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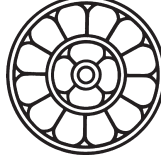
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

Sri Aurobindo

‘MORTALS, YOUR END IS BEATITUDE, RAPTURE ETERNAL HIS MEANING . . .’ (Poem)	...	531
SRI AUROBINDO’S LETTERS ON THE MOTHER	...	535

The Mother

‘A FLAME CONSECRATED TO THEE’	...	559
SURRENDER AND SACRIFICE	...	560
SURRENDER, SELF-OFFERING AND CONSECRATION	...	565

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)

“SANTO RISO” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO	...	567
--	-----	-----

Manoj Das

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI CHAPTER XXIV: PRELUDE TO THE TUMULTUOUS EPOCH	...	569
--	-----	-----

Amrita

VISIONS AND VOICES	...	576
--------------------	-----	-----

Arvindbabu

SWEET MOTHER — LOVE INCARNATE	...	580
-------------------------------	-----	-----

Janina Stroka

POEMS AND PRAYERS	...	593
-------------------	-----	-----

Ratri Ray

RHETORIC IN SRI AUROBINDO’S PROSE — II	...	597
--	-----	-----

Prema Nandakumar

SRI AUROBINDO’S SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO LITERARY CRITICISM (A Book Review)	...	600
--	-----	-----

Pramila Devi

THE LUMINOUS PAST	...	603
-------------------	-----	-----

**‘MORTALS, YOUR END IS BEATITUDE,
RAPTURE ETERNAL HIS MEANING . . .’**

. . . Or is it all but a vain expectation and effort ungrounded,
Wings without body, sight without object, waters unsounded,
Hue of a shimmer that steals through some secret celestial portal,
Glory of a gleam or a dream in an animal brief-lived and mortal?
Are they not radiances native to heaven's more fortunate ether,
Won when we part from this body, this temporal house of a nether
Mystery of life lived in vain? Upon earth is the glory forbidden,
Nature for ever accursed, frustrated, grief-vexed, fate-ridden?
Half of the glory she dreamed of forgotten or lost in earth's darkness,
Half of it mangled and missed as the death-wheels whirl in their starkness,
Cast out from heaven a goddess rebellious with mind for her mirror,
Cursed with desire and self-will and doomed to self-torture and error,
Came she to birth then with God for her enemy? Were we created
He unwilling or sleeping? did someone transgress the fated
Limits he set, outwitting God? In the too hasty vision
Marred of some demiurge filmed there the blur of a fatal misprision,
Making a world that revolves on itself in a circuit of failure,
Aeons of striving, death for a recompense, Time for our tenure?
Out of him rather she came and for him are her cry and her labour;
Deep are her roots in him; topless she climbs, to his greatness a neighbour.
All is himself in her, brooding in darkness, mounting the sun-ways;
Air-flight to him is man's journey with heaven and earth for the runways.
He is the witness and doer, he is the loved and the lover,
He the eternal Truth that we look in ourselves to discover.
All is his travel in Time; it is he who turns history's pages,
Act and event and result are the trail that he leaves through the ages;
Form and idea are his signs and number and sound are his symbols,
Music and singing, the word and its rhythm are Divinity's cymbals,
Thunder and surge are the drums of his marching. Through us, with urges
Self-ward, form-bound, mute, motionless, slowly inevitably emerges
Vast as the cosmos, minute as the atom, the Spirit eternal.
Often the gusts of his force illumining moments diurnal
Flame into speech and idea; transcendences splendid and subtle
Suddenly shoot through the weft of our lives from a magical shuttle;
Hid in our hearts is his glory; the Spirit works in our members.
Silence is he, with our voices he speaks, in our thoughts he remembers.

Deep in our being inhabits the voiceless invisible Teacher;
 Powers of his godhead we live; the Creator dwells in the creature.
 Out of his Void we arise to a mighty and shining existence,
 Out of Inconscience, tearing the black Mask's giant resistance;
 Waves of his consciousness well from him into these bodies in Nature,
 Forms are put round him; his oneness, divided by mind's nomenclature,
 High on the summits of being ponders immobile and single,
 Penetrates atom and cell as the tide drenches sand-grain and shingle.
 Oneness unknown to us dwells in these millions of figures and faces,
 Wars with itself in our battles, loves in our clinging embraces,
 Inly the self and the substance of things and their cause and their mover
 Veiled in the depths which the foam of our thoughts and our life's billows cover,
 Heaves like the sea in its waves; like heaven with its star-fires it gazes
 Watching the world and its works. Interned in the finite's mazes,
 Still shall he rise to his vast superconscience, we with him climbing;
 Truth of man's thought with the truth of God's spirit faultlessly timing,
 That which was mortal shall enter immortality's golden precincts,
 Hushed breath of ecstasy, honey of lotus depths where the bee sinks,
 Timeless expanses too still for the voice of the hours to inveigle,
 Spaces of spirit too vast for the flight of the God-bearing eagle, —
 Enter the Splendour that broods now unseen on us, deity invading,
 Sight without error, light without shadow, beauty unfading,
 Infinite largeness, rapture eternal, love none can sever,
 Life, not this death-play, but a power God-driven and blissful for ever.
 "No," cry the wise, "for a circle was traced, there was pyloned a limit
 Only we escape through dream's thin passages. None can disclaim it;
 All things created are made by their borders, sketched out and coded;
 Vain is the passion to divinise manhood, humanise godhead.
 None can exceed himself; even to find oneself hard for our search is:
 Only we see as in night by a lustre of flickering torches.
 To be content with our measure, our space is the law of our living.
 All of thyself to thy manhood and Nature and Circumstance giving,
 Be what thou must be or be what thou canst be, one hour in an era.
 Knowing the truth of thy days, shun the light of ideal and chimera:
 Curb heart's impatience, bind thy desires down, pause from self-vexing."
 Who is the nomad then? who is the seeker, the gambler risking
 All for a dream in a dream, the old and the sure and the stable
 Flung as a stake for a prize that was never yet laid on the table?
 Always the world is expanding and growing from minute to minute;
 Playing the march of the adventure of Time with our lives for her spinet
 Maya or Nature, the wonderful Mother, strikes out surprising

Strains of the spirit disprisoned; creation heavenward rising
Wrestles with Time and Space and the Unknown to give form to the Formless.
Bliss is her goal, but her road is through whirlwind and death-blast and storm-race.
All is a wager and danger, all is a chase and a battle.
Vainly man, crouched in his corner of safety, shrinks from the fatal
Lure of the Infinite. Guided by Powers that surround and precede us
Fearful and faltering steps are our perishing efforts that lead us
On through the rooms of the finite till open the limitless spaces
And we can look into all-seeing eyes and imperishable faces.
But we must pass through the aeons; Space is a bar twixt our ankles,
Time is a weight that we drag and the scar of the centuries rankles:
Caught by the moments, held back from the spirit's timelessness, slowly
Wading in shallows we take not the sea-plunge vastly and wholly.
Hard is the way to the Eternal for the mind-born will of the mortal
Bound by the body and life to the gait of the house-burdened turtle.
Here in this world that knows not its morrow, this reason that stumbles
Onward from error to truth and from truth back to error while crumbles
All that it fashioned, after the passion and travail are ended,
After the sacrifice offered when the will and the strength are expended,
Nothing is done but to have laid down one stone of a road without issue,
Added our quota of evil and good to an ambiguous tissue.
Destiny's lasso, its slip-knot tied by delight and repining,
Draws us through tangles of failure and victory's inextricable twining.
In the hard reckoning made by the grey-robed accountant at even
Pain is the ransom we pay for the smallest foretaste of heaven.
Ignorance darkens, death and inconstancy gape to absorb us;
Thick and persistent the Night confronts us, its hunger enormous
Swallowing our work and our lives. Our love and our knowledge squandered
Lie like a treasure refused and trod down on the ways where we wandered;
All we have done is effaced by the thousands behind us arriving.
Trapped in a round fixed for ever circles our thought and our living.
Fiercely the gods in their jealousy strike down the heads that have neighboured
Even for a moment their skies; in the sands our achievements are gravured.
Yet survives bliss in the rhythm of our heart-beats, yet is there wonder,
Beauty's immortal delight, and the seals of the mystery sunder.
Honied a thousand whispers come, in the birds, in the breezes,
Moonlight, the voices of streams; with a hundred marvellous faces
Always he lures us to love him, always he draws us to pleasure
Leaving remembrance and anguish behind for our only treasure.
Passionate we seek for him everywhere, yearn for some sign of him, calling,
Scanning the dust for his footprints, praying and stumbling and falling;

Nothing is found and no answer comes from the masks that are passing.
 Memories linger, lines from the past like a half-faded tracing.
 He has passed on into silence wearing his luminous mantle.
 Out of the melodied distance a laugh rings pure-toned, infantile,
 Sole reminder that he is, last signal recalling his presence.
 There is a joy behind suffering; pain digs our road to his pleasance.
 All things have bliss for their secret; only our consciousness falters
 Fearing to offer itself as a victim on ecstasy's altars.
 Is not the world his disguise? when that cloak is tossed back from his shoulders,
 Beauty looks out like a sun on the hearts of the ravished beholders.
 Mortals, your end is beatitude, rapture eternal his meaning:
 Joy, which he most now denies, is his purpose: the hedges, the screening
 Were but the rules of his play; his denials came to lure farther.
 These too were magic of Maya, smiles of the marvellous Mother.
 Oh, but the cruelty! oh, but the empty pain we go rueing!
 Edges of opposite sweetness, calls to a closer pursuing.
 All that we meet is a symbol and gateway; cryptic intention
 Lurks in a common appearance, smiles from a casual mention:
 Opposites hide in each other; in the laughter of Nature is danger,
 Glory and greatness their embryos form in the womb of her anger.
 Why are we terrified? wherefore cry out and draw back from the smiting —
 Blows from the hands of a lover to direr exactions exciting,
 Fiery points of his play! Was he Rudra only the mighty?
 Whose were the whispers of sweetness, whose were the murmurs of pity?
 Something opposes our grasp on the light and the sweetness and power,
 Something within us, something without us, trap-door or tower,
 Nature's gap in our being — or hinge! That device could we vanquish,
 Once could we clasp him and hold, his joy we could never relinquish.
 Then we could not be denied, for our might would be single and flawless.
 Sons of the Eternal, sovereigns of Nature absolute and lawless,
 Termlessly our souls would possess as he now enjoys and possesses,
 Termlessly probe the delight of his laughter's lurking recesses,
 Chasing its trail to the apex of sweetness and secrecy. Treasured
 Close to the beats of Eternity's heart in a greatness unmeasured,
 Locked into a miracle and mystery of Light we would live in him, — seated
 Deep in his core of beatitude ceaselessly by Nature repeated,
 Careless of Time, with no fear of an end, with no need for endeavour
 Caught by his ecstasy dwell in a rapture enduring for ever. . . .

SRI AUROBINDO
 'Ahana'

SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS ON THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of June 2013)

The Mother's Force

Surrender to the Mother and the Working of Her Force

Is it the Purusha who consents to the Mother's Force acting in the whole being?

Yes.

If the Purusha does not consent to the working of the Mother's Force, does it mean that the other beings (mental, vital, physical and psychic) also cannot come to the front to enable the sadhak to receive the Mother's Grace?

No. The Purusha often holds back and lets the other beings consent or reject in his place.

22 April 1933

*

Make the central surrender. The Mother's Force will do the rest.

25 October 1933

*

In this process of the descent from above and the working it is most important not to rely entirely on oneself, but to rely on the guidance of the Guru and to refer all that happens to his judgment and arbitration and decision. For it often happens that the forces of the lower nature are stimulated and excited by the descent and want to mix with it and turn it to their profit. It often happens too that some Power or Powers undivine in their nature present themselves as the Supreme Lord or as the Divine Mother and claim the being's service and surrender. If these things are accepted, there will be an extremely disastrous consequence. If indeed there is the assent of the sadhak to the Divine working alone and the submission or surrender to that guidance, then all can go smoothly. This assent and a rejection of all egoistic forces or forces that appeal to the ego are the safeguard throughout the sadhana. But the

ways of Nature are full of snares, the disguises of the ego are innumerable, the illusions of the Powers of Darkness, Rakshasi Maya, are extraordinarily skilful; the reason is an insufficient guide and often turns traitor; vital desire is always with us tempting to follow any alluring call. This is the reason why in this Yoga we insist so much on what we call *samarpaṇa* — rather inadequately rendered by the English word surrender. If the heart centre is fully opened and the psychic is always in control, then there is no question; all is safe. But the psychic can at any moment be veiled by a lower upsurge. It is only a few who are exempt from these dangers and it is precisely those to whom surrender is easily possible. The guidance of one who is himself by identity or represents the Divine is in this difficult endeavour imperative and indispensable.

11 September 1934

*

Nothing is impossible if the nature of the psychic being is awake and leading you with the Mother's consciousness and force behind it and working in you.

19 October 1935

Assimilation of the Mother's Force

Allow a quiet and steady will to progress to be settled in you; learn the habit of a silent, persistent and thorough assimilation of what the Mother puts into you. This is the sound way to advance.

March 1928

*

As for the Mother's force, when one receives it the best is to be quiet till it is assimilated; afterwards it is all right, not lost by outward movements or mixing.

24 January 1935

*

Ramana Maharshi says that if "you meditate for an hour or two every day, you can then carry on with your duties. If you meditate in the right manner . . ."

A very important qualification.

*“then the current of mind induced will continue to flow even in the midst of your work. It is as though there are two ways of expressing the same idea; the same line which you take in meditation will be expressed in your activities.”*¹

If the meditation brings poise, peace, a concentrated condition or even a pressure or influence, that *can* go on in the work, provided one does not throw it away by a relaxed or dispersed state of consciousness. That was why the Mother wanted people not only to be concentrated at pranam or meditation but to remain silent and absorb or assimilate afterwards and also to avoid things that relax or disperse or dissipate too much — precisely for this reason that so the effects of what she put on them might continue and the change of attitude the Maharshi speaks of will take place. But I am afraid most of the sadhaks have never understood or practised anything of the kind — they could not appreciate or understand her directions.

9 February 1936

Calling the Mother's Force

I tried to meditate, but I simply had to give it up as the mind would not cooperate.

When you cannot meditate, remain quiet and call in the Mother's Peace or Force.

8 April 1933

*

Suppose I am in a fix and call down the Mother's force which is above me. Now, how am I to know whether or not it has descended?

By the feeling of it or the result.

And suppose it has descended, and I am doing my lessons — can I then order it to guard me from outer influences and simultaneously keep me in complete touch with the Mother?

You can't order anything to the Mother's force; the Mother's force is the manifestation of the Mother herself.

I cannot understand how this force can deal with action.

1. Paul Brunton, *A Search in Secret India* (London: Rider & Company, [1934] 1943), p. 156. The quotation is a paraphrase of Ramana Maharshi's words by Brunton. — Ed.

You think the Mother's force has nothing to do with action or that it is too feeble to act? Or what? What is a force meant for but to act?

26 June 1933

*

I am again feeling that depression, but I cannot find out its cause. I feel a burning pain inside me and then some part in me becomes very hostile. There is also some inertia in the nature.

These are the two difficulties, one of the vital dissatisfaction and restlessness, the other of the inertia of the physical consciousness which are the chief obstacles to the sadhana. The first thing to do is to keep detached from them, not to identify yourself mentally with these movements — even if you cannot reject them — next to call on the Mother's force quietly but steadily for it to descend and make the obstacles disappear.

31 January 1934

*

My mind becomes quiet for some time, but then many absurd thoughts rush in and I cannot quiet them down. Then I feel very much harrassed. How long will it take to calm down my mind?

What is still restless in the vital has to quiet down for the peace of mind to be even and constant. It has to be controlled, but only control will not be enough. The Mother's Power has to be called always.

10 April 1934

*

Please initiate me into a tangible form of Yoga. I make this assurance that I shall follow your instructions to the very letter and refer to you my doubts and difficulties on the way.

There is no method in this Yoga except to concentrate, preferably in the heart, and call the presence and power of the Mother to take up the being and by the workings of her force transform the consciousness; one can concentrate also in the head or between the eyebrows, but for many this is a too difficult opening. When the mind falls quiet and the concentration becomes strong and the aspiration intense, then there is a beginning of experience. The more the faith, the more rapid the result is

likely to be. For the rest one must not depend on one's own efforts only, but succeed in establishing a contact with the Divine and a receptivity to the Mother's Power and Presence.

30 November 1934

*

When these attacks of illness come, remain quiet and call on the Mother's Force to remove them.

17 February 1936

*

To stand separate and not let the mind be overcome, is the first step. The next is to learn how to call down the Mother's Force whenever the attack comes, so that the attack may be pushed away at once or at least very soon before it can affect the outer vital and the body. If that can be done, the body will recover very soon with the inflow of the forces.

*

What should I do so that my work becomes an offering? What should I do so that I can always be with the Mother?

