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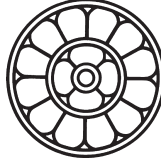
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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O WILL OF GOD*

O Will of God that stirrest and the Void
Is peopled, men have called thee force, upbued
Upon whose wings the stars borne round and round
Need not one hour of rest; light, form and sound
Are masks of thy eternal movement. We
See what thou choosest, but 'tis thou we see.

I Morcundeya, whom the worlds release,
The Seer, — but it is God alone that sees! —
Soar up above the bonds that hold below
Man to his littleness, lost in the show
Perennial which the senses round him build;
I find them out and am no more beguiled.
But ere I rise, ere I become the vast
And luminous Infinite and from the past
And future utterly released forget
These beings who themselves their bonds create,
Once I will speak and what I see declare.
The rest is God. There's silence everywhere.

My eyes within were opened and I saw.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 520)

*No title in the manuscript. 1913.

EXPERIENCES AND REALISATIONS IN THE INTEGRAL YOGA

PART THREE EXPERIENCES OF THE INNER CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

SECTION TWO EXPERIENCES OF THE INNER BEING AND THE INNER CONSCIOUSNESS

Chapter Two Inner Detachment and the Witness Attitude

Inner Detachment

It [*the individual consciousness*] is not by its nature detached from the mental and other activities. It can be detached, it can be involved. In the human consciousness it is as a rule always involved, but it has developed the power of detaching itself — a thing which the lower creation seems unable to do. As the consciousness develops, this power of detachment also develops.

*

Detachment means standing back with part of the consciousness and observing what is being done without being involved in it. There is no “how” to that; you do it or try it until it succeeds.

*

That sense of separate being and concentration behind the frontal consciousness is very good. It helps to liberate the inner being and make it stand back from the movements of the outer nature.

*

That is the condition of progress, — if, whenever there is an attempt to cloud the consciousness, you can stand back, remain quiet and prevent the clouding. Do that always and the progress is sure.

*

All that you have written here is perfectly correct. It is so, by standing back from these forces [*in the surrounding world*], neither attracted nor disturbed by them, that one gets freedom, perceives their falsity or imperfection and is able to rise above and overcome them. The consciousness that comes forward may be either the psychic or the spiritualised mind — it is probably the former.

*

Well, but it [*the need for detachment*] is not individual to you. Everyone has to do that with his difficulties. Detach means that the Witness in oneself has to stand back and refuse to look on the movement as his own (the soul's own) and look on it as a habit of past nature or an invasion of general Nature. Then to deal with it as such. It may seem difficult, but it comes perfectly well by trying persistently.

*

One must get the power to quiet the mental and vital, if not at first at all times, yet whenever one wills — for it is the mind and vital that cover up the psychic being as well as the self (Atman) and to get at either one must get in through their veil; but if they are always active and you are always identified with their activities, the veil will always be there. It is also possible to detach yourself and look at these activities as if they were not your own but a mechanical action of Nature which you observe as a disinterested witness. One can then become aware of an inner being which is separate, calm and uninvolved in Nature. This may be the inner mental or vital Purusha and not the psychic, but to get at the consciousness of the inner *manomaya* and *prāṇamaya* Purusha is always a step towards the unveiling of the psychic being.

*

The condition in which all movements become superficial and empty with no connection with the soul is a stage in the withdrawal from the surface consciousness to the inner consciousness. When one goes into the inner consciousness, it is felt as a calm, pure existence without any movement, but eternally tranquil, unmoved and separate from the outer nature. This comes as a result of detaching oneself from the movements, standing back from them and is a very important movement of the sadhana. The first result of it is an entire quietude, but afterwards that quietude begins (without the quietude ceasing) to fill with the psychic and other inner movements which create a true inner and spiritual life behind the outer life and nature. It is then easier to govern and change the latter.

At present there are fluctuations in your consciousness because this inner state is not yet fully developed and established. When it is, there will still be fluctuations

in the outer consciousness, but the inner quiet, force, love etc. will be constant and the superficial fluctuations will be watched by the inner being without its being shaken or troubled, until they are removed by the complete outer change.

As for X, it is best to let it pass and try to remain steady within and detached; one cannot separate from all contacts; one must become more and more superior to their customary reactions.

*

Detachment is the beginning of mastery, but for complete mastery there should be no reactions at all. When there is something within undisturbed by the reactions that means the inner being is free and master of itself, but it is not yet master of the whole nature. When it is master, it allows no wrong reactions — if any come they are at once repelled and shaken off, and finally none come at all.

*

The experience you have of a division in the being with the inner void and indifferent, *udāsīna*, — not sorrowful, but neutral and indifferent, — is an experience which many pass through and is highly valued by the Sannyasis. For us it is a passage only to something larger and more positive. In it the old small human feelings fall away and a sort of calm neutral void is made for a higher nature to manifest. It must be fulfilled and replaced by a sense of large silence and freedom into which the Mother's consciousness can flow from above.

*

In the ordinary consciousness one takes a personal interest in what is done, feels joy or feels sorrow. When one does sadhana, a condition may come in which the consciousness draws back from these reactions of joy and sorrow and does work and action impersonally as a thing that ought or has to be done but without desire or reactions. The Yogis value this condition of complete detachment very highly. In our Yoga it is a passage only, if it comes, through which one goes from the ordinary consciousness to a deeper one in which one acts out of a deep peace and union with the Divine or else of a self-existent Ananda not depending on anything but the presence of the Divine, in which all works are done not out of personal interest or satisfaction but for the sake of the Divine.

