobindo: *Letters on Yoga*; SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 991.
2. A. B. Purani: *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*; Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 2007 Ed., p. 612.
3. Sri Aurobindo: *Autobiographical Notes . . .*; CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 98.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
5. Sri Aurobindo: *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*; CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 233.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 233-34.
7. ‘Adwaita’ in *Collected Poems*; CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 621.

8. 'The Stone Goddess' in *Collected Poems*; CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 608.
9. Sri Aurobindo: *Letters on Yoga-I*; CWSA, Vol. 28, pp. 333-34.
10. Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya: "Aurobindo" in *Galpa Bharati*, Kolkata.
11. *The Statesman*; Kolkata, 25 December 1904.
12. *Congress Presidential Addresses*; G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras 1935.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Sri Aurobindo used this expression for Curzon in an incomplete article found in his early manuscripts. CWSA, Vol. 6, p. 72.
15. Ajit K. Neogy: *Partition of Bengal*; A. Mukherjee & Co. Kolkata.
16. *Congress Presidential Addresses*; G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras 1934.
17. Sir Surendranath Banerjea: *A Nation in Making*; Oxford University Press; 1925.

... in India the breath moves slowly, the afflatus is long in coming. India, the ancient mother, is indeed striving to be reborn, striving with agony and tears, but she strives in vain. What ails her, she, who is after all so vast and might be so strong? There is surely some enormous defect, something vital is wanting in us; nor is it difficult to lay our finger on the spot. We have all things else, but we are empty of strength, void of energy. We have abandoned Shakti and are therefore abandoned by Shakti. The Mother is not in our hearts, in our brains, in our arms.

The wish to be reborn we have in abundance, there is no deficiency there. How many attempts have been made, how many movements have been begun, in religion, in society, in politics! But the same fate has overtaken or is preparing to overtake them all. They flourish for a moment, then the impulse wanes, the fire dies out, and if they endure, it is only as empty shells, forms from which the Brahma has gone or in which it lies overpowered with tamas and inert. Our beginnings are mighty, but they have neither sequel nor fruit.

Now we are beginning in another direction; we have started a great industrial movement which is to enrich and regenerate an impoverished land. Untaught by experience, we do not perceive that this movement must go the way of all the others, unless we first seek the one essential thing, unless we acquire strength.

Sri Aurobindo
'Bhawani Mandir'

(Bande Mataram, CWSA, Vol. 6, pp. 80-81)

A CAPTIVE OF HER LOVE

(Continued from the issue of April 2013)

13.6.1958

SOMETIMES this servant A is too funny for words. In the beginning I thought he was stupid but he is not and when he wants he is not even slow. It was probably a mask he put on to save himself from too many troubles in new surroundings. It seems that he just needs love. I have to beg him with charming smiles to sweep or wipe the floor or to come to me. When I call him my voice must be like that of a cherub and he always pretends at first not to hear me, so that I am obliged to call him once more. When he feels hurt (usually when I raise my voice — now I don't do it any more) he gets a dark, wild light in his eyes and a dark wave comes over me. He cheats me of course too, but I am still more clever than he is and I cheat better. So at the end the house looks clean and the work is done. All these problems with A became actual when the first servant S's child fell ill and died. So I was left alone with A for a time. In all this She works silently to make a witness out of me. I feel that that is Her purpose now. First, as usual, She shows me that this is how I should be and then She lets me aspire and aspire and pray with all my heart. Then only, at last, She graciously agrees to do what She Herself has put as aspiration into me — and then She transforms me. Oh, is it not sheer delight? I have not had easy days of late but my happiness is so great.

I have found in Calcutta's yearly *Mandir Annual* an old article by Sri Aurobindo which made me really feel how essential aspiration is. He describes how it is included in the Harmony of the Universe and says that the gods and the Supreme never give anything without aspiration from the human soul. So, I try to *be* aspiration, to be a flame. And in a way I am, it burns. Being a witness is not easy, but I shall learn this too.

As my birthday is approaching, I am making a small sculpture for Her. It is a custom here that we offer Her something. It will be a figure drinking from the Source. I have also got oil colours. It is wonderful to know that everything that is needed will be given. But, of course, needed as She judges it. Lately She has said such wonderful things during Her children's class, chiefly about the powerful working of the new Supramental Force. That, whether we feel it or not, whether we want it or not, it works in us. And later, when our consciousness has undergone in its progress one of the decisive transformations, then this Force itself will show what it has done in our body without our knowing it and in other parts too. But She always says that each one has to proceed modestly on his own way. What She says is usually printed

in the *Bulletin*, so you will have it too.

* * *

20.6.1958

Today I have a meat holiday. Tripura's husband has his birthday and he did not want any meat. So I gave more time to the "garden". It is so funny — a garden in flower-pots. Everything grows so quickly — you cannot imagine — but there are also more different pests to be fought than in Europe.

I do my work and practise being only a witness. It will be so: I shall sit in a corner of Her Heart and adore Her. She will do all the work, and think in me and feel in me and I shall look at it with wonder and admiration. In a way — maybe — it is already so. But sometimes it is all so overwhelming that I hardly believe that it is. I remember how often I was reading and repeating to myself in Poland, "In order to stand aside, you must know yourself as the Purusha who merely watches, consents to God's work, upholds the Adhar and enjoys the fruits that God gives." But at that time I never grasped that it means I shall really be doing nothing. When I say that, maybe, it already is, I mean that I feel Her doing the work — not that the channel is clean.

I want to go to the library today and read some of the psalms from the Bible, the ones where the human soul, being at peace, adores the Lord. So I feel, I aspire for more and more true, deep humility. How can I stand before my Lord without perfect humility? She is the Lord together with Sri Aurobindo. She is transforming my love for Her so that I can . . .

* * *

27.6.1958

I don't remember what it was I wanted to say a week ago. A patient was brought in suddenly after a gall-bladder attack and since then I have had no time. I can only do for her what you were doing for me after my operation — just spoiling a bit. It is not so easy. But Mother looks at me through Her eyes and it helps. Oh! Diederika, I tell you, these are not easy days, but I am only grateful that Her will is manifesting. I shall tell you something that is going on, but don't tell other people, they would not understand. I am discovering that Mother works with people who have very strong egos and even what one would call mean. Oh! it is wonderful to learn it. You know who my chief is. Well, he turned against me and complained — I do not know if to Mother or Pavitra — that I rearranged the Nursing Home, that I put flower-pots and took three rooms for myself! The "waves" were strong, I tell you, but it is wonderful

to feel the Supreme Force working through the maze. I had not seen Pavitra for a long time. Then two days ago he met me and told me what the chief had said and that I must only do what he wants because this is the Nursing Home he is in charge of. Pavitra began to talk with cold detachment and while he was talking and I (inwardly peaceful and surrendered) answering, we both at the same moment felt that all this is just nothing, all was dropped, I knew that he understood what was Mother's will and that I had surrendered and maybe he understood more about my life with Mother during the last months. I felt that we were both really feeling Mother looking through us at each other. There is nothing sentimental in this. It is a little beginning of something in me that is sheer delight and felicity. He probably has it permanently already. So now Janina wanted to learn how to be a witness and she has a wonderful occasion. "Pani Dyrektor" who was always at the top giving orders in Poland will have to ask for the chief's signature for almost everything she wants to change in the Nursing Home. My vital rebels of course and Janina, from the inner being, where she sits close to Mother, tries to look at it and watch how God's Force transforms her being. But Janina feels already what immense felicity there is not only in expanding independently — which God has permitted her to do until now — but also in working "as if with bound hands" because this is now Her Will. And with this attitude towards the new situation I feel only Love streaming from Her to me and from me to Her.