What you should do is to have confidence and try to remain always confident and cheerful. If you feel depressed call for the Mother's Force to remove the depression. If you fall ill, call the Mother's Force to cure you. When you work call the Mother's Force to support you and do the work through you.

Receptivity and Openness to the Mother's Force

Do not allow yourself to be troubled or discouraged by any difficulties, but quietly and simply open yourself to the Mother's force and allow it to change you.

10 March 1931

*

When you decided to tell the Mother, it had the effect of opening something in your physical consciousness and the Mother's Force acted. It often happens so — the action of the Mother's Force depends on a certain power of receptivity in the mind or vital or body — and openness is the first necessary condition for the receptivity.

29 May 1933

*

How to become one with the Divine?

Open yourself to the Mother's Force and aspire — in time you will become one with the Divine.

15 June 1933

*

The vital defects and difficulties are the same in all and also the shortcomings of the mind. One has to open in faith and confidence to the Divine; the Mother's Force will gradually put everything right.

15 September 1933

*

I am overcome with disappointment and depression. After reading your last letter, everything crumbled down in a wave. You said you would increase the Mother's light and consciousness in me, but I can't receive them correctly when I feel like this. I used to believe that the Mother was always there to help, but now you have uprooted that blind faith of mine. Why did you write like that? A little encouragement from your side would make me stronger to reach the destination.

I wrote so because the action of the sadhana does not depend on the Mother alone, but also on the attitude, will and openness of the sadhak. That is a well-known fact of the spiritual life which everybody is supposed to know. The Mother's Force can do everything only when there is a real and true and complete surrender and openness to the Mother. All these things have been written again and again and it ought not to be necessary to repeat it to each one as if it were a new and unheard-of idea.

12 January 1934

*

I had a terrible headache today. What is this all about? If it is Yogic in origin, I will have some comfort. Is the Mother breaking some resistances inside?

No. To make people ill in order to improve or perfect them is not Mother's method. But sometimes things like headache come because the brain either tries too much or does not want to receive or makes difficulties. But these Yogic headaches are of a special kind and after the brain has found out the way to receive or respond, they don't come at all.

20 June 1935

*

If one remains in full confidence in the Mother and psychically open, then the Mother's force will do all and one has only to give consent and keep oneself open and aspire.

12 November 1935

*

It is no use giving way to depression or self-distrust, they are only obstacles to the change you want and which the Mother is working at in you. The suggestions which raise these things are always one-sided and exaggerated and one ought not to listen to them. It is not by his own strength or good qualities that anyone can attain to the divine change; there are only two things that matter, the Mother's force at work and the sadhak's will to open to it and trust in her working. Keep your will and your trust and care nothing for the rest — they are only difficulties that all meet in their sadhana.

13 May 1936

*

I feel the descent of the Mother's peace and power and the action of her Force down to the physical. Why then does this trouble still persist? Is the nervous part of my being not receiving the Force or is it receiving it but refusing to change?

The Peace and Force come down, but the nervous weakness also rises up and resists and counteracts their influence and prevents them from settling in the being. That is because your mind assents to the nervous weakness, accepts its suggestions as true, is full of apprehensions and doubts, believes even that it is the Force which creates the nervous trouble. If you fear the action of the Force, how can the Force do its work?

5 September 1936

*

It is certain that one's own effort is necessary, though one cannot do the sadhana by one's own effort alone. The Mother's Force is needed, but the sadhak must open himself to it, reject what opposes the Force, put his full sincerity, aspiration, will power into the sadhana. It is only when all is open and there is the full surrender that the Divine Power takes up the sadhana so entirely that personal effort is no longer necessary. But that cannot happen at an early stage — one must go on opening oneself, consecrating oneself, making the surrender till that later stage comes. This has been explained in the book *The Mother*.

17 March 1937

*

Open what is closed. The Mother does not withhold her force from anyone — it is there for all in abundance. Her pleasure is in giving her force, not in withholding it. But if you keep your mind filled with thoughts of this kind, about X and others, and your needs and grievances, you shut yourself up in that and there is no room for the higher consciousness and its force to come in.

Pulling the Mother's Force

I am depressed that the Divine has made me meditate the wrong way for three and a half years without letting me know it was wrong. Why did I feel that I must stimulate my aspiration through great concentration in meditation in order to expedite my progress? Why only now has the Mother told me that I have been meditating in the wrong way, with too much strain and stiffness and tension? This makes me sad beyond words. The more I think about it, the sadder I become. I am so bewildered and confused.

What am I to do? It seems to me that before I was trying to fit the wrong key into the lock of the faery palace, but now I have been left with no key at all.

What is needed is to profit by the discovery and get rid of the impediment. The Mother did not merely point out the impediment; she showed you very expressly how to do it and at that time you understood her, though now (at the time of writing your letter to me) the light which you saw seems to have been clouded by your indulging your vital more and more in the bitter pastime of sadness. That was quite natural, for that is the result sadness always does bring. It is the reason why I object to the gospel of sorrow and to any sadhana which makes sorrow one of its main planks (*abhimāna*, revolt, *viraha*). For sorrow is not, as Spinoza pointed out, a passage to a greater perfection, a way to Siddhi; it cannot be, for it confuses and weakens and distracts the mind, depresses the vital force, darkens the spirit. A relapse from joy and vital elasticity and Ananda to sorrow, self-distrust, despondency and

weakness is a recoil from a greater to a lesser consciousness, — the habit of these moods shows a clinging of something in the vital to the smaller, obscurer, dark and distressed movement out of which it is the very aim of Yoga to rise.

It is therefore quite incorrect to say that the Mother took away the wrong key with which you were trying to open the faery palace and left you with none at all. For she not only showed you the true key but gave it to you. It was not a mere vague exhortation to cheerfulness she gave you, but she described exactly the condition felt in the right kind of meditation — a state of inner rest, not of straining, of quiet opening, not of eager or desperate pulling, a harmonious giving of oneself to the Divine Force for its working, and in that quietude a sense of the Force working and a restful confidence allowing it to act without any unquiet interference. And she asked you if you had not experienced that condition and you said that you had and knew it very well. Now that condition is the beginning of psychic opening and, if you have had it, you know what the psychic opening is; there is of course much more that afterwards comes to complete it but this is the fundamental condition into which all the rest can most easily come. What you should have done was to keep the key the Mother gave you present in your consciousness and apply it — not to go back and allow sadness and a repining view of the past to grow upon you. In this condition which we term the right or psychic attitude, there may and will be call, prayer, aspiration. Intensity, concentration will come of themselves, not by a hard effort or tense strain on the nature. Rejection of wrong movements, frank confession of defects are not only not incompatible, but helpful to it; but this attitude makes the rejection, the confession easy, spontaneous, entirely complete and sincere and effective. That is the experience of all who have consented to take this attitude.

I may say in passing that consciousness and receptivity are not the same thing; one may be receptive, yet externally unaware of how things are being done and of what is being done. The Force works, as I have repeatedly written, behind the veil; the results remain packed behind and come out afterwards, often slowly, little by little, until there is so much pressure that it breaks through somehow and forces itself upon the external nature. There lies the difference between a mental and vital straining and pulling and a spontaneous psychic openness, and it is not at all the first time that we have spoken of the difference. The Mother and myself have written and spoken of it times without number and we have deprecated pulling² and straining and advocated the attitude of psychic openness. It is not really a question of the right or the wrong key, but of putting the key in the lock in the right or the wrong way, — either, because of some difficulty, you try to force the lock turning the key this way and that with violence or confidently and quietly give it the right turn and the door opens.

5 May 1932

*

2. There is a steady drawing of the Force possible which is not what I mean by pulling — drawing of the Force is quite common and helpful.

What is meant by pulling? When we want something from the Mother with a vital desire, is it pulling? What is its effect on us?

Yes; that is one kind of pulling — its effect is to blind and confuse the consciousness. But there is also a pulling for right things which is not bad in itself, and most people use — e.g. for Light, Force, Ananda. But it brings more reactions than a quiet opening to the Divine.

1 June 1933

*

Can you explain in a few master strokes what you mean by “pulling down”? As I understand it, it is when one makes mental efforts of concentration and meditation without having any eagerness for it.

That is not what is meant by pulling. When one is open and too eager and tries to pull down the force, experience etc. instead of letting it descend quietly, that is called pulling. Many people pull at the Mother’s forces — trying to take more than they can easily assimilate and disturbing the working.

7 April 1935

The Mother’s Force and the Forces of the Lower Nature

There is in me a revolt of the vital against the Light resulting in much vital confusion. I hope that one day all my desires and ambition will go away and I will depend completely on the Mother. In the meantime, as these things too come from the Mother, there is nothing to do but wait.

What things? The vital confusion and desires? It is entirely false to say that these things come from the Mother. They come from the lower Nature and its darkness and ignorance. The Mother’s Force is *not* the lower Nature, it is the Power of the Divine Truth and Light working upon the lower Nature to drive out the confusion and falsehood and desire from it and to transform everything into the Truth and Light.

It is equally false to say “so there is nothing to do but wait”. There is something to do and I have repeatedly told you what it is — I have told you not to go down into the lower vital unless you can go there with the Mother’s Force and Light supporting you. If you are pushed or fall into the lower vital confusion, then to remain quiet (not discussing or consenting to whirl round in the lower vital chaos), to reject the vital suggestions and experiences and open yourself calling down the Mother’s Force to change this part of the being.

Instead of that you begin “experiencing” the chaos and trying to follow every jump and whirl in it and speculating about it with the result that you get falsehoods like these two — the falsehood that “these things too come from the Mother” and the falsehood that “there is nothing to do but wait” and you consent to them!

When will you learn to remember and follow the plain instructions I have given you instead of believing in the ignorant mind and the confused suggestions of this vital chaos?

10 June 1930

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I am practising with the feeling that the Mother is in everything. When I make a mistake, I think: “This also the Mother has done through me to bring me to full consciousness.” I believe that the sadhaks cannot consciously commit mistakes.

The Mother does not make people commit mistakes; it is the Prakriti that makes them do it — if the Purusha does not refuse his consent. The Mother here is not this lower Prakriti, but the Divine Shakti and it is her work to press on this lower Nature to change. You can say that under the pressure, the Prakriti stumbles and is unable to reply perfectly and makes mistakes. But it is not the Mother who makes you do wrong movements or does the wrong movements in you — if you think that, you are in danger of justifying the movements or their continuance.

11 April 1933

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What is the truest and surest means to recognise the Mother's Force when it acts and to distinguish it from other egoistic or ignorant forces?

One has only to be perfectly sincere, not to justify one's own desires and faults by the mind's reasonings, to look impartially and quietly at oneself and one's movements and to call on the Mother's Light — then gradually one will begin to discern everything in that light. Even if it cannot be done perfectly at once, the judgment and feeling will get clearer and surer and a right consciousness of these things will be established.

If a sadhak cannot fully discriminate between the Mother's Force and the egoistic and ignorant forces and cannot reject the lower forces, what will be his condition? And what is the best step for him to take on the path of Yoga?

All these questions are met by my answer. One cannot be perfect in discrimination at once or in rejection either. The one indispensable thing is to go on trying sincerely till there comes the full success. So long as there is complete sincerity, the Divine Grace will be there and assist at every moment on the way.

1 July 1933

*

There are two cosmic Forces — one the higher Cosmic Shakti which is a form of the Mother, the other a Power of the Ignorance. You have not to open to the latter, only to the Mother.

25 October 1933

*

I told you that when I make some mistake, then the lower forces rise up to trouble me, but you replied: "It is not necessarily due to some mistake or fault that they rise." But my experience is that so long as the Mother's name is on my lips nothing undivine can touch me. It is only when I am careless and forget to say her name that mistakes occur.

And what does the carelessness come from? It is because the habit of the lower nature makes you forget. That is an action of the lower forces. It is only by the higher force meeting the lower forces and its pressure on them (this is the contact) that the habit of forgetfulness disappears.

25 January 1935

*

How is it that the Mother cannot or will not move the hostile forces to action, since even the Asura and Rakshasa and Pisacha are her children?

As for the Asuric forces, their movement is part of the ordinary cosmic movement in the Ignorance, but Mother is not here to encourage that movement, but to bring down the higher Truth in which they have no place. If then she moves the hostile Forces to act against her and her work and the sadhaks (which they are quite ready enough to do of themselves), it would mean that she is working against herself and trying to frustrate her own purpose in being here! Such an action would be absurd in the extreme.

8 April 1935

The Mother's Force and the Three Gunas

When one feels that it is the Mother's Force that acts through one and not one's own force, is it the Mother's Force alone that works in one's actions while the gunas remain quiescent?

No, the gunas are there and not quiescent — for they are the instrumentation. If the force and the inner consciousness are very strong then there is a tendency for the rajas to become like some inferior form of tapas and the tamas to become more like a kind of inert shama. That is how the transformation begins, but usually it is very slow in its process.

29 January 1936

Conditions for the Working of the Mother's Force

When you can receive the Mother's peace in the mind and heart, it will act on the vital also and calm it. Once the vital is calm then force can be there in it and give it strength.

There is no intention of test or ordeal. But for the Mother's force to act certain conditions are necessary. There must be a certain acceptance, a will steady and persistent to reject what comes in the way of her action and to receive her force alone.

But why should you be always thinking about X or others? You have very little to do with X now, and it is no use thinking only of the past. Leave him to the Mother to deal with and forget all that.

*

If ego-sense comes back upon you so strongly, it must be because something in you admits it. The Mother's force is there always and can help you to get rid of these things, but you on your part must with faith and sincerity accept the Mother and put yourself entirely on her side so as to make it possible for the Force to work with effect. When bad thoughts come, you must reject them, not assent to them in your mind, not give voice to them in your speech, not believe in them or their suggestions. These things cannot vanish in a day, but if you do like that, they will diminish and lose their power to lay strong hold of you and disturb you, and in the end they will disappear.

21 April 1932

*

It is true that it is the Mother's Force that aspires in you, but if the personal consciousness does not give its assent, then the Force does not work. If the personal consciousness ceaselessly looks for the Divine and assents to the working, then aspiration and the working of the Force becomes also ceaseless.

9 April 1933

Discrimination and the Working of the Mother's Force

It is dangerous to think of giving up "all barrier of discrimination and defence against what is trying to descend" upon you. Have you thought what this would mean if what is descending is something not in consonance with the divine Truth, perhaps even adverse? An Adverse Power could ask no better condition for getting control over the seeker. It is only the Mother's Force and the divine Truth that one should admit without barriers. And even there one must keep the power of discernment in order to detect anything false that comes masquerading as the Mother's Force and the divine Truth, and keep too the power of rejection that will throw away all mixture.

Keep faith in your spiritual destiny, draw back from error and open more the psychic being to the direct guidance of the Mother's light and power. If the central will is sincere, each recognition of a mistake can become a stepping-stone to a truer movement and a higher progress.

24 May 1930

*

How to recognise that a particular thought, feeling or impulse to action has come from the Mother herself and not from some universal force or anything else? If it is apparently a force from the Falsehood it can be recognised as such, but there are many others of a different character and sometimes one goes on thinking that they are prompted by the Mother from within.

It can only be done by discrimination, care, sincerity, a constant control with regard to the mind's movements and the growth of a certain kind of psychic tact which detects any mental imitation or false suggestion of its being the Mother's.

27 April 1933

*

About my weaknesses you have mentioned the “inertia and fundamental resistance in the consciousness”. How can I become free of them?

There is only one rule for all these things — to watch oneself closely so as to detect these things always when they show themselves, to reject them always and persistently when seen, to aspire always for their removal, to call always the Force of the Mother to help to remove them. But the most entirely effective thing is if you can feel the Force of the Mother working in you and support its action always.

29 June 1933

*

You have written: “But the most entirely effective thing is if you can feel the Force of the Mother working in you and support its action always.” What is the meaning of “support its action always”?

To support its action means that one must recognise the Mother's force when it acts and distinguish it from other egoistic or ignorant forces and give assent to the one and refuse the others. It is again a general rule — its application each sadhaka has to see for himself.

1 July 1933

*

The Mother's Force may do everything but one has to become more and more conscious of one's own being and nature and what is below in it.

It is not a question of mental judgment, — that is of little use in these matters, — but of the consciousness feeling and seeing.

Supermind is not organised in the lower planes as the others are. It is only a veiled influence. Otherwise the supramental realisation would be easy.

22 May 1934

*

As to the Force, you said, “It creates its own activities in the mind or elsewhere.” In that case does the mind or any other part on which the Force acts express only what the Force has created?

That is the ideal condition when the Force is the true Force only — but there is too much mixture in the nature for that to be possible at this stage of sadhana.

3 August 1934

*

You say: "That is the ideal condition when the Force is the true Force only." Does this mean that what my consciousness feels as the Force is not the real Force of the Mother?

