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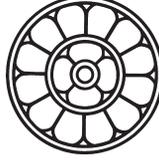
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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‘REASON AT LAST HAS ARISEN . . .’

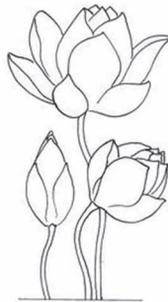
. . . ALL now is changed, the reverse of the coin has been shown to us; Reason
Waking, detecting the hoax of the spirit, at last has arisen,
Captured the Truth and built round her its bars that she may not skedaddle,
Gallop again with the bit in her teeth and with Fancy in the saddle.
Now have the wise men discovered that all is the craft of a super-
Magic of Chance and a movement of Void and inconscient Stupor.
Chance by a wonderful accident ever her ripples expanding
Out of a gaseous circle of Nothingness, implacably extending
Freak upon freak, repeating rigidly marvels on marvels,
Making a world out of Nothing, started on the arc of her travels.
Nothingness born into feeling and action dies back to Nothing.
Sea of a vague electricity, romping through space-curves and clothing
Strangely the Void with a semblance of Matter, painfully flowered
Into this giant phenomenon universe. Man who has towered
Out of the plasm and struggled by thought to Divinity’s level,
Man, this miniature second creator of good and of evil,
He too was only a compost of Matter made living, organic,
Forged as her thinking tool by an Energy blind and mechanic.
Once by an accident queer but quite natural, provable, simple,
Out of blind Space-Nought lashed into life, wearing Mind as its wimple,
Dupe of a figment of consciousness, doped with behaviour and feature,
Matter deluded claimed to be spirit and sentient creature.
All the high dreams man has dreamed and his hopes and his deeds, his soul’s greatness
Are but a food-seeking animal’s acts with the mind for their witness, —
Mind a machine for the flickers of thought, Matter’s logic unpremissed, —
Are but a singular fireworks, chemistry lacking the chemist,
Matter’s nervous display; the heart’s passion, the sorrow and burning
Fire of delight and sweet ecstasy, love and its fathomless yearning,
Boundless spiritual impulses making us one with world-being,
Outbursts of vision opening doors to a limitless seeing,
Gases and glands and the genes and the nerves and the brain-cells have done it,
Brooded out drama and epic, structured the climb of the sonnet,
Studied the stars and discovered the brain and the laws of its thinking,
Sculptured the cave-temple, reared the cathedral, infinity drinking
Wrought manufacturing God and the soul for the uplift of Nature, —
Science, philosophy, head of his mystical chemical stature,
Music and painting revealing the godhead in sound and in colour,

Acts of the hero, thoughts of the thinker, search of the scholar,
 All the magnificent planning, all the inquiry and wonder
 Only a trick of the atom, its marvellous magical blunder.
 Who can believe it? Something or someone, a Force or a Spirit
 Conscious, creative, wonderful shaped out a world to inherit
 Here for the beings born from its vast universal existence, —
 Fields of surprise and adventure, vistas of light-haunted distance,
 Play-routes of wisdom and vision and struggle and rapture and sorrow,
 Sailing in Time through the straits of today to the sea of tomorrow.
 Worlds and their wonders, suns and their flamings, earth and her nations,
 Voyages endless of Mind through the surge of its fate-tossed creations,
 Star upon star throbbing out in the silence of infinite spaces,
 Species on species, bodies on bodies, faces on faces,
 Souls without number crossing through Time towards eternity, aeons
 Crowding on aeons, loving and battle, dirges and paeans,
 Thoughts ever leaping, hopes ever yearning, lives ever streaming,
 Millions and millions on trek through the days with their doings and dreaming,
 Herds of the Sun who move on at the cry of the radiant drover, —
 Countless, surviving the death of the centuries, lost to recover,
 Finished, but only to begin again, who is its tireless creator,
 Cause or the force of its driving, its thinker or formless dictator?
 Surely no senseless Vacancy made it, surely 'twas fashioned
 By an almighty One million-ecstasied, thousand-passioned.
 Self-made? then by what self from which thought could arise and emotion,
 Waves that well up to the surface, born from what mystiered ocean?
 Nature alone is the fountain. But what is she? Is she not only
 Figure and name for what none understands, though all feel, or a lonely
 Word in which all finds expression, spirit-heights, dumb work of Matter, —
 Vague designation filling the gaps of our thought with its clatter?
 Power without vision that blunders in man into thinking and sinning?
 Rigid, too vast inexhaustible mystery void of a meaning?
 Energy blindly devising, unconsciously ranging in order?
 Chance in the march of a cosmic Insanity crossing the border
 Out of the eternal silence to thought and its strangeness and splendour?
 Consciousness born by an accident until an accident end her?
 Nought else is she but the power of the Spirit who dwells in her ever,
 Witness and cause of her workings, lord of her pauseless endeavour.
 All things she knows, though she seems here unseeing; even in her slumber
 Wondrous her works are, design and its magic and magic of number,
 Plan of her mighty cosmic geometry, balance of forces,
 Universe flung beyond universe, law of the stars and their courses,

Cosmos atomic stretched to the scale of the Infinite’s measure.
 Mute in the trance of the Eternal she sleeps with the stone and the azure.
 Now she awakes; for life has just stirred in her, stretching first blindly
 Outward for sense and its pleasure and pain and the gifts of the kindly
 Mother of all, for her light and her air and the sap from her flowing,
 Pleasure of bloom and unconscious beauty, pleasure of growing.
 Then into mind she arises; heart’s yearning awakes and reflection
 Looks out on struggle and harmony, — conscious, her will of selection
 Studies her works and illumines the choice of her way; last, slowly
 Inward she turns and stares at the Spirit within her. Holy
 Silences brood in her heart and she feels in her ardent recesses
 Passions too great for her frame, on her body immortal caresses.
 Into the calm of the Greatness beyond her she enters, burning
 Now with a light beyond thought’s, towards Self and Infinity turning,
 Turned to beatitude, turned to eternity, spiritual grandeur,
 Power without limit, ecstasy imperishable, shadowless splendour.
 Then to her mortals come, flashing, thoughts that are wisdom’s fire-kernel;
 Leaping her flame-sweeps of might and delight and of vision supernal
 Kindle the word and the act, the Divine and humanity fusing,
 Illuminations, trance-seeds of silence, flowers of musing, —
 Light of our being that yet has to be, its glory and glimmer
 Smiting with sunrise the soul of the sage and the heart of the dreamer. . . .

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, pp. 479-82)



SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS ON THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of May 2013)

SECTION THREE

THE MOTHER AND THE PRACTICE OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA

The Mother's Force

What Is the Mother's Force?

What is the Yoga shakti? What is Yogic mind-force, Yogic life-force and Yogic body-force?

In the Yogic consciousness one is not only aware of things, but of forces, not only of forces, but of the conscious being behind the forces. One is aware of all this not only in oneself but in the universe. There is a force which accompanies the growth of this new consciousness and at once grows with it and helps it to come about and to perfect itself. This force is the Yoga shakti. It is here asleep and coiled up in all the centres of our inner being (chakras) and is at the base what is called in the Tantras the Kundalini Shakti. But it is also above us, above our head as the Divine Force — not there coiled up, involved, asleep, but awake, scient, potent, extended and wide; it is there waiting for manifestation and to this Force we have to open ourselves — to the power of the Mother. In the mind it manifests itself as a divine mind-force or a universal mind-force and it can do everything that the personal mind cannot do; it is then the Yogic mind-force. When it manifests and works in the vital or physical in the same way, it is then apparent as a Yogic life-force or a Yogic body-force. It can awake in all these forms, bursting outwards and upwards, extending itself into wideness from below; or it can descend and become there a definite power for things; it can pour downwards into the body, working, establishing its reign, extending into wideness from above, link the lowest in us with the highest above us, release the individual into a cosmic universality or into absoluteness and transcendence.

23 March 1933

*

You often speak of the Mother's Force. What is it?

It is the Divine Force which works to remove the ignorance and change the nature into the divine nature.

18 June 1933

*

Why do I feel that it is I who do this thing or that? For is it not true that it is the Mother's force which does everything in us?

When I speak of the Mother's force, I do not speak of the force of Prakriti which carries on things in the Ignorance but of the higher Force of the Divine that descends from above to transform the nature.

4 August 1933

Progress in Sadhana and the Mother's Force

When you say to someone, "You are open to the Mother", do you mean open in a general way? Are not all in the Asram more or less open to the Mother as soon as they have accepted her as the Mother? And when the Mother has accepted a sadhak, does her Force not begin to work in him and is it not always with him?

All are not open to the Force. X never was in the least degree and there are others who shut themselves up in their own self-will or their own formations, ideas or desires. If there is no opening, the Force may act for a long time without response — and if there is an insufficient opening then the progress will be slow and chequered by great difficulties.

*

Let nothing and nobody come between you and the Mother's force. It is on your admitting and keeping that force and responding to the true inspiration and not on any ideas the mind may form that success will depend. Even ideas or plans which might otherwise be useful, will fail if there is not behind them the true spirit and the true force and influence.

23 March 1928

*

The illnesses you have are the signs of the resistance of your physical consciousness to the action of the Divine Power.

If you cannot advance in your sadhana, it is because you are divided and do not give yourself without reserve. You speak of surrendering everything to the Mother but you have not done even the one thing which she asked of you and which you have promised more than once. If after having called the action of the Divine Force, you allow other influences to prevail, how can you expect to be free from obstruction and difficulties?

20 November 1928

*

Nowadays my vital nature gets excited about anything and everything, even trifles. From morning to night it is in an unhappy condition. I have my doubts whether it can be changed. I know that it is not in my power to do the work; the Mother's Grace alone can do it. My outer mind needs some rays of hope.

It is to be assumed that you are capable of the change since you are here in the presence and under the protection of the Mother. The pressure and help of the Mother's Force is always there. Your rapidity of progress depends upon your keeping yourself open to it and rejecting calmly, quietly and steadily all suggestions and invasions of other forces. Especially the nervous excitement of the vital has to be rejected; a calm and quiet strength in the nervous being and the body is the only sound basis. It is there for you to receive, if you open yourself to it always.

27 August 1932

*

When I look at the way the Mother deals with people, I feel that she does not love them equally in an outward way. Is this feeling true?

The Mother's Force is working in all alike, according to their capacity they will receive it and it will work in them; if there is any difference, it is their own nature that makes it.

6 February 1933

*

This restless mind and unquiet vital are not peculiar to you; they are the human nature from which every sadhak starts. What you have to get is the Mother's force and grace bringing with it deliverance, peace and Ananda which you say you from time to time experience. That in the beginning does come only for a short time, but as you persist in the path, it increases in frequency and stays longer until it can be made a permanent experience. It is this that will cure the defects of which you complain.

16 June 1933

*

Once you wrote, "Before you read offer it to the Mother and call down her force." Is her force not already in us and working?

If it is, then you will have no difficulty.

4 August 1933

*

Is not every sadhak ready to receive and contain the Mother's force at any time and in any circumstance? Who would not want to hold its constant action?

It is not a question of mental wish but of capacity and whether all the parts of the being are ready and can retain it. If everybody were containing the constant action of the Mother's force, the sadhana would be finished by now and the siddhi complete.

7 August 1933

*

Is it not time for me to let the Mother's Force take charge of the Yoga, instead of allowing the Adhar to think it is doing the Yoga?

That can be only when all is ready.

In that case is it necessary for the mind to aspire? Because once the Force is there, it will set everything right.

The system has first to be accustomed to the Force working.

9 May 1934

*

All has to be done by the working of the Mother's force aided by your aspiration, devotion and surrender.

30 October 1934

*

The Mother has already given you orally the answer to your letter and the directions you asked for. As she told you, your concentration should be in the heart centre and all the rest — the rising above the head etc. — should come of itself in the natural process of the sadhana. Through the heart you will get the closer and closer touch of the Mother and the working of her Force in the whole being.

9 December 1934

*

In a dream yesterday I was walking in the street, carrying some kind of big flat drum. Just for fun I touched it with my fingers and very sweet musical sounds were produced. Perhaps it was a broken drum, for no one expected any music to come from it, but as I went on playing, fine music was coming out.

It is a symbol of the harmony that can be brought out of the human nature in spite of its present imperfection when one gives it the true touch, that is, puts it under the true psychic influence.

People around me were charmed by the music. I was very happy and played more and more; many new fine tunes were coming from the drum as if they were simply ready made.

Always keep open to the Mother's Force — let the inner consciousness develop — only that will help and deliver from all difficulties as the openness in the physical grows in you.

12 January 1935

*

There are some people here who remain constantly in despair and gloom because they have become conscious of their minutest imperfections, but they are unable to get rid of them.

They are unable for two reasons: (1) because they yield to despair and gloom and the illusion of impotence, (2) because they try only with their own strength and do not care or know how to call in the working of the Mother's force.

10 June 1936

*

Sometimes I feel a thick wall between me and the Divine. At other times there is a pressure on me and I feel quietude come into me.

Persevere in spite of the fluctuations. The Mother's force is at work *all the time*, even when the thick wall is there, so that there may be no wall in future.

24 June 1936

*

You have written that "the Force is there". Why then do I not feel it except for a short time after pranam? Formerly I felt that the Force above was doing the sadhana. Why do I not feel it now?

The Mother's Force is not only above on the summit of the being. It is there with you and near you, ready to act whenever your nature will allow it. It is so with everybody here.

15 November 1936

*

This evening X told me, "Fill your entire nature with the Mother's power." In my past sadhana I have never consciously invoked power; the entire stress has been on purity and clarity. But if that is the need of my nature, I will pray for power along with other things.

It is not necessary to ask for Power. It is the Mother's Force that must work in the being and if it is there, all necessary power will come.

c. 1936

*

When a sadhak works with the right attitude and the higher Force acts in him directly, how does the Force work to purify or remove his defects and imperfections?

It acts by awakening the inner consciousness gradually or swiftly, by replacing the principle of ego-service by the principle of service of the Divine, by making him watch his actions and see his own defects and pushing him to rectify them, by establishing a connection between his consciousness and the Mother's consciousness, by preparing his nature to be taken up more and more by the Mother's consciousness and force, by giving him experiences which make him ready for the major experiences of Yoga, by stimulating the growth of his psychic being, by opening him to the Mother as the Universal Being, etc. etc. Naturally it acts differently in different persons.