* * *

30.6.1958

I am prostrating myself before the chief who is Herself and things are becoming clearer and more harmonious. My life seems to be becoming slowly concentrated only on Her. I have endless conversations with my God and I begin to discover that He (or She), being the Immensity, is at the same time something very, very simple. I can quarrel with Her, or put my head on Her lap and cry, or I can smile and laugh. She will accept everything. Oh! at last I can be completely natural, completely, completely, as I am now with all my imperfections. She knows each corner of my being and She loves me as I am. I feel Her more and more clearly in my inner being, close to me. She embraces me and we both as witnesses watch all that is being done by Her as God the Worker — in me and everywhere. This does not mean that all is easy. Oh! I feel so exhausted often and have strange headaches, but now all has become different. I have really given my adhara to Her. I no longer have a headache — She has it. Let Her do with it what She likes and with my fatigue too. My eyes are also inflamed again, but I do not worry. Let Her worry!

Our patient is much better. It has been a real yoga crisis. There is so much jealousy streaming on me — but that is also Mother's business, not mine.

The heat had been awful for a week and then, suddenly, overnight, the change came. There are lovely showers and it is much cooler. Evenings, nights and mornings are almost European! I have received both your letters and I shall give the letter to Pavitra this evening. It is good that you have written to him. It does not matter at all what you write to me, just write. Everything will come in its due time. Oh! I have such confidence now in Her. Each tiniest thing She is just doing in the way and time when it is necessary.

APPENDIX – I

Letters to a Young Bengali

24.1.1960

Yes, S, this is the Grace and Glory of Her Presence. Just let it work, let it vibrate in and around you and give yourself, give yourself, give yourself. She will free you from unnecessary workings of your mind and leave those that She needs for the work in you. She will make your heart burn, She will give you bliss, if you will persevere even in the midst of “hell” — persevere and persevere. She will give you strength. Yes, repeat Her Name even in the midst of “hell” — She is there too. And Her Name is the Infinite Love and Power, the Supreme Mother. . . .

We had one patient for an operation and just when we had finished the operation, suddenly our young German friend E had to be operated as an emergency. But everything went smoothly, we meditated as usual before the operation and we all felt that Mother was present. She Herself fixed the time of the operation for 8 p.m.

* * *

5.2.1960

Here are the messages. The last Blessings we had were on the 2nd of February and the message was: “Let us meditate on the most auspicious form of Savitri, on the Light of the Supreme which shall illumine us with the Truth.”

I shall now be sending you each message immediately, for what I have learned here is that when we take each message as the *most* important thing at that moment — for it is God’s Word to us, chosen by Him (Her) and given by Him (Her) to us — then it is a tremendous help on our way. The next message will be on Mother’s birthday, the 21st of February. . . . I feel myself in this respect to be like a clever beggar who runs where he expects something will be given and is completely concentrated on it. So I took the message of the 2nd of February and it fills my life until She

gives a new Word on the 21st. You probably know that the 29th of February is the first anniversary of the descent of the Supermind (four years ago) and will be a very great day.

* * *

18.3.1960

Since yesterday our Nursing Home is again without patients. It is an enchanted house indeed. Every day it grows more and more beautiful. I do love to sit on the balcony to look at the wonder of the orange bougainvillea against the blue sky and feel Her Presence around me and in me.

And now I am going to tell you a true story. There was a sadhak (a visitor) who used to come here from time to time. A very fine man. He has a daughter here, about twenty years old. He wanted very much to stay permanently near Mother, but the conditions in the family were such that he got too many reproaches that he was neglecting his family duties every time he wanted to come even for a visit here.

And then the accident happened, a car accident; for a week he was still alive and then he died. The girl here is a marvellous girl. You know, there are some children and young people in the Ashram who have something so deep and direct in their relation with Mother. She is one of them. She cried, of course, and was miserable, but one felt that somehow in her being she lives in Mother, instinctively as it were. She loved her father very much, she loved his soul, and her physical mother almost hated her, if one may say so. The girl did not go home for the ceremonies. Mother said it was better not to go and she did Mother's will. And then Mother told her how it all happened. The father's whole being was longing for the Ashram, completely concentrated on it, but he could not realise his heart's wish because of the conditions in which he found himself in his body (wife and other family problems). So it was necessary that the body be destroyed to make the soul free to come here. "Your father is here," Mother said, "just next to you, only you cannot see him. He has brought with him his mental and vital being also, not only the psychic." And Mother has told the girl to write this to her family.

* * *

13.4.1960

It is wonderful indeed to have a younger brother who writes such beautiful letters. I do not mind the "ornaments" that are generously spread over the pages. The time will come when we shall sing out of Her Marvel Heart and each word will be a honeydrop of Grace. And we shall write endless books of delight on the white

shimmering pages of the Milky Way. From time to time Mother will bend over our heads holding a lamp of stars to make us see better. But at present we may prefer to walk a little longer on the paths of a life turned away from the Divine, immersed in “delusions” — or at least we may want to write about the life of the Shadow and why should we not do it?

Yes, She is the Diamond Bridge. She will join in the One (She has already done it) the two contradictions in you which you mentioned. Of course you can pray and you must pray and you must do nothing else but pray with each throb of your heart and each movement of your fountain pen, that the solution of these two contradictions might manifest in you through Her Love. And it will manifest. It will be your glory path towards the Diamond Bridge, the glory path of suffering or the glory path of joy, as She wants it — this does not matter at all. It can be a sunlit path if the miser, whom She loves without end, will give Her the small key to his heart even now. Then She will open his heart wide, wide as the Universe, and the miser will *really* embrace the Shadow and *really* console the Shadow — as, it seems, he would like very much to do.

As to the Ashram, what is most wonderful now besides Mother is the tree over the Samadhi. Do you know the name Mother has given to it? It is the Service Tree. And it does bend over the Eternal Child like a good old servant. Can you imagine how it looks now in full golden bloom, a Dome of Light, with its smile-drops falling continuously down and our little children crawling over the sunny carpet around the Samadhi and collecting the small flowers in baskets? The common name of this tree is the Rusty Shield-Bearer.

I have written to Poland asking for Polish children’s stories. They might come before you come here next time.

* * *

18.5.1960

Here is what Mother said about the Balcony Darshan:

Question: “Mother, what do you give us every morning at the Balcony and what should we try to do in order to receive what you give us?”

Answer: “Every morning, at ‘Balcony’, after having established a conscious contact with each one of those who are present, I identify myself with the Supreme Lord and merge myself completely in Him. Then my body, completely passive, becomes only a channel through which the Supreme Lord passes freely His Forces and pours on all His Light, His Consciousness and His Delight according to each one’s receptivity.

“The best way to receive what He gives is to come to ‘Balcony’ with confidence and aspiration and to be there as calm and quiet as possible in a silent and passive

waiting. If anyone has something precise to ask, it is better to ask before and not at the moment when I am there, because any activity diminishes the receptivity.”

You see, *since all our life will slowly become a darshan*, it is good to know how it should be.

* * *

27.5.1960

I do hope you feel better now. Yes, this is the best medicine, the most wonderful: Mother's Name. Are we not the luckiest people in the world? Just think! She has allowed us to discover Her and to see Her and to meet Her and She allows us to adore Her and to love Her. She is sitting smiling in each of your cells — sweeping too where it is necessary, and scrubbing — so, all is for the best!

As to you living in your characters, what else is Mother doing but living in us and tasting with millions of bodies this glorious world She has made? We are just Her characters — and yours are just yours and slowly you will learn that they should not drag you down if you can see in them too Mother tasting the world! . . .

Why should it be a dream — the final breaking down of the Golden Door and being engulfed in Her Embrace? It is *the* most real reality, the most touchable. Only we stupid creatures do not see it yet; but the day will come when we shall awake and realise that all the time we have been in Her Embrace — all the time. . . .

* * *

6.6.1960

Last Wednesday was Prosperity Day and the Glory of Her near presence. Although this Glory is there every morning radiating from the Balcony and piercing to the bottom of the soul, still I love the nearness of Her Gaze.