I have said that it gets mixed with the action of the present mind, vital and body. That is inevitable since it has to work upon them. It is only after the transformation that it can be fully the Mother's Force with no mixture of the separate personality. If the Divine Force in all its perfection without mixture were to act from the beginning, not taking any account of the present nature, then there would be no sadhana, only a miraculous substitution of the Divine for the human without any reason or process.

4 August 1934

Mental Knowledge and the Working of the Mother's Force

During the evening meditation my mind tries to become conscious of the thoughts which the Mother brings down. Is this the right activity?

It is not altogether the way — if the mind is active it is more difficult to become aware of what the Mother is bringing. It is not thoughts she brings, but the higher light, force etc.

22 March 1933

*

With reference to the Mother you once said, "Ask for the consciousness of her force." Does it mean that I should aspire to know her consciousness and her force?

Yes — not know with the mind only, but to feel them and see them with the inner experience.

18 June 1933

*

My mind fails to make out the present state of the being. It does not understand what the Mother's Force is doing.

Plenty of people progress rapidly without understanding what the Force is doing — they simply observe and describe and say "I leave all to the Mother." Eventually the knowledge and understanding come.

17 July 1933

The Mother's Force and the Body

When can it be said that the material being is ready for the Divine?

If the material consciousness is open, feels the Mother's Force working in it and responds, then it is ready.

11 June 1933

*

I feel the Mother's light, peace, beauty, joy and love descending from above into each strand of my hair. The whole body, calm and still, becomes absorbed in deep peace.

It can be there in all the atoms of the body since all is secretly conscious.

5 October 1933

*

One thing I wish to say about the condition of my body: Do not arrange any medication for me. Medicines are insignificant compared to the Mother's Force and Compassion. Everything will come all right through her Love and Force — this is my strong faith.

For the Mother's Force to work fully in the body, the body itself and not only the mind must have faith and be open.

9 October 1933

*

I pray that the Mother's Force may help my body. Kindly let me keep her Light and by that Light mould me through Peace and Love.

Aspire and concentrate for the purification and illumination of the vital. The vital once clear with the Mother's Light and Force in it, it will be easier for the Force to work on the body.

11 October 1933

*

Today while I was sitting with others, slowly something came down and filled up all my body. The body became very heavy, like a statue — I could not move. My body, especially the chest, was expanding. Peace! Calm! Ananda! Afterwards, the upper portion of my body slowly became smaller and smaller. Then something entered from the soles of my feet, and I came back to the physical consciousness.

That is very good. It is the Force and Presence of the Mother from above that comes down like that into the body — first in the head and chest and afterwards into the whole body. It is the first fundamental experience of the sadhana from which all the rest begins — for until it comes all else is only preparation. Very often it takes people years to bring it into the body, and with most it comes only by degrees. That it should come in a mass like that and even down to the chest shows that what I told you was true — that once you get free from the old obstacles that were obstructing you, you can have the Yoga experiences as well as anyone else here.

3 December 1933

*

Is the heat that I felt in the body the heat of the fever or the heat of the Mother's Force? It exerted a tremendous pressure on my mind, life and body.

That has still to be seen. It is most probably the tapas heat; the question is whether it is turned partially in the body into fever.

7 June 1936

*

It is quite true that the Mother has been putting a constant pressure of her Force to help you in overcoming this illness. I am very glad you have been so vividly aware of it. We do not think it is correct that the Mother can only take the pain away but cannot replace the organs in their right place. This also is possible for the spiritual Force to effect in time. But it is desirable that you should not allow any inner condition of yours which makes the working easy to yield to one like those you speak of which would make it difficult by allowing the old forces to return. Even if that happens, the Mother will still work of course to restore the previous condition until the thing is set right. But a continuous openness is very desirable.

22 October 1936

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Mother is not opposed to your going to Madras for treatment if you feel it necessary; but she is not at all sure that it will result in a radical cure — it may or it may not and, if it does not, it may return worse; so neither can she recommend your going. It depends on your own decision.

The illness has no doubt a physical cause, but there is associated with it a strong resistance to the Force — which is evidently seated in the subconscious, since you are not aware of it. This is shown by the fact that after Mother put a concentrated force there yesterday, the whole thing returned more violently after an hour's relief. That is always a sign of a violent and obstinate resistance somewhere. It is only if this is overcome or disappears that complete relief can come.

Your experiences related in the letter were quite sound and very good. There is no delusion about the Force working in the body, but there are evidently points where there is still much resistance. The body consciousness has many parts and many different movements and all do not open or change together. Also the body is very dependent on the subconscious which has to be cleared and illumined before the body can be free from adverse reactions.

15 April 1938

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The Mother's Force is always pouring down — your body must now forget its habit of depression or sadness. Let the happiness come into it also.

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First the Mother organises the inner parts of the being; then she begins to work on the outer being. Does this mean that when the inner parts are brought under control, then she begins to work on the physical nature?

It is the usual course, but some work is always being done in the inner parts at all times, because they are interdependent.

The Mother's Therapeutic Force

While working, I suddenly felt a pressure of weakness, a depression in the chest. When I became conscious of it, I opened myself and called the Mother's force. After a few minutes it disappeared. Was it the divine strength that supported me in some mysterious way, or was it the inherent strength of the body that awakened?

The inherent strength of the body does not do things like that. It is the Mother's force that does it, when one calls and opens oneself. Even people who never did Yoga and are conscious of nothing, get cured like that without knowing the reason or feeling the way in which it was done. The Force comes from above or in descending it envelops and comes from without inside or it comes out from inside after descending there. When you are conscious of the play of the Forces, then you feel the working.

5 May 1933

*

When I got up from sleep, I found that a cold had already entered my head. My consciousness brought down the Mother's Force and the cold disappeared. Formerly the consciousness used to say passively, "Let the Force work it out", but the effect was not the same. I want to know if the method adopted for the Force is quite the right way.

It is quite the right way. It is very good that you are learning to use the Force.

27 August 1934

*

Every time I receive the Mother's touch at Pranam, I feel a sense of strong nourishment, even in the physical being. When she presses her fingers on the opening point of the spinal cord at the top of my head, I feel something subtle coming in which makes my inner being overflow with joy. This sense of nourishment (as if a new substance is being created within) is so strong that even when I am unwell and weak, it completely dominates with its sense of joy and security.

As you suffer from ill-health, Mother presses the nourishment of the divine strength and health into your physical being, renewing its substance with that.

4 November 1934

*

If we want the Mother to help someone outside with her Force, but we give her wrong information, does the help she sends miss its mark or does it go automatically where it should? Yesterday I suppose the Mother acted before X gave the wrong information about my uncle, but if she had been misinformed from the start, what would have happened?

Yes, Mother had worked before, but wrong information coming across the working creates a confusion so that it is no longer possible to say what is the result of the working. Of course if the wrong information came at the beginning, it would be still worse. It is very necessary that information given should be correct.

10 June 1935

*

I remember the Mother once saying that there is hardly a disease that cannot be cured by Yoga. I was surprised, much surprised, and thought, "What about cancer, then, the most deadly enemy of present civilisation? Can it be cured by Yoga?" What is your opinion?

Of course it can, but on condition of faith or openness or both. Even a mental suggestion can cure cancer — with luck, of course, as is shown by the case of the woman operated on unsuccessfully for cancer, but the doctors lied and told her it had succeeded. Result, cancer symptoms all ceased and she died many years afterwards of another illness altogether.

11 October 1935

*

I had a heated but pleasant discussion with X about the action of the healing force. He argued: "Now that the healing force has arrived here, it is likely to operate in other parts of the world and any Tom, Dick and Harry can wield it even if not spiritually developed."

It may operate but not through every T, D and H, at first at least.

I contended that the healing force will act only if a man is open to the Mother in some way, through devotion, faith or some kind of rapport. I also said that most probably the healing force can act only if the healer is directly in physical contact with her. Certain conditions are necessary for cure. What do you say?

At first it will be no doubt like that if it is to be the true Force, but when once it is settled in the earth-consciousness a more general use of supraphysical force for healing may become possible.

It is not always necessary either that the rapport you speak of should be conscious. Coué for instance was in rapport with the Mother without knowing it — she told me of his getting something of the force and of the beginning of his work long before he was known to anyone (of course she did not know his name but she described him and his work in such a way that the identification was evident).

3 February 1936

*

X writes that her hip-joint pain is gone and wants me to thank the Mother for removing it. She calculates that her first letter to me mentioning the pain must have reached me on Thursday and her hip pain almost vanished miraculously at eight in the evening that day. But I did not write to the Mother about X's complaint until Friday. Could it be that when X's letter entered the Ashram atmosphere a response came?

Y spoke to the Mother about X's pain on the same day — so it is not necessary to suppose an automatic effect of the letter itself. But such an automatic effect does often take place either immediately after writing or when the letter enters the Mother's atmosphere.

17 April 1936

*

I generally rely in my practice on medicines impregnated with the Mother's force. X is now convinced that there is nothing of any medicine left after potentisation except Homeopathic philosophy (the Mother's force). What is your opinion?

I never have opinions — except for the purpose of writing or conversation. To the eye of the Yogin all opinions are true and all are false. It is only realities and results that matter. The Mother's force is a reality and the cure is a result — the medicine is perhaps a phenomenal link between the two.

2 June 1936

*

It was precisely out of solicitude for you because the suffering of insomnia and the spasms had been excessive that I proposed to you to take the help of treatment. It is a fact of my experience that when the resistance in the body is too strong and persistent, it can help to take some aid of physical means as an instrumentation for the Force to work more directly on the body itself; for the body then feels itself supported against the resistance from both sides, by means both physical as well as supraphysical. The Mother's force can work through both together.

1 September 1936

*

In the last two weeks there has been no improvement in my nervous trouble. I had the belief that the Mother's look and grace at the Sunday Pranam would ease my situation, but it has not. Shall I undergo medical treatment or rely solely on the Mother's grace and influence which I shall receive at the Sunday Pranam?

Sunday Pranams are not the only way of receiving Force, one can do it at any time by opening to receive in a quiet concentration. If you can do that, any illness can be cured either at once or, if it is chronic, in time. That should be done in any case. But where there is not the full openness, medical treatment can help as an auxiliary. If you like to consult X, he may be able to understand better your case than by second hand and you can see whether you would care to try any remedies he suggests.

28 March 1937

Receiving the Mother's Force at a Distance

I write from Comilla to present to you the sad story of a sad person's life. For over twenty-five years I have suffered from leucorrhoea. I have taken all kinds of treatments, but never succeeded in removing it. My body is becoming weaker day by day. I feel that no doctor can remedy this disease. You and the Mother have come on earth to remove people's sufferings. I pray that you will rid this poor thing of her sufferings for ever.

It is possible for her to be cured,³ but only if she has sufficient and complete faith and can receive the force of the Mother. If she can put herself into the true contact, she will cure.

*

As to what your other friend asks, it is quite possible for him to receive where he is without coming here if he has the adoration of the Mother in his heart and an intense call.

25 August 1935

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You spoke of my friend X as receiving the Mother's Force.

“*In contact with*” the Divine Force which is the force of the Mother — that was what I wrote, I believe.

But which Mother?

How many Mothers are there?

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

Ours or some universal Mother as people say?

Who is this some universal Mother? How many of these some universal Mothers are there?

I ask because I do not understand how, without invoking the Mother, he gets her Force.

Have you not put him by the photograph and his letter in connection with us? Has he not turned in this direction? Has he not met Y and been impressed by him — a third channel of contact? That is quite sufficient to help him to a contact if he has the faith and the Yogic stress in him.

2 February 1936

*

Has Mother really been sending force to my friend?

I don't know whether Mother is sending force in the accepted sense; I haven't asked her. In any case anyone can receive the force who has faith and sincerity, whose psychic being has begun to wake and who opens himself, — whether he knows or not that he is receiving. If X even imagines that he is receiving, that may open the way to a real reception, — if he *feels* it, why question his feeling? He is certainly trying hard to change and that is the first necessity; if one tries it can always be done, in more or less time.

28 June 1943

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It was I a.m. at night when my brother in excruciating pain called me and asked if Sri Aurobindo could heal him. I took out some Prasad flowers that were with me and touched the affected part with them. And lo! the pain vanished and he began to recover. I want to know if you were aware of this and heard my prayer.

What happens in such cases is that when someone is accepted, the Mother sends out something of herself to him and this is with him wherever he goes and is always in connection with her being here. So when he does anything like what you did in this case with faith and bhakti, it reaches, through that emanation of herself which is with him, the Mother's consciousness inner or outer and the Force goes in return for the result.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Mother with Letters on the Mother, CWSA, Vol. 32, pp. 213-40)

‘A FLAME CONSECRATED TO THEE’

April 4, 1914

O Lord, my adoration rises ardently to Thee, all my being is an aspiration, a flame consecrated to Thee.

Lord, Lord, my sweet Master, it is Thou who livest and willest in me!

This body is Thy instrument; this will is Thy servant; this intelligence is Thy tool; and the whole being is only Thyself.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 118)



SURRENDER AND SACRIFICE

Is not surrender the same as sacrifice?

In our Yoga there is no room for sacrifice. But everything depends on the meaning you put on the word. In its pure sense it means a consecrated giving, a making sacred to the Divine. But in the significance that it now bears, sacrifice is something that works for destruction; it carries about it an atmosphere of negation. This kind of sacrifice is not fulfilment; it is a deprivation, a self-immolation. It is your possibilities that you sacrifice, the possibilities and realisations of your personality from the most material to the highest spiritual range. Sacrifice diminishes your being. If physically you sacrifice your life, your body, you give up all your possibilities on the material plane; you have done with the achievements of your earthly existence.

In the same way you can morally sacrifice your life; you give up the amplitude and free fulfilment of your inner existence. There is always in this idea of self-immolation a sense of forcing, a constriction, an imposed self-denial. This is an ideal that does not give room for the soul's deeper and larger spontaneities. By surrender we mean not this but a spontaneous self-giving, a giving of all your self to the Divine, to a greater Consciousness of which you are a part. Surrender will not diminish, but increase; it will not lessen or weaken or destroy your personality, it will fortify and aggrandise it. Surrender means a free total giving with all the delight of the giving; there is no sense of sacrifice in it. If you have the slightest feeling that you are making a sacrifice, then it is no longer surrender. For it means that you reserve yourself or that you are trying to give, with grudging or with pain and effort, and have not the joy of the gift, perhaps not even the feeling that you are giving. When you do anything with the sense of a compression of your being, be sure that you are doing it in the wrong way. True surrender enlarges you; it increases your capacity; it gives you a greater measure in quality and in quantity which you could not have had by yourself. This new greater measure of quality and quantity is different from anything you could attain before: you enter into another world, into a wideness which you could not have entered if you did not surrender. It is as when a drop of water falls into the sea; if it still kept there its separate identity, it would remain a little drop of water and nothing more, a little drop crushed by all the immensity around, because it has not surrendered. But, surrendering, it unites with the sea and participates in the nature and power and vastness of the whole sea.

There is no ambiguity or vagueness in the movement, it is clear and strong and definite. If a small human mind stands in front of the Divine Universal Mind and clings to its separateness, it will remain what it is, a small bounded thing, incapable of knowing the nature of the higher reality or even of coming in contact with it. The

two continue to stand apart and are, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, quite different from each other. But if the little human mind surrenders, it will be merged in the Divine Universal Mind; it will be one in quality and quantity with it; losing nothing but its own limitations and deformations, it will receive from it its vastness and luminous clearness. The small existence will change its nature; it will put on the nature of the greater truth to which it surrenders. But if it resists and fights, if it revolts against the Universal Mind, then a conflict and pressure are inevitable in which what is weak and small cannot fail to be drawn into that power and immensity. If it does not surrender, its only other possible fate is absorption and extinction. A human being, who comes into contact with the Divine Mind and surrenders, will find that his own mind begins at once to be purified of its obscurities and to share in the power and the knowledge of the Divine Universal Mind. If he stands in front, but separated, without any contact, he will remain what he is, a little drop of water in the measureless vastness. If he revolts, he will lose his mind; its powers will diminish and disappear. And what is true of the mind is true of all the other parts of the nature. It is as when you fight against one who is too strong for you — a broken head is all you gain. How can you fight something that is a million times stronger? Each time you revolt, you get a knock, and each blow takes away a portion of your strength, as when one who engages in a pugilistic encounter with a far superior rival receives blow after blow and each blow makes him weaker and weaker till he is knocked out. There is no necessity of a willed intervention, the action is automatic. Nothing else can happen if you dash yourself in revolt against the Immensity. As long as you remain in your corner and follow the course of the ordinary life, you are not touched or hurt; but once you come in contact with the Divine, there are only two ways open to you. You surrender and merge in it, and your surrender enlarges and glorifies you; or you revolt and all your possibilities are destroyed and your powers ebb away and are drawn from you into That which you oppose.