7 May 1937

Reliance on the Mother's Force

My mind is not yet quiet and that is why I am not getting any joy in my sadhana, any experience or realisation — nothing at all. This makes me very sad and unhappy. May the Mother bestow on me the flow of Peace and help me to open my closed heart-centre.

There has always been too much reliance on the action of your own mind and will — that is why you cannot progress. If you could once get the habit of silent reliance on the power of the Mother — not merely calling it in to support your own effort — the obstacle would diminish and eventually disappear.

14 July 1929

*

You should not rely on anything else alone, however helpful it may seem, but chiefly, primarily, fundamentally on the Mother's Force. The Sun and the Light may be a help, and will be if it is the true light and the true Sun, but cannot take the place of the Mother's Force.

28 May 1930

*

There is no aspiration in me, no capacity to follow something higher. I feel dullness inside. But I do feel quiet from the pressure on my head. I must be patient and keep faith — then you will make me conscious.

Quietude first; with it confidence in the Mother's Force that is working on you. When the physical mind is obliged to be quiet, it has this impression of inactivity and dullness at first. When it opens more and more to the Force, that impression will disappear.

12 November 1932

*

If one gives full and constant consent to the Mother's working, how can the attempt of other beings to enter into one succeed?

If you give consent to the Mother's working alone, then it cannot.

It is not always an attempt. One receives the thoughts and feelings of the others without any attempt or intention of theirs, because they are in the atmosphere.

31 July 1933

*

The depression has come upon you because you accepted the thought that you were not doing what you should and not using the chance Mother had given you. Such thoughts should never be indulged for they open the door to depression and depression opens the door to the old movements; they used to come formerly from the idea that you were unfit, now it is this idea that you are not doing all you ought to do. As a matter of fact you have been progressing with a surprising rapidity for the last days at a rate that we ourselves did not expect from you. But whether the progress is rapid or slow, the attitude should always be an entire faith and reliance on the Mother; just as you do not think that the progress was the result of your own effort or merit, but of your taking the right attitude of reliance and the Mother's force working, so you should not think that any slowness or difficulty was due to your own demerit but only seek to keep this attitude of reliance and let the Mother's Force work, — slowly or rapidly does not matter.

The dream was again one of these experiences of test or ordeal on the vital plane which you have been having — here it was the test of temptation by power, comfort, riches, attractive things, as it was formerly the test by fear, difficulty, trouble. The evidence of all these tests is that your inner being is perfectly ready and free to go unwaveringly to the goal. There is nothing there that is wrong or defective.

Keep the reliance steady in your heart and do not allow self-distrust, depression or sadness to invade you from outside.

14 November 1935

*

How can I do Yoga when I know nothing about your Yoga? I do not even know what to do.

There are two ways of doing Yoga, one by knowledge and one's own efforts, the other by reliance on the Mother. In the last way one has to offer one's mind and heart and all to the Mother for her Force to work on it, call her in all difficulties, have faith and bhakti. At first it takes time, often a long time, for the consciousness to be prepared in this way and during that time many difficulties can come up, but if one perseveres a time comes when all is ready, the Mother's Force opens the consciousness fully to the Divine, then all that must develop develops within, spiritual experience comes and with it the knowledge and union with the Divine.

9 April 1937

*

You say after several years you have not changed your nature. I only wish the external nature were so easy to transform that it could be done in a few years. You forget also that the real problem — to get rid of the pervading ego in this nature — is a task you have seriously tackled only a short time ago. And it is not in a few months that that can be done. Even the best sadhaks find after many experiences and large changes on the higher planes that here much remains to be done. How do you expect to get rid of it at once unlike everybody else? A Yoga like this needs patience, because it means a change both of the radical motives and of each part and detail of the nature. It will not do to say, "Yesterday I determined this time to give myself entirely to the Mother, and look it is not done, on the contrary all the old opposite things turn up once more; so there is nothing to do but to proclaim myself unfit and give up the Yoga." Of course when you come to the point where you make a resolution of that kind, immediately all that stands in the way does rise up — it invariably happens. The thing to be done is to stand back, observe and reject, not to allow these things to get hold of you, to keep your central will separate from them and call in the Mother's Force to meet them. If one does get involved as often happens, then to get disinvolved as soon as possible and go forward again. That is what everybody, every Yogi does — to be depressed because one cannot do everything in a rush is quite contrary to the truth of the matter. A stumble does not mean that one is unfit, nor does prolonged difficulty mean that for oneself the thing is impossible.

The fact that you have to give up your ordinary work when you get depressed does not mean that you have not gained in steadiness — it only means that the steadiness you have gained is not a personal virtue but depends on your keeping the contact with the Mother — for it is her force that is behind it and behind all the progress you can make. Learn to rely on that Force more, to open to it more

completely and to seek spiritual progress even not for your own sake but for the sake of the Divine — then you will go on more smoothly. Get the psychic opening in the most external physical consciousness. That and not dependency is the lesson you ought to draw from your present adverse experience.

Becoming Conscious of the Mother's Force

Yesterday I felt a great Peace and Power. I felt the Mother's atmosphere around me and a strange nearness to her. I thought that the Mother's thought or consciousness must be with me. Is this true?

The Force is always around you, for the Mother has put her consciousness there — but it works with especial force when we think of you, and that is what you feel. Your consciousness of it — what you describe of your feeling about it, is quite correct — to become clearly conscious in all parts of the being takes time.

6 July 1933

*

X told me that he does not feel it is the Mother's force that works in him, since with his own force he is able to lift 40 lbs. of grain.

What is meant by one's own force? All force is cosmic and the individual is merely an instrument — a certain amount of the force may be stored in him, but that does not make it his own.

There are certain possibilities in the way of the experience. First there is the faith, or sometimes a mental realisation and this of itself is enough to make one open to the Mother's force so that it is always available at need or call. Even if one does not feel the Force coming, yet the results are there and visible. The next is when one feels oneself like an instrument and is aware of the Energy using it. A third is the contact with the Power above and its descent (spontaneous or at call) into the body — this is the more concrete way of having it, for one physically feels the Force working in one. Finally there is a state of awareness of close contact with the Mother (inward) which brings a similar result.

12 May 1934

*

What I have to see is that my consciousness supports the working of the Mother's Force in me. For example, if my being constantly supported the Mother's work, there would hardly be any halt in sadhana due to the tamas in me; the tamasic inertia would get transformed into peace without rising up and darkening the other parts of the being.

Yes, that is how it should happen — but it is difficult so long as the inner being is not conscious and receptive at all times and in all conditions — and it is difficult and takes time to establish such a condition.

23 January 1935

Descent of the Mother's Force

What you feel streaming down must be the Mother's overhead Force. It flows usually from above the head and works at first in the mind centres (head and neck) and afterwards goes down into the chest and heart and then through the movement of the whole body.

It is the effect of this working which you must be feeling in the head up to the shoulders. The Force that comes down from above is the one that works to transform the consciousness into that of a higher spiritual being. Before that the Mother's Force works in the psychic, mental, vital and the physical plane itself to support, purify and psychically change the consciousness.

*

When you began to meditate, you saw the Mother's face; that is very good, it means that there is an inner connection established. The absence of the smile does not mean that she is displeased or that you have done anything against her will. At the same time the Mother's force descended on you, it was the pressure of her Force that you felt on the head and breast — everybody feels in the beginning this pressure — and what you felt in the breast was the working of the Force. In the Yoga these are signs of the action of the Yoga and you must observe quietly what happens without getting disturbed, remembering the Mother always and trusting in her action upon you.

25 June 1932

*

When there is obscurity or habitual thoughts, the narrowness of the physical mind becomes prominent. But now and then, the physical mind seems to become limitless, thoughtless and without obscurity. Is this a true feeling?

Yes. All the parts that have to be changed must widen like that before the higher consciousness can descend into them.

Is there any relation between the Mother's descent into the physical parts and the descent of the forces that are working in me?

Certainly. In a sense, the descent of the higher forces is the Mother's own descent — for it is she who comes down in them.

21 December 1933

*

As I sat to pray, I felt an electric force pass through my spinal cord. It was like the electricity from a battery passing from the crown of my head down to the end of my backbone. The more it went downward, the more strong and joyous was the rapture I felt. What is this?

It is the descent of the Mother's Force from above through the spinal cord — it is a well-known movement. There are two or three kinds of descent. One is this touching the base of the centres which rest on the spinal cord. Another is through the head into the body going from level to level till the whole body is filled and opening all the centres of consciousness. Another is a descent enveloping the Adhar from outside.

1 February 1934

*

Last night I felt that the Mother's Force, instead of descending through the head as usual, came down directly through the forehead centre.

It can come in anywhere, but the normal way of descent is through the head.

8 May 1934

*

When the Peace is established, this higher or Divine Force from above can descend and work in us. It descends usually first into the head and liberates the inner mind centres, then into the heart centre and liberates fully the psychic and emotional being, then into the navel and other vital centres and liberates the inner vital, then

into the Muladhara and below and liberates the inner physical being. It works at the same time for perfection as well as liberation; it takes up the whole nature part by part and deals with it, rejecting what has to be rejected, sublimating what has to be sublimated, creating what has to be created. It integrates, harmonises, establishes a new rhythm in the nature. It can bring down too a higher and yet higher force and range of the higher Nature until, if that be the aim of the sadhana, it becomes possible to bring down the supramental force and existence. All this is prepared, assisted, farthered by the work of the psychic being in the heart centre; the more it is open, in front, active, the quicker, safer, easier the working of the Force can be. The more love and bhakti and surrender grow in the heart, the more rapid and perfect becomes the evolution of the sadhana. For the descent and transformation imply at the same time an increasing contact and union with the Divine.

That is the fundamental rationale of the Sadhana. It will be evident that the two most important things here are the opening of the heart centre and the opening of the mind centres to all that is behind and above them. For the heart opens to the psychic being and the mind centres open to the higher consciousness and the nexus between the psychic being and the higher consciousness is the principal means of the Siddhi. The first opening is effected by a concentration in the heart, a call to the Divine to manifest within us and through the psychic to take up and lead the whole nature. Aspiration, prayer, bhakti, love, surrender are the main supports of this part of the Sadhana — accompanied by a rejection of all that stands in the way of what we aspire for. The second opening is effected by a concentration of the consciousness in the head (afterwards, above it) and an aspiration and call and a sustained will for the descent of the divine Peace, Power, Light, Knowledge, Ananda into the being — the Peace first or the Peace and Force together. Some indeed receive Light first or Ananda first or some sudden pouring down of Knowledge. With some there is first an opening which reveals to them a vast infinite Silence, Force, Light or Bliss above them and afterwards either they ascend to that or these things begin to descend into the lower nature. With others there is either the descent, first into the head, then down to the heart level, then to the navel and below and through the whole body, or else an inexplicable opening — without any sense of descent — of peace, light, wideness or power or else a horizontal opening into the cosmic consciousness or, in a suddenly widened mind, an outburst of knowledge. Whatever comes has to be welcomed — for there is no absolute rule for all, — but if the peace has not come first, care must be taken not to swell oneself in exultation or lose the balance. The capital movement however is when the Divine Force or Shakti, the Power of the Mother comes down and takes hold, for then the organisation of the consciousness begins and the larger foundation of the Yoga.

11 September 1934

The experiences you have are a good starting-point for realisation. They have to develop into the light of a deeper state in which there will be the descent of a higher consciousness into you. Your present consciousness in which you feel these things is only a preparatory one — in which the Mother works in you through the cosmic power according to your state of consciousness and your karma and in that working both success and failure can come — one has to remain equal-minded to both while trying always for success. A surer guidance can come even in this preparatory consciousness if you are entirely turned towards her alone in such a way that you can feel her direct guidance and follow it without any other influence or force intervening to act upon you, but that condition is not easy to get or keep — it needs a great one-pointedness and constant single-minded dedication. When the higher consciousness will descend, then a closer union, a more intimate consciousness of the Presence and a more illumined intuition will become possible.

17 November 1934

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The stream which you feel coming down on the head and pouring into you is indeed a current of the Mother's Force; it is so that it is often felt; it flows into the body in currents and works there to liberate and change the consciousness. As the consciousness changes and develops, you will begin yourself to understand the meaning and working of these things.

21 August 1936

*

Something is growing in you, but it is all inside — still if there is the steady persistence it is bound to come out. For instance, this white dazzling light with currents, it is a sure sign of the Force (the Mother's) entering and working in the *ādhāra*, but it came to you in sleep — that is to say, in the inner being, still behind the veil. The moment it came out, the dryness would disappear.

5 February 1937

*

What the Mother did was to light the fire within — if you did not feel it, it must be because the outer covering has not yet allowed it to come through into the outer consciousness. But something in the inner being must have kept it and opened more widely — that is shown by your experience in sleep, for that was evidently an action of the Mother in the inner being. The descent of this current in the spine is always a descent of the Mother's Force working in the centres to open them; the

strong force of the current which you felt is an evident proof that the wider opening is there. You have only to persist and the effects both of the fire and the force will come out in the surface consciousness — for always there is a preparatory work behind the veil in the inner being before the veil thins or disappears and all the working can be done with the participation of the outer consciousness.

22 April 1937

*

The Mother's force can come down quite nicely and gently — there is no need of palpitations, giddiness or nausea for that.

Pressure of the Descending Force

This is the meaning of your experiences:

(1) The power of the Divine Mother from above is descending upon you and the pressure you feel on your head and the workings of which you are aware are hers.

Put yourself completely into her hands, have entire confidence, observe carefully and accurately all that happens and write that here. There is no need of special instructions since what is needed is being done for you.

(2) The first pressure was on your mind. The centres of the mind are (a) the head and above it, (b) the centre of the forehead between the eyes, (c) the throat and the vital mental (emotional) and sensational mind centres from the breast downward. It is this latter which is the first *prāṇa* of which you became aware. The action of the Power was to widen these two parts of you and raise them up towards the lowest centre of the higher consciousness above your head, so that hereafter they might both be consciously governed from there and that these might both move in a wide universal consciousness not limited by the body.