* * *

29.6.1960

From each constellation, physical or psychological, new unexpected wonders appear when we can give ourselves to Her as completely as possible. . . . If She chooses, She can make us into completely new beings — is it not a wonder of wonders?

As to my spiritual thoughts you asked me to write about, I am tremendously happy that I think as little as possible and each day less and less. Mother is answering my prayers.

* * *

20.8.1960

As to the Ashram, what can I write about the Darshan?¹ We never have big celebrations. Just in the afternoon some music in Mother's presence after the march past and in the evening some slides of Mother's activities. For the rest, in general, during these days people drag the atmosphere down as they are so many and the Deluge of Bliss has to pump it upwards.

* * *

7.9.1960

What Mother has said about teaching literature is a message like a thunderstorm. Mother announces in it too that She intends to take in hand the problem of education. She says: "When I intervene and remould things it may seem like a cyclone. People may feel that they can no longer stand on their legs! So many matters will get upset. There will be all-round bewilderment at first. But, as a result of the cyclone, the wall will break down and the true Light burst in."

* * *

13.12.1960

I have two patients and I paint, and paint, and paint — or rather I draw, and draw, and draw. I have swept the whole universe away and put it on my white sheet of paper, my small white sheet of paper. And I did not even need to squeeze in. And from my nebulae and divine forms I go to my two coughing and "prosaic" creatures, but when I go to them, I see them as two tiny dots in my world of dots on my tiny white sheet of paper. Because, you know, I am now drawing not with lines but only with dots. Mother told me that She is collecting my pictures for an exhibition which will be arranged when there are enough pictures to do it. It was on the occasion of the anniversary of my arrival in Pondicherry, when I first saw Her. Is it not a glory?

As to your present life of a busy man, I can only see Mother dancing around you in the attire and robes of all those people you meet. Can She not change dresses for Her Beloved as She likes? And can't you see Her eyes in the eyes of many who look or stare at you? Even if with one hand She keeps you in the midst of chaos, She holds Her dear child strongly with the other — and this is the Glory — you are kept tightly by Her in Her arms.

* * *

1. This was written a few days after the Darshan on Sri Aurobindo's birthday (15 August).

10.10.1961

I am at present mostly occupied in tracing figures resembling Mother's figure. And this will be made into mosaics! For this I have to ask you to do something for me: I need beautiful stones and pebbles in the colours of dreamland! Here we have lots of pebbles of greyish and brownish-grey shades which can be used for backgrounds, but the Pondicherry countryside is poor in colourful stones and, as you have many acquaintances all over Bengal, you might find a few "souls" (because souls are needed for this) who could, maybe, help to develop art in the Ashram. But please do not start with wagon loads . . . just a few stones from time to time — green, red, yellow, also nice browns will be most welcome. I also need information about colour cements.

If all this is too difficult for you, simply drop the matter, but if it is possible, I shall be very, very happy.

* * *

27.7.1963

I must tell you about my birthday. I gave all the pictures to Mother, there are 35 pictures. Mother wrote: "*C'est très intéressant*."² She also sent me Her Blessings. "To Janina. With my blessings that the Beauty and the eternal Truth express themselves more and more through her art."

Do you think a human being can wish more?

And the most amusing thing is that one day later I had to start drawing anatomic diagrams and other pictures for a surgery book.³ I found it such a wonderful Divine Joke that I began to draw them with exactly the same enthusiasm as my own pictures. And I received Her loving Grace, for in those tissues and cells I can find Her too, shining and laughing at us.

* * *

(Concluded)

JANINA STROKA

2. "It is very interesting."

3. A. C. Sanyal, *Surgical Text* (Pondicherry, 1965).

APPENDIX – II

The Mother on Janina's Passing

(From a talk of 11 August 1964, translated from the French)

I remember, the very day Janina died (she died at about six in the morning, I think), around four in the morning, suddenly something made me take interest in this question: What will the new form be like? What will it be like? And I looked at man and at the animal. Then I saw that there would be a much greater difference between man and the new form than between man and the animal. I started to see things, and it happened that Janina was there (in her thought, but a quite material and very concrete thought). And it was very interesting (it lasted a long time, about two hours), because I saw the whole timidity of human conceptions, whereas she had made contact with something: it wasn't an idea but a sort of contact. I had the impression of a Matter that was more plastic and full of Light, responding much more directly to the Will (the higher Will), and with such a plasticity that it could respond to the Will by taking variable and changing forms. And I saw some of these forms of hers, which she had conceived — a little like these beings who don't have a body like us, but who have hands and feet when they want, and a head when they want, and luminous clothes when they want — things like that. I saw that and I remember I congratulated her. I told her, "You have had a partial, but partially very clear perception of one of the forms the new Manifestation will take." And she was very happy. I told her, "You see, you have worked fully for the future." Then all at once I saw a sapphire-blue light, pale, very luminous, shaped like a flame (with a rather broad base), and it made a kind of flash, pfft! and then it was gone . . . And she was no longer there. I thought: "Well, that's odd!" An hour later (I saw this around six in the morning; all the rest had lasted about two hours), they told me she was dead. That is, she spent the last moments of her life with me and then, from me, pfft! went off towards . . . a life elsewhere.

It was very sudden. She was so happy, you know; I told her, "How well you have worked for the future!" And all at once, like a flash (a sapphire-blue light, pale, very luminous, with the shape of a flame and a rather broad base), pfft! she was gone. And that was just the moment when she died.

It is one of the most interesting departures I have seen — fully conscious. And so happy to have participated! . . . I myself didn't know why I was telling her, "Yes, you have truly participated in the work for the future, you have put the earth in contact with one of the forms of the new Manifestation."

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

SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION IN SRI AUROBINDO

THE writing of good prose is no less taxing an art than writing poetry. In this essay only one aspect of prose, that of construction of sentences, will be taken up. It is not known to the present writer whether any study of Sri Aurobindo's prose has been undertaken from this point of view, so the lack of references to critical works may kindly be excused. This study does not have anything to do with grammatical division of sentences into clauses etc. This is not a grammatical approach to sentence construction.

There is no question that Sri Aurobindo is one of the most serious and best prose artists ever seen, and I use the term "serious" here, not for the content, but for the manner, his approach to prose. It should also be pointed out now that as I do not want to take his name in vain again and again, he shall be referred to as "our author" from now on. The scope of this article, indeed, is very limited, since it will deal, not with the content, or the tone, or rhetoric, but only with one rather technical matter — his art of sentence construction. Even within this extremely limited field it will be seen what wealth is there in his writings and how much it enriches us. The examples will be taken from *The Future Poetry*.^{*} Examples will also be cited from Bacon in order to facilitate our understanding of the topic under discussion.

It is usual for writers to divide their sentences into two or more parts. Many careful artists (Bacon, for example) place appropriate punctuation marks like commas etc. in order to mark out the divisions. But then, Bacon is an exceptionally careful writer. Usually writers do not pay any attention to the way in which their sentences are constructed. We are not dealing with such writers. We are dealing with one who very often does give punctuation marks to help his readers. Let us start by taking a sentence divided into two parts, by Bacon:

Of this I may give only this advice, according to my small model.¹

Here Bacon has most considerately placed a comma after "advice" to indicate the two divisions. The reader will notice that the two parts are roughly equal in length (10 syll.:8), but this is not necessary. Here is our author on poetic genius:

It follows its own course and makes its own shaping experiments.²

It is noticeable here that the writer has not given any punctuation marks to divide the sentence, yet, to the observant reader, no such mark is necessary. The

^{*} It is the first edition that has been used in this study. The text is essentially a reproduction of what appeared in the Arya. — Ed

1. Selby, F. G. ed., *Bacon's Essays*, Macmillan, 1971 rpt., p. 7.

2. Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953, p. 10.

sentence is built in such a way as to fall naturally into two parts. But, as has already been observed, the different parts do not have to be equal and balance each other:

So too with the poetical sense of objects, the poet's attempt to embody in his speech truth of life or truth of Nature.³

Here, it will be seen, the comma marks out unequal divisions.