There are many wrong ideas current about surrender. Most people seem to look upon surrender as an abdication of the personality; but that is a grievous error. For the individual is meant to manifest one aspect of the Divine Consciousness, and the expression of its characteristic nature is what creates his personality; then, by taking the right attitude towards the Divine, this personality is purified of all the influences of the lower nature which diminish and distort it and it becomes more strongly personal, more itself, more complete. The truth and power of the personality come out with a more resplendent distinctness, its character is more precisely marked than it could possibly be when mixed with all the obscurity and ignorance, all the dirt and alloy of the lower nature. It undergoes a heightening and glorification, an aggrandisement of capacity, a realisation of the maximum of its possibilities. But to have this sublimating change, he must first give up all that, by distorting, limiting and obscuring the true nature, fetters and debases and disfigures the true personality; he must throw from him whatever belongs to the ignorant lower movements of the

ordinary man and his blind limping ordinary life. And first of all he must give up his desires; for desire is the most obscure and the most obscuring movement of the lower nature. Desires are motions of weakness and ignorance and they keep you chained to your weakness and to your ignorance. Men have the impression that their desires are born within; they feel as if they come out of themselves or arise within themselves; but it is a false impression. Desires are waves of the vast sea of the obscure lower nature and they pass from one person to another. Men do not generate a desire in themselves, but are invaded by these waves; whoever is open and without defence is caught in them and tossed about. Desire by engrossing and possessing him makes him incapable of any discrimination and gives him the impression that it is part of his nature to manifest it. In reality, it has nothing to do with his true nature. It is the same with all the lower impulses, jealousy or envy, hatred or violence. These too are movements that seize you, waves that overwhelm and invade; they deform, they do not belong to the true character or the true nature; they are no intrinsic or inseparable part of yourself, but come out of the sea of surrounding obscurity in which move the forces of the lower nature. These desires, these passions have no personality, there is nothing in them or their action that is peculiar to you; they manifest in the same way in everyone. The obscure movements of the mind too, the doubts and errors and difficulties that cloud the personality and diminish its expansion and fulfilment, come from the same source. They are passing waves and they catch anyone who is ready to be caught and utilised as their blind instrument. And yet each goes on believing that these movements are part of himself and a precious product of his own free personality. Even we find people clinging to them and their disabilities as the very sign or essence of what they call their freedom.

If you have understood this, you will be ready to understand the difference, the great difference between spirituality and morality, two things that are constantly confused with each other. The spiritual life, the life of Yoga, has for its object to grow into the divine consciousness and for its result to purify, intensify, glorify and perfect what is in you. It makes you a power for manifesting of the Divine; it raises the character of each personality to its full value and brings it to its maximum expression; for this is part of the Divine plan. Morality proceeds by a mental construction and, with a few ideas of what is good and what is not, sets up an ideal type into which all must force themselves. This moral ideal differs in its constituents and its ensemble at different times and different places. And yet it proclaims itself as a unique type, a categorical absolute; it admits of none other outside itself; it does not even admit a variation within itself. All are to be moulded according to its single ideal pattern, everybody is to be made uniformly and faultlessly the same. It is because morality is of this rigid unreal nature that it is in its principle and its working the contrary of the spiritual life. The spiritual life reveals the one essence in all, but reveals too its infinite diversity; it works for diversity in oneness and for perfection in that diversity. Morality lifts up one artificial standard contrary to the variety of

life and the freedom of the spirit. Creating something mental, fixed and limited, it asks all to conform to it. All must labour to acquire the same qualities and the same ideal nature. Morality is not divine or of the Divine; it is of man and human. Morality takes for its basic element a fixed division into the good and the bad; but this is an arbitrary notion. It takes things that are relative and tries to impose them as absolutes; for this good and this bad differ in differing climates and times, epochs and countries. The moral notion goes so far as to say that there are good desires and bad desires and calls on you to accept the one and reject the other. But the spiritual life demands that you should reject desire altogether. Its law is that you must cast aside all movements that draw you away from the Divine. You must reject them, not because they are bad in themselves, — for they may be good for another man or in another sphere, — but because they belong to the impulses or forces that, being unilluminated and ignorant, stand in the way of your approach to the Divine. All desires, whether good or bad, come within this description; for desire itself arises from an unilluminated vital being and its ignorance. On the other hand you must accept all movements that bring you into contact with the Divine. But you accept them, not because they are good in themselves, but because they bring you to the Divine. Accept then all that takes you to the Divine. Reject all that takes you away from it, but do not say that this is good and that is bad or try to impose your outlook on others; for, what you term bad may be the very thing that is good for your neighbour who is not trying to realise the Divine Life.

Let us take an illustration of the difference between the moral and the spiritual view of things. The ordinary social notions distinguish between two classes of men, — the generous, the avaricious. The avaricious man is despised and blamed, while the generous man is considered unselfish and useful to society and praised for his virtue. But to the spiritual vision, they both stand on the same level; the generosity of the one, the avarice of the other are deformations of a higher truth, a greater divine power. There is a power, a divine movement that spreads, diffuses, throws out freely forces and things and whatever else it possesses on all the levels of nature from the most material to the most spiritual plane. Behind the generous man and his generosity is a soul-type that expresses this movement; he is a power for diffusion, for wide distribution. There is another power, another divine movement that collects and amasses; it gathers and accumulates forces and things and all possible possessions, whether of the lower or of the higher planes. The man you tax with avarice was meant to be an instrument of this movement. Both are important, both needed in the entire plan; the movement that stores up and concentrates is no less needed than the movement that spreads and diffuses. Both, if truly surrendered to the Divine, will be utilised as instruments for its divine work to the same degree and with an equal value. But when they are not surrendered both are alike moved by impulses of ignorance. One is pushed to throw away, the other is pulled towards keeping back; but both are driven by forces obscure to their own consciousness,

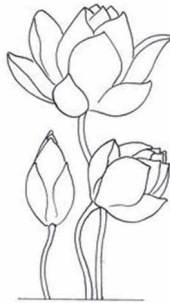
and between the two there is little to choose. One could say to the much-praised generous man, from the higher point of vision of Yoga, “All your impulses of generosity are nothing in the values of the spirit, for they come from ego and ignorant desire.” And, on the other hand, among those who are accused of avarice, you can see sometimes a man amassing and hoarding, full of a quiet and concentrated determination in the work assigned to him by his nature, who, once awakened, would make a very good instrument of the Divine. But ordinarily the avaricious man acts from ego and desire like his opposite; it is the other end of the same ignorance. Both will have to purify themselves and change before they can make contact with the something higher that is behind them and express it in the way to which they are called by their nature.

In the same way you could take all other types and trace them to some original intention in the Divine Force. Each is a diminution or caricature of the type intended by the Divine, a mental and vital distortion of things that have a greater spiritual value. It is a wrong movement that creates the distortion or the caricature. Once this false impulsion is mastered, the right attitude taken, the right movement found, all reveal their divine values. All are justified by the truth that is in them, all equally important, equally needed, different but indispensable instruments of the Divine Manifestation.

4 August 1929

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1929-1931, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 3, pp. 114-20)



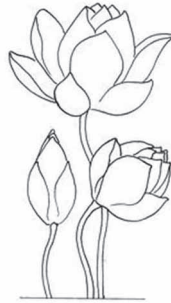
SURRENDER, SELF-OFFERING AND CONSECRATION

SURRENDER is the decision taken to hand over the responsibility of your life to the Divine. Without this decision nothing is at all possible; if you do not surrender, the Yoga is entirely out of the question. Everything else comes naturally after it, for the whole process starts with surrender. You can surrender either through knowledge or through devotion. You may have a strong intuition that the Divine alone is the truth and a luminous conviction that without the Divine you cannot manage. Or you may have a spontaneous feeling that this line is the only way of being happy, a strong psychic desire to belong exclusively to the Divine: "I do not belong to myself," you say, and give up the responsibility of your being to the Truth. Then comes self-offering: "Here I am, a creature of various qualities, good and bad, dark and enlightened. I offer myself as I am to you, take me up with all my ups and downs, conflicting impulses and tendencies — do whatever you like with me." In the course of your self-offering, you start unifying your being around what has taken the first decision — the central psychic will. All the jarring elements of your nature have to be harmonised, they have to be taken up one after another and unified with the central being. You may offer yourself to the Divine with a spontaneous movement, but it is not possible to give yourself effectively without this unification. The more you are unified, the more you are able to realise self-giving. And once the self-giving is complete, consecration follows: it is the crown of the whole process of realisation, the last step of the gradation, after which there is no more trouble and everything runs smoothly. But you must not forget that you cannot become integrally consecrated at once. You are often deluded into such a belief when, for a day or two, you have a strong movement of a particular kind. You are led to hope that everything else will automatically follow in its wake; but in fact if you become the least bit self-complacent you retard your own advance. For your being is full of innumerable tendencies at war with one another — almost different personalities, we may say. When one of them gives itself to the Divine, the others come up and refuse their allegiance. "We have not given ourselves," they cry, and start clamouring for their independence and expression. Then you bid them be quiet and show them the Truth. Patiently you have to go round your whole being, exploring each nook and corner, facing all those anarchic elements in you which are waiting for their psychological moment to come up. And it is only when you have made the entire round of your mental, vital and physical nature, persuaded everything to give itself to the Divine and thus achieved an absolute unified consecration that you put an end to your difficulties. Then indeed yours is a glorious walk towards transformation, for you no longer go from darkness to knowledge but from knowledge to knowledge, light to light, happiness to happiness. . . . The complete consecration is undoubtedly

not an easy matter, and it might take an almost indefinitely long time if you had to do it all by yourself, by your own independent effort. But when the Divine's Grace is with you it is not exactly like that. With a little push from the Divine now and then, a little push in this direction and in that, the work becomes comparatively quite easy. Of course the length of time depends on each individual, but it can be very much shortened if you make a really firm resolve. Resolution is the one thing required — resolution is the master-key.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1929-1931, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 3, pp. 126-27)



**“SANTO RISO” —
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO**

Sri Aurobindo —

I hope I am not sending this too soon after your period of “force one with unimaginable rest.” It is mostly a little “evolution” from a phrase of Dante’s about Beatrice. Is it any good?

Santo Riso

No power could span
My fathomless
Agelong immensity
Of soul-forgetfulness.

Between the unheard
Deific Shore
And my earth-captive life
Billowed a sense-uproar —

Until there dawned
Her haloed mien
Of silence beautiful
With love of the Unseen.

Her gaze might droop
Weary awhile,
But though each lash hung wet
Her lips of faith would smile.

And from that curve
Of bliss I won
A dreamful boat to cross
My heart’s oblivion.

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

I find it very good. I like your new style very well.

20 December 1933

[Version from *The Secret Splendour* —
Collected Poems of K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran), 1993, p. 46:]

Santo Riso

No power could span
 My fathomless
 Agelong profundity
 Of soul-forgetfulness.

Between the unheard
 Deific shore
 And my earth-captive life
 Billowed a sense-uproar —

Until there dawned
 Her haloed mien
 Of silence beautiful
 With love of the Unseen.

Her gaze might droop
 Weary awhile,
 But though each lash hung wet
 Her lips of faith would smile.

And from that curve
 Of bliss I won
 A dreamful boat to cross
 My heart's oblivion.

AMAL KIRAN
 (K. D. SETHNA)

*. . . Dante errant mid his terrible or beatific visions of Hell and Purgatory and
 Paradise . . .*

Sri Aurobindo

(The Future Poetry, CWSA, Vol. 26, p. 225)

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of June 2013)

Chapter: XXIV

Prelude to the Tumultuous Epoch

In order to restore to man the free use of those powers and faculties which have been degraded by the prolonged arts of tyranny, the first step is to raise him in his own esteem, to efface the mark of slavery on his brow and make known to him One divinity, that lies dormant within him, the greatness of his destiny and inviolability of his human nature.

Joseph Mazzini
(quoted in the *Yugantar*, 2 September 1906)¹

SRI AUROBINDO would appear to have used several dimensions of time simultaneously from early 1906 till his arrest in the Alipore Conspiracy Case on the 2nd of June 1908 to be able to act on so many planes simultaneously.

One such act, himself absent from the scene, was the launching of the Bengali weekly, *Yugantar* (meaning advent of a new or different era) at Calcutta. It began its publication on the 12th of March 1906 with his blessings, before his final departure from Baroda. During the first phase of its publication Barindra Kumar and his gifted collaborator Debabrata Bose (1879-1918)² edited and wrote the major part of the paper's content. The list of other contributors included Upendranath Bandopadhyay, Sakharam Ganesh Deoskar and Bipin Chandra Pal.

Research till date shows that it was the 3rd issue of this journal that carried the first ever article in Bengali by Sri Aurobindo. It was entitled *Amader Rajnaitik Adarsha* (Our Political Ideal). It asserted that no country or nation could advance along the path of its national awakening without a large and liberal political ideal. It contained examples such as without Rousseau's ideal of equality, the aspirations emanating from the French Revolution could not have flooded the whole of Europe after awakening the half-dead France. The United States of America could not have been formed if the nation had not desired to assert the inherent "rights of man". The article concluded with a call to Indians to break their shackles, even though made of gold.³

The weekly *Yugantar* was priced at one paisa. At the beginning the paper did not sell more than 17 or 18 copies. The rest of the copies were distributed free. But its popularity began to grow and within a year its circulation was seven thousand

copies. Later its circulation touched twenty thousand.⁴

Before a gathering of 15,000 people Subodh Mullick had announced a contribution of a lakh of rupees (then a large amount of money if we remember that a daily newspaper was priced at one paisa which was a sixty-fourth part of a rupee) for the founding of a national college and the jubilant youth had “put him in a horseless carriage and pulled it to his house on the Wellington Square”.⁵ Even so he, it seems, had really, though his thought remained unexpressed, offered the money to Sri Aurobindo and would like that unassuming but spontaneously captivating friend of his to spend it in whatever way he liked. Mullick got the impression that Sri Aurobindo (who was not present in that meeting) would like the amount to be spent for a cause directly linked to the revolutionary activities! Hence he dillydallied in handing it over to Satish Chandra Mukhopadhyay (remembered as Acharya Satish Chandra), the prime mover behind the proposed college who would succeed Sri Aurobindo as its Principal. Satish Chandra became impatient and asked Subodh Mullick, anointed ‘Raja’ by the public, about his promise. The Raja frankly told him that he must have the green signal from Sri Aurobindo.

As arranged by Subodh Mullick, Satish Chandra met Sri Aurobindo and spoke to him at some length about the importance of utilising the proposed donation for an educational venture. This is how the event is narrated by one who heard it from Satish Chandra himself:

Sri Aurobindo listened to Satish Chandra’s long lecture calmly. Not even once did he interrupt or ask any question. When Satish Chandra finished, he only said, “I support your view. The money could be spent in a right way through your hands. I withdraw whatever reservation I had.”⁶

Satish Chandra thanked him and requested him to write a line of instruction to Subodh Mullick. Sri Aurobindo obliged him at once. Commented Satish Chandra in conclusion:

“I realised the *mahatmya* (the highest quality of nobility) of Sri Aurobindo more intensely through this dialogue. A man of such a tremendous personality! Yet he gave me the opportunity to place before him my view that was contrary to his, spoken in my way, for such a long time and without a murmur, without a question — a grand trait of his great character indeed!”⁷

Sri Aurobindo was freely participating in political conferences and organisational activities even though he had not resigned his position as the Acting Principal of the Gaekwad’s college at Baroda. However, on the Principal’s return, he handed over the charge to him on the 3rd February 1906 and came to Calcutta obtaining leave for three months. Efforts towards the formation of the National Council of

Education were in full swing and Sri Aurobindo attended the meeting of the organisers on the 11th of March where the resolution for formally inaugurating the Council was passed.

He attended the famous Bengal Provincial Congress Conference on the 14th and 15th of April at Barisal (now in Bangladesh). By then the State had been partitioned. Leaders of the Congress decided to hold the conference inside the newly formed State in order to assert the unity of the two Bengals — with a large number of delegates from Calcutta streaming into that small town. That was also the precise provocation for Fuller, the Lt. Governor, to disrupt the event. For him it was an invasion of his domain by those who were against Partition. That is why he let loose the police on the procession without any provocation. Hundreds were injured and much blood was shed. Sri Aurobindo “was in the front row of three persons in the procession which was dispersed by the police charge.”⁸ Luckily he was not harmed.

Later Fuller wrote to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Morley: “But, really, we were very badly treated, having been invaded by Calcutta with deliberate intent to challenge our authority.”⁹ Both Lord Morley and Minto, of course, were thoroughly disillusioned about that gentleman.

The brutal repression as let loose at Barisal not only sent thrills of sensation in the country but also gave a powerful fillip to the growth of political radicalism. The Extremists or the Nationalists were completely disillusioned and wanted to organise themselves. For that purpose Bipin Chandra Pal, along with Sri Aurobindo and others undertook tours of Eastern Bengal and Assam. . . . In course of seven months (July-December 1906) Sri Aurobindo became a front-ranking leader of the Nationalist Party.¹⁰

On the 1st of June 1906 Sri Aurobindo applied for a year’s leave without pay through a telegram to Baroda and soon thereafter he proceeded to Baroda and, on the 18th of the same month was informed that his leave had been granted.