(3) The other *prāṇa*, the restless one of which you became aware, is the vital being, the being of desire and life-movement. The work of the Power has been directed towards quieting the restless movements and making it wide in consciousness as with the Mind. The large body you felt was the vital body, not the physical, *sthūla śarīra*.

(4) The basis of your Sadhana must be silence and quiet, *śānti, nīravatā*.

You must remain and grow always more and more deeply quiet and still both in yourself and in your attitude to the world around you. If you can do this, the sadhana is likely to go on progressing and enlarging itself with a minimum of trouble and disturbance.

Never mind your family difficulties and say nothing to your people. Go on quietly trusting to the Power that is at work in you.

8 September 1927

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It is the pressure of Mother's force. If you keep quiet and don't resist, then instead of being uneasy, it will make you happy.

11 August 1932

*

From time to time there is a feeling of pressure and heaviness in different parts of the body as the pressure comes down. When it passes, the mind is at peace, the heart free, the body light and easy.

The pressure is that of the Mother's force. When there is a resistance, you feel the pressure. When the resistance is cleared away, there is the lightness and ease.

4 October 1932

*

Nowadays in the evening I try to remain calm and pray for half an hour. Then I feel a weight or pressure on my head. It is so calm and cool, yet has such force and fire. Then I am disturbed by nothing whatever. Formerly I also felt this on certain days, but then I lost it due to some disorder of the consciousness.

This weight or pressure on the head is always the sign that the Mother's Force is in contact with you and pressing from above to envelop your being and enter the Adhar and pervade it — usually passing by degrees through the centres on its way downward. Sometimes it comes first as Peace, sometimes as Force, sometimes as the Mother's consciousness and her presence, sometimes as Ananda.

When you lost it before, it must have been due either to some uprising of vital imperfections in yourself or an attack from outside. Of course the pressure need not always be there, but if things take the ordinary course, it usually recurs or else continues until the Adhar is open and there is no further obstacle to the descent of the higher consciousness.

18 September 1933

*

From time to time, I feel a pressure above my head and also in my head and forehead. For the last few days, when I sit for meditation, there is a feeling as though ants were crawling at the top of my neck and in the spinal cord. Does this have any value?

You can write to him¹ that the pressure he feels on his head is the pressure of the Mother's force (the force of the higher consciousness) preparing an opening through the three upper centres (brahmarandhra, base of sahasradala; inner mind centre in the forehead; and the heart or psychic-emotional centre). The feeling in the spine is due to a very slight flow of the current of the Shakti from above — the spine being the base of all the centres and the channel through which the Force tends most easily to flow from one centre to another (Sahasradala = the centre where the human or mental and the higher or spiritual consciousness meet).

15 September 1935

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If the term "pressure" is a wrong one to describe the Mother's recent dealings with me,² what is the sense in which it is used in The Mother — she "puts on them the required pressure" [p. 18] and "the vehemence of her pressure"? [p. 20]

I was speaking of your case only — it was not my intention to say that the Mother never uses pressure. But pressure also can be of various kinds. There is the pressure of the Force when it is entering the mind or vital or body — a pressure to go faster, a pressure to build or form, a pressure to break and many more. In your case if there is any pressure it is that of help or support or removal of an attack, but it does not seem to me that that can properly be called pressure.

In the same book you say "her hands are outstretched to strike and to succour". [p. 19] What do you mean by "strike" here?

It expresses her general action in the world. She strikes at the Asuras, she strikes also at everything that has to be got rid of or destroyed, at the obstacles to the sadhana etc. I may say that the Mother never uses the Mahakali power in your case nor the Mahakali pressure.

5 June 1936

*

The suggestion that the pressure of sadhana is unbearable has got fixed in my mind, particularly after reading in two places that those whose nerves are weak are better off living outside the Ashram. One place is in one of your letters, and another in the Conversations, where the Mother says: "You must

1. Written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary, who replied to the enquirer. — Ed.

2. See letter of 5 June 1936. — Ed. [See Mother India February 2013, p. 172.]

have a strong body and strong nerves. . . . If you have to bear the pressure of the Divine Descent, you must be very strong and powerful, otherwise you would be shaken to pieces.”³ Are these things applicable to me?

These things refer to beginners who are not open and have not a fit Adhar, yet want to do the sadhana.

Your body is not weak and you have considerable vital strength. Moreover you have the openness to the Force and the habit of receiving it, and there is no reason why there should be any upsetting by the Force. It is not the Force, but the suggestion of these vital Forces that produces the upsetting.

7 September 1936

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The feeling of the vibration of the Mother's force around the head is more than a mental idea or even a mental realisation, it is an experience. This vibration is indeed the action of the Mother's Force which is first felt above the head or around it, then afterwards within the head. The pressure means that it is working to open the mind and its centres so that it may enter. The mind-centres are in the head, one at the top and above it, another between the eyes, a third in the throat. That is why you feel the vibration around the head and sometimes up to the neck, but not below. It is so usually, for it is only after enveloping and entering the mind that it goes below to the emotional and vital parts (heart, navel, etc.) — though sometimes it is more enveloping before it enters the body.

24 March 1937

Faith and the Working of the Mother's Force

Is it so difficult to have faith and confidence in the Mother? Even with a little of that attitude, the descent was taking place in you.

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If you want to get back your faith and keep it, you must first quiet your mind and make it open and obedient to the Mother's force. If you have an excited mind at the mercy of every influence and impulse, you will remain a field of conflicting and contrary forces and cannot progress. You will begin to listen to your own ignorance

3. *The Mother, Conversations 1929-1931 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2003), p. 11.*

instead of the Mother's knowledge and your faith will naturally disappear and you will get into a wrong condition and a wrong attitude.

March 1928

*

Put your faith in the Divine Shakti, set your mind at rest and let the Mother's Force work.

26 August 1933

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There is no reason to be discouraged. Three years is not too much for the preparation of the nature and it is usually through fluctuations that it gradually grows nearer to the point where a continuous progress becomes possible. One has to cleave firmly to the faith in the Mother's working behind all appearances and you will find that that will carry you through.

31 August 1935

*

I can try to call down the Mother's Force, but faith and surrender would require a wonderful Yogic poise and power possible only in born Yogis, I think.

Not at all. A wonderful Yogic poise and power would usually bring self-reliance rather than faith and surrender. It is the simple people who do the latter most easily.

10 August 1936

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Mother with Letters on the Mother, CWSA, Vol. 32, pp. 192-212)

‘OH, TO BELONG TO THEE WITHOUT ANY DARKNESS, WITHOUT ANY RESTRICTION!’

April 3, 1914

It seems to me that I am being born to a new life and all the methods, the habits of the past can no longer be of any use. It seems to me that what I thought were results is nothing more than a preparation. I feel as though I have done nothing yet, as though I have not lived the spiritual life, only entered the path that leads to it, it seems to me that I know nothing, that I am incapable of formulating anything, that all experience is yet to begin. It is as though I were stripped of my entire past, of its errors as well as its conquests, as though all that has vanished and made room for a new-born child whose whole existence is yet to be lived, who has no Karma, no experience to learn from, but no error either which has to be set right. My head is empty of all knowledge and all certitude, but also of all vain thought. I feel that if I learn how to surrender without any resistance to this state, if I do not try to know or understand, if I consent to be completely like an ignorant and candid child, some new possibility will open before me. I know that I must now definitively give myself up and be like an absolutely blank page on which Thy thought, Thy will, O Lord, can be inscribed freely without danger of any deformation.

An immense gratitude rises from my heart, it seems to me that I have at last reached the threshold I sought so much.

Grant, O Lord, that I may be sufficiently pure, impersonal, animated with Thy divine love to be able to cross it definitively.

Oh, to belong to Thee without any darkness, without any restriction!

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM Vol. 1, 2nd Ed., pp. 116-17)

THE ORDINARY LIFE AND THE TRUE SOUL

THE ordinary life is a round of various desires and greeds. As long as one is preoccupied with them, there can be no lasting progress. A way out of the round must be discovered. Take, as an instance, that commonest preoccupation of ordinary life — the constant thinking by people of what they will eat and when they will eat and whether they are eating enough. To conquer the greed for food an equanimity in the being must be developed such that you are perfectly indifferent towards food. If food is given you, you eat it; if not, it does not worry you in the least; above all, you do not keep thinking about food. And the thinking must not be negative, either. To be absorbed in devising methods and means of abstinence as the *sannyasis* do is to be almost as preoccupied with food as to be absorbed in dreaming of it greedily. Have an attitude of indifference towards it: that is the main thing. Get the idea of food out of your consciousness, do not attach the slightest importance to it.

This will be very easy to do once you get into contact with your psychic being, the true soul deep within you. Then you will feel immediately how very unimportant these things are and that the sole thing that matters is the Divine. To dwell in the psychic is to be lifted above all greed. You will have no hankering, no worry, no feverish desire. And you will feel also that whatever happens, happens for the best. Do not misunderstand me to imply that you must always think that everything is for the best. Everything is not for the best so long as you are in the ordinary consciousness. You may be misled into utterly wrong channels when you are not in the right state of consciousness. But once you are poised in the psychic and have made your self-offering to the Divine, all that happens will happen for the best, for everything, however disguised, will be a definite divine response to you.

Indeed the very act of genuine self-giving is its own immediate reward — it brings with it such happiness, such confidence, such security as nothing else can give. But till the self-giving is firmly psychic there will be disturbances, the interval of dark moments between bright ones. It is only the psychic that keeps on progressing in an unbroken line, its movement a continuous ascension. All other movements are broken and discontinuous. And it is not till the psychic is felt as yourself that you can be an individual even; for it is the true self in you. Before the true self is known, you are a public place, not a being. There are so many clashing forces working in you; hence, if you wish to make real progress, know your own being which is in constant union with the Divine. Then alone will transformation be possible. All the other parts of your nature are ignorant: the mind, for instance, often commits the mistake of thinking that every brilliant idea is also a luminous idea. It can with equal vigour trump up arguments for and against God: it has no infallible sense of the truth. The vital is generally impressed by any show of power and is willing to

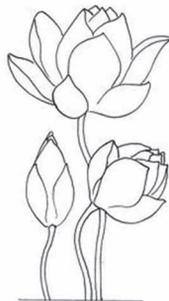
see in it the Godlike. It is only the psychic which has a just discrimination: it is directly aware of the supreme Presence, it infallibly distinguishes between the divine and the undivine. If you have even for a moment contacted it, you will carry with you a conviction about the Divine which nothing will shake.

How, you ask me, are we to know our true being? Ask for it, aspire after it, want it as you want nothing else. Most of you here are influenced by it, but it should be more than an influence, you should be able to feel identified with it. All urge for perfection comes from it, but you are unaware of the source, you are not collaborating with it knowingly, you are not in identification with its light. Do not think I refer to the emotional part of you when I speak of the psychic. Emotion belongs to the higher vital, not to the pure psychic. The psychic is a steady flame that burns in you, soaring towards the Divine and carrying with it a sense of strength which breaks down all oppositions. When you are identified with it you have the feeling of the divine truth — then you cannot help feeling also that the whole world is ignorantly walking on its head with its feet in the air!

You must learn to unite what you call your individual self with your true psychic individuality. Your present individuality is a very mixed thing, a series of changes which yet preserves a certain continuity, a certain sameness or identity of vibration in the midst of all flux. It is almost like a river which is never the same and yet has a certain definiteness and persistence of its own. Your normal self is merely a shadow of your true individuality which you will realise only when this normal individual which is differently poised at different times, now in the mental, then in the vital, at other times in the physical, gets into contact with the psychic and feels it as its real being. Then you will be one, nothing will shake or disturb you, you will make steady and lasting progress and be above such petty things as greed for food.

THE MOTHER

(*Questions and Answers 1929-31*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 3, pp. 123-25)



“LALITA” —
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

I don't think this poem would lose much if considered as about the living person who bears its title as her name. More basically, however, it represents the typical beauty and harmony of the Gopi-soul. What is your opinion of its merit?

LALITA

Why is she silent to the ear of day?
 Why turns she now a loveless countenance
To life's appeal of fire, the turbulent lay
 Of passion-colour to her listening glance? —
Listening, but with how distant a dream-hue
 In answer to some world-end loveliness
Of spirit wood-voice flowering neath moon-dew!
 Her heart's lone throbbing music none can guess

Who has not watched when vigil silences
 Of inward prayer upon her visage wrought
In perfect rhythm the gloom-glow of her thought.
 Her love's a flute ensouled with timeless drouth,
 Craving each night the touch of Krishna's mouth
To wake its exquisite eternities.

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

It is very good poetry at any rate. As a sonnet, the building is very well done.

4 April 1933

[Version from *The Secret Splendour* —
Collected Poems of K. D Sethna (Amal Kiran), 1993, p. 17:]

LALITA

Why is she silent to the ear of day?
Why turns she now a loveless countenance
To the appeal of light, the turbulent lay,
Of passion-colour to her listening glance? —
Listening, but with how distant a dream-hue
In answer to some world-end loveliness
Of spirit wood-voice flowering neath moon-dew!
Her heart's lone throbbing music none can guess

Who has not watched when vigil silences
Of inward prayer upon her visage wrought
In perfect rhythm the gloom-glow of their thought.
Her love's a flute ensouled with timeless drouth,
Craving each night the touch of Krishna's mouth
To wake its exquisite eternities.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

Rhythms may come from the same source and yet be entirely dissimilar. It would be a very bad job if the overmind touch made all rhythms similar.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Poetry and Art, CWSA, Vol. 27, p. 25)

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of May 2013)

Chapter XXIII

A Crucial Plunge

. . . whereas others regard the country as an inert piece of matter and know it as the plains, the fields, the forests, the mountains and the rivers, I know my country as the Mother, I worship her and adore her accordingly. What would a son do when a demon, sitting on his mother's breast, prepared to drink her blood? Would he sit down content to take his meals or go on enjoying himself in the company of his wife and children, or would he rather run to the rescue of his mother? I know I have the strength to uplift this fallen race, not a physical strength; I am not going to fight with a sword or a gun, but with the power of knowledge . . .¹

THIS often-quoted passage from a letter written by Sri Aurobindo from Baroda to Mrinalini Devi on the 30th of August 1905, referred to as the 'Three Madnesses' letter is much more significant than generally understood. It is most important to remember that this was an entirely privileged and private communication to one "dearest" to its author. The imagery of the country as the living mother whose blood was being sucked by a demon was not an emotional appeal made to any audience or a wide readership to arouse patriotic fervour in their hearts, but an honest and candid effort to impress upon an unsophisticated but trusting and loving mind whose empathy and indulgence he needed. Along with his other two madresses — his belief that he was only a trustee of all he possessed and after what was strictly necessary for a simple living the rest must go "to the Divine" in the sense that it must be used to eradicate the misery of the people and, secondly, he must experience God, the letter stands out as the true testament of a momentous life in the process of unfolding.