The two parts of a sentence may be further divided into more parts. Let us see Bacon:

Certainly there be that delight in giddiness, and count it a bondage to fix a belief; affecting free-will in thinking, as well as in acting.⁴

Here the sentence is, first of all, divided into two parts indicated by a semi-colon, then each part into two more parts, indicated by commas, neatly balancing each other. Here is our author, in the sentence immediately preceding the one about poetic genius quoted above:

We may perhaps think that this was not the proper form for their spirit, that they cannot get there a full or a flawless success; but who shall lay down rules for creative genius or say what it shall or shall not attempt?⁵

Here, as in Bacon, the sentence is first of all divided into two parts by a semi-colon, then the first part subdivided by a comma. The second part of the sentence is also divided but has not been indicated by a punctuation mark. The division comes after "genius".

Let me say just one thing here, as this is just the beginning, for we shall be stepping into far more complexities after this. When one reads Bacon, one is very, very conscious of the fact that the sentences have been carefully engineered, built, as it were, brick by brick, and one admires the artistry. Bacon admires himself and we admire Bacon. Every sentence is like a verbal gesture: "Look, look at me." Contrariwise, there is never, but never, any impression of deliberate effort with our author. He writes his sentences, as it were, just naturally. It is as if they fall naturally into a pattern. The reader, if he is discerning enough, has to find out the artistry himself. After all, does not art lie in concealing itself? That is what happens with his sentences — the artistry involved is so natural that it does not obtrude itself into our attention as it does at every stage in Bacon and many other prose artists.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

4. *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

5. *The Future Poetry*, p. 10.

Each part of these two-part sentences has been divided into two, but they can be divided into more parts as well. Bacon has several such. Here he is, in ‘Of Death’:

It is worthy the observation, | that there is no passion in the mind of man so weak, | but it mates and masters the fear of death; || and therefore death is no such terrible enemy | when a man has so many attendants about him | that can win the combat of him. ||⁶

Here, for the convenience of the reader, I have marked the main divisions of the sentence with double vertical lines and subdivisions with single vertical ones. This sentence is divided into two parts and then each part into three more. Now here is a sentence by our author, slightly more complex:

In regard to poetic style we have to make, | for the purpose of the idea we have in view, | the starting-point of the mantra, | precisely the same distinctions as in regard to poetic rhythm, || — since here too we find actually | everything admitted as poetry | which has some power of style | and is cast into some kind of rhythmical form. ||⁷

This sentence is divided into two parts and each is then divided into four. It will be noted that the subdivisions have been marked with commas in the first part, but not in the second. There I have used my own instinct.

Next we come to sentences divisible into three parts. Let us first see what Bacon does about it. Here is his famous sentence on revenge:

Revenge is a kind of wild justice; which the more man’s nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out.⁸

So here there are three short parts, each indicated clearly. Now let us take up our author:

Reason and taste, two powers of the intelligence, are rightly the supreme gods of the prose stylist, while to the poet they are only minor deities.⁹

Let the reader not be misled by the first comma, for “Reason and taste” cannot be regarded as an independent part of a sentence. In this sentence the first part ends with “intelligence” and the second with “stylist”.

6. *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

7. *The Future Poetry*, p. 32.

8. *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

9. *The Future Poetry*, p. 19.

In a longer sentence the three parts can be subdivided. So here is Bacon, in ‘Of Truth’:

To pass from theological and philosophical truth, | to the truth of civil business;
|| it will be acknowledged even by those that practise it not, | that clear and
round dealing is the honour of man’s nature; || and that mixture of falsehood is
like alloy in coin of gold and silver, | which may make the metal work better,
but it embaseth it.¹⁰

Let us now look at our author. He is talking about rhythm, in a sentence that is most systematically rhythmical:

From a certain point of view it is the rhythm, | the poetic movement which is of
primary importance; || for that is the first fundamental, | indispensable element
without which all the rest, || whatever its other value, | remains unacceptable to
the Muse of poetry.¹¹

This is a very fine sentence indeed, if only from the viewpoint of construction. Apart from its division into carefully balanced parts, please notice how the sentence begins quite mildly, but the tone gets stronger and stronger till, in the last part, it becomes almost declamatory, assertive in tone, thundering to its close in the clause “remains unacceptable to the Muse of poetry.” We are paying attention to only one aspect of his sentences, but there are, we know, many other sides to prose style.

After this come sentences divisible into four parts, with their subdivisions. Here is Bacon in ‘Of Truth’:

But it is not only the difficulty and labour | which men take in finding out truth;
| nor again that when it is found | it imposeth upon men’s thoughts, || that doth
bring lies in favour; || but a natural though corrupt love of the lie itself.¹²

It is noticeable that the first two parts of the sentence are divided into two parts each, but the third and fourth, both much shorter, are not. This is quite common with sentences in which one part is longer than the other and thus do not balance each other. Sometimes it is deliberate, sometimes not.

Now to look at our author. Here is a sentence that nearly parallels the one by Bacon:

10. *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

11. *The Future Poetry*, p. 23.

12. *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

But the poetic vision, | like everything else, || follows necessarily the evolution of the human mind || and according to the age and environment, || it has its levels, | its ascents and descents and its returns. ||¹³

Neatly divided into four parts, this sentence also, like the one by Bacon, has subdivisions, marked by commas, in the first and the last parts, each balancing the other.

Let me introduce the patient reader to another intricacy of four-part sentences. This is what is known as the “enclosed” or the “rounded” period. Now here we shall have to travel further back than Bacon, to another master of prose style, Malory. Let me quote Vinaver here, explaining this sentence:

. . . Malory’s handling of rhythm and sentence-balance . . . he discovered the advantages of the “rounded period”, i.e. a sentence consisting of four main periods of unequal length: long before Bossuet he gave it the musical cadence.¹⁴

I shall write Malory’s sentence down in the way that Vinaver has given it, so that the rounded or the enclosed feature will be clear to the reader. I shall, in addition, put down the number of syllables in each part:

And at such times, my lord Arthur, said Sir Launcelot, ye loved me, — 16
and thanked me when I saved your Queen from the fire; — 12
and then ye promised me for ever to be my good lord — 14
and now me thinketh ye reward me full ill for my good service. — 16¹⁵

The first and the last parts, being longer than the middle ones, enclose or give a rounded effect to the whole sentence. Now let us look at a rounded period by our author in the same manner:

Prose style carries speech to a much higher power — 12
than its ordinary use, — 7
but it differs from poetry — 5
in not making this yet greater attempt. — 10¹⁶

Here too the enclosed or rounded effect is clearly discernible. There are different kinds of rounded sentences, but perhaps that would be a bit too much. It is not my intention to daze or persecute the innocent reader more than has already been done.

13. *The Future Poetry*, p. 48.

14. Vinaver, E. M., Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1970 rpt., p. 106.

15. Sir Thomas Malory, *Morte d’Arthur*: with an Introduction by Helen Moore, Wordworth Classic of World Literature, 1996, p. 760.

16. *The Future Poetry*, p. 18.

After this come sentences divisible into 5 or 6 parts, of which I shall give just one example each. Sentences divisible into five parts are known as “quincunxes” and very fine examples of them are to be found in our author:

We may say that the artist creates | an ideal world of his own, | not necessarily in the sense of ideal perfection, | but a world that exists in the idea, | the imagination and vision of the creator. |¹⁷

Thus we have a quincunx here. One, however, gets the impression that it is not a consciously created sentence, with each part balancing another. Our author has written the sentence without any such care to give it an artificial form. He has just written a long sentence, putting a comma here and a comma there as needed, and behold, there is a quincunx. As I have said earlier, our writer’s sentences never give any impression of artificiality or contrivance as those of Bacon do.