That practically brought to an end the Baroda phase of Sri Aurobindo’s life. Here is a first-hand report of his arrival in Calcutta at the end of June (in early July according to the following account) left by Upendrachandra, the younger brother of Abinash Bhattacharya. (This is a more or less literal translation, though slightly condensed):

Whenever I came to Calcutta I visited the *Yugantar* office to meet my bother. In the beginning of July 1906, on my arrival there I heard that Sri Aurobindo was about to arrive and that my brother and Barin-da had gone to Howrah station to receive him. I had waited long for an auspicious Darshan of Sri Aurobindo. The opportunity had come at last! Gratefully I waited with bated breath. Soon a 2nd class horse-carriage carrying Sri Aurobindo, my brother

and Barin-da arrived. From what I had heard about the unearthly genius and powers of Sri Aurobindo, I had visualised a picture of him — solemn like the other contemporary leaders, ready to shoot out oratorical fire. But the one alighting from the carriage was a lean young man, clad in trousers, turban and boots. His physique, though slim, suggested a personality that was unusually strong. His tender face combined gravity and a contented geniality. But what surprised me were his elongated luminous eyes. They exuded a certain radiance and one could not shift one's look from them. I kept surveying him with wonder. He spoke softly to the two in English but only a few words and then climbed the stairs. I followed them. He took off his boots and said something to Dada. Dada went out at once and I gave him company. Dada bought a pair of *dhotis* from the Chhatra Bhandar and a pair of shirts from Kamalalaya. He also met Sukumar Mitra and informed him of Sri Aurobindo's arrival. On our way back he bought for Sri Aurobindo two pairs of orange-colour footwear (one pair of Albert sandals costing two rupees and one pair of slippers costing one and a half rupee) from Utkal Tannery. We gave all these items to Sri Aurobindo and he went for a bath. Within that short time I saw Shyamsundar Chakravorty, Brahmabandhav Upadhyay and Sukumar Mitra arriving there.

I went back to my mess and came at 12 noon and saw a number of people gathered. Sri Aurobindo was resting inside a closed room lying on a mat.

Many more had come by 3 p.m. He smiled softly but never uttered more than a few words. Soon, his friend Charu Dutta I.C.S. reached there, bringing Raja Subodh Mullick along. Also came Shyamsundar Chakravorty, Krishnakumar Mitra, Haridas Haldar, Brahmabandhav Upadhyay and others. They sat talking. A little before evening Sri Aurobindo left with Charu Dutta and Subodh Mullick. I learnt that he would reside at Raja Subodh Mullick's house.

All his belongings went with him but left behind were his trousers, coat, turban, the boots and the socks. Dada, with great care, put them in his box.¹¹

(By the way, Upendrachandra left for his village carrying as trophy, with Barin's permission, those items used by Sri Aurobindo; the youth of his area took oath to serve the Motherland, placing their hand on these objects. Back in the city Upendrachandra found that pictures of a few renowned leaders were on sale in the market. He bought a full dozen of Sri Aurobindo's at four annas each, but with 25 percent off for a dozen! The write-up below the picture read: "Shri Arabindo Ghose, the 3rd son of the legendary philanthropist of Khulna, Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose. Though educated in England and in English system for seventeen years, he adores God, is unique in sacrifices, exemplary in humility and like a spark of fire in subtle energy. Giving up his high position and regal honours in the State of Baroda, he has accepted the Principal's post of the National Council of Education, at a salary of a mere seventy-five rupees.")

If the Baroda authorities generally acceded to Sri Aurobindo's requests for leave, that is probably because they did not wish to lose him. We have seen earlier, through the information provided by a scion of the royal family, Fatehsingh Gaekwad, that the Maharaja was quite aware of Sri Aurobindo's political ideals and activities. But what is unusual, he surely wished Sri Aurobindo to continue in his Administration in spite of that. What is even more intriguing, there is a report that the Maharaja, on a visit to Calcutta in 1906, invited Sri Aurobindo to meet him and asked him not to leave his service. We cannot simply dismiss this as rumour because two important names are involved in it. First, Abinash Bhattacharya who acted as the *de facto* secretary to Sri Aurobindo states this in a most matter-of-fact manner: "Our *Yugantar* was published in March 1906. Sometime after that Aurobindo Babu snapped all his ties with Baroda and lived amidst us. The Maharaja of Baroda came to take him back, but had to go back disappointed."¹²

And the following report has no less strength. It suggests that Raja Subodh Mullick accompanied Sri Aurobindo to the Maharaja's camp:

The fact that the Maharaja tried to take Sri Aurobindo back to Baroda but failed has been told by the younger brother of Swami Vivekananda, Dr. Bhupendranath Dutta: "At this juncture Sri Aurobindo resigning his job and coming over to Calcutta inspired the youths. The Raja of Baroda came to Calcutta in 1906. He proposed to make Aurobindo the Principal of the college so that he agreed to return to Baroda. But he (Sri Aurobindo) did not agree. Some friends from Baroda were then Subodh Mullick's guests. One of them asked Subodh Mullick, after (his) return from meeting the Raja, what Aurobindo told the Raja. He (Subodh Mullick) replied, Aurobindo said, 'No', 'No'! This writer who then sat near Subodh Babu, heard this with his own ears."¹³

Bipin Chandra Pal's decision to publish an English newspaper bearing the title *Bande Mataram* and his request to Sri Aurobindo to contribute articles to it and the latter gradually getting more and more involved in its editing and management are well known facts.

Prior to the publication of the *Yugantar*, there was a fiery nationalist daily newspaper, the *Sandhya*, the very first of its kind, edited by a remarkable personality, Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya (1861-1907) whose original name was Bhawani Charan Bandopadhyaya. A restless seeker after truth who embraced faith after faith but ultimately returned to the Vedanta and left a deep impression on his audiences at Cambridge and Oxford, Brahmabandhav was a person of weighty disposition in his writings but he loved laughing at the fake trappings of power and, when he was accused of sedition, presented himself in the court dressed as a bridegroom. He told the judge:

I do not take any part in this trial because I do not believe that in carrying out my humble share of the God-appointed mission of Swaraj, I am in any way accountable to the alien people who happen to rule over us and whose interest is and must necessarily be in the way of our true national development.¹⁴

His untimely death occurred while his trial was on.

The *Bande Mataram* was at first published from the office of the *Sandhya*. Brahmabandhav was looking after its management. He seems to have been gifted with some intuition and he saw in Sri Aurobindo something so extraordinary that he wrote in the *Sandhya*, on the eve of the *Bande Mataram*'s first appearance:

Have you ever seen the spotless all-white Aurobindo (lotus)? The hundred-petalled Aurobindo (lotus) in full bloom in India's Manassarovar? . . . Our Aurobindo is a rare phenomenon in the world. In him resides the *sattvika* divine beauty, snow-white, resplendent. Great and vast — vast in the amplitude of his heart, great in the glory of his own self, his *swadharmā*. . . . So pure and complete a man — a fire-charged thunder yet tender and delicate as the lotus-petal. A man rich in knowledge, self-lost in meditation. You can nowhere find his like in all the three worlds. In order to free the land from her chains Aurobindo has broken through the glamour of Western civilisation, renounced all worldly comfort, and now as a son of the Mother he has taken charge of the *Bande Mataram*. He is the Bhavananda, Jivananda, Dhirananda of Rishi Bankim, all in one.

You, fellow-countrymen, touch no more those bloated, whining, Moderate papers servilely echoing their master's voice. This Aurobindo's Word will flood our breasts with cascades of patriotism; provide the impetus to the country's service. The words of the *Bande Mataram* will drive out your fear, steel your arms with the might of thunder; fire will course through your veins; death will put on a face of spring-time splendour. The mantric power of the *Bande Mataram* will expel the venom of Anglomania; the infirmities sapping the national stamina will be things of the past. You will come to realise that those rifles and guns, jails and tribunals, governors and viceroys are so many empty nothings. The *feringhi*'s frown and threat, rage and roar will vanish like an evil dream.

True, he has had his education in England, but he has not succumbed to its bewitching spell. An efflorescence of the glory of his country's *swadharmā* and culture, Aurobindo is now at the feet of the Motherland, as a fresh-blown lotus of autumn, aglow with the devotion of his self-offering. Oh, was there ever its like? Aurobindo is no fop sprung from the vulgarities of an alien way of life. That is why, a true son of the Mother, he has set up the Bhawani Temple. There, bow down to the Mother, with the mantra of 'Bande Mataram'. Swaraj is now no far-off event.¹⁵

(To be continued)

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A great critic has pronounced that the aim of all truly helpful criticism is to see the object as it really is. The Press is the sole contemporary critic of politics, and according as its judgments are sound or unsound, the people whose political ideas it forms, will be likely to prosper or fail. It is therefore somewhat unfortunate that the tendency of journalists should be to see the object not as it really is, but as they would like it to be. In a country like England this may not greatly matter; but in India, whose destinies are in the balance, and at a time when a straw might turn the scale, it is of the gravest importance that no delusion, however specious or agreeable, should be allowed to exist. Yet in the face of this necessity, the Indian Press seems eager to accept even the flimsiest excuse for deluding itself.

Sri Aurobindo

[From ‘India and the British Parliament’. Published in *Indu Prakash* on 26 June 1893.]

(Bande Mataram, CWSA, Vol. 6, p. 7)

VISIONS AND VOICES

(Continued from the issue of June 2013)

ON THE EVE OF THE COMING RHYTHM

A NIGHT burdened with many secret treasures, but covered with many layers of dreadful darknesses, was the beginning. Then layer after layer of the darkness began to feel, to answer to a touch of burning inward light and it revealed, it turned into something that it was apparently not. A series of darknesses, different in shade and colour, emerged out of this burning travail. First was the rhythmic dumb mighty material trance, a tenebrous womb of complete night. Then came another rhythm, a darkness of grey clouds, and that obscure vigil took form in the plant world. Thirdly, a dim emergence, a rhythm of starlit shadow, the animal world. And then there came a moon movement in the darkness, there came the epicycloidal movement of mind revolving as on a pivot around the involved supermind, a lesser circle turning on an arc of that greater hidden circle. And now what we see is the last whirlings of the mind moon pale and languorous in a vast and bewildering sky because she has seen, silently announced by a ray of the star of hope, Hesperus, the approach of her Lord, because she has heard a far-off hint of the foot-falls of his coming. Though she knows it is her Lord who approaches, yet is she shy of meeting him in her borrowed garments of light, and therefore she resists and recedes from what she wishes, falls back on her own deficiencies and by her trepidations and sinkings seems to labour to put off the birth it was always her mission to precede and prepare. Already the East is reddening with the Dawn, — Dawn the eternal handmaid of the pink and rosy blushes, who at every moment of her life, at every step of her constant journey, goes ahead of truth, clearing and rending the darknesses — her advent a sure sign of the approaching Lord, the rising Sun of Truth. The Sun of Truth shall burst open into the vast sky and the entire manifestation beginning from now dead matter pulsate with a luminosity that is at once power and joy.

The immediate rhythm that is waiting to appear here on this earth will make of man a passive channel for its vibrant and luminous play. And when it has fully descended, his illumined body and physical consciousness will be a source of puissant calm on which various other and supraphysical harmonies will be sounded. His body will not as before be a cause of fatigue, sleep, hunger, disease and death. At every moment it will be felt releasing out of its calmness that is strength a series of impulses strong with light and capable of carrying out that towards which they started. Now all his efforts and movements are perverted by ignorance, brought up by a check before they are completed and return baffled upon themselves, but then

they will be unimpeded and luminous with knowledge. The self-revolving movements of the tired and exhausted mind and the mind itself will be entirely swallowed up by the thousand rays of the Sun of Truth, and there will be left only a bright disc with a power to pass on the rays of the Sun as they come without any diminution or distortion either of their power or of their light. This all from body up to mind with all their infinite intricacies and complications will be transmuted into the best possible channels and instruments of the supreme Truth and Beauty and stripped of their ignorance, egoism, incoherence, isolation. Different men will be conscious channels for different intents and purposes. This is but a small indication of that coming larger harmony — a key also to the present various and conflicting rhythms.

DANGERS IN SADHANA

Two kinds of movements only are left open to the *sadhakas* of the yoga — one towards the higher and another towards the lower being and nature. To remain in one place and to stagnate there is an impossibility for any *sadhaka*. Even when he seems to stagnate, it is only either to rest in the hands of the higher and gather strength for a further step in the beyond or to rest in the hands of the lower for a further step downwards, losing some more of his already gained strength and light.

The nature of the objects of desire of a *sadhaka* will explain more clearly the dangers to which he is liable. When one desires an object, — particularly if it is the desire for union with another soul, — it is to be seen definitely and clearly whether that soul or individual being has his potentialities, capacities, tendencies turned towards the higher or towards the lower or ordinary common life. Those who are not *sadhakas* generally move either lower and lower in the scales of existence or turn in the one plane in which they live in wider and wider circles or vegetate at one point neither widening nor moving high or low. To be drawn towards such individuals is a clear indication of tendency or tendencies that act or make an attempt to act in the *sadhaka*.

The lower forces when they move towards forces that are higher than themselves, march always calmly with folded hands and with genuine reverence. But when an imperfect *sadhaka* feels tendencies towards the lower forces, he always goes towards them blindfolded and very often makes a rash, unhesitating and helpless surrender. It is supposed and truly that the *sadhaka's* fall is most often sudden, precipitate and tremendous and the collapse causes grievous hurt which takes time to become again whole. Forces are awake and at work around him gifted with powers and a strength which it is difficult for him to detect and counter. He is a bold and seeing, an ascending *sadhaka*, who with the help of higher powers is able to rightly manage these variously moving forces of overwhelming strength.

The *sadhaka* must take the necessary care and caution to see clearly the several

directions of the variously moving, clamorous and complex lower forces to be able to be steady, unflinching, and fixed to the higher aims that are found in him. Dark clouds of lower forces that move downwards in several streams, will come and stand in between his half-seeing eyes and the object of his sight and make him feel confused for a while or longer, as though lost in a trackless wide ocean covered by a dark sky. *Sadhakas* must be able to generate in their being heat and light and luminous flames to disperse those thundering dark clouds.

The greater the height on which the *sadhaka* happens to be, the greater and more hurtful would be the fall if he continues still to depend on his own strength as he did when he began the *sadhana*. The more he ascends, the more must be the willing surrender to the Highest towards which he is destined and less and less the dependence on himself and his powers, if he wishes to avoid dangers and pitfalls, which are innumerable on the way.

THE SECRET OF THE PHYSICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Behind the higher mind, the mind, — *manas*, *chitta* — *prana* and body, there is the strength of the physical consciousness. The womb of physical consciousness is always in travail to bring out the Something that is behind all these things — to bring it out in its various true forms and types which are immortal, luminous and eternal.

The *pranic* force delivered out of matter fails in its creation and mutilates the types; then the physical consciousness confers upon the *pranic* force the release of death and gives a new birth to it, opens to it a fresh trial in another manner. The anxiety of this consciousness to preserve the types with which the *pranic* force is endowed is actively visible in the instinctive force of self-preservation. Its preying upon others in order that it may continue to live and its effort to defend itself against other contrary forces are the principal forms that are taken by this instinctive process of self-preservation. Here is the place of the theory of “the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest”. Both these ideas express a partial truth, but their true truth lies in the spiritual fact behind the physical manifestation. It is this that the true and right type-seed which came out of the womb of physical consciousness, will alone survive among the many possibles, and it endures till the fragrant flower of the truth within it blossoms in a perfect form of the physical existence.

The several truth-seeds are several distinct type-seeds. They are the concentrated, gathered and involved knowledge-will of an infinite and vast consciousness. They have therefore in them a law and a power of growing into their original states of being. The process of involution presupposes a process of evolution. Each truth-seed grows constantly in power and extension by a distinct instinct of self-reproduction which is seen in one form or another in all living things from plant to man.

In the world of mind, the physical consciousness preserves the type-seeds chiefly by the strong instinct of conservation. Even when the mind makes an attempt at a forward step, there comes clouding around it a thick vapoury smoke of doubt. That doubt springs from the dim partiality of the mind's envisaging of the truth beyond. There is then a battle between the forces that preserve already existing types and the forces that discover new types. The latter are very often overbalanced by the former. But the tender new truth, the type-seed, grows in strength and extension outside the pale of the old established order of things, in the end either to devour it and be stronger or to transform it and grow richer.

The physical consciousness everywhere acts as the force that holds together. Out of it originates an instinct for order, law, rhythm, the *dharma*. The multiple truths will finally be revealed by the physical consciousness in their multiple order and rhythm which will be a free, vast and integral *dharma*, a non-clashing, a harmonious, spontaneous, inalienable interplay of movements of beauty, truth and light ever vibrant with power and joy.