From 1905 till June 1906 when he obtained leave without pay from his college for a year, practically ending his career at Baroda, we see him maintaining a balance between his political activities, subdued but exacting — exacting partly because they were subdued — and the demands of his job. But that his creative self maintained a remarkable poise is obvious from the fact that he could compose works like

Rodogune, the tragedy in verse (January-February 1906) and the play *Perseus the Deliverer* (June 1906).

The following extract from a confidential report by J. C. Nixon, an executive of the provincial Home Department, almost summarises Sri Aurobindo's political activities so far as Bengal was concerned, prior to his final departure from Baroda. The report "was compiled mostly from the intelligence reports and the court records. Nixon also had opportunity to see reports from the other non-police agencies and from the Home Government in England."² He wrote:

Swami Vivekananda, the revivalist of Vedantism and the founder of Rama-krishna Mission, died in 1902 at Belur near Calcutta. Apparently before that date Arabinda Ghose had attempted to influence the political life of Bengal. From Baroda he had sent Jatindranath Banerji, a soldier in Gaekwar's army, and later, his brother Barindra Kumar Ghosh to preach the cause of freedom in Bengal. They approached Babu Surendra Nath Banerji, some members of the Tagore family, Swami Vivekananda, Miss Saralabala Ghosal, Messrs P. Mitter, C. R. Das, Bijay Chatarji and many other barristers. It is not very clear what was the effect of this early propaganda, but it seems that at about that time many small and independent samitis sprang up in the moffussil and in Calcutta which, though not ostensibly revolutionary, had for their ultimate aims freedom and independence and the subversion of the British Government. The samitis seem principally to take the *akharas* for physical culture. At the beginning of 1902 three distinct *akharas* existed in Calcutta respectively associated with the names of Jatindra Banerji, P. Mitter and Saralabala Ghosal. The second of these was later known as the Calcutta Anusilan Samiti and P. Mitter was its President and Satish Chandra Basu its Secretary.³

By the beginning of 1905 the whole of Bengal, Calcutta in particular, was in turmoil because of the widespread protest against Lord Curzon's plan to partition Bengal. Public meetings condemning the move were almost a daily occurrence. A formidable obstacle Curzon could face was the attitude of Nawab Salimullah of Dacca who at first described the scheme as a "Beastly arrangement". Surprisingly, in no time he became not only its supporter, but also its champion. The key to this mysterious change of heart seems to be absolutely mundane: the government sanctioned him a huge loan. However, his brother, Nawabzada Khwaja Artikullah declared at the 1906 Congress session that the Muslims of East Bengal did not want partition and "the real fact is that it is only a few leading Mohammedans who for their own purpose supported the measure."⁴ In fact, he moved the Anti-Partition resolution at the Congress.⁵ Most of the Muslim leaders respected by both the communities opposed the partition. Among them were Maulvi Abul Hossain, Abul Kasem, A. Rasol, Liyakat Hossain and Ismail Hossain Sirazi. Again, the name of

Chaudhuri Alimuzzaman of Faridpur headed an Anti-Partition memorandum signed by about a thousand Mahomedan zamindars, taluqdars, jotedars, traders and others.⁶

The biggest protest meeting against the scheme was held on the 7th of August 1905 at the Town Hall, Calcutta. It was attended by thousands from the city and places far and near. Babu Surendranath Banerjea (1848-1925) was emerging as the most prominent leader of the Anti-Partition movement. According to a sincere recorder of the events of the time, Upendrachandra Bhattacharya (1892-1974), it was Sri Aurobindo, coming down from Baroda, who presented the proposals for boycott, a national system of education and promotion of Swadeshi on that forum through Krishna Kumar Mitra, his maternal uncle and by then a highly influential leader and editor. According to Upendrachandra it was at Sri Aurobindo's instance that Krishnakumar wrote his editorial against the move for partition in his *Sanjeevani* early in 1905 and organised a series of meetings to organise public opinion against it.⁷

Workers and the clerical staff of numerous factories and jute mills observed a strike on the very day after the Partition was officially announced on 1st September 1905. Muslim and Hindu workers exchanged rakhis in several industrial establishments, to the chagrin of their British management. The right moment for Swadeshi had arrived, for the Government would not undo the partition unless the gross interest of British commerce received a big blow. At certain places, at Barisal for example, the fervour for boycott was total; the cobblers refused to mend shoes of foreign make and washermen refused to wash Lancashire linen.⁸

If Lord Curzon, who seems to have been over-confident of his superior intelligence, thought that all would believe the scheme to be nothing but an administrative adjustment, he was under an illusion. In an article which he did not complete (to which a passing reference was made earlier), Sri Aurobindo wrote:

We have recently been permitted to know that our great Viceroy particularly objects to the imputation of motives to his Government — and not unnaturally; for Lord Curzon is a vain man loving praise & sensitive to dislike & censure; more than that, he is a statesman of unusual genius who is following a subtle and daring policy on which immense issues hang and it is naturally disturbing him to find that there are wits in India as subtle as his own which can perceive something at least of the goal at which he is aiming. But in this particular instance he has only himself & Mr. Risley to thank, if his motives have been discovered . . .⁹

Even *The Statesman* wrote:

. . . objects of the scheme are, briefly, first, to destroy the collective power of the Bengali people, secondly, to overthrow the political ascendancy of Calcutta, and thirdly to foster in East Bengal the growth of a Mohammedan power which

it is hoped will have the effect of keeping in check the rapidly growing strength of the educated Hindu community.¹⁰

The British bureaucracy in India was quite clear in its motive.

One of our main objects is to split up and thereby weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule,¹¹

wrote one of its members.

Leaders of the Anti-Partition movement belonged to two distinct schools of thought. For the first, undoing the partition was the only goal. For the second, the movement was an opportunity for achieving a greater goal. The first was represented by Surendranath Banerjea who made it clear that the purpose of the movement was to unify Bengal and that there was nothing anti-British beyond this limited goal. The other, represented by Sri Aurobindo, saw in the situation an opportunity to mobilise the people against the British rule as a whole.

In August 1905 the father of the scheme for partitioning Bengal, the Viceroy Lord Curzon, was obliged to resign his post because his government in Britain did not support his stand on certain issues against Lord Kitchener, the Commander-in-chief. But he was intelligent enough to sense his growing unpopularity in India. Calcutta was still the capital of India and the discontent of the people over his scheme for partition was too loud for him to turn a deaf ear to it. This author suspects that his resignation was partly prompted by this factor. Also, a review of his life shows that he was eager to return to England because of a far greater ambition — to become the Prime Minister. He held a few posts in the Cabinet during the two decades that followed, but that ambition remained unfulfilled.¹²

Never before had a Governor-General's departure been publicly celebrated as was Curzon's. Reported *The Statesman* of 22 August 1905 under a deceptive headline — 'Farewell to Curzon':

A very large meeting was held last evening in College Square in consequence of the news that had arrived during the day of Lord Curzon's resignation. Patriotic speeches by certain well-known Bengalis, songs by bands of students, with a display of chirag-illuminations and bomb firing were the prominent features of the meeting. The speeches all went to prove the fact that change in Government was popular, and the crowd expressed its feelings in an unmistakably delighted fashion.

It was hoped by many that the malevolent scheme would get pushed into a zone of silence with its champion's departure. Alas, the imp that had sprung out of the evil genius was fast assuming a communal colour — providing certain elements

in the administration with the idea of using that poison for keeping India restless and preoccupied enough so that its legitimate political ambitions would be pushed into a comfortable distance. The stark irony of history — that half a century later the nation itself was partitioned along the communal lines — makes one wonder: Was it Curzon the individual who originated the scheme? was it a horde of lesser men like Fuller who further perverted the spirit behind the scheme, unabashedly motivated by communal pragmatism? Rather, was it not some awesome divisive dark force that made those ambitious men its first-generation instruments?

The atmosphere turned turbulent in Bengal as the scheme was executed in October 1905. Sri Aurobindo sent an article entitled ‘No Compromise’ to his lieutenants in Calcutta. Reminisces Abinash Bhattacharya:

No press was willing to take it up for printing. There was no way other than to arrange for the type-set, stick, lead, case etc. in our own lodge. A Marathi youth named Kulkarni who lived with us composed the text. We got a few thousand copies printed in a press overnight. We distributed the article among all the newspaper editors and people who mattered. Barin and I carried it to the honourable Surendranath Banerjea. He asked us to leave it with him. But as we insisted on his reading it, he began glancing at it but could not keep it down. He read with concentration and looked stunned. He asked who its author was, for no Indian, no Bengali could write that kind of English containing such arguments supported by facts. Coming to learn that the author was Aurobindo Ghose, he said, “Yes, none but he could have written such an article.”¹³

It was time for Sri Aurobindo to plunge into the tumult, though trying to remain as anonymous as possible — the first crucial plunge into an unpredictable future for the political liberation of his country before the next and momentous one he was to take for an infinitely different kind of struggle for humanity’s liberation from the tentacles of primeval inconscience.

Widely known are the facts about the immediate occasion that brought him to Kolkata and the founding of the National College. According to Upendrachandra: Satish Chandra Mukhopadhyay (1865-1948), the editor of *Dawn* and the founder of the Dawn Society once met Sri Aurobindo while the latter was put up at the residence of Subodh Mullick on a visit from Baroda.

Satishchandra, in the course of his discussion with Sri Aurobindo about a scheme of national education, requested him to join the Dawn Society. Sri Aurobindo said in response, “Nobody can relate the concept of national education with a name like Dawn Society; they will have no interest. We need a national university. We have to build up a National Council of Education.”¹⁴

The idea inspired Subodh Mullick. In a large gathering of the elite at Pantir Math off Cornwallis Street, he announced a donation of Rupees one lakh for founding a national college — and probably announced that Sri Aurobindo could be persuaded to take up the position of its founder-principal. The elated crowd hailed Mullick, then aged 26, as Raja — an honorific that became a permanent prefix to his name.

(To be continued)

MANOJ DAS

References and Notes

1. For the original letter in Bengali, see *Writings in Bengali*; SABCL, Vol. 4, p. 319.
2. *Terrorism in Bengal* Vol. II (Introduction): A Collection of Documents (in 6 Volumes) compiled and edited by Amiya K. Samanta, Director, Intelligence Branch, West Bengal; Govt. of West Bengal, Kolkata; 1995.
3. *Ibid.*, “An Account of the Revolutionary Organisations in Bengal”.
4. “Salutations to Swadeshi and Swaraj”; *The Statesman Festival Annual*, 2004.
5. Ajit K. Neogy: *Partitions of Bengal*; A. Mukherjee & Co.; Kolkata.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Upendrachandra Bhattacharya: *Amar Elomelo Jeebaner Kayekti Adhyay* (Bengali); Modern Book Agency, Kolkata.
The author is the younger brother of the well-known revolutionary, writer and Sri Aurobindo’s lieutenant Abinash Bhattacharya. He was a witness to several historic events of the era. He came in contact not only with Sri Aurobindo, but also with a number of celebrities such as Bipin Chandra Pal, C. R. Das, Surendranath Banerjea and all the revolutionaries of the period. He was a student of the National College. His autobiography is a mine of important information and revelations.
8. “Salutations to Swadeshi and Swaraj”; *The Statesman Festival Annual*, 2004.
9. Sri Aurobindo: *Bande Mataram*; CWSA, Vol. 6, p. 72.
The Risley to whom Sri Aurobindo refers was H. H. Risley, Secretary to the Govt. of India. It was he who first wrote to the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal on 3rd December 1903: “I am directed to address you on the subject of the desirability of reducing the territorial jurisdiction of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal . . .” For most of the original documents on the Partition the interested reader may refer to *Partition of Bengal: Significant Signposts 1905-1911*, by Nityapriya Ghosh and Ashoke Kumar Mukhopadhyaya; Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata.
10. *The Statesman*, 4 July 1905.
11. Sumit Sarkar: *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*; New Delhi, 1977.
12. Lord Ronaldshay: *Life of Lord Curzon*.
13. Abinash Bhattacharya: *Sri Aurobindo* (Bengali); originally published in *Galpa Bharati*, Kolkata.
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VISIONS AND VOICES

(Continued from the issue of May 2013)

THE SEVERAL RHYTHMS

THE Supreme God in His utter sleep — in one of His profoundest meditations — the Supreme Consciousness involved in its own substance — is the rhythm of the apparently dead matter that we see around us. The vast oceans roar over Him, the high mountains shoot up upon Him, but still that utter calmness continues undisturbed. For that supremely rhythmic equipoise is the main support of this entire ordered universe. God's complete withdrawal into Himself — a cessation of all His activities — an entire and thorough forgetfulness of His outer self seems to be a necessary price which He has willingly paid to bring out of Himself this vast manifestation — these many universes. And so too this great and grand dumbness of matter is the basic principle by which the universe in which we live became possible. A divine ignorance is the divine earth out of which grow infinite things. Ignorance that is matter is but an involved sense.

When the supreme ignorance that is matter meets with the consciousness in its first tremor of waking, then the rhythm of the vital sense originates with all its beautiful and infinite ranges of plants, shrubs and trees. The tremor of the God at his first waking from his stupendous trance is felt and seen in the pulsations of erectly growing trees with their outstretched upward arms, of crawling creepers, and of outspreading shrubs. This rhythm of 'the sense-world' is often, rather always overpowered by the all-absorbing and oppositely 'not-moving force' of the ignorance, the involved sense. Already here is seen the struggle between the two kinds of rhythms — a rhythm of perfect stillness and a rhythm of faintly pulsating dim wakefulness. This sense again is but an involved 'sense-mind'. The struggle is the cause of the deaths that occur in the plant world — the fading of flowers, the withering leaves, and the blasting away of fields of corn; a general death reigns behind this life. The law of the God in His all-absorbing meditation is too powerful for the individual plant to persist in the life-course. Still a collective rhythm of the sense-world continues in its course and is the parent of the rhythm of the sense-mind.