Finally, here is a sentence divisible into six parts:

To arrive at the mantra | he may start from the colour of a rose, | or the power or beauty of a character, | or the splendour of an action, | or go away from all these into his own secret soul | and its most hidden movements.¹⁸

This sentence too does not give any impression of contrivance, of being built up, brick by brick, to make a certain pattern. Sentences built like that have their own value, compelling our admiration at the expertise of the writer. But that is not our author’s way. His is the instinctive, natural approach. A careful, sophisticated artist can write like Bacon, but prose artists like our author are born, not made. This had been said about poets by Horace: *poeta nascitur, non fit*, but the same can be said about prose artists like our author.

There are many other ways of constructing sentences — I have chosen the most obvious of them. Above all, this article is definitely not about his prose style, but upon only one aspect of it. Besides the kind of sentences mentioned here, there are certain other methods also, like dividing sentences into unequal parts to produce a wave-like rhythm etc., which are used in poetic prose.

The attentive reader might have wondered why examples have been taken from Bacon and not from the Bible, which would have yielded examples of many different kinds. But, then, our author’s prose is not Biblical prose. Had the subject of this article been Bunyan’s sentences then the Bible could have been taken as a model. Here the sentences taken for illustration are all from *The Future Poetry*, which is discursive writing. I would request the reader to turn to the ‘Uttarpara Speech’ for an example of oratory.¹⁹

RATRI RAY

17. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

19. The reader might also like to have a look at an essay on this speech by the present writer: ‘The Uttarpara Speech: A Unique Piece of Deliberative Oration’, in Mukherjee, Kalyan ed., *Sri Aurobindo’s Uttarpara Speech: A Centennial Commemorative Volume (1909-2009)*, published by Uttarpara Sri Aurobindo Parishad Trust, 2009, pp. 132-140.

MEDITATIONS ON MAN'S DIVINE POSSIBILITIES IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

Our life's repose is in the Infinite;
It cannot end, its end is Life supreme.
Death is a passage, not the goal of our walk:
Some ancient deep impulsion labours on:
Our souls are dragged as with a hidden leash,
Carried from birth to birth, from world to world,
Our acts prolong after the body's fall
The old perpetual journey without pause. (*Savitri*, p. 197)¹

THESE insightful lines from Sri Aurobindo's revelatory poem, *Savitri*, best explain man's standing upon earth and his long evolutionary journey of existence. Man is yet to find his life's true purpose and his being's highest fulfilment in the cosmic order of the Divine. Despite being only slightly above the brute part of creation, man is till date god's greatest possibility on this imperfect earth. All saints and saviours, all great incarnations have suffered immensely to bring about Truth and consciousness into man's life and to liberate him from his innate animalistic nature. Human history is replete with instances of great men who, even at the cost of their lives, tried to bring down 'the kingdom of God' upon earth.

Sri Aurobindo has insightfully gauged the immense complexities of human nature and heralded the transformation of mankind — the necessity of a supramental realisation upon earth. He has revealed that man's identification with his false self is the cause of all his suffering and failures. Man is, by nature, an eternal seeker of Light, Love and Delight; but his faulty judgment, his identifying himself with the life and the physical world deprive him of these graces. So dense is the veil of nescience around his persona that he is easily persuaded by the Powers who tempt him with the 'thrills of the flesh', but lead him not to 'the soul's desire'. (p. 77) He thus remains ignorant of the Truth that can uplift his being from its earthly limitations. An ardent aspirant of godhead on the earth plane, man remains perpetually a thinking animal vainly trying to achieve a divine perfection, without first seeking an individual purification and perfection. Of all creatures, man alone is unhappy and dissatisfied despite so much material advancement and refinement in his outer life. Man is unhappy because he is not what he should be and he is interminably at war with himself. His nature and attitude are a mystery of contraries and the great puzzle in this world. To quote from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*:

1. All quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from *Savitri*, CWSA, Vols. 33-34.

Freedom he asks but needs to live in bonds,
 He has need of darkness to perceive some light
 And need of grief to feel a little bliss;
 He has need of death to find a greater life. . . .
 His life is a blind-man's-buff, a hide-and-seek;
 He seeks himself and from himself he runs;
 Meeting himself, he thinks it other than he.
 Always he builds, but finds no constant ground,
 Always he journeys, but nowhere arrives . . . (p. 337)

Trapped in the cycle of endless journeys, man's fate is eternally sealed on the *terra firma* of life. There is no rest or respite, no permanent joy, no contentment of spirit in the life of man upon earth. To some extent, he is soothed only when he fixes his gaze upon the heavenward path of self-perfection. Ignorant of his real purpose on earth, man is puzzled, confused and angry at the incessant encounters in the cycles of creation and destruction in which he is a mute but involuntary player. There is no denying that "Beauty surrounds him for a magic hour" (p. 340) and he is privileged to enjoy the ". . . visits of a large revealing joy" (p. 340); but man's unprepared and imperfect mind immediately leads him on the trodden path of his uneventful life, dominated by Matter and instigated by his petty ego. He doubts the infinite blessings of grace that await him on the summit perfection of Self-realisation and the small moments of joy and success in life do not fully satisfy him. Despite his awareness of an immortal and all-encompassing Self within and some 'rare intimations' from the Divine that he is not destined to remain forever what he presently is, man is still the only creature who willingly welcomes his ignorance and embraces imperfection, impurity and impermanence. Man has been, paradoxically, the greatest support and the staunchest opponent of the evolution of consciousness on earth. Sri Aurobindo puts it so well in his *Savitri*:

He walks by his own choice into Hell's trap;
 This mortal creature is his own worst foe.
 His science is an artificer of doom;
 He ransacks earth for means to harm his kind . . .
 An idiot hour destroys what centuries made,
 His wanton rage or frenzied hate lays low
 The beauty and greatness by his genius wrought
 And the mighty output of a nation's toil.
 All he has achieved he drags to the precipice. (p. 440)

Such a 'wonderful' creator and destructor is man! Ever since life on earth assumed a civilised character, man's history is replete with rancour, cruelty, intolerance,

indolence, ego and ignorance — all in the name of good and God! There has hardly been an age when this beautiful earth has not witnessed the cruelties and injustices inflicted by man on man. And this vicious cycle of self-annulment will go on endlessly as long as man remains a blind puppet of dark Forces and “An ignorant judge of problems Ignorance made”. (p. 439) The seeds of self-destruction are deep-rooted in the heart of man and his small mind is the deft plotter of the worst of his pains and privations.

God has bestowed upon man the gift of laughter; but so deep are the pains of man that, instead of laughing, he is perpetually doomed to wail and weep. Animals have their own limited satisfactions and they are happy with their fixed lot; but man, the summit of creation, has badly failed himself and earth. The plight of this thinking animal is best described by the poet in *Savitri*:

I am Prometheus under the vulture's beak,
Man the discoverer of the undying fire,
In the flame he kindled burning like a moth;
I am the seeker who can never find,
I am the fighter who can never win,
I am the runner who never touched his goal:
Hell tortures me with the edges of my thought,
Heaven tortures me with the splendour of my dreams. . . .
I toil like the animal, like the animal die. (p. 506)

The mind of man contemplates the worst and most devilish schemes which ultimately harm him more than the intended target. How beautifully the poet puts man's plight in the line — “Hell tortures me with the edges of my thought”! On the contrary, man's dream of rising to the summits of immeasurable grandeur of higher heavens also haunts him as he thinks beautifully of those ‘homelands of bliss’ but woefully never reaches the peak. This possibility of creation as well as destruction, strength as well as weakness is always present in the heart of man. By doing his best he moves a step further on the godward Path and, by lowering his consciousness through destructive acts, he scripts one more tale of human failure in Destiny's book. Man is endlessly pitched between the devil and the angel, between bliss and grief, between hope and despair. And the sagacity of man in such circumstances determines the course of his future and his fate. His role is fixed in the stage of “. . . this green smiling dangerous world”. (p. 10)

Where God is unseen and only is heard a Name
And knowledge is trapped in the boundaries of mind (p. 702).