The physical consciousness in its psychic movement is very near to the images of truth. The dark and concealed sense in plants, the covert and accurate instinct in animals and the stray flashing intuitions that come to man, are all psychic aspects of physical consciousness in its various grades and phases. If man is to discover any new and enduring truth-order, it must be only by the many concrete powers of the psychic consciousness in its most highly developed and transformed order and degree of status and action. The ever-enduring forms of the truth-seeds are seen by the psychic vision, not of a dark and lower, but of a higher and more illumined nature; they are established by the pure and lucent powers of the higher psychic consciousness, and they are set in motion by the energies of an ever-moving higher Life.

(To be continued)

AMRITA

(Visions and Voices, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1954, pp. 39-57)

I do not wish to argue the question of the existence or nonexistence of Yogic siddhis; for it is not with me a question of debate, or of belief and disbelief, since I know by daily experience that they exist.

Sri Aurobindo

(Essays Divine and Human, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 14)

SWEET MOTHER — LOVE INCARNATE

EVEN as a child of about thirteen, the Mother was aware of her great mission. In Paris, France, she used to see in her visions, for months at a stretch, that she had taken a huge form, shooting up into the sky and well above the city, wearing a magnificent golden robe . . . that spread around the city like an immense roof. Then she saw a sea of people “men, women, children, old men, the sick, the unfortunate coming out from every side; they would gather under the outspread robe, begging for help, telling of their miseries, their suffering, their hardships. In reply, the robe, supple and alive, would extend towards each one of them individually, and as soon as they had touched it, they were comforted or healed, and went back into their bodies happier and stronger than they had come out of them.” (Prayer of February 22, 1914)

The Mother’s *Prayers and Meditations* reveals clearly as daylight her aim and mission in this terrestrial existence. She had descended upon this dark inconscient earth for the redemption of mankind and that was possible by the transforming power of her love. Man is too weak to attempt to change all by himself, and so the Mother voluntarily took up on herself the responsibility to do even the sadhana for all her children, young and old. Time and again we read in the pages of *Prayers* the Mother praying intensely to make her “the fire of love”, etc. so that she could effectively carry out her mission of transforming man and earth.

Sri Aurobindo Ashram is the creation of the Mother, and it blossomed by the sweet sap of her Love. She willingly accepted the responsibility of doing the sadhana for her blind unconscious children, and in order to remain close to them she gave a number of Darshans during the day. She went to the Playground, the Tennis Ground and the Sportsground to be with them for as long as she could. She called her children on their birthdays as she saw that they were more conscious and open on that particular day. Trustees and the heads of departments went to her to keep her informed about their work, and also to receive from her valued instructions and suggestions for the better performing of their duties. The Mother accepted the invitation to visit various departments, paddy fields and farms, poultries and dairies, etc., and also graced by her presence individual private houses when invited. She was omnipresent, just to be close to her children and pour her love on them incessantly, hoping that one day they may yearn for Light and Truth.

Darshans

In those golden days, the Mother used to give a number of Darshans during the day: Balcony Darshan, Terrace Darshan, Blessings Darshan in the Meditation Hall, Staircase Darshan, Window Darshan etc.

Balcony Darshan

Our life revolved around the Mother. She was the sun whose warm rays awakened her children to yearn for the light and to remain in close proximity with her divine presence. Her children, small and not so small, tried to discipline themselves to get up early in the morning to rush to the Balcony street, Rue St. Gilles, to have the Mother's Darshan at 6.15 a.m. Some aspirants came from quite a distance to have an early glimpse of her. One of my acquaintances came walking all the way from Le Faucheur, an Ashram farm, which is about five kilometres away from town. He would walk down from there, attend the Balcony Darshan, have his breakfast at the Dining Hall, and return for work, walking. Life without her had no meaning; work without her was a painful labour. She was the be-all and end-all of our existence, the source of our strength, the light that guided us through darkness to the brighter pastures.

Way back in the year 1946, when I was in Dortoir, the only boarding existing at the time, our guardian coaxed us to get ready early in the morning and took us for the Balcony Darshan. I was then a child of eight. We were repeatedly requested to remain quiet and not to move around the place and make noise. But children are children, how long can they remain quiet? On any pretext, we would burst into laughter or just do some *khatpat* or *chhatpat*. Our elders who were quietly standing or sitting with closed eyes waiting for the Mother's arrival would all on a sudden open wide their eyes and signal to us to behave ourselves, by placing the index finger over their mouth. We would at once stop fidgeting for the moment and try to be good children.

The Mother's arrival on the Balcony was quite dramatic. Aspirants at once got up from their sitting position and stood, all attention, in a *namaskar* posture, looking up at the Mother. Those who were standing with eyes closed, raised up their heads, palms folded.

We the children just imitated our elders. Being mischievous and a dullard, I prayed intensely to the Mother, "Douce Mère, make me a true child of yours. Help me to become a good student", etc. From time to time I would open my eyes and watch the elderly aspirants around me. Almost all of them were looking up at the Mother, some with closed eyes, praying seriously and sincerely. I too tried to be sincere and serious.

Balcony Darshan was a training to look up towards the Light, towards the sky and beyond, away from the narrow, dark and sordid round of ordinary life towards a wider, brighter and nobler existence. It was a Darshan to awaken men from their slumber. A wake-up call, a clarion call, "Rise up from your unconscious torpor and run towards the Light, towards the luminous future." And Light and Beauty stood there at the Balcony, all radiant with a sweet smile, the smile that disperses all gloom and darkness like the clouds that beat a quick retreat as the sun throws out its shafts of light.

Terrace Darshan

There were two Terrace Darshans. The Mother used to come to the terrace of Dyumanbhai's room and play with crows and feed them. Devotees gathered in the Ashram courtyard to watch the Mother's love and care bestowed even upon the crows. There was a second Terrace Darshan, when she used to go up on the second-floor terrace of her apartments and walk up and down.

The Blessings Darshan

The Blessings Darshan used to be held in the Meditation Hall, which began at 9.30 a.m. The Mother distributed flowers to all the members of the Ashram, aspirants, devotees and students etc. She sat on a high-backed chair around which were kept several neatly arranged vases of lovely fragrant flowers. This is the spot where there is now a large framed photograph of the Mother taken at a special Darshan — the Kali Puja Blessings. Sadhaks and aspirants sat in the Meditation Hall and watched with rapt attention the Mother's every movement and actions, and tried to read some meaning into them: why did the Mother smile at some, and not at others? Why did she go into trance when certain individuals came in front of her and were fortunate to remain in her sweet presence for a longer period of time? Why she did not smile at them, whether they had committed some wrong action that disappointed her? etc. etc. And they wrote letters to Sri Aurobindo praying for his explanation to the Mother's gesture. The Master gently warned them not to read superficially into the Mother's actions and fabricate stories.

The Staircase Darshan

There were two Staircase Darshans: the staircase in the Meditation Hall that leads to a small rectangular space at the top from where there is an access to Sri Aurobindo's Room on the right and to the Mother's Room on the left. The Mother used to give her darshan and blessings standing here. Incidentally, I had my first darshan of the Mother at this very place. Way back in April 1946 I arrived in Pondy, and after I had a bath, my sisters, Sushilaben and Kalaben, took me straight to have the Mother's Darshan. The door at the top of the staircase was open and I could see the Mother standing, all aglow with a sweet smile. I was too young to understand the significance of this auspicious moment, but I had a feeling that I was climbing towards a glorious light. I just fell at her feet. She tenderly lifted me up and softly stroked my head saying something I could not understand, but felt the tender touch of her loving words that lifted me to ecstasy. After the Staircase Darshan I was taken to the Dortoir.

The second Staircase Darshan was when the Mother came down from the staircase adjacent to Nirod-da's room. Before going to play tennis at 4 p.m. she

distributed flowers to some aspirants who had assembled there. This was an unique distribution; the Mother picked a flower from a dish held by a sadhak and threw it at the devotees. They were supposed to be vigilant enough to catch it, that is to grab the Grace, I presume.

Beginning with the Balcony Darshan in the early morning to various other Darshans during the day, the Mother devoted all her precious time and energy for all her children to awaken them from their torpor. Speaking of Darshan, there were four other major Darshans: February 21 — the Mother's birthday, April 24 — the Mother's final arrival in Pondicherry, August 15 — Sri Aurobindo's birthday, and November 24 — the Siddhi Day. On these four major Darshan days, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother sat on a sofa, the Mother sitting on the right side of the Master. A static Brahman, majestic, quiet and still, Sri Aurobindo gazed in front towards the steady line of aspirants who passed by in front of him, without even blinking. It seemed he was in deep trance with eyes open. The Mother, on the other hand, looked radiant with loving smiles, an incarnation of love and beauty. Bestowing a sweet smile of recognition on some, a nod of appreciation on others, the Mother looked at each and every one of her children who filed passed in front of her with loving attention. Being the dynamic Mother of all, she wrapped her children in her compassionate and caring gaze.

What is Darshan? In religious or spiritual parlance 'Darshan' means to realise the Divine, to see and meet Him physically, or spiritually. How fortunate we were to have the Darshan of the living and visible twin Avatars of the New Age!

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had descended upon the earth for a great mission; to pave the way for the descent of the Supermind into the very earth-consciousness which is at present steeped in dark inconscience. It is in this darkness, falsehood and unconsciousness that they have planted the seed of the Supermind which will gradually grow into a golden tree of Light, Truth and Consciousness, and its roots will spread far and wide throughout the length and breadth of the earth and transform Matter. Fortunate are we to be present at this Hour of God and that too at the very Gates of Heaven.

To hasten the work of world-transformation the Mother chose to remain close to her children right from morning till late evening. She was eager to have all her children participate in this stupendous mission.

The Mother in the Playground

The Mother went to play tennis in the Tennis Ground at 4 p.m. After playing an hour of tennis she came to the Playground, where she devoted a good deal of her precious time and energy. It is interesting to note that the Mother kept the children as well as the adults engaged by conducting French classes. A translation class for the adults was held in the hall adjacent to her resting room. The Mother translated

Sri Aurobindo's works into French and the elders wrote the translated version in their notebooks.

The Mother conducted French classes for children in the Guest House which is located on the western side of the Playground. She sat on a chair and the children sat around her in a semi-circle. One day she took dictation class, translation class another day, and yet another day she would recount stories.

Gradually, many other students, small as well as big, were interested in joining these classes and the Guest House courtyard was too small to accommodate them. So the Mother started taking these classes in the Playground. She sat on a chair placed in front of the map of India and children and adults sat around her in a semi-circle. (These were the 'Wednesday classes'.) Even the children's parents and relatives and many others who could not understand a word of French got the benefit of sitting there and watching with rapt attention and devotion the Mother conducting these classes. At the end of these teaching sessions which were held twice a week, there used to be meditation for about half an hour, meditating solely upon the subject discussed that particular day.

Prior to these French classes and meditations, Dada [Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, who was in charge of the physical education activities] used to take Gymnastic Marching daily for adults. At 7.15 p.m. Dada called "Rassemblement" for the senior group. The members of other groups who were willing to join it were welcome. The Playground used to look full and lively with a good number of participants doing exercises as commanded in French by Dada. The Mother stood in front of the map to take salute during the March Past. After the March Past the Mother went into her resting room, where she met some persons who had prior permission to see her. While the Mother was occupied with meeting people, Dada proceeded with the Gymnastic Marching. There used to be a short concentration after the exercises were over, the Mother standing in front of the map and the group members standing around her in a semi-circle in their own respective groups.

After the group activities were over, the Mother used to distribute either pieces of coconut with jaggery or toffees or roasted groundnuts to the group members. Members of each group stood in two rows facing each other. The Mother with some helpers would walk between these two rows and distribute the prasada to a member standing on the right side and then to a member standing on the left side, and so on she proceeded distributing to each group and each member all round the Playground, always with a sweet and loving smile. Then, later on, due to indifferent health, the Mother continued this after-group distribution sitting in front of the map.

I would like to relate a few incidents that show the Mother's keen capacity to detect each one's problems and difficulties, reflecting her deep concern for her children.

Often I injured myself while playing or involving myself in some monkey tricks. Lest the Mother catch me limping or observe an unusual sign, I just skipped

going to her during the after-group distribution of prasad. Once I sprained my ankle while playing basketball. I tried to walk as normally as possible, but the Mother at once detected a slight limp and she enquired,

“Are you hurt?”

“Mother, while playing basketball I sprained my ankle,” I was forced to reveal; and she advised me with loving concern, “Be more alert and conscious, then you will be able to avoid injuries.”

Once I had an excruciating pain in the hip joint. There was a marked limp in my walk. The Mother at once noticed my problem. After ascertaining the cause she decided that I should take a piece of cheese and an extra cup of milk. Daily Ravindraji gave me a large piece of cheese and from the Dining Hall I got an extra cup of milk, as instructed by the Mother. That was not all — the Mother called Hriday-da (Dada’s brother), who was present in the Playground, and told him to give me physiotherapy treatment. Daily Hriday-da made me sit in hot water and the level of water in the tub used to be upto my stomach or chest. After 10 to 15 minutes of bath, he used to give me a good massage and then made me do a few exercises. In a couple of weeks I was completely cured of my problem.

On another occasion, while playing football, I fractured my ulnar bone, just above the wrist joint. The bone was set by Dr. Sanyal and a cast was put. Then I was taken to the Playground for the Mother’s blessings and prasad. On my way to the Playground I was feeling terribly drowsy due to the effect of the anaesthesia and my hand was causing me unbearable pain. I was in great agony. Someone held me gently and directed me towards the Mother, who was seated in front of the map. Her sweet smile acted as a balm. Gently, lovingly, she caressed my fractured arm and enquired from me the reason for the accident. She advised me to be more conscious and concentrated and encouraged me, saying that I would soon get cured. I went home feeling happy and the pain became more and more bearable.

Once during the daily distribution of prasad after the evening’s group activities, I was late for the distribution and stood in the line meant for the older group. The Mother stood in front of me, a bit surprised. Surprised, because firstly, I was standing in an unusual group and secondly, I asked for a smaller quantity of groundnuts. There were three sizes of ladles; large, medium and small. Group members had to name the size of ladle from which they wished to have groundnuts. I always used to ask for the large one. I had to give the explanation for the twin surprises: “Mother, as I was very hungry I had my dinner earlier and so I got late for distribution. And as my stomach is full I am asking for less groundnuts.” Satisfied with my answer, the Mother affectionately poured into my cupped palms the small ladle-full of groundnuts.

Nothing escaped her eagle-eyed survey. I have related with humble gratitude a few incidents revealing her deep concern and love for her child. All those who have come in contact with the Mother, children as well as adults, surely have some

incidents to relate about her love and care.

The Playground was used for many activities. Apart from gymnastics, body-building exercise, weightlifting and yogasana classes, other programmes too were organised there; talks, dances and plays, magic shows and feats of strength, film shows etc. The first and second December programmes were held in the Playground before the Sportsground and the Theatre became available. A stage used to be erected on the western end of the ground where the annual cultural programme of December 1 used to be performed, and the physical demonstration programme was held on December 2.

The Mother sat and watched both these programmes with a lot of interest. In fact, she was the motive force behind the cultural programmes performed on the stage. She would give suggestions on direction, acting, costumes, on stage décor and management, etc. etc.

Christmas too used to be celebrated in the Playground when the number of aspirants and children was small. Then as the number increased, the Festival of Love and Joy was shifted to the Theatre where it is still celebrated with a lot of enthusiasm and fervour. The Mother sat on a chair all radiant with smiles, distributing presents to her children. The Christmas tree was decorated with multi-coloured balloons, and it sparkled with rainbow-coloured festoons. The Mother sat beside the glowing tree and the Playground turned into a fairyland of love, beauty and joy.

Birthdays have a special place in the Ashram. The Mother gave a lot of importance to this day, because she saw that a person was more conscious and open to receive her Grace on his birthday. The Playground was one of the places where she showered her love and blessings on the birthday-*wallahs*.

The Mother devoted more than three hours of her precious time in the Playground alone in order to remain close to her children for as long a period as was possible. It was here that aspirants had easy access to the Mother for her advice and help. People used to approach her with all their petty problems and difficulties, and the Mother would console some, caress others and some others she would wrap in her loving arms to lessen the burden of their agony. In her book *Prayers and Meditations* the Mother prays:

Mother Divine . . . All the earth is in our arms like a sick child who must be cured and for whom one has a special affection because of his very weakness.
(October 14, 1914)

Man is sick and weak and the Mother has willingly accepted the responsibility to cure him by the transforming Power of her love.

The Mother in the Tennis Ground

When the Mother went to play tennis at the Tennis Ground at 4 p.m. she came down from the staircase adjacent to Nirod-da's room.

It was during this Staircase Darshan at 4 p.m. that we had the Mother's Darshan and Blessings before going to play football matches with local teams, either in our ground or else in some local grounds. Once seeing my bare feet she enquired whether I had a pair of football shoes, and said, "If you do not have one, then get it made at Harpagon." The Mother gave a smile of satisfaction when I assured her that I did have them.