The sense delivers out of itself the sense-mind and a new rhythm bursts open in the animal world. All from the crawling insect to the full-fledged bird and the quadruped comes under this new world — a world where the rhythm is in a straight line. This straight and linear rhythm makes possible for the animal a constant prying into the well-covered store-house of memory: — it is a straight onward rhythm

which admits of a straight backward glance. Animals succeed in remembering the place where they get their food; and the act of remembering turns with them into an unconscious habit. But theirs is the instinctive process of memory in the world of sense-mind; whether the movements are backward or forward, — the former represents the instinctive process of memory and the latter the instinctive process of living from moment to moment, — they are always in a straight line. Everything goes by instinct. The movements are not cyclic as in the mental process.

Plants, creepers, shrubs and trees are rooted to the mother Earth; animals have succeeded in wrenching themselves away from the bosom of the earth and have a freer movement. The grip of ignorance that is matter is perforce a little slackened. Yet the all-pervasive and basic principle of ignorance pursues relentlessly the beings of the world of sense-mind and causes sleep, fatigue, disease and death. As in the plant, so in the animal world also, the individual animal dies, but the collective life-force, the total rhythm of the sense-mind continues. The plant world is more in consonance with the laws of its parent, the matter-world, and therefore the royal representatives of the plant-world, the huge trees in their forests of majestic symphonies enjoy a longer life than the animals which are the direct manifestation of a pronounced rebellion against the laws of the world of matter.

Under the pressure of the upward aspiration of the secret will-in-things the veil that lies over the sense-mind is lifted and a new world, a world where mind is the principal factor, peopled with human beings, emerges with its own characteristic laws quite different from those of the worlds of matter, sense and sense-mind. A new law means a new rhythm. If the world of matter were a plane figure, then the numberless beings of the sense-world are so many fixed points on that plane, and the animals of the world of sense-mind are so many moving points, and the human beings of the world of mind are so many points which revolve each on itself as they move or stand. Man comprises in himself all these, the standing, the moving and the self-revolving — these are represented in him by the four rhythms of matter, sense, sense-mind and thinking mind. He is a field, broadly speaking, of these four great rhythms, of these four great movements, and each comprises many and various smaller movements giving rise to a complexity, a richness and variety that engenders a future of still greater possibility.

The greater the distance between ignorance and man, the more subtle are the ways invented by ignorance to prevent him from hastening onward. Fatigue, sleep, disease and death are partially circumvented by man. The world of mind would have given birth to that for which it is waiting so long, — but for the most subtle of all the weapons of the mother of the present manifestation, the ignorance of the physical consciousness, a power that binds man to the earth and makes him persistently stagnate in the same place, neither allowing him to go onward nor to retrograde. This mind of man is but the involved supermind. And the mind must perforce one day yield to the supermind under the supreme pressure of the upward urge in the

secret will-in-things.

Out of the several rhythms and movements that are found in man the mental being, — the richest and the most complex of beings, — has yet to rise a harmony higher and greater than all those that went before. And that rhythm will be a key to all the others.

AMRITA

(*Amrita Birth Centenary Commemoration Volume*, September 1995,
Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry, 1995, pp. 55-8)

But the greatest skill in works of Yoga is that which to the animal man seems its greatest ineptitude. For all this difficult attainment, the latter will say, may lead to anything you please, but we have to lose our personal life, abandon our personal objects, annul our personal will and pleasure and without these life cannot be worth living. Now the object of all skill in works must be evidently to secure the best welfare either of ourselves or of others or of all. The ordinary man calls it welfare to secure momentarily some transient object, to wade for it through a sea of grief and suffering and painful labour and to fall from it again still deeper into the same distressful element in search of a new transient object. The greatest cunning of Yoga is to have detected this cheat of the mind and its desires and dualities and to have found the way to an abiding peace, a universal delight and an all-embracing satisfaction, which can not only be enjoyed for oneself but communicated to others. That too arises out of the change of our being; for the pure truth of existence carries also in it the unalloyed delight of existence, they are inseparable in the status of the infinite. To use the figures of the Vedic seers, by Yoga Varuna is born in us, a vast sky of spiritual living, the divine in his wide existence and infinite truth; into that wideness Mitra rises up, Lord of Light and Love who takes all our activities of thought and feeling and will, links them into a divine harmony, charioteers our movement and dictates our works; called by this wideness and this harmony Aryaman appears in us, the Divine in its illumined power, uplifted force of being and all-judging effective will; and by the three comes the indwelling Bhaga, the Divine in its pure bliss and all-seizing joy who dispels the evil dream of our jarring and divided existence and possesses all things in the light and glory of Aryaman's power, Mitra's love and light, Varuna's unity. This divine Birth shall be the son of our works; and than creating this what greater skill can there be or what more practical and sovereign cunning?

Sri Aurobindo

(*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 125-26)

STRIKING PARALLELS

At the age of seventeen, after having spent the World War II years in South Africa, I found myself in Paris, the city of my birth. At that time, revelations about the concentration camps were destroying all previously-held conceptions of the limits to which human evil could extend. The horror of that time and place was not an abstraction for me: a cousin with whom I used to play as a child had come out of Auschwitz with her identity number tattooed on her arm and a burden of dreams from which she would wake up screaming, night after night.

One day I came upon a French translation of Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*. In a world that had lost its bearings it was the only thing that made sense to me. In the *Gita*, there is a significant moment just before the battle between the powers of darkness and the powers of light when the destiny of the known world is about to be decided. The mighty warrior Arjuna, upon whom the outcome of the war depends, surveys the enemy's ranks in which stand his kinsmen and his guru. The code by which he lives declares it his duty to destroy the enemy. The same code regards the slaying of one's kinsmen or teacher as the greatest of sins. Confronting this dilemma and foreseeing the destruction that must follow upon either choice, Arjuna is paralysed with horror. What finally releases him is something from another dimension, a vision in which the terrifying ambiguities of morality are somehow resolved. I cannot begin to describe the catharsis this produced in me. Suffice it to say that I became convinced that the answers I sought could only come from another plane.

In 1959 I left home, heading for the Sri Aurobindo Ashram of Pondicherry, India. It was at the Ashram that I first read (in twelve thick volumes!) the great Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, of which the *Bhagavad Gita* comprises a single chapter.

My relation to the *Mahabharata* was a vividly lived experience, its events not the happenings of a distant age, but one with the epic events through which we had just lived. Over the years, greatly aided by Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* and other writings, as some quantum of the *Mahabharata*'s spiritual wealth became accessible to me, I knew that I wanted to present it in a way that would make its wisdom and beauty more easily accessible to others. The more I studied the *Mahabharata*, the more striking were the parallels I discovered between its story of the conflict culminating in the battle of Kurukshetra, and the events culminating in World War II. In both cases there was a tremendous clash between the forces of darkness and the forces of light such as takes place in a time of changing Dharma. It is this clash — between Asura and Deva, to use Vedic terminology — with its result on humanity either taking a step forward or sliding back into barbarism: that

is the theme of the *Mahabharata*. It seemed to me that this was also the central lesson learned from World War II.

Sometimes in my vision, the figures and events of the *Mahabharata* slid in and out of the drama the world had so recently witnessed in the rise and fall of Nazism. The parallels were uncanny.

Powerful and savage Jarasandha sought emperorship over Bharatavarsha, and in order to ensure his success, he was ready to offer Shiva the heads of a hundred captured kings as a sacrifice. At the war's end, Hitler sealed and flooded the Berlin underground — the city's faithful residents offered as a last desperate sacrifice to the dark power he worshipped.

While in exile, the Pandavas were told by a sage that Drona, Ashwatthama, and Greatfather Bheeshma himself would be possessed by demonic powers. Writing to Nirodbaran — his disciple and later secretary — three years before the war, Sri Aurobindo said that Hitler and his chief lieutenants Goering and Goebbels were certainly under the grip of vital possession. For Sri Aurobindo, 'vital beings' were Asuras or forces adverse to the Light.

Dhritarashtra's message to the Pandavas in the face of war was, "It is better for the sons of Pandu to be dependents, beggars, and exiles all their lives than to enjoy the earth by the slaughter of their brothers, kinsmen and spiritual guides: contemplation is purer and nobler than action and worldly desires." "Peace in our time" was the watchword of Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister whose foreign policy sought infamously to appease Hitler.

The parallels continue. After the war, Arjuna voices his confusion about a critical point: "In the forest you told us to wait out our exile for the full thirteen years, and then Dharma would be with us. But when Krishna came to the forest he said: 'Fight now!'"

Vyasa answers: "I gave you of my knowledge . . . I walk within my Dharma. Krishna is free of Dharma. It will not work to act as though you are free of Dharma when you are not."

Likewise Gandhi-ji wrote the following letter to the British members of the House of Parliament on July 2, 1940 as he walked within his non-violent Dharma:

I appeal for cessation of all hostilities . . . because war is bad in essence . . . I want you to fight Nazism without arms or . . . with non-violent arms. I would like you to lay down the arms you have as being useless for saving you or humanity . . . Let them take possession of your beautiful islands with your many beautiful buildings . . . but not your souls or your minds.

Gandhi-ji was a great being, a statesman and perhaps a saint. But he was not a seer. There are times when we have to rise and fight and only those beyond Dharma like Krishna can spur us on to do so.

And yet, it is Krishna who when Ashwatthama releases the Narayan astra tells everyone to surrender. Surrendering is meant not just as a physical act but as a spiritual surrender as is made clear during the Ashwamedha when the sacrificial horse enables Arjuna to surrender his ego, his prejudices, in fact his own self for a higher cause. This version of the epic shows how at various stages the Pandavas and Draupadi make this surrender. On the fulcrum of surrender is balanced Karma and Dharma. It is in Krishna that this balance is found in the most pristine form.

Sri Aurobindo, who had fought so fiercely for independence from the British, alarmed and astonished the nation and even his disciples by championing the British war effort, declaring:

Those who fight for this cause are fighting for the Divine and against the threatened reign of the Asura.¹

In another letter, he said:

. . . You should not think of it as a fight for certain nations against others or even for India; it is a struggle for an ideal that has to establish itself on earth in the life of humanity, for a Truth that has yet to realise itself fully and against a darkness and falsehood that are trying to overwhelm the earth and mankind in the immediate future. It is the forces behind the battle that have to be seen and not this or that superficial circumstance. . . .²

And to another disciple:

. . . We made it plain in a letter which has been made public that we did not consider the war as a fight between nations and governments (still less between good people and bad people) but between two forces, the Divine and the Asuric. What we have to see is on which side men and nations put themselves; if they put themselves on the right side, they at once make themselves instruments of the Divine purpose . . .³

He is thus Krishna-like looking at a future of peace only through the resolution by battle.

Perhaps something more needs to be said about the various entities I have referred to — the ‘asuras’, ‘vital beings’, and their god-like counterparts, the ‘devas’. We tend to use these terms only metaphorically today, but in Vedic times and to seers of all times, they were very real indeed.

1. *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 212.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 211-12.

3. *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*, CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 465.

What are these beings? They are the embodied forces which seek to obstruct (asuras), or aid (devas) the evolutionary advance of the Light. In crucial moments such as those marking humanity's attempt to make a transition to a new dharma, when the pressure of evolution threatens to dislodge the obsolete past, such beings appear on either side to lead the battle.

In the *Mahabharata* we can easily recognise Jarasandha and Dhritarashtra as asuric figures, Krishna as the embodiment of the Light and Arjuna, his instrument, as the champion of the Light.

During World War II, Hitler was clearly the Asura's agent. But who in that battle was the champion of the Light? And where did the Light come from?

I tend to think it was Winston Churchill, whose inspiring speeches roused his listeners to implacable defiance in the face of what for long seemed the inevitability of defeat. But Churchill was aware of being guided by something beyond, far beyond his own scope. In a statement to the House of Commons on 31 October 1942, he declared:

. . . I have a feeling, in fact I have it very strongly, a feeling of interference. I want to stress that I have a feeling sometimes that some guiding hand has interfered. I have the feeling that we have a guardian because we serve a great cause, and that we shall have that guardian so long as we serve that cause faithfully. And what a cause it is!⁴

If Arjuna was the hero fighting with weapons against overwhelming odds in the war Sri Krishna conducted from another dimension with his light and inspiration, Churchill was the hero of an unarmed, unprepared Britain fighting against overwhelming odds, with the only weapons she had — his speeches.

Here is what Sri Aurobindo said of the action of his spiritual force during World War II:

Certainly, my force is not limited to the Asram and its conditions. As you know it is being largely used for helping the right development of the war and of change in the human world. . . .⁵

Right from the beginning, Churchill's words to the House on 3 September 1939 were hardly those of a politician, and instead had the unmistakable ring of an inspired mystic:

4. Peter Clarke: *Mr Churchill's Profession, Statesman, Orator, Writer*, p. 254.

5. *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 496.

I felt a serenity of mind and was conscious of a kind of uplifted detachment from human and personal affairs. The glory of Old England, peace-loving and ill-prepared as she was, but instant and fearless at the call of honour, thrilled my being and seemed to lift our fate to those spheres far removed from earthly facts and physical sensation. I tried to convey some of this mood to the House when I spoke, not without acceptance.⁶

Churchill himself understood the evolutionary significance of the present age, which Sri Aurobindo emphasised in his writings, and in which Churchill himself played so critical a role:

The destiny of mankind is not decided by material computation. When great causes are on the move in the world, stirring all men's souls, drawing them from their firesides, casting aside comfort, wealth and the pursuit of happiness in response to impulses at once awe-striking and irresistible, we learn that we are spirits, not animals, and that something is going on in space and time, and beyond space and time, which, whether we like it or not, spells duty.⁷

And again:

A wonderful story is unfolding before our eyes. How it will end we are not allowed to know. But on both sides of the Atlantic we all feel, I repeat, all feel, that we are part of it, that our future and that of many generations is at stake. We are sure that the character of human society will be shaped by the resolves we take and the deeds we do. We need not bewail the fact that we have been called upon to face such solemn responsibilities. We may be proud, and even rejoice amid our tribulations, that we have been born at this cardinal time for so great an age and so splendid an opportunity of service here.⁸

And yet again:

I have absolutely no doubt that we shall win a complete and decisive victory over the forces of evil, and that victory itself will be only a stimulus to further efforts to conquer ourselves . . .⁹

6. Winston Churchill: *The Gathering Storm: The Second World War*, Rosetta Books, p. 364.

7. Churchill's radio broadcast on June 16, 1941 to America on receiving the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from the University of Rochester, New York.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Churchill's impromptu speech on 17 January 1941 at Glasgow.