Interpreting the puzzle that is the life of man, Rupa Sengupta writes:

Caught between the infinite and the infinitesimal, man is paltry *vis-à-vis* cosmic immensity and a colossus *vis-à-vis* subatomic nothingness, a “midpoint between all and nothing”. His intelligence, accordingly, draws from experience of the intelligible world of commensurate scale. But, since everything comes out of nothingness and moves towards infinity, man is in eternal despair for knowing neither the journey’s principles nor its end. (*The Speaking Tree*, p. 10)

The most interesting truth about the life of man is that he has not accepted defeat yet — and therein lies his possibility of turning himself from a faint spark of Nothingness into a cosmic blaze of the Absolute. Man is able to convert an autumn of despair into a spring of infinite blossoming. He may seem nothing but he holds the possibility and potential of becoming everything. Notwithstanding his imperfections and childish follies, he remains the most conscious child of the Creator on this earth. He has tried to explain the Reality through different ways and by different methods — as per his perception and level of consciousness — and this apparent difference of vision has turned the simple world of Truth into a battlefield of ceaseless aggression.

This is a wonderful and highly interesting episode of the evolutionary journey of man, where the sage in the Himalaya, the sceptic in the Sahara, the agnostic in Argentina and the scientist in Geneva are stipulating the same Reality in their own ways. In this regard Satprem has something interesting to reveal:

. . . men have grown up, and nations, and civilisations, each of them in its own way looking for the Great Secret, the simple secret — through arms and conquests, through meditation and magic and beauty, through religion or science. But to tell the truth, we do not know very well who is the most advanced, the Acropolis builder, the Theban magus or the Cape Kennedy astronaut, or even the Cistercian monk, because some rejected life in order to understand it, while others grasped it without understanding it . . . (*On the Way to Supermanhood*, p. 12)

This is an honest picture of the egoistic mental projection of man. All his ‘knowledge’ leads him eventually to the kingdom of Ignorance. Therefore a sincere follower of truth should understand the harm caused by Mind and Ego on the spiritual path. Both Ego and Mind are great helpers in the material world but equally are they great hurdles on the spiritual path. Therefore a worshipper of Mind should “. . . renounce the hope of Truth” because

. . . Mind can never touch the body of Truth
And Mind can never see the soul of God (pp. 645-46)

On earth where material prosperity is the *summum bonum* for most people, Mind is of great importance: all the wonderful inventions of science are the brain

children of Mind, “. . . the author, spectator, actor, stage”, (p. 645) and director of human activities. On the other hand, Mind is also a bar on the path of life and, most of the time, it emerges as an advocate of the dark forces and dissuades the seeker from his purpose. Mind creates a strong wall of Ego between man and spirit, a wall that can be removed only by the absolute surrender of the being and total abolishing of Ego. After a great inner battle, the seeker surmounts the negativities of Mind and realises the unspeakable felicity of the vision of indwelling God:

. . . when we have left these small purlieus of mind,
 A greater vision meets us on the heights
 In the luminous wideness of the spirit's gaze.
 In last there wakes in us a witness Soul
 That looks at truths unseen and scans the Unknown;
 Then all assumes a new and marvellous face:
 The world quivers with a God-Light at its core,
 In Time's deep heart high purposes move and live,
 Life's borders crumble and join infinity. (p. 168)

The endless bliss of the peaks of the Infinite is beyond expression! It is a matter of realisation and secret inner illumination. The bliss of perfection, vision and realisation becomes possible “. . . only when we break through Matter's wall” (p. 543) and enjoy the oceanic vastness of “God's timeless calm”. (p. 543) It is in this flood of rapture that for the first time since the maiden cry of birth, man rises to the peaks of Perfection hidden in his own heart. In the mighty guidance of the inner Light, he becomes aware of his true purpose of visiting this earth which is called *mrityuloka* or the world of Death. For the first time he realises that the earth is a launching pad of his spiritual journeys, a base camp of the soul's momentary repose. Paradoxically, the purity, power, light and perfection that inundate man's existence come to him only after self-realisation; it is only after trampling through lands of imperfection that he glimpses the summits of perfection and it is by suffering interminable bouts of pain that he is blessed with oceans of bliss and timeless *ananda*.

Seen in this light, man's impurity and imperfection are a goad, eventually leading him, helping him on the path of self-perfection and self-realisation. Sri Aurobindo aptly comments:

This imperfection is not a thing to be at all deplored, but rather a privilege and a promise, for it opens out to us an immense vista of self-development and self-exceeding. Man at his highest is a half-god who has risen up out of the animal Nature and is splendidly abnormal in it, but the thing which he has started out to be, the whole god, is something so much greater than what he is that it seems to him as abnormal to himself as he is to the animal.

(*The Human Cycle*, CWSA, Vol. 25, p. 234)

Sri Aurobindo's revelatory poem, *Savitri*, is one of the most promising documents of man's higher spiritual perfection and his possibilities of turning into a Divine superman. He was insightfully aware of the various physical, mental, vital, psychic and spiritual complexities of human nature and gracefully devoted more than seven hundred pages for sorting out these stumbling blocks. Despite thousands of imperfections and deformities, man remains the most evolved, self-conscious, spiritually oriented creature of the earth. He is a "... compromise between the beast and god" (p. 343) in the great and eventful evolutionary journey of creation. He is the standard bearer of all creation, an advocate of Mind and Matter. Calling man "A disparate enigma of God's make" (p. 655) who is blindly grappling with the dark and divine forces of his nature, Sri Aurobindo proclaims that it is man who is persistently "Climbing the stairs of God to higher things". (p. 655) As a great incarnation of Truth upon earth Sri Aurobindo knew that individual liberation will not root out the pain, privation, fear, death, impurity and imperfection from this world; therefore, he envisioned and realised the descent of Truth-consciousness or the Supramental manifestation upon earth. It is only by the descent of the Supermind upon earth that this world could become a permanent home of Truth, Light, Bliss, Peace and Perfection.

The Divine Mother, Savitri, is not working for individual liberation but to bring down heaven's graces upon earth. She is a representative of the suffering world and a roaring lioness who shook the heart of Death by saying that "I trample on thy law with living feet". (p. 652)

The individual soul of Savitri has identified its true relation with the cosmic Reality; therefore she wants heaven's perfection for earth, by transforming it into a place of Life instead of death, of Bliss in place of grief and of Spirit rather than matter. She reveals her personality before unrelenting Death in the following beautiful lines:

I am not bound by thought or sense or shape;
 I live in the glory of the Infinite,
 I am near to the Nameless and Unknowable,
 The Ineffable is now my household mate.
 But standing on Eternity's luminous brink
 I have discovered that the world was He;
 I have met Spirit with spirit, Self with self . . .
 I have pursued him in his earthly form.
 A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
 A heart that has grown one with every heart:
 I am a deputy of the aspiring world,
 My spirit's liberty I ask for all. (p. 649)

Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is a reflection of the very heart and soul of the integral yoga propounded by the poet-seer. No other book in any literature of the world holds the equal of greatness of purpose and vision that we witness in *Savitri*. The pages of literature are filled with the glories and beauties of higher heavens untouched by earth and man at best remains a dream enjoyer of these graceful worlds who can only 'aspire' and cannot 'realise' the splendour of fields "where joy forever dwells". But by penning *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo has scripted the spiritual fate of man in the journey of existence. In *Savitri* he has given us the mantra for solving all of man's earthly troubles as well as startling formulae to scale the greatest possible spiritual summits. It is up to man whether he decides to remain a complex mix of beast and god or dips deeper in the ocean of existence and meets the smiling deity waiting for man on the other side of the sea. And unless the whole world inundates itself in the light and purity of the Divine, the beauty and beatitude of heaven will haunt man only in his momentary dreams. We have to realise that *Savitri* is fighting the dark forces on behalf of man.