In those days Harpagon used to make football shoes for members who had the Mother's sanction. It also made white canvas shoes with crepe soles for all the members of P.E.D., and also provided running shoes and spikes to the members who had the sanction.

The Mother entered the Tennis Ground from the main gate and the car stopped near the gate of the Tennis Courts. Devotees gathered there to have her Darshan, and to watch her play. Now, some time in the year 1954, my father presented me an elegant imported Raleigh cycle. I was asked to show the grand new vehicle to the Mother and receive her blessings. The best place to show her was at the Tennis Ground. While cycling up the slope of the ground, I lost control of the cycle and its front wheel dashed against the entrance gate and the vehicle's handle got bent on one side. Someone standing nearby came to my rescue and straightened the handle. Excited and a bit nervous, I waited for the Mother's arrival. Finally, she came, appreciated my sparkling cycle by gently caressing it, and advised me to take proper care of it. In the beginning, for quite some months I cleaned it often in a day. I used to wipe it after cycling even a little distance. Anyway, that cycle is still giving me service. Naturally, except for its original frame, all the other parts and accessories have been changed. The Mother gave due importance even to little things. She said that you have no right to use a thing if you cannot take care of it.

The Mother played tennis for about an hour, demonstrating to her devotees that age is no bar in the pursuit of physical education. She was then 70-75 years of age. She laid emphasis on sports activities, keeping in view the fact that a strong, healthy, supple and vibrant body has the capacity and endurance to walk on the rugged path of Yoga.

At times, after playing tennis, the Mother, accompanied by Dada, walked up and down on the sands of the sea beach for some time and then went to the Playground. By the way, at that time there was a spacious sandy beach and we used to play catching game, *kabaddi*, *rumal chor* etc. We also used to run and walk on the beach upto the old pier or else upto Park Guest House and run back as part of our endurance training. Often my friends and I went to the Tennis Ground early in the morning and massaged each other with mustard oil provided by Dada to the

group members. After the massage session was over we used to lie down on the sand and enjoy a sunbath. We then sat where the sea water lapped on the shore and smeared the cold wet sand on our body and finally went for a swim and some 'surf-riding'. Those were the days of a carefree life and great fun.

Let me come back to the story of the Mother in the Tennis Ground. Apart from the two tennis courts, the Tennis Ground has a boxing ring and a wrestling pit, two sand pits for the jump items, two basketball courts and an area for volleyball. On special occasions, the Mother graced these sports activities by her presence. The athletics competitions were held in the Tennis Ground before the Sportsground came into existence. Jumps and throws, 100m run and hurdles etc. were held in the ground complex, while the other running and walking items were held on the sea-front road. Once, while a discus throw competition was going on, a competitor inadvertently threw the discus out of the angle of the marked area, and the missile was heading straight towards the Mother. One of the spectators volunteered to take the impact of the flying saucer. The brave person escaped with a mild injury.

Quite often basketball matches with local teams used to be organised in the Tennis Ground. These matches were held on Sundays at about 6.30 a.m., and a good number of group members and others would come to watch these matches. There was a lot of interest and excitement.

When the Ashram got the Sportsground, most of the games, tournaments and the athletics competition were held there.

The Mother in the Sportsground

The Mother took keen interest in all the activities of life. During the athletics season, she used to be present at the Sportsground to watch her children in action. In those bygone days, all the groups took part in a particular sports discipline. For instance, during the month of April there used to be athletics competition. The officials would organise different grades of groups according to the capacity of each group member. Say, for instance, for the 100m race, athletes, boys and girls as well as elders would be placed in different groups according to their timing. So it would be a mixed group. Imagine a child of 13-15 years running with Nolini-da! In the same way, groupings were made for the throws and jumps. The athletics season lasted for two whole months.

The Sportsground and all the children were blessed by the Mother's presence. She came to watch and also to oversee each item organised for the day. For instance, the items chosen for the day were shot put, long jump, hurdles, and 100m race. The Mother sat and watched each throw and jump item, and after these items were over she wrote down the results of these two events in a notebook. For the running, walking and hurdles events, she stood at the finish line, holding a tape at a post on the western side, while someone else held it on the eastern side. Again after the

running events the Mother noted down the results.

The Sportsground used to be alive with spectators. Almost all the Ashram members and the parents and relatives of children would be present there especially to have the Mother's Darshan. It used to be a festival of love and joy. The athletes tried to perform their level best because the Mother was present. She was the source of inspiration for all, athletes as well as spectators.

Once there was a shot put competition. I was the youngest among the participants in Group 1. Due to nervousness I got disqualified in my first two attempts. I was terribly worried because if I failed to qualify in the third attempt then I would be out of the competition. When the third throw was in progress, I looked at the Mother and prayed to spare me from being disqualified in my last attempt so that I might be one of the three participants to qualify for the three extra throws. All on a sudden, I saw the Mother's eyes focusing on me and a sweet smile of assurance flickered on her face. There was a sudden surge of warmth of inspiration in the body and my third attempt in shot put was an effortless throw which fell way ahead of the other competitors — an Ashram record. I heard a thunderous round of applause all around me and I looked at the Mother, she too was clapping. To perform well was a great joy, but greater was the happiness to receive the Mother's heart-elevating appreciation.

The Mother sat on a chair and her attendants sat on mats around her. Once, while doing pole vault, I fell in the sandpit in a sitting posture with my legs stretched in front and a good amount of sand spilt outside the sandpit. The Mother must have found it extremely funny and I saw her burst out in hearty laughter. At that time, I had an elephantine bulk and that falling posture must have looked very comical.

The Mother's very presence enlivened the whole Sportsground with a glow of beauty, love and joy abundant. And the starry-eyed tiny tots brought more sparkling glow to the ground. It was a treat to watch these little cherubim waiting for the arrival of the Mother's car and fall at her feet as soon as she stepped out of her vehicle. Her soft loving touch, eagerly aspired for, simply transported them to ecstasy and they ran about the ground in glee.

On special occasions, the Mother watched basketball, volleyball and football matches. Once the famous football club of Bengal, Mohanbagan, had come to Pondicherry and played with the Ashram team. The Mother appreciated the artistic football played by the visitors.

The construction work of the swimming pool was completed in 1957. By that time the Mother had reduced considerably her coming out of the Ashram due to indifferent health. But she inaugurated the swimming pool on her birthday, 21st February, 1957. She sat on the deck of the pool and saw displays of diving and life-saving, swimming and swimming formations performed by the group members.

The Mother attended the annual physical demonstration programme held in the Sportsground on December 2. The ground was full of group members participating in the demonstration. Although it was the period of the annual holidays, most of the

group members stayed back to be able to participate in the programme. The Mother watched the entire programme. Even heavy downpour of rain did not dampen the enthusiasm of the participants and the spectators, because the Mother was present amidst them. The Sportsground glowed with light, the drills and exercises performed in accompaniment with lively melodious music which enlivened the events. Harmonious and graceful drills combined with powerful and vigorous demonstration of gymnastics, acrobatics and feats of strength etc. involving strength, courage, timing and balance of the body enthralled the spectators. The ground reverberated with thunderous rounds of applause after the performance of each item.

The Mother encouraged her children to participate in sports activities with a definite purpose; to try to be conscious of the inner working of the body, to bring consciousness in the very cells of the body. We could say that sports in the Ashram is Yoga of the physical being, to train the body keeping in mind that it is a temple wherein dwells the Divine, and that the structure must be kept clean and strong, the body made supple and vibrant to withstand the rigours of Yoga.

The Mother Gave Her Children a Chance to Change

The Mother had infinite patience to bear her children's mistakes, weaknesses and crookedness. She was the Mother of all and had voluntarily accepted the burden of man's dark nature, and tried to transform it. Hers was an all-encompassing forgiveness in the hope that one day her children may yearn to change for the better. I was a notorious boy, not that I am not today, but the Mother's love and grace have minimised and reduced to quite an extent the intensity and gravity of my notoriety. I was staying in Dortoir, the only boarding existing in those early days. Dortoir came into existence in 1945 and I joined it a year later, in 1946. There was a set of basic rules we were asked to follow; for instance, not to mix with strangers, not to venture beyond the canal on the West; if one wanted to go for an outing or picnic, one had to take the Mother's permission; going to see films in the local theatres was strictly forbidden. But going to see films was what I did: I would sneak out of the boarding, watch a film and come back late in the night. The main door of the boarding used to be locked, so I would enter from the Guest House door — luckily for me it used to remain open — quietly climb the flight of steps leading to the wall that partitioned Dortoir from the Playground, stealthily get into the boarding and quietly get into my bed. I was alerted a number of times by my boarding mates, and got warning signals from my guardian, but it fell on deaf ears.

Daily the Mother used to give Blessings Darshan at 9.30 a.m. in the Meditation Hall. Ashramites as well as students went to her in a queue to receive flowers and blessings from her. One day, as I neared the Mother, I saw the Mother in her fierce and angry Kali-form instead of the usual sweet loving one. Severely, she told me, "Meet Ravindra." Only two words did she utter, but they were packed with the

force of two hundred frightening sentences. Ravindra-ji was the chief guardian of Dortoir. He lived in the Ashram premises, but he used to come to the boarding to keep an eye on the mischievous boys that we were. The rule was “not to waste food, to ask for only as much as you can eat.” But at times some dishes were unpalatable, so we used to put the foodstuff we did not relish in our pockets and kept our plates clean. That way we could avoid being scolded by Ravindra-ji, but at the expense of spoiling our shorts. He also used to supervise us when we studied at night and if he found us inattentive or doing some mischief he made us stand before a wall and sometimes in anger he would bang our head against the wall to make us more alert and concentrated and. . . . So that was Ravindra-ji in my eyes. And now Mother’s order was: “Meet Ravindra.”

With a lot of trepidation I approached Ravindra-ji. I was expecting a fierce scolding and some solid slaps from him as punishment, but instead he said in a firm voice, “The Mother wants you to stay with your mother. You have to leave Dortoir.” The punishment of being thrown out of the boarding was more painful than the volleys of scolding and slaps. The load of guilt was difficult to bear. But the gracious Mother had not abandoned her child totally. Yes, she showed me the way out of the boarding, but not out of her Ashram. She gave her child, a wayward child, a chance to change.

Study was never my calling. I had a constitutional allergy to it. Somehow my mind was hard as a walnut shell, and my grey matter as dry as the matter inside that shell. Studying science and mathematics were to me like entering a labyrinth blindfolded. History and geography were too boring with their host of names and dates to memorise. The moment after I finished reading anything it slipped out of my mind. I remembered nothing, nothing would register in my mind. It was totally dull and dumb. One day Nirod-da advised me, “Babu, you are unable to concentrate on your studies, better take up some work in a department, that way at least you will be able to serve the Mother . . .” He was right. I was willing to accept his advice, but then, as usual, the teacher’s good advice just slipped out of my mind. Luckily for me, I did have some interest in literature and philosophy. I loved poetry, but then to memorise a poem was a Herculean task — my mind was blank, it retained nothing. What to do? I prayed fervently to the Mother to do something about it. One day, seeing the poor results in my annual exams, Pavitra-da requested me to take some work instead of wasting my time in school. I enquired from him whether the Mother wanted me to leave my studies. Pavitra-da was honest enough to admit that it was his personal request. The matter ended there.

Months and years passed and I went on to complete the Higher Course. My subjects were literature, philosophy and Sri Aurobindo’s major works. I enjoyed them immensely. Finally, the Mother’s loving Grace had cracked the hard shell of my brain and made some way for her Light to enter. Her Love and Grace are infinite.

The Mother also reached out to her children who lived in far-off places, either

in India or abroad, by means of her occult powers. All on a sudden, in the midst of Prasad Distribution in the Playground or during the Flower Distribution in the Meditation Hall, the Mother went quite often into trance. She explained that her going into trance all on a sudden was the result of an urgent call, an S.O.S. from some aspirant praying for her help and grace. In her childhood vision the Mother's robe of love spread around the city of Paris, and the sufferings and miseries of people used to vanish by the touch of this love-robe. Today the robe has spread throughout the world, and silently her regenerating power of love is preparing the ground for the world-transformation, paving the way for the establishment of the Life Divine upon earth.

ARVINDBABU

The desire for the Divine or of bhakti for the Divine is the one desire which can free one from all the others — at the core it is not a desire, but an aspiration, a soul need, the breath of existence of the inmost being and as such it cannot be counted among desires.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Mother with Letters on the Mother, CWSA, Vol. 32, p. 476)

POEMS AND PRAYERS

I DO NOT KNOW

I do not know Thy Name, O Thou who art,
When Thy armour of death and these dreadful feet
Trample the white calm of my praying heart . . .
I do not know.
But I am the bleeding hill of Thy defeat,
O Mask, of all Thy doom.

I do not know, O One, Thy Name of Light
When Thy swift little feet, touches of the Sun,
Fall on me chasing the retreating night . . .
I do not know.
But I am Thy path of this victorious run
And of triumphs that loom.

I do not know Thee, Lord, but I am Thou,
O Giant Warrior behind the death-black shield,
O Radiant One to whom all meadows bow! . . .
I do not know.
I am the mystery on Thy Battlefield . . .
I only bloom.

THE SERVICE TREE AT THE SAMADHI

O Thou faithful bearer of the rusty shields,
Holy Service Tree!
Thy fragrant blessings on my heart's praying fields . . .
Thanksgiving to thee.

O humble crown, green vigil of delight,
Guard proud of God,
Thy blessing-shields borne high by the flaming Knight,
High where no fighter has trod,

Are crushed into pollen of throbbing gold,
 O vault of luminous shade,
 Look! Bunches of blossoming lights behold!
 And the shadows of old fade . . .

Rustling mystery-tale! Love with covered face
 Bent over the New-born!
 One day under the shield of diamond grace
 Thy emerald visor will be torn.

TO MY SUPREME LORD

(5th-9th December 1950)

Never could I give my eyes to Thy Eyes light-giving,
 Nor feel the touch of Thy Golden Hand's Grace,
 Thy Hand's my Lord, while on earth Thou wast living —
 Never could I prostrate myself before my Lord's Face.

But I loved Thee always and I was Thine
 When with me in my anguished land Thou didst throw Thy Soul,
 When to my tears in grief Thou didst chain Thy Cry.
 Thou hast not forgotten, my Lord, I know.

And then, when the fierce pride of the Dark and its wrath
 Into Thy cells Thou didst suck in to transform into Light,
 That Light came shining on my sorrowful path
 Where fear, where pain were creeping, and despair of Night.

Now, in Thy Home, Thou hast taken me into Thy arms,
 Near Thy Living Stone, at Thy feet, I can rest,
 Like a tired worker who returns to his own home's charm,
 Like a hunted bird that, at last, flies back into its nest.

Thee I thank, who in those woeful, darkest days
 Didst kindle Hope Supreme with Thy receding Breath.
 Thee I thank, whose Arms of Light, in rest,
 Have strangled the approaching Death.

THREE PRAYERS**While waiting for Thee, Mother**

1

While I was waiting for Thee, O Light,
To appear on the balcony,
I prayed:

Before the Lord descends in the first ray of Thy gaze,
O Mother, chase away the clouds that cover my soul
As Thou art lifting at dawn the mist-veil
From the immaculate face of that deep Black Lake
In my Tatry Mountains . . .¹

And then, when the Lord will come,
The luminous beam will pierce my bare being
Unto its very depths and fill it with bliss.
And the Lord will be pleased,
And He will look around Him on His happy property
At the bottom of my soul.

2

While I was waiting for Thee before Thy Blessings
Before my eyes would come near to Thine,
I prayed:

Mother, let my eyes lie still like those tranquil lakes
In my Tatry Mountains,
Immobile, spread before the Lord,
Crystal mirrors waiting . . .
Will He permit an offering to Him of His own face?

And then, when the Lord will come through Thy eyes all loving
To stoop over these two lakes of calm,
He will perceive Himself in their humble felicity.
And the Lord will be pleased,
And He will smile
Seeing His own eyes looking at Him.

1. The Tatry Mountains, the highest mountain range in Poland.

While I am waiting for Thee in the lucid silence
 Before the sacred hour of meditation
 I pray:

Fill, Mother, my cells with longing ecstasy,
 The same that sparkles in all those lakes of beauty
 In my Tatry Mountains
 When the last sun-drops caress them with glowing happiness
 And when the Lord Himself is approaching after His long day's journey.

And then, when the Lord will come,
 My whole being will be His luminous abode.
 And the Lord will be pleased.
 He will sigh with delight.
 He will rest and take off His sandals
 And wash His feet in the radiant waters.

JANINA STROKA

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

Everyone who is turned to the Mother is doing my Yoga. It is a great mistake to suppose that one can "do" the Purna Yoga — i.e. carry out and fulfil all the sides of the Yoga by one's own effort. No human being can do that. What one has to do is to put oneself in the Mother's hands and open oneself to her by service, by bhakti, by aspiration; then the Mother by her light and force works in him so that the sadhana is done. It is a mistake also to have the ambition to be a big Purna Yogi or a supramental being and ask oneself how far have I got towards that. The right attitude is to be devoted and given to the Mother and to wish to be whatever she wants you to be. The rest is for the Mother to decide and do in you.