It was in this historical and philosophical context that I began to understand the Vedic ideas of sacrifice and surrender, and the joy experienced at the moment of acceptance. There are numerous examples of this in the Vedic hymns and in the Vedic concept of sacrifice, with which the *Mahabharata* abounds.

It is through Arjuna, my protagonist, that I personify a changing Dharma after Kurukshetra. It is through him that Krishna has been able to reveal the mystery of the Cosmos, and it is now through him that one sees a new model of a man grown wise. In his post-war Ashwamedha campaign we find the Kshatriya hero discovering and developing his feminine, intuitive, and compassionate side in his encounters with those he must challenge.

The Kali Yuga that Krishna predicted is upon us and is accelerating the rate of evolution at a dizzying pace. Forms of resistance are inevitable, as are clashes with forms of resistance. The evils that led to Kurukshetra and World War II are still the evils that haunt us — insensitivity, rivalry, greed, violence, competitiveness and the denial of the love that created us. The pain and grief that these times have caused can only be healed by Harmony and Samata, two virtues held dear by both Sri Aurobindo and Mother.

Recent world events have left us living in a state of semi-paranoia. As Eckhart Tolle says in *A New Earth*:

If the history of humanity were the clinical case history of a single human being, the diagnosis would have to be: chronic paranoid delusions, a pathological propensity to commit murder and acts of extreme violence and cruelty against his perceived “enemies”, — his own unconsciousness projected outward. Criminally insane, with a few brief lucid intervals.¹⁰

Nothing makes this more clear than the epic narratives of history. And yet they allow us to pause and take stock. For a moment we live in the aftermath and reflect. And we are somehow stilled and healed. The soul makes its way through the madness to come to the fore. In his introduction to Part II of an earlier edition of my book, Pradip Bhattacharya drew attention to a point made by Joseph Campbell in a televised series of his talks. Campbell said that science had created a gap between the modern world and mythological symbols. As the incidence of vice and crime, violence, murder and despair rises rapidly, it is the myths that offer “the most solid supports of the moral order, of the cohesiveness and creativity of civilisation”. Campbell concludes that it is in the body of creative literature focusing on the world’s epics that he saw “hope for our society in the twenty-first century”.

Yet the Kali Yuga, the precursor of a wondrous dawn, is pregnant with surprises. Science has recently taught us to harness the beneficent sun. A deeper science may

10. Eckhart Tolle: *A New Earth – Create a Better Life*, Penguin Books, 2009, pp. 11-12.

yet harness us to the Greater Light. In any case though the resistances are fierce, the ultimate victory is certain. It will be for some future epic to tell the tale.

The sages say that much merit is acquired by listening to the story of the *Mahabharata*. May you, the reader, acquire merit, peace of soul, and serene joy.

*Of Bliss these Beings are born,
In Bliss they are sustained
And to Bliss they go and merge again.
Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti*

(Taittiriya Upanishad)

MAGGI LIDCHI GRASSI

(From *The Great and Golden Sacrifice of the Mahabharata*)

Note: The references have been supplied editorially.

But what we can do with profit is to seek in the Gita for the actual living truths it contains, apart from their metaphysical form, to extract from it what can help us or the world at large and to put it in the most natural and vital form and expression we can find that will be suitable to the mentality and helpful to the spiritual needs of our present-day humanity. No doubt in this attempt we may mix a good deal of error born of our own individuality and of the ideas in which we live, as did greater men before us, but if we steep ourselves in the spirit of this great Scripture and, above all, if we have tried to live in that spirit, we may be sure of finding in it as much real truth as we are capable of receiving as well as the spiritual influence and actual help that, personally, we were intended to derive from it. And that is after all what Scriptures were written to give; the rest is academical disputation or theological dogma. Only those Scriptures, religions, philosophies which can be thus constantly renewed, relived, their stuff of permanent truth constantly reshaped and developed in the inner thought and spiritual experience of a developing humanity, continue to be of living importance to mankind. The rest remain as monuments of the past, but have no actual force or vital impulse for the future.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Essays on the Gita*, CWSA, Vol. 19. p. 5)

FIVE POEMS

DO NOT DARE

Do not dare to say that we are not He,
Not the One who is in each proud lone rock
Or, born into flame-souls of the world to be,
Carries up in His tempest even you who mock!
For we are He.

Do not dare to disdain our radiant child-look
When to our Mother who is radiant bliss we cling,
When bent over dark pages of the sacred book,
Only from Her eyes we read, grow under Her wing.
For we are He.

Do not dare to dream that on this sweet black-earth
Will be left one corner where we are not!
In us will spread the all-embracing hearth,
The globe immense of love in a tiny dot.
For we are He.

MY CRADLE

The two loving palms, my cradle of delight,
Close on my soul like sun on happy shade,
Like warm praying fields of corn sweet and bright,
Like soft moss and crisp grass on still soil of a glade.

Wide and long I stretched in clasps of wild thyme,
In sweet fragrance, in greenery beauty-rooted,
And with Thee, my Mother, my prayer I rhyme.
By my rapture-cry the whole world is muted.

In Thy loving palms I lie, a bundle of bliss,
And in wide open skies Thy Heart-throbs I seek.

From vaults of light falls a trembling sun-kiss,
A golden drop of Grace on my happy cheek.

Blue-winged birds swaying on Thy magic thread
Before my enchanted gaze to Thy hands fly,
In a heaven of smiles that for me Thou hast spread
Rock my dreams to tunes of Thy Lullaby.

Let me learn to fly where the blue-winged bird flies
And sway for ever on the swing of Thy beam.
Let me grow to sweep the shining floors in Thy Skies
And build vast and proud vaults for Thy White Fiery Dream.

THY KITE

Hold strong the cord, Eternal Sprite!
I play with Thee the hide-and-peek
Through milky roads, Thy sky-drunk kite
In love with sweet earth, though black and bleak.

Deep in Thy palm I chase Thee, Lord.
With blows of wind in glorious flight
I glide on tempest's leaden cord
And press against the sun my face so bright.

And when Thy caprice pulls my ray
And calls to fly in earth's dark night,
Prey of Thy breath in Thee I sway
From bliss of doom to bliss of light.

THE MARIONETTE OF JOY

Raise up Thy dappled harlequin of Joy,
Thou One sweet Actress, for the Play's bell rings,
Breathless is waiting Thy puppet, Thy toy,
For the lightning-pull of the magic strings.

Quite numb I am, just dead, a graceful rag,
 As all true harlequins have always been.
 My long and will-less limbs helplessly sag,
 But in the mellow heart throbs Thy Force, my Queen.

O, let these strings now be my nerves of steel,
 That I may vault to the caprice of Thy song,
 In somersault-whirls Thy power let me feel
 To fight in this stuffed body fierce and strong.

THE SONG OF THE BATTLEFIELD

Do not cry, my fields,
 Do not weep, O meadows,
 When the cloud of dreadful shields,
 When the mass of iron shadows
 Bury the Sun's face.

When ruthless feet with black delight
 Our breast crush, squash each smiling bud
 That leans out from green beauty, when Doom's might
 Tramples the radiant warriors into bloody mud,
 For this too is Grace.

Do not cry, do not weep,
 For in our secret valley's heart
 On slopes of mystery hard and steep
 She fights the Battle from her victory cart,
 The Queen of the golden race.

JANINA STROKA

(*A Captive of Her Love* by Janina Stroka, edited by Michèle Lupsa,
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INNER PEACE

CALMNESS is the state in which we should receive all life's experiences. Only those who experience harmony within their souls, know the harmony that runs through nature.

The mind in chaos finds chaos all around. But he who has inner peace can abide in this state even in the midst of outer discord. God's song is the song of calmness.

Calmness is the life-breath of God's immortality in us.

Peace is the best medicine for our body, mind and soul. Peace is the altar of God, the condition in which happiness exists.

We have to keep a secret chamber of silence within ourselves, where we will not let moods, trials, battles, or disharmony enter. In this chamber of peace, God will visit us.

We should pattern our life by a triangular guide. Calmness and sweetness are the two sides; the base is happiness. Whether we act quickly or slowly, in solitude or in the busy marts of men, our centre should be peaceful, poised.

It is a well-proven fact that the milk of an angry mother can have a harmful effect on her child. Indulgence in constant thoughts of fear, anger, melancholy, remorse, envy, sorrow, hatred, discontent or worry and lack of necessities for normal and happy living, such as right food, proper exercise, fresh air, sunshine, agreeable work and a purpose in life — all are causes of nervous disease.

The nervous system was not made to withstand the destructive forces of intense emotions or persistent negative thoughts and feelings. The sufferers must be willing to analyse their condition and remove the disintegrating emotions and negative thoughts that are little by little destroying us. The victims of nervousness must understand their state and reflect on those continual mistakes of thinking which are responsible for their maladjustments to life.

As soon as our mind becomes restless, we should give it a whack with our will and order it to be calm. Lack of proper distribution of nerve-force is the sole cause of nervousness.

Our body when it is relaxed and calm invites mental peace. Feel the energy vibrating there, energising and revitalising. Feel that we are not the bodies, we are that life which sustains our bodies.

When we have peace in every movement of our bodies, and peace in our thinking and in our will-power and peace in our love, and peace in our strivings, know that we have connected God with our life.

We should not make a fuss about anything. Fear of failure and sickness is cultivated by turning over such thoughts in the conscious mind until they become rooted in the subconscious and finally in the unconscious.

We have to uproot them from within by forceful concentration upon courage,

and by shifting our consciousness to the absolute peace of God within. We have to have faith in him. Why suffer now when the malady has not yet come?

The healing will be instantaneous. Let us mentally surround ourselves with spirit. . . . We will feel its wonderful protection. Fear comes from the heart, if our heart is truly quiet, we cannot feel any fear at all.

The past and the future loads are too heavy for the mind to carry, so we must restrict the amount of the load. Why continue to carry it in the mind? A swan eats only the solid content from the liquid he scoops up in his bill; similarly we should keep in mind only the lessons we have learned from the past and forget the unnecessary details.

When we have too much to do at one time, we become very discouraged. The clock cannot tick twenty-four hours away in one minute, and we cannot do in one hour what requires twenty-four hours. We have to fully enjoy the wonder and beauty of each moment. The more we do that, the more will we feel the presence of that power in our life.

But, isn't it better to live simply, without so many luxuries and with fewer worries? More security and peace will be found in a simple life.

So is it with our life. We will become bankrupt, emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. No matter how busy we are, we should not forget now and then to free our minds completely from worries and all duties. . . . We must try to remain, for one minute at a time, without thinking negatively, fixing the mind on the peace within, especially when we are worried. Following that, we must, mentally, go through some pleasant experience over and over again until we have forgotten our worries entirely.

Knowing that we are all children of God, let us make up our mind to be calm no matter what happens; let us quieten the outgoing mental restlessness and turn within. Then we will see the underlying harmony in our life and in all nature. The beauty and depth of yoga lies in its bestowal of this invariable tranquillity.

Flashes of divine joy will come with this realisation, sometimes a deep illumination will pervade one's being, banishing the very concept of fear. The delusion of matter, the consciousness of being only a mortal body, is overcome by contacting the sweet serenity of the spirit, attainable by daily meditation.

The moment we are restless or disturbed in mind, we will need to retire into silence and meditation until calmness is restored.

Silence is all, say the sages.

Silence watches the work of the ages;

In the book of Silence the cosmic Scribe has written his cosmic pages:

Silence is all, say the sages.¹

SILUVERU SUDARSHAN

1. *Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 644.

RHETORIC IN SRI AUROBINDO'S PROSE

I

Nor much seems to have been written on the artistry of Sri Aurobindo's prose. My reading in this sphere is very limited and I do not know of any such work. This is somewhat surprising, because he is as much an artist in, and master of, prose, as of poetry. Let us, therefore, venture into this comparatively unexplored field and undertake a study of the use of rhetoric in his prose. I do not use the word "rhetoric" in a figurative sense as is often done these days. One comes across essays entitled 'Rhetoric in Swift' and the like, only to discover that it has nothing to do with rhetoric or figures of speech. The process to be followed in this essay and the ensuing ones is this: first there will be an introduction, and then we shall see how the different figures of speech have been used by our writer. The instances will be taken mainly from *The Future Poetry* as it is a work about a secular subject, and though I am not a religious person, still I do not like to make revered works serve irreverent purposes. In the course of these essays references will be made to one or two works on rhetoric and to our beloved K. D. Sethna's *Talks on Poetry*. Ah, I still remember how I used to wait for *Mother India* every month when these Talks were being published in the sixties. They quenched the thirst for knowledge as nothing else could have done.

A brief introduction to the topic of rhetoric is necessary. It is a vast topic but as I would avoid bewildering the hapless reader at any cost, only a few bits of information will be given. Usually it is Aristotle we start with, but the Guru should come first. It is in *Phaedrus* that Plato talks about rhetoric. I would like to point out just that he, or in other words Socrates, believed in the superiority of true knowledge and sincerity to mere opinions, however firmly given. This is of peculiar importance to us because our writer never offers mere opinion or statement. Whatever is given us is the product of true, first-hand knowledge, and it is always offered in earnest, in sincerity. When he talks about Sophocles or Virgil we know that he had studied them in the original, not through translations as we have done. The second point I would like to offer from Plato has, somehow, always been ascribed to his disciple Aristotle. It is about the construction of anything in writing. Socrates, or Plato, says that the orator (or in our case the writer) should first of all give a preliminary idea of his topic and then divide it into several parts. The reader will observe that I have tried to do the same. In that way the work (in his case the speech of an orator) will have a systematic form:

Every discourse must be organised, like a living being, with a body of its own as it were, so as not to be headless or footless, but to have a middle and members, composed in fitting relation to each other and to the whole.¹

As we shall see, in our writer's case, every paragraph, every sentence is formed with consummate skill — a skill which is so natural as not to obtrude itself upon the attention of the reader at any time.