Savitri is our own story, our own journey and our own opportunity of blossoming into the flowers of Eden and shedding the age old burden of our "... poor petty life of animal Man". (p. 611) Her victory will bring God and his graces upon earth and will transform the life of man for good. Therefore, boldly rejecting the offer of enjoying life with Satyavan in heaven *Savitri* speaks her mind before the god of Death: "Earth cannot flower if lonely I return". (p. 637) And the great battle of Life and Death is continued even today! Dr. Alok Pandey remarks:

In us too, Satyavan is lost in the forest of Ignorance. In us too, *Savitri* struggles to liberate him from the clutches of darkness, from the forest of human life . . . this becomes not just a story of *Savitri* and Satyavan in far remote times, but the story of Man, the story of Creation. It is our own story, and as long as there is even one blind soul struggling in ignorance, *Savitri* would remain relevant, and not just relevant — it will be a power to redeem us. (*Invocation Study notes* No. 31, p. 11)

Savitri is the most convincing document of man's spiritual evolution and divine perfection, aimed at bringing down the fullness of the divine upon earth. It will be a great tragedy if, despite having the power and guidance of *Savitri*, human life remains incomplete, impure, painful and ignorant and misses the opportunity of the divine transformation. Death will always dominate man's mind unless he understands his true relation with the Eternal and his outer manifestation in the form of earth. It is for this reason that Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* holds these three — man, earth and God — as the most essential players for the descent of the Truth-consciousness. The epic aims at making earth a permanent abode of the Divine, a heaven for man and a spectacular spiritual laboratory of cosmic-transformation of life, mind and matter.

In his great work, *Essays on the Gita*, Sri Aurobindo writes:

His [*i.e.* *Man's*] imperfections can cease only when he knows himself, knows the real nature of the world in which he lives and, most of all, knows the Eternal from where he comes and in whom and by whom he exists. When he has once achieved a true consciousness and knowledge, there is no longer any problem . . . (CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 591)

Man may take ages to understand this fundamental truth of his existence that his soul-strings are strongly entwined with the soul of the Divine, and his work upon earth is to fulfil the Divine's law and will. Had man not been in love with his ignorance and imperfection he would have changed himself long ago but *maya* or illusion and Matter are two of his worst foes, eternally determined to keep man away from God. But the extremely virulent transformatory power of *Savitri* will spiritualise the nature of Matter, dispel the sense of illusion and bring about a radical change in their existence. After Divine transformation "The Spirit shall look out through Matter's gaze" and, more significantly, "Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face". (p. 709) The enshrining of a great cosmic Harmony and Beauty in the consciousness of earth will change the mind and spirit of Man and, elated, he shall attain the full possibilities of his spiritual perfections. Free from the slavery of mind, life, body and matter, the Divine Superman in man

. . . shall be more than the thinker, he shall be the seer of knowledge; he shall be more than the craftsman, he shall be the creator and master of his creation . . . (*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 151-52)

This is the meaning of the constantly changing earth — its complete submergence into the flood of the Divine's rapture. Man, "A swift tornado of God-energy" (*Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 626) is the best hope of God upon earth; and God, the cosmic controller of man's destiny, is the final destination of man.

I conclude with a great message about man's earthly possibilities as revealed by Sri Aurobindo in his *magnum opus*, *The Life Divine*:

The animal is satisfied with a modicum of necessity; the gods are content with their splendours. But man cannot rest permanently until he reaches some highest good. He is the greatest of living beings because he is the most discontented, because he feels most the pressure of limitations. He alone, perhaps, is capable of being seized by the divine frenzy for a remote ideal. (CWSA, Vol. 21, p. 51)

CHARAN SINGH

Works cited:

- Pandey, Alok. "Approaching Book Two of *Savitri*" *Invocation* Study notes No. 31, Savitri Bhavan, Auroville, pp. 10-31.
- Sengupta, Rupa. "Hide and Seek", *The Speaking Tree*. New Delhi: March 6, 2011.
- Satprem. *On the Way to Supermankind*. Mysore: Mira Aditi, 2002.
- Sri Aurobindo. *Savitri, a Legend and a Symbol*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, CWSA, Vols. 33-34.
- Essays on the Gita*. CWSA, Vol. 19.
- Essays Divine and Human*. CWSA, Vol. 12.
- The Human Cycle, the Ideal of Human Unity, War and Self-Determination*. CWSA, Vol. 25.
- Collected Poems*. CWSA, Vol. 2.
- The Life Divine*. CWSA, Vol. 21.

On Savitri

Its expression aims at a certain force, directness and spiritual clarity and reality. When it is not understood, it is because the truths it expresses are unfamiliar to the ordinary mind or belong to an untrodden domain or domains or enter into a field of occult experience; it is not because there is any attempt at a dark or vague profundity or at an escape from thought. The thinking is not intellectual but intuitive or more than intuitive, always expressing a vision, a spiritual contact or a knowledge which has come by entering into the thing itself, by identity.

. . .

The philosophy of Savitri . . . expresses or tries to express a total and many-sided vision and experience of all the planes of being and their action upon each other. Whatever language, whatever terms are necessary to convey this truth of vision and experience it uses without scruple, not admitting any mental rule of what is or is not poetic.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Poetry and Art*, CWSA, Vol. 27, pp. 317-18)

THE LUMINOUS PAST

(Continued from the issue of April 2013)

ONE year on 6th December Bharati-di came to see me. At that time I was talking to a woman. I introduced her to Bharati-di and said, “She is a new Ashramite. She has been given a room but not yet been assigned any work. She wants to work with me.”

Bharati-di spoke about this to the Mother when she found the occasion and the Mother asked her to tell me that I should give her the name of the woman and let her know who she was. I wrote the letter on the morning of the 7th and sent it through Amrita-da. The Mother replied to me. She gave me the permission to take her as my helper. What I received with the letter made my heart dance with joy. The Mother had written that on the 9th, after the meditation, at 10.45 a.m., I could go to receive her blessings along with the children, as it was the boarding’s anniversary.

With a joyful heart I prepared myself to go and touch the Mother’s feet on Sri Aurobindo’s Mahasamadhi day. The children bought all the presents they wanted to give to the Mother. They had not been told the news that we were actually going to the Mother. In the evening of the 8th the Mother had sent Bula-da to write down the names of all the children and give them to her. Bula-da wrote down the names of thirteen children. At 9.30 a.m. on the 9th Vasudha came. She said, “The fifteen of you — your new helper, yourself and the thirteen children — should all go to the Mother after the meditation around the Samadhi. This is what the Mother has said.” The children clapped with joy.

On the 9th we all gathered near Nolini-da’s gate and waited for the staircase to be clear in order to go upstairs. Nolini-da came and saw us. We went upstairs and straightaway entered the Mother’s room. The Mother looked at us all with a smile. She made a sign to me asking me to stand next to her. She instructed her attendants to leave as it would take her some time to receive all our *pranams*.

She started with the youngest child. She asked each one his or her name, then received what they had brought and put it beside her. The Mother took all her time to receive their *pranams*. She blessed each child by placing her hand on his or her head. To each, she gave a little affectionate smile. At the end she looked at my assistant who was standing nearby. She asked if she was indeed the person who was helping me. Following my indication she came forward and offered her *pranam* to the Mother. Looking at her blessings card, the Mother asked, “How is it that there is an extra card remaining? This means that someone hasn’t come.”