Sri Aurobindo

(*The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, CWSA, Vol. 32, pp. 151-52)

RHETORIC IN SRI AUROBINDO'S PROSE

(Continued from the issue of June 2013)

II

TURNING to the classification of styles, Demetrius (1st to 2nd century A.D.) gives us four kinds: the elevated, the elegant, the plain and the forcible. We are familiar with the first three and the last has not been accepted by all rhetoricians. The first three, as given by Theophrastus (3rd century B.C.), have become generally accepted and we shall have occasion to refer to the fourth later on. Theophrastus basing his classification on the three kinds of oratory (into which we are not going to delve) gives three kinds of style as was later accepted by Demetrius and others. Cicero's nomenclature has been generally accepted: the grand style (vehemens), the middle (modicum) and the low and plain style (subtile). We are familiar with these, so instead of giving their characteristics, I will just point out that it is the middle style that is, most appropriately, favoured by our own writer in his prose works.

Now the ancient writers, when writing about style, usually mean poetic style or the style of oratory. Let us turn to Aristotle who is careful to differentiate between different kinds of styles. First of all he differentiates between poetry and oratory. Then he differentiates written prose from oratory.

The style of written prose is not that of oratorical debate.¹ In this chapter he distinguishes between written prose and spoken most carefully. It has to be remembered that he recommends the middle style: "Plainly the middle way suits best." Moreover he prefers clarity above other qualities, a point that has been stressed by all later writers. In *Poetics* he says:

The perfection of style is to be clear without being mean.²

We shall see how our author's prose follows the middle style, being elegant as demanded by Demetrius, as well as clear as demanded by Aristotle.

Before we turn to the figures of speech themselves it is necessary to say a word about rhythm and in this context, at long last I am happy to be able to quote Isocrates in this connection. Perhaps the reader is not as familiar with his name as with that of Aristotle. Nor am I, for that matter. He lived for ninety-eight years (436-338 B.C.) and was a sophist, a contemporary of Plato, and was dead by the time Aristotle returned to Athens in 335 B.C. He was much admired by Milton, whose *Areopagitica*

1. S. H. Butcher transl., *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts*, London, Macmillan & Co., 1932, p. 81.

2. *Ibid.*

is named after and modelled on his *Areopagiticus*. He has said many important things about rhetoric and here is his pronouncement on rhythm in prose:

Prose must not be merely prose, or it will be dry; nor metrical, or its art will be undisguised; but it should be compounded with any sort of rhythm, particularly iambic or trochaic.³

Let the reader not be apprehensive — I am not going to scan the prose of our writer (though I would dearly like to do so), but limit myself to rhetoric only. Let me, however, quote a sentence in this context from our writer himself:

Prose-rhythm aims characteristically at a general harmony in which the parts are subdued to get the tone of a total effect; . . .⁴

Our writer's prose always gets this "general harmony" by subduing the parts to get the effect. Nothing in his prose obtrudes itself on our attention. Unless one is quite alert, the art conceals itself so totally as to be missed completely.

As to the number of figures of speech, they are too many, far too many to be listed here. By the end of the sixteenth century Henry Peacham had listed nearly 200 in his *Garden of Eloquence*. For the convenience of the reader and also mine I will classify them into a few categories and name only a few within each — the few that at the present stage I think we are likely to come across. This classification itself has been done in many different ways by different rhetoricians and I restrain myself with difficulty from naming them. I shall take up each group in turn and as I take up the few figures of speech I have listed in them I shall endeavour to say a few words about each before I turn to the use of them by our writer.

Figures based on resemblance: Simile, metaphor, allegory.

Based on difference: Antithesis, epigram, oxymoron.

Based on construction: Climax, anti-climax, rhetorical question, hyperbaton, syllepsis, isocolon, parison, enthymeme.

Based on sound: Alliteration, assonance, catachresis, tautology, anaphora, epistrophe.

Based on association: Metonymy, synecdoche, hypallage.

Based on imagination: Personification, apostrophe, invocation, hyperbole.

Based on indirectness: Irony, innuendo, sarcasm.

Once more I would like to remind the reader that these are only the few figures which, it seems, we will come across in our study. Some obvious figures like pun etc. have been omitted from the list for it does not seem at present that we are likely to come across them.

3. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

4. *The Future Poetry*, p. 29.

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Let us now bring this discussion to an end. I feel guilty for having written too much as well as for having written too little. Perhaps this introduction itself was not needed at all. But there my lifelong training as a teacher revolted against shirking of duty. When I think of the patient reader plodding through all this, really my heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains my sense of justice. But the editor is always a convenient scapegoat, thank God. Had he not encouraged me, none of this would have happened at all.

The reader might often feel in the ensuing pages, that picking out different figures of speech makes us concentrate too much upon details, that the beauty of prose gets side-tracked. There is, of course, always that danger with detailed analyses. One cannot see the wood for the leaves. To take a wonderful image from our writer himself:

. . . to take the myriad-stringed harp of Saraswati to pieces for the purpose of scientific analysis must always be a narrow and rather barren amusement.⁵

Let us hope our amusement will not be as barren as this presages. By the way, this sentence quoted above contains no less than four figures of speech!

(To be continued)

RATRI RAY

5. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Q. I wonder what to do in order to bring my essay up to the mark. Could you please make some suggestions?

I am afraid I can't make suggestions. Just now I am too busy with other and more strenuous things to be very fit for literary suggestions. I can only say generally avoid over-writing; let all your sentences be the vehicle of something worth saying and say it with a vivid precision neither defective nor excessive. Don't let either thought or speech trail or drag or circumvolute. Don't let the language be more abundant than the sense. Don't indulge in mere clever ingenuities without a living truth behind them. I think that is all.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Poetry and Art, CWSA, Vol. 27, p. 627)

SRI AUROBINDO'S SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO LITERARY CRITICISM

(A book review)

Towards the Rhythmic Word: Studies in Sri Aurobindo's Theory of Poetry by Pabitra-kumar Roy (Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, 8 Shakespeare Sarani, Kolkata 700071, 2011; 181 pages; Rs. 200)

AN evolutionary theory which also assures us that the process contains a constant integralisation of matter and spirit is the simplest elucidation which we use to get Sri Aurobindo's poetic aesthesis across to the students. It has not been an easy task, for without realising it, we stop midway, and remain admiring the results of this aesthetic theory. Teachers and students get mesmerised by the Aurobindonian quotes on hand. Pabitrakumar Roy seems to have understood this tutorial problem very well and has come up with a neat little text for teaching Sri Aurobindo's poetry to the students and specifying the Mahayogi's place in the history of English poetry as well as literary criticism.

I did begin with a knitting of the brows. The opening paragraph speaks of logo-centricism and phono-centricism. Doubting my own ability in managing the contemporary critical lingo, I checked and found that they are 'logo-centrism' and 'phono-centrism'. Not that it matters, for Dr. Roy is applying the terms for a book of literary criticism. It warmed my heart to read that he is no icon-breaker who uses criticism as a fault-finding weapon. Roy is one who appreciates Sri Aurobindo's significant contributions in this area. "Sri Aurobindo's prose is phenomenal. Its winding sentences go on disclosing, phrase by phrase, clause by clause, newer dimensions, subtle nuances, new shades of meaning at every turn. A closer study alone will yield the secrets, revealing its prismatic effect."

This is a job that is not done easily by allowing the fingers to dance on the keyboard of one's PC. Fortunately Dr. Roy is well-equipped for the task with his erudite readings in Sanskrit and Western theories of aesthetic criticism. Not for him the calculated destruction, distortion, and disruption of the deconstructionists. We are here to build, not destroy!

The *adhar sruti* of Sri Aurobindo's aesthesis is that mind is not the creator. The originating move comes from afar, beyond our reckoning. How to identify the divine afflatus that not only verbalises but makes the result swing to a rhythm? Meanwhile art itself is a help for the consciousness to ascend to higher planes, as it has an "immediate power for inner truth, for self-enlargement, for liberation." Perhaps this explains the paintings in Ajanta and Ellora. As Dr. Roy puts it:

The aesthetic image is a brilliant mask of God, the suprarational beauty is the intuitive revelation of the face that animates the mask. Art is a key to self-discovery. The 'creative knowledge' which demarcates the aesthetic consciousness is part of a vision, involved in and inseparable from the act of creation. Inspired forms of beauty are symbolic of the unseen reality, a deeper and original truth which escapes the senses or the reason.

Going further in search of the great secret, Dr. Roy says that the critic has also to be "inspired, intuitive, revealing". Technique is not all. Only when the critic tries to get close to the wave-length of the original creation can he come somewhere near explaining it. When Dr. Roy describes how the intuitive intelligence can "take up the work of the intellect and do it with a greater power and light and surer insight" I am reminded of the great Indian commentators. It is unfortunate that Indian academics who spend so much of their time perusing the western critics have not studied our great commentatorial tradition in Sanskrit and all the Bhasha literatures. Where would we be in understanding Valmiki, Kalidasa and Vedanta Desika but for Govindaraja, Mallinatha and Appayya Dikshita respectively? Even the subtle changes in the thought-processes of the ancient Tamil poets have been intuited by commentators like Nachinarkiniyar and Perasiriyar. They did not take their hats around for getting labelled!

Dr. Roy moves forward slowly but with sure steps to understand how poetry and art are derived from the delight of existence which is comprehended not by the mind but by one's subliminal self. Necessarily by the time the 'sight' is translated into what we see and hear at the mental level, there are inevitable distortions. However, mind itself could get transformed into the seer's eye when the Overmind power descends upon it. We are then drawn into the mystery of language, the attempt to catch in the net of sounds the elusive thoughts that belong to a higher plane of consciousness. Again, the search for Truth, the nature of mantric poetry is that it helps us 'see' by just listening.

As one reads this tightly-knit critique, there appear plenty of golden nuggets to gather. A flash of Gurudev-Mahayogi comparison, for instance:

Sat and cit aspects have enjoyed the privilege of attention. Only two of our modern masters, Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo have been the pipers of the ananda of Reality. It goes without saying that Sri Aurobindo's has been a philosophy of the adventure of consciousness. As for Rabindranath, the following citation should suffice:

Let the veil of 'I' fall apart
 And the pure light of consciousness
 Break through the mists
 Revealing the everlasting face of truth.

India's academia which discusses at length Hölderlin, Rilke and other poets from the west as makers of new pathways in philosophy, has not cared to give serious thought to Sri Aurobindo's philosophical poetry which often rises to the spiritual levels of mantra.

There are thought-provoking references in the book to the place of Ravi Varma's painting in our cultural history, the idea of 'soul sound' and Sri Aurobindo's own close study of Rabindranath Tagore when he was setting down his ideas on the poet as a rishi. In every way, *Towards the Rhythmic Word* is a valuable guide for both the student of Sri Aurobindo's literary criticism and the teacher of the subject in the classroom here and abroad.

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

I do not know why your correspondent puts so much value on general understanding and acceptance. Really it is only the few that can be trusted to discern the true value of things in poetry and art and if the "general" run accept it is usually because acceptance is sooner or later imposed or induced in their minds at first by the authority of the few and afterwards by the verdict of Time. There are exceptions of course of a wide spontaneous acceptance because something that is really good happens to meet a taste or a demand in the general mind of the moment. Poetic and artistic value does not necessarily command mass understanding and acceptance.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Poetry and Art, CWSA, Vol. 27, p. 675)

THE LUMINOUS PAST

(Continued from the issue of June 2013)

OUR life was continuing in its sweet rhythm. Nolini-da was slowly withdrawing within himself. In the context of my work, I received his blessings and help until the end. The grand celebrations for the Mother's birth centenary were being organised under Nolini-da's directions. The Mother is the Divine Mother, Aditi. Everything was decorated in white for that centenary. A pure and celestial atmosphere was created to favour a simple unostentatious celebration.

Our inner lives were also influenced by the purity of this whiteness. I came closer to the old doctor whom I had avoided for so long during this centenary year. I took a decision to see him for the treatment of my toothache. With a clear heart and a smiling face he gave me a handwritten note then, in the manner of an elder brother whom I had known for a long time, he said, "Take this note and go to the dentist, then come back and take the medicines from me. You will not get any medicines from there. This is the ideal that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have upheld. Don't keep any grudge in your heart. We are all devoted children of the Mother."

The new doctor came and told me, "The Nursing Home is ready. From now on you will send the sick children there. Let us make the Mother's birth centenary the right occasion to forget our old differences of opinion and make it a year of fulfilment."

I remembered the Mother's wish. She had told me, "The Corner House is meant for the children of the school. They have to eat there if we want them to be in good health." I consulted the girls, then made arrangements for them to eat in the Corner House well before the Mother's birth centenary. Everything went off well with the Mother's grace.

*

Every year on the eve of Nolini-da's birthday, I used to go in the evening and do a *pranam* to him before the others. The last time, on 12th January 1984, Anima said, "You can't see Nolini-da, he is tired. He is resting. Please come the day after tomorrow in the morning."

On 14th January, I went to do my *pranam* to Nolini-da. He was very tired. Anima handed him an envelope. Nolini-da, whom I loved and respected, looked at me with his soothing gaze for a while. Very gently, he gave me that envelope, then shut his eyes and turned over as he lay on his bed. I opened the envelope and found

a colour photograph of him, full of light, with his signature and also the Gayatri Mantra written by Sri Aurobindo.

These I received as his last and greatest blessing. This was his last touch. In many ways I have received many things from him. His generosity had no comparison. However, there was nothing else like this last gift from him. Deep within my heart this gift of his lighted an undying flame of light.

On his birth centenary when I went to do my *pranam* in his room I suddenly remembered that photograph. I regretted not having framed that picture and hung it in my room. When I came home, I immediately sent that photograph to Panu at Harpagon workshop to get it framed. By the grace of Sweet Mother, in the evening of 13th January 1989, Panu sent that photograph back set inside a beautiful frame. I put it up in my room, lit an incense stick and did a *pranam* to him with all my heart on his birth centenary day.

*

I have seen Nolini-da many times even after his death, in dreams. Those dreams seem to me like reality even now. On 5th December 1984, in the morning, I had such a dream in which I saw him. The girls of the boarding had already left for the *pranam*. They had joined the line at four in the morning for their visit to Sri Aurobindo's Room, after having done their *pranam* at the Samadhi. Because of my asthma, I had not been able to sleep all night. In the early hours of the morning I did not know when I fell asleep.

In my dream, I saw Nolini-da standing next to my bed. He was wearing Sri Aurobindo's gold-bordered dhoti and had a *chadar* on his torso. He called me and said, "Pramila, you are getting late. Wake up quickly. Have a wash and go to the Ashram. If you sit in Sri Aurobindo's Room and meditate, you will get well." In my dream I even saw him walking out of the room having said this. I woke up at once. I opened my eyes and looked around me. I had completely forgotten, at that moment, that Nolini-da was no more.

Having come back to reality I quickly had a wash and went to the Ashram, only to find that the Room Darshan had stopped. A group of volunteer boys asked me to sit on the staircase and told me that, if I was called from upstairs, I should go there for meditation. But would I get the permission to go upstairs? One had to get prior permission to go there. I thought I might as well sit downstairs and meditate. This is what was going on in my mind. But the boys didn't want to hear anything. They insisted that I sit on the staircase.

Somebody came from upstairs and called us. Some distinguished people started climbing up the stairs. I followed the instruction that Nolini-da had given me and joined these special people and entered Sri Aurobindo's Room. To my left, Nirodda was sitting for meditation. For an hour and a quarter, I sat in the same position

and meditated. This meditation was unlike any other. I lost all sense of place, time, and people as my mind went totally blank. In this experience there was only a limitless peace. There was only peace and more peace. Illness, unhappiness, hunger, and weariness were blown away from me. At the end of the meditation I touched my forehead to the floor and did a *pranam* into which I put all my heart and came down the stairs with a healthy body and the joy of freedom.

When I came downstairs I went to the Samadhi and lit an incense stick, then offered some flowers and did my *pranam*. In the depth of my heart I received their blessings. This Mahasamadhi is the sacred place where we find our peace and liberation. This is the place where we find our inspiration towards Truth and the taste of liberation. The sacred Samadhi is where past, present and future, find their holy union. This is where one finds one's life's initiation to Truth. This is where one finds the great mantra that comes from the sacred names of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo who transcend past, present and future.

(Concluded)

PRAMILA DEVI

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

Whatever is our work and whatever we do, we must do it sincerely, honestly, scrupulously, not in view of any personal profit, but as an offering to the Divine, with an entire consecration of our being. If this attitude is sincerely kept in all circumstances, whenever we need to learn something to do the work more effectively, the occasion to acquire this knowledge comes to us and we have only to take advantage of the opportunity.

The Mother

(*Words of the Mother – II*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 14, p. 301)

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