Keeping these two valuable points in mind let us see what Aristotle has to say about rhetoric. This is how he defines it:

Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.²

It is within the compass of the teasing phrase “available means of persuasion” that the many different figures of speech come. I will just refer to I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot among modern theoreticians and then proceed to deal more directly with the topic. The former defines rhetoric as the “study of verbal understanding and misunderstanding.”³ Commenting upon this will lead us into a quagmire, so let me merely point out that from the Romantics onwards, well into twentieth century, rhetoric was regarded with suspicion and worse. One simple example will be enough to illustrate this. Compound words are not really a figure of speech, though, being embellishments, they fall legitimately within our province. Demetrius, to whom we shall refer repeatedly later, recommends the use of compound words as they give majesty to poetry as well as to prose. Coleridge, on the other hand, does not favour them as, according to him, they make the style inordinately heavy. It is this latter attitude that is to be found in both Richards and Eliot. Incidentally, our writer uses them quite freely in his poetry. There are no less than twenty compound words in the first Canto of *Savitri*, which has 342 lines.

Eliot, summing up this attitude of mistrust, says that “rhetoric” had become: “merely a vague term of abuse for any style that is bad.”⁴

But the very fact that in the second decade of the twenty-first century serious studies of rhetoric are being pursued is an indication that the wind has changed. We, “in calm of mind, all passion spent” are going to look at the art of writing prose by one of the accredited masters of English prose.

(To be continued)

RATRI RAY

1. *Phaedrus*, 264 C, H. N. Fowler transl., Loeb Classics Libr., 1914.

2. W. R. Roberts, *Greek Rhetoric*, New York, Cooper Square Pubs. Inc., 1963, p. 22.

3. I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, London, 1936, p. 23.

4. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, London, 1951, p. 37.

TOWARDS THE GOLDEN VALLEY

[Readers would remember the series of accounts published some years ago in *Mother India* describing the circumstances in which some persons came into contact with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. These and other such accounts were later published as four books — *How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother* by Shyam Kumari.

This article is another such story.]

I WAS born in 1969, in a very unorthodox family. My childhood was spent in Africa. My father was a rich farmer and my mother a village girl from India. Neither of them was at all religious, and I do not remember anything about God or religion or related subjects being discussed or even mentioned in our home during the period we lived in Africa.

Childhood for me was a living hell. While pursuing his higher studies in England, my father had begun to drink. He became a confirmed alcoholic. He was also violent. We children used to live in mortal terror of him and scenes of beating and extreme violence in relation with our mother were etched deep in our young minds. My mother had great forbearance and rarely have I seen her shed tears in front of us. She was a constant source of encouragement. She tried her best to guide us in our studies and games. I have a feeling that it was at that tender stage that I had decided never to get married and suffer the tyranny of a monster.

In 1976 we came to India for good. We lived in a housing society comprising 140 houses. The houses were very close to each other but father's behaviour and habits did not change. He continued to quarrel and shout till late in the night. Our friends and neighbours asked me embarrassing questions about father and I would stand ashamed, in awkward silence. I tried to have as few friends as possible. Socialising was out of question. This is how I lived till my matriculation. Surprisingly, the more the situation worsened, the more determined I was to become "independent". Therefore I never let the home situation affect my studies. I was an extremely hard-working student. Given the situation at home, it was very difficult to concentrate, yet I would chalk out a study schedule and sometimes to fulfil it I had to work 18 hours a day. Suppose I sat down to study and then violence erupted and continued for two or three hours, then all that I had done would be lost and I would have to start all over again. But my aim of studying and earning enough money to stand on my own feet and have my own house sustained me. Out of peer pressure I opted for a commerce course. And simultaneously with my B.A. course I took up a diploma course in computer studies and did well in both.

I had fallen in love with a boy when I was 16. After taking my double degree,

I decided that we should get married and have our own home. He was a nice boy and not at all an alcoholic. Suddenly, one day he told me he was no longer interested in me and there could be no further friendship between us. I saw the world I had built with so much labour and against such odds lie shattered around me. Anyway there was nothing I could do. Strangely enough after a few days of suffering, I felt a sense of freedom and release and all my depression vanished. I was 19 years old then.

I felt I was ready for something new. All the previous limits were broken, and I could be my real self — independent and awakened. I took up mountaineering as a sport and fell in love with the mountains. Whenever there was some depression, I used to console myself with the thought, “There is one thing at least that is permanent, that I can depend upon — that is the mountains. The beauty of Nature, the pure air, the open sky, all these are true; all else is impermanent.”

Around this period of my life I became an absolute atheist. I stopped my nightly prayers, I did not enter temples and even if I had to, I did not bow down before the deity nor did I offer *namaskar*. “He is not there,” I declared to myself. For me the only real thing was the contact with beauty and love I felt in the mountains, the sea and the other facets of nature.

At this stage of my life a boy whom I met for the first time gave me a book and told me, “You must read this book, it is meant for you. Just read it and you will see for yourself.” I was taken aback but out of curiosity read it. It turned out to be a book of philosophy, *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand. The author was an atheist who had no belief in a personal God. Her sole belief was in truth — truth in speech, action and thought, and most important of all, “To be true to the ideal” for which she existed or what she called, “her purpose in life”. She pointed out with great lucidity the insincerities in which the life of ordinary man is steeped. And strangely enough, after reading this book, I saw clearly the falsehoods in myself. I was terrified at the realisation that I could live with so much falsehood within. This realisation was so shattering that I found myself to be disgusting and ugly. One afternoon while I was in this frame of mind I fell asleep. Suddenly I became aware that I was out of my body. I could see the body lying down. I could not move my hands or feet and thought, “Am I dead?” And then a few seconds later I was back in my body.

This experience was a turning point in my life. I spoke of it to nobody. From that day onwards, I would spend at least an hour or two everyday reflecting whether what I had done was sincere. Why I had acted as I had? I began to find a lot of falsehood in the way I lived and acted and spoke. I began to feel that all this that men call “life” is false. There is no truth in it. There was no disgust in my heart but only the feeling that truly nothing that I did, said or was, mattered. What does it matter if I buy a particular dress or go to a party, whether I go this way or that way? — Nothing seemed to make any difference to me. Then I started asking myself,

“But what I should live for? What is the purpose of my life?” “I must find it,” I told myself.

About one year later I made a friend; I told him about my perplexities and my quest. One day he told me, “You want to know yourself, don’t you? Well, then join this course called ‘Forum’. There you will learn a lot.” I bombarded him with questions: What is it? Why should I join it? and many more in the same vein. To all these his only reply was, “Join it if you have faith in my words. Otherwise, do as you want. I will not tell you anything about it. If you want to know yourself better, then join this course; what you do is your choice.” Since I had great trust in him, I decided to join this course and asked him, “At least tell me how to go there to join.”

He gave me only a telephone number as reference and then he went abroad. I did not join at once but something in me kept insisting that I must join it and find out its truth. Then a few months later I rang up the person in charge and informed him that I wanted to join the course and asked for directions. I soon paid the fee and joined it with my elder brother.

This course lasted from 9 a.m. to midnight, on five consecutive days. The rules of this course seemed quite ridiculous to us, that one should speak to no one except the course members, even at home silence was recommended, as far as possible. Everyday, on returning home, one had to write what one had learnt that day. It had a course leader who directed and organised the whole thing along with a few assistants. On the first two days this gentleman told us to go within and analyse ourselves. I could not understand much of what he said. He told us to remember the first few incidents of our childhood, the most fearful things we had experienced, what we call our strengths and weaknesses, what we cannot do without, etc., in short, to analyse one’s past and present and to come to an objective understanding of oneself. After this topic was exhausted we were expected to speak about this to another member of the course, a total stranger, to find out a solution to the so-called problem in ourselves. It was obvious that all of us who had joined the course were in some sort of trouble or the other and wanted to find the solution to the problems. I found a partner who seemed to be keen to solve everybody’s problems. After telling me that he could solve troubles, he asked me what was my trouble and why was I dissatisfied with life. I replied, “But I have no problems. I am very satisfied with my life and what I do, I do it because I have chosen to do it and if there are difficulties in my chosen endeavour, I choose to face them and therefore I have no problems or difficulties as such.”

He was flabbergasted at my reply and demanded, “Then why have you joined this course?” I told him that I had joined because a friend whom I respected and loved had asked me to join. And it is true that I had joined without any preconception or expectation, without any idea of how to benefit except for his instruction, “Be open.” And I am truly grateful to him because I became like an open book on which to etch a glorious Truth.

On the third day he started speaking of strange things which I could not quite grasp. We had already had a subjective understanding of ourselves. Suddenly he said, "What if all this that you know to be yourself was erased completely? Imagine that you are born today and have a fresh life to live. What if all that you were and are were lost and you were to start anew as if nothing in your past mattered at all? What if you let yourself be washed clean of all that you think you are and be what you now must be? You can be anywhere or nowhere. You can be nothing or the Infinite," etc., etc.

I could not grasp a thing but some part in me liked the idea of being born anew, of effacing all that I thought I was and therefore I started repeating, "I am nothing. I am nothing. I do not exist," etc. And then he said quietly, "Now close your eyes and be what you will be in the next five years. Relax and lie still," and much more in the same vein.

A strange and marvellous thing happened. Soon after I closed my eyes I entered another world. I had spontaneously a most wonderful vision, indescribable in its magnificence. When he said that we must visualise what we must become in the near future, the only thing I wanted to do was to live in the mountains I loved and where I felt at home. I could remember only one place in the Garhwal Himalayas, where I had been during my mountaineering exploits. It was a most wonderful place filled with a vast expanse of yellow daisies spread out like a golden carpet, with a pond of crystal-clear waters, surrounded by snow-clad mountains, where I had sat under a deep blue sky for a few solitary moments.

Let me describe this enchanting valley which I had visited about 16 months back. Generally at heights of 10000 feet or more, during the afternoons there is either snowfall or it rains. Therefore mountaineers try to make camp before the late afternoon. That is why after lunch we used to have a few hours to ourselves. I loved to roam around rather than rest. I would go on long walks into the mountains. On that particular day our guide had taken us to a lake in the morning. We were at about 13000 feet above sea-level. I wanted to reach this place again that afternoon, to spend there some hours in solitude, lost in the mystic beauty.

Off I went. I was trying to remember the path we had taken in the morning. I passed by a beautiful spring which was merrily gurgling. Then I entered this beautiful pine forest on a slope. On top of the slope I could see a "light" through the trees. There seemed to be a clearing there and the "light" streaming through the cleft was inviting me to explore further. I climbed up towards the "light", and arrived at the top hoping to find the lake. But instead I found myself in a totally new and enchanting place.

The light revealed acres upon acres of a huge meadow of golden-yellow flowers. Far away gleamed the snow-capped summits. At a little distance I saw a simple yet exceedingly beautiful mountain house which was in total harmony with its pristine surroundings. At a distance a few horses and ponies were grazing. No man was in

sight. Then far away, at the end of the meadow-land I could see something shining. I felt it must be the lake I had seen that morning and was searching for.

But between me and the lake set in the midst of the vast meadows was grazing a herd of Himalayan wild buffaloes. There must have been at least one or two hundred of them. I felt I had to reach that beautiful lake and began to walk towards it with intrepidity. Only one fleeting thought passed through my mind, "If you have no fear, wild animals do not attack." Wild buffaloes are supposed to be even more dangerous than lions and leopards. Yet off I went and calmly passed by this wild herd in the faith that nothing will happen to me. There was not a trace of fear in me. I was full of confidence as I walked in the serenity and vastness of that beautiful place. When I came within four or five feet of them, the whole herd stopped grazing and the blood-red eyes of each buffalo were on me. They stood still, ready to attack. But totally calm, I neither increased nor decreased my pace. Thus, passing through the whole herd, I reached that place which from a distance had looked like some shining sheet of water. It turned out to be a most lovely pond with crystal-clear diamond waters. There were steps and a huge stone to sit upon right in the middle. I went to this resting spot and sat there quietly, drinking in the quiet joy and peace of that magnificent place, for God alone knows how long. Then since it was getting dark I had to return to the camp.

Therefore when the guide told us to close our eyes and visualise where we would like to be . . . say . . . five years hence, I spontaneously remembered the lovely lake and the fantastic experience I had. I told myself, "I want to be there again." And with this thought uppermost in my mind I closed my mind to try and visualise again the beauty of this place.

But instead of the Himalayan dale I had a vision of a supra-physical world of beauty and light. I felt as if I had always lived there. The magnificence and grandeur of this vision is indescribable. The valley in the Himalayas which I had visited was nothing compared to what I saw in the vision . . . nothing at all.

This extraordinary vision, which is too sacred to describe, changed everything, everything. I don't know how long this lasted. I remember waking up suddenly and finding myself in that class. My brain was filled with questions, "Is it possible? Is there such a place on earth? How can I find it? And find it I must."

And then everything started. You see, I had not read anything about spirituality or God — nothing at all, never. What I saw I could not understand, what I was experiencing, I knew I was experiencing it, without knowing why or how. I knew no one who could guide me as to what was happening to me. Somehow I approached no one, asked no questions and spoke to nobody about what was happening to me.

I suddenly felt that there was nowhere to go anymore, nothing to do anymore, that I had arrived, where and at what — I had no idea. I felt myself to be deep, deep down. If anybody spoke to me I could not answer immediately. I would talk slowly as if it was a great effort to come out and most of the time I was lost. I had the idea

and the feeling, you might call it knowledge, that nobody dies, that death is just a passage to another state — what state and how — I knew not. Somehow I felt that I must tell everybody that they will never die and all are eternal. Also I kept hearing this small voice say to me, “What you are looking for is not here. There is a place where there is eternal peace and love and there you must go. Your mission is to take this message of love and peace to others and to take them, to lead them there.”

There were many such experiences within a period of seven days after that vision, when I would go into trance automatically, at any time, sometimes while talking with someone. And wherever I went, I felt a tranquil and wonderful love. I felt the presence of God in everything and everybody. People’s faces were not the same as we naturally see them, I saw them different, even physically. I felt I knew and understood and loved everybody. I would talk with the bed, the bed-sheet, the chair, the car, the wind, the sky and even with strangers on the road who would respond in an unusual manner. The way in which I did things, read the newspaper, watched TV and other everyday things changed completely, absolutely. And yet no one had ever spoken of God to me. At night I would talk to several different entities.