I informed the Mother, “One of the children was supposed to arrive last night. His grandmother died unexpectedly so he has sent word that he will be reaching

tonight.” The Mother put an extra bunch of flowers along with his blessings card and made a sign to me to come and do *pranam*. I kneeled down in front of her and placing my head on her soft feet did my *pranam*. Being able to touch the Mother’s feet on such an auspicious day I felt a sweet joy and peace in my heart. The Mother had given us so much of her time. After she had given me the blessings card she placed her hand on my head and bade me goodbye with a smile.

*

In the second week of February 1965, anti-Hindi riots broke out in Pondicherry. One evening a sadhak came running and, shutting the door behind him, asked us to switch off all the lights and to remain very quiet. Then he rushed out. We had just finished our dinner. I asked the children to go to bed. They fell asleep. At 10 o’clock two captains came and took them all to the Playground. I refused to go. Sitting next to the window I could hear that a noisy mob had reached our street. Exactly at that moment the police van arrived and started firing. Suddenly everything became quiet. At 1 o’clock at night Jatin-da came accompanied by two servants. I served him some food in the kitchen. I came to know from him that three persons had died after being shot. At 3 o’clock he went back to the Bakery to start his work — baking the bread. In the morning the children were brought back. They had breakfast and were escorted to the school building. I was asked to take all the valuables and cash and lock up the house and to go to the school. When I came out on the street I saw that our post office had been burnt down. After spending two nights in the school, when everything was normal again, I came back home.

*

On 2nd July Jatin-da came for dinner. He sat in the easy-chair and chatted with the children. They told him many stories and were enjoying themselves. I said, “It’s nearly 9 o’clock, let’s have dinner.” The children had already finished their dinner. That day Jatin-da had shaved himself, had a wash and had come wearing a set of ironed *dhoti* and *kurta*. He was looking very bright. We were cracking jokes about this. He said that he had finished all his work that day and had baked a loaf of bread for the Mother. He had given that loaf to Pavitra-da and come to us. He had discussed matters related to his work with Amrita-da, Dyuman-bhai and Nolini-da. He had done *pranam* at the Samadhi before coming to the boarding. He wrote a note and kept it on my table. A maid was to be sent to Panu to fetch kerosene the next day. When a child said something about his studies he burst out laughing. He did not even close his mouth. With that laughter he bade us goodbye . . . for ever!

*

This death would have been hard for me to bear had it not been for the Mother's thousand-streamed flow of grace. I recognised the Mother in my heart. She explained Jatin-da's true identity in a letter. The elder brother whom I had known only as an affectionate brother, appeared to me in a different light after I had read the Mother's letter and I saw him as a yogi. Nolini-da translated into English two other letters of the Mother. Those two letters as well as an article on Jatin-da were published in *Mother India*. After that, before writing this, I too wrote something about Jatin-da and it was published so I am not going to say more on the subject here. I only want to express my gratitude to those who love me and who in that moment of grief gave me solace. They were Nolini-da, Amrita-da, Pavitra-da, Pranab-da, Dyuman-bhai, Purani-ji, Sisir-da, and Satyakarma-ji. First of all, Dyuman-bhai told me, sitting next to Jatin-da's body, why the Mother had taken me out of the Laundry three years earlier. In 1962 when it was detected that he had high blood sugar, his soul had told the Mother that he wanted to leave this body which was ill. Amrita-da said that the Mother had told him how the four walls of the Laundry and the Bakery had become one with Jatindranath. It would have been impossible for me to live in that place after his death.

When Amrita-da saw that I was heart-broken, he informed the Mother about it. After talking to the Mother about it he called me to his room and explained, "You have come to Pondicherry, to Sri Aurobindo's Ashram, for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Jatindranath never wrote about all of you. You came here pulled by your attraction to the Mother. Why are you now caught in the illusion of attachments?" These words lit within me a new light. I understood that those persons whom you never lose in your life are the ones who give you liberation. One should not shed tears of sorrow and grief for them. They themselves draw us close and remove all our unhappiness and all our pain. I became calm and, with a smile on my lips accepted the Mother's words, the Mother's advice and got the strength to receive the Mother's loving blessings with bowed head.

*

In August, it was my birthday. It had been two months since Jatin-da had passed away. I, as well as some of his friends, had seen him often in dreams. In those dreams it was wonderful to hear stories of Sri Aurobindo from him. I wrote to the Mother about one of these dreams. In answer the Mother had said, "This dream is absolutely true."

Four days before my birthday, Nolini-da said, "This time you can go to her." I had not been to the Mother since Jatin-da's passing. Pavitra-da informed me that on my birthday the education ministers from several states, twelve persons, were coming to our boarding for lunch. The time was fixed for 11 o'clock. So the Mother asked me to go to her in the afternoon. Since it was my birthday the children decorated the house.

Pavitra-da came with the ministers. They praised the decorated house and the beautiful garden.

Our garden was very small. All around was a green lawn, at the centre was a lily pond. There were pink, blue and yellow water lilies. To one side was a miniature mountain made of stone surrounded by cacti of various kinds. On either side there were creepers of white jasmine. In another corner there was a creeper of red bougainvillea. These red flowers lit up the garden. I remember that the Rector of Annamalai University had come with Pavitra-da to visit the boarding. He was very pleased to see the garden. Pavitra-da had often brought many well-educated people. This is how he used to introduce me: “This is our Pramila. She is a Bengali woman and teaches French in our school.” He used to say these things in an amused way. Anyhow, the education ministers had lunch and greeting me for my birthday took their leave.

At 5 o’clock I went to see the Mother. She was not her usual cheerful self. She looked at me compassionately. Very slowly she said, “*Bonne Fête, mon enfant*” (Happy birthday, my child). Then she took the bouquet of flowers from my hand and placed it beside her. She held both my hands in her soft palms and remained quiet for a few moments, closing her eyes. Then she let go of my hands and looked at me. I kneeled down and did *pranam* at the Mother’s feet. She placed her hand on my head and blessed me. I sat before her. The Mother gave me my birthday card and flowers. Once again she caressed my head.

(*To be continued*)

PRAMILA DEVI

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

Let this day of your birth be for you an occasion to give yourself a little more, a little better to the Divine. Let your consecration be more total, your devotion more ardent, your aspiration more intense.

Open yourself to the New Light and walk with a joyful step on the path.

Resolve on this day that it may be thus and the day will not have passed in vain.

The Mother

(*Words of the Mother – III, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 15, p. 199*)

**CELEBRATING THE CENTENARY YEAR OF
THE MOTHER'S FIRST COMING TO PONDICHERRY
(MARCH 29, 2013-MARCH 29, 2014)**

On this auspicious occasion, we are launching two programmes:

I. "SACAR Research Assistance" starting August 15, 2013:

1. Fellow of SACAR (3 Years)
2. Scholar in Sri Aurobindo's Thought (1 Year)
3. Researcher in Sri Aurobindo Studies (6 Months)

II. "The University of Tomorrow" (the name was blessed by the Mother in 1972) — a Learning Centre in the Vision & Thought of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother — independent and self-governed, not affiliated to the UGC or any University in India, offers the following 12-week Online Certificate Courses in Integral Studies starting August 15, 2013:

1. Integral Philosophy
2. Integral Yoga Psychology
3. Integral Education
4. Integral Management
5. Integral Vision of the Vedas
6. Integral Vision of the Upanishads
7. Integral Path of the Bhagavad Gita
8. Integral Vision of Human Unity
9. Integral Vision of Poetic Criticism
10. Integral Vision of Indian Culture
11. Integral Personality Development
12. Inner Psychology and Health

III. Launching of our new e-magazine "Sri Aurobindo Darshan" (the name was blessed by the Mother in 1972) on March 29, 2013. Please visit: www.sacar.in

Admissions to both the above programmes open on May 1, 2013.

For details, please contact: sacar@auromail.net