One night I was lying near my bed and felt as if the bed was covered with a golden light. At that time I prayed, “Oh, please don’t show me anything any more yet. I am not ready.” After this that light gradually disappeared. My friends and neighbours enquired if I had taken drugs and I would say, “No.” “Then what has happened to you?” they would ask and I would keep silent.

As I said, all this lasted for about seven days, after the vision. Then followed the most difficult period of my life. I started feeling extremely superior and knowledgeable, as if I had found the ultimate Truth. Though the deeper part of my being kept saying, “Be silent. Don’t throw it out, wait, be patient.” But the voice of this higher part was lost in the din of the ego-part and since I had no one to guide me and neither had I read anything about God or spirituality, I became like a boat without a boatman, being tossed about in a storm. One part of me said that I had become mad, another said, “Now I know the Truth.”

I started behaving very strangely at home. My family was very upset. I declared to my parents, “Now I will leave home and lead a free life, maybe in the mountains.” I would not sleep at night and roamed about in a very excited state. My mother, being a very practical lady, got hold of a psychiatrist to examine me. At that time I was having a hysteric fit. He gave me a very strong injection and I collapsed. I gained consciousness after three and half days. When I became conscious I felt a terrible fatigue and also had the feeling that I had fought a great battle and had come back from a very dark place and that I had been given a chance again, almost as if I had come back from the land of the dead. I was in a hospital under intensive care and was being given injections every few hours so that I would not become fully conscious.

I started thanking everybody for their help. I would thank the nurses after they

injected me, and the doctor when he visited me. He was a psychiatrist and asked as to what had happened to me and what was happening. I revealed nothing. It was a period of great depression for me. I could not speak of my experiences or condition to anybody for fear of being diagnosed as mad and being thrown in the mental ward. I knew nobody who could guide or help me. I was as if entering a deep abyss from where there seemed to be no possibility of return. Return where and to what? I knew not.

The doctor discharged me from the hospital. My depression deepened. "I am good for nothing," such thoughts tormented me constantly. I was trapped in insomnia and could not sleep for months. There was no desire to do anything at all. Leave aside going to office, even the normal chores of life were difficult to do. I was still being treated by that psychiatrist who prescribed strong doses of sleeping pills. Every time I took those pills I told my parents, "I need something else. Do you want to kill me with these?" My poor parents felt helpless. Being extremely practical materialists, they could think only of a doctor and this doctor was a very ordinary one.

One day I chanced upon a book by Shri Rajneesh *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, and having nothing else to do, I started reading it. This book was amongst the collection of spiritual books which my elder brother had started to read, and which, being an avowed atheist, I had carefully avoided till then. I came across a chapter where he writes about a neophyte entering the spiritual world and how the first concrete contact with God is a tremendous experience and how if the neophyte is not under the guidance of a Guru, he will be open to tremendous dangers at that time, especially from the dark shadows of his own being. In a flash everything clicked. I knew that I had neither gone mad nor were my experiences hallucinations. I felt comforted and much better.

But all the same, during this period I became conscious of various extremely dark forces and within myself I had to face many a fearful vision and would sometimes hear horrible laughter. Also during my illness I had completely forgotten how to walk. Daily my mother gave me exercises in walking. I would forget and walk in the most awkward fashion. Sometimes the hands would not move at all or if they moved, then the right hand and leg would move simultaneously and then the left hand and left leg would do the same. Sometimes only the legs would move.

Yet all through this period of depression, I could hear this faint "voice" say, very persistently, calmly and firmly, "Whatever happens you will have the power to fight it; if you face this difficulty, it is because you have the strength to go beyond. Have no fear. All will be well. Do not worry. All is well."

It was during this period that my brother gave me the book, *The Adventure of Consciousness* by Satprem. And after reading it all was understood and solved. During this period a friend took me to a person whom I accepted as a guru. All this drama was enacted during the period between April 1991 and January 1992.

In the meanwhile I began to read lots of spiritual books by Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Yogananda Paramhansa and his Guru Shri Yukteshwar and also about Lahiri Mahashaya and, of course, by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. After a few months of reading I felt that only the books by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother evoked a spontaneous response within and since then I have not studied deeply the books by others.

Around this time I came across a statement of the Mother which says words to the effect that on their birthday seekers can make the greatest progress and that all sincere aspirations get a sure seal of the Divine sanction. This revelation awakened an intense aspiration in my being to be at some sacred place and to offer prayers at a place where the presence of the Divine could be felt, especially as February 21, 1992 was approaching. I wrote to an address, SABDA, Pondicherry, which I had found in one of the books of the Lord purchased by me. Miraculously I got the reply from SABDA on February 20 informing me about the centre where all the Ashram books were available.

I was overjoyed on receiving the letter. Next day I left home to go to this centre but after some time I discovered that I had left the address of the centre at home. To turn back at this stage was impossible for me. All that I remembered was that this place was somewhere near Churchgate. It was February 21 and I was determined to find this place. I was travelling by car, when a thought flashed in my mind, "The building's name is Sahakar." The first lane amongst the by-lanes of Churchgate our car passed was 'B' Road. In front of Sahakar a voice seemed to say, "Be alert, look out." I looked out of the window and saw a fleeting nameplate in a building "Sahakar". Extremely glad and at the same time astonished at the turn events took, I entered the centre.

What a peaceful and serene atmosphere! Oh, those beautiful flowers! I spent a few minutes in silent and ardent aspiration and gratitude to the Lord and the Divine Mother. Then I went to the book section. O, books and books of the Lord and the Mother. I was overjoyed. I started picking and choosing books and placing them on a nearby table, all one on top of another, as if I was gathering a treasure and hardly noticed that the table was full by then. I stood looking at another shelf of books when out of the stillness I heard a thud. I was shocked at the noise and turned around to see that all the books I had selected for buying had fallen on the floor yet the table had not tilted, nor was there any strong breeze, nor had I put the books carelessly or awkwardly. And even if I did, how could have all of them fallen down, even the bottom one, off that plain and flat table? I felt a little afraid. But something in me said, "Now it is over, finished." I reassured myself with the thought, "These are the words of the Divine and whatsoever happens will be for the ultimate triumph of the Truth in me and in all." I picked up all those books and bought them all and went home happy and at peace.

From February 21 onwards I began to feel the presence of something unbelievably

pure within and around me. My nights and days were filled with lovely experiences and always I felt, "She is with me, in me." In the night it was as if She was sleeping with me and my entire room would fill with ethereal fragrances. My whole body would be filled with tremendous vibrations of joy and ecstasy. In the morning my skeptic mind would say, "It was your imagination. The fragrance is that of incense sticks. It won't come again." Yet every night the same experience would recur. Once, during this period I was going to my office by car. On the way I was thinking of Him and Her. Suddenly I felt the same ethereal fragrance. It seemed to come from my purse. I opened the bag and traced the source of the fragrance to the photographs of the Supramental Avatars which I had begun to keep with me always.

On February 29, 1992, I went to the Sahakar Centre for the special celebrations for the Supramental Manifestation. As I approached the centre, even before I reached it, that fragrance again enveloped me filling me with joy and love and gratitude.

Interview and retelling by SHYAM KUMARI

Truth is an infinitely complex reality and he has the best chance of arriving nearest to it who most recognises but is not daunted by its infinite complexity. We must look at the whole thought-tangle, fact, emotion, idea, truth beyond idea, conclusion, contradiction, modification, ideal, practice, possibility, impossibility (which must be yet attempted,) and keeping the soul calm and the eye clear in this mighty flux and gurge of the world, seek everywhere for some word of harmony, not forgetting immediate in ultimate truth, nor ultimate in immediate, but giving each its due place and portion in the Infinite Purpose. Some minds, like Plato, like Vivekananda, feel more than others this mighty complexity and give voice to it. They pour out thought in torrents or in rich and majestic streams. They are not logically careful of consistency, they cannot build up any coherent, yet comprehensive systems, but they quicken men's minds and liberate them from religious, philosophic and scientific dogma and tradition. They leave the world not surer, but freer than when they entered it.

Sri Aurobindo

(Essays Divine and Human, CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 12-13)

THE LUMINOUS PAST

(Continued from the issue of May 2013)

I RECEIVED the Mother's blessings for the last time on my birthday. Sweet Mother received my *pranams* even though she was unwell. When she recognised me she was happy and placed her right hand on my head. I could feel within me how painful it was for her to open her eyes and to lift her head to look at me. The Mother gave me so much — her sweet smile, flowers and the blessing card. I could never have imagined that it was going to be my last birthday meeting with the Mother.

*

17th November came to be marked as the day on which the Mother left her body. 17th November 1973 is an unforgettable day in our lives. Giving a description of that day is beyond me. If one reads Nolini-da's book *Sweet Mother* one can understand everything about the Mother's passing. "The Mother is not there", we do not understand what these words mean. We know that the Mother is guiding us in her subtle body. On the 20th, the Mother's body was laid to rest within the Samadhi. Nolini-da slowly went to his room, holding Vasudha's hand. I was heart-broken at this sight. I came back home quickly repeating the Mother's name. I did not see Nolini-da for a long time after this. One day I went to Nolini-da's room for some work and found him sitting on a chair and reading a book. He told Anima to give me whatever I had come to ask from him, and she gave it to me with a smile. As I was turning to go, Anima called me and said, "Pramila-di, look how Nolini-da is looking at you and smiling."

I turned back and went towards Nolini-da. He was smiling gently. I understood on seeing that smile on Nolini-da's lips, how he was quietly and deeply continuing to do the Mother's work. I felt consoled by that smile which filled the vacuum left by the absence of the Mother's smiles. The Mother is still with us. Nolini-da's smile is a proof of how true these words are.

*

I received such touches of affection many more times from our loved and respected Nolini-da. Once, on the occasion of a birthday, Nolini-da came alone for the first time to have a meal with us. He never accepted any invitations without the company of Amrita-da. Whenever I invited him for a meal at the boarding, he always wanted

to know whether Amrita-da would agree to come along. This is why we used to go first to Amrita-da.

Once, Amrita-da wanted another helping of my cauliflower dish. As I was about to serve him I was stopped by Nolini-da. He said, "Don't serve Amrita any more. He suffers at night from stomach aches."

What to do? When Nolini-da saw me standing with that bowl of cooked cauliflower he said, "All right, you can give him just that much." Amrita-da was happy and indicated to me to serve him a little. Having served Amrita-da the cooked cauliflower, I was about to serve Nolini-da some tomato chutney.

"Do I have to eat more?" asked Nolini-da.

Amrita-da said immediately, "Just a bit. You love chutney that is why she is giving you another helping." The last time that Amrita-da had come with Nolini-da, he hardly ate anything. He only took a glass of fruit drink. That was Amrita-da's last visit to Jhunjhun Home.

After Amrita-da's passing, Nolini-da came only once alone, to honour an invitation from a boy whose birthday it was. He came a little after six o'clock in the evening. This time I had made the menu keeping in mind what was suitable for Nolini-da. There was no one at home. The boarding was empty. I was serving Nolini-da. As he ate, he started telling me stories of their past and how they used to cook and eat. This was the first time he ate with relish. When he finished eating, he looked at me and smiled a little, then said, "This time all your dishes were well-prepared."

"Nolini-da, whenever you have eaten here before, each time I could feel that you were not quite satisfied with my cooking. Isn't that so?" I asked.

Nolini-da agreed and said, "Amrita used to praise the cooking so effusively that I didn't want to say anything more. Really, this time the cooking was very good." This was the last time he ate in our boarding.

*

His very last visit was even more beautiful. It was the birthday of Nolini-da's grand nephew (his nephew's son), Robi, so at his request I went with him to see Nolini-da. Nolini-da was very fond of Robi. Robi did his *pranam* to Nolini-da and invited him to have dinner at the boarding. Nolini-da told me, "The food is only incidental. The real reason of my coming would be to see Robi again in the evening. Don't cook anything special for me. I have to follow a diet these days. But I will surely come. At what time will I find Robi in the boarding? The bus comes from the Sports Ground at 6.15 in the evening. So I will come after six."

Nolini-da came exactly at six o'clock. He did not come inside the room. I put a chair for him outside. He sat in the garden, very close to the cement bench. He put the file which was in his hand on that bench and looked at the garden.

“The garden isn’t very beautiful now,” I said.

“In this season gardens are usually not very beautiful,” he said.

He opened his file and took out an envelope. He took out a picture from that envelope and looked at it for a while. He looked at me and said, “Look at this.” He handed me the picture and asked, “Can you guess whose portrait this is?”

“It’s your portrait, Nolini-da,” I answered.

He remained silent for a while then said, “Yes, it’s my portrait. It is drawn by the Mother. You could recognise me!”

“I could recognise you and I also understood that it was drawn by the Mother. How beautiful!” I said. Nolini-da was bright and radiant in that picture! He was as bright outwardly as he was inwardly.

Just then Robi came. He ran to wash his hands and face, then came and did a *pranam* to Nolini-da. As soon as he gave the picture to the eight-year-old Robi, the boy said, “*Dadu*, this is your portrait drawn by the Mother.”

When he heard this from the child’s lips, Nolini-da was overjoyed and said, “You recognised me all right.”

“Are you happy, Robi?” I asked.

“*Dadu*, I am very happy,” he replied.

“Come and see me tomorrow morning. Now I must leave,” Nolini-da said.

This was the last time he had come to our boarding. We did *pranam* to him. We accompanied him outside then stood on the pavement. When Nolini-da reached the pavement of the Ashram, he stood near his window, then turned around and looked at us. Robi waved his hand to say goodbye, then came inside with me.

(*To be continued*)

PRAMILA DEVI

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

O Lord, I pray to Thee, guide my footsteps, enlighten my mind, that at every moment and in all things I may do exactly what Thou wantest me to do.

The Mother

(*Words of the Mother – III, Vol. 15, p. 213*)

*For us here there is only one thing that counts.
We aspire for the Divine,
live for the Divine,
act for the Divine.*

The Mother

(Words of the Mother – I, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 13, p. 108)

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