The Witness Attitude

A man with a very developed introspective mind often identifies himself with the witness part of his mind and observes his own thoughts and studies their nature. That is a beginning which makes it easy for the full detachment to come. For others it is less easy, but it can be done by all.

*

There is a stage in the sadhana in which the inner being begins to awake. Often the first result is the condition made up of the following elements:

(1) A sort of witness attitude, in which the inner consciousness looks at all that happens as a spectator or observer, observing things but taking no active interest or pleasure in them.

(2) A state of neutral equanimity in which there is neither joy nor sorrow, only quietude.

(3) A sense of being something separate from all that happens, observing it but not part of it.

(4) An absence of attachment to things, people or events.

It seems as if this condition were trying to come in you; but it is still imperfect. For instance in this condition (1) there should be no disgust or impatience or anger when people talk, only indifference and an inner peace and silence. Also (2) there should not be a mere neutral quiet and indifference, but a positive sense of calm, detachment and peace. Again (3) there should be no going out of the body so that you do not know what is happening or what you are doing. There may be a sense of not being the body but something else, — that is good; but there should be a perfect awareness of all that is going on in or around you.

Moreover this condition even when it is perfect is only a transitional stage — it is intended to bring a certain state of freedom and liberation. But in that peace there must come the feeling of the Divine Presence, the sense of the Mother's power working in you, the joy or Ananda.

If you can concentrate in the heart as well as in the head, then these things can more easily come.

*

The mind can become quiet only when you detach yourself from it and see the thoughts as things that pass. Then you don't think yourself but see thoughts passing through your mind. Afterwards you can stop attending to these passers-by and concentrate on the Mother.

Thoughts and feelings are passing from one human being to another all the

time, only people don't know or observe it. Especially if people live together the same life, as in the Asram, a sort of atmosphere is formed in which the same thoughts and feelings are moving about and constantly passing from one to another.

You have to become conscious — that is to say, there must be something in you which is not carried away by thoughts and feelings, but looks at them and observes how they work and how they affect you. The part that observes and knows is called the Witness *sākṣī* in man. It is always possible to develop this in oneself.

It is not by thinking and reading that consciousness comes. There are many who read and think a great deal but are not conscious, have not the witness developed in them. There are others who work all day like X, yet are very strongly conscious. When one has the power of stopping thinking altogether and only looking, then the Witness becomes very strong and conscious. This consciousness can come by practice, but it can also come by turning to the Mother and thinking of her always and offering to her everything. The being opens, the Mother's force begins to work and one becomes more and more conscious.

*

It is indeed a great thing that you can keep this calm and this unaffected witness attitude. It is always the sign of a strong inner foundation in the consciousness and that even the physical being shares in this result of the realisation.

*

As for the “spectator” and the coils of the dragon, it is the Chino-Japanese image for the world-force extending itself in the course of the universe and this expresses the attitude of the Witness seeing it all and observing in its unfolding the unrolling of the play of the Divine, Lila. It is this attitude that gives the greatest calm, peace, samata in face of the riddle of the cosmic workings. It is not meant that action and movement are not accepted but they are accepted as the Divine Working which is leading to ends which the mind may not always see at once, but the soul divines through all the supreme purpose and the hidden guidance.

Of course there is afterwards an experience in which the two sides of the Divine Whole, the Witness and the Player, blend together; but this poise of the spectator comes first and leads to that fuller experience. It gives the balance, the calm, the increasing understanding of soul and life and their deeper significances without which the full supramental experience cannot come.

The Witness Purusha or Witness Consciousness

By itself the Purusha is impersonal, but by mixing itself with the movements of Prakriti it makes for itself a surface ego or personality. When it appears in its own separate nature then it is seen to be detached and observing.

*

The consciousness you speak of would be described in the Gita as the witness Purusha. The Purusha or basic consciousness is the true being or at least, on whatever plane it manifests, represents the true being. But in the ordinary nature of man it is covered up by the ego and the ignorant play of the Prakriti and remains veiled behind as the unseen Witness supporting the play of the Ignorance. When it emerges, you feel it as a consciousness behind, calm, central, unidentified with the play which depends upon it. It may be covered over, but it is always there. The emergence of the Purusha is the beginning of liberation. But it can also become slowly the Master — slowly because the whole habit of the ego and the play of the lower forces (which also you describe correctly here) is against that. Still it can dictate what higher play is to replace the lower movement and then there is the process of that replacement, the higher coming, the lower struggling to remain and push away the higher movement. You say rightly that the offering to the Divine shortens the whole thing and is more effective, but usually it cannot be done completely at once owing to the past habit and the two methods continue together until the complete surrender is possible.

*

The attitude of the witness consciousness within — I do not think it necessarily involves an external seclusion, though one may do that also — is a very necessary stage in the progress. It helps the liberation from the lower prakriti — not getting involved in the ordinary nature movements; it helps the establishment of a perfect calm and peace within, for there is then one part of the being which remains detached and sees without being disturbed the perturbations of the surface; it helps also the ascent into the higher consciousness and the descent of the higher consciousness, for it is through this calm, detached and liberated inner being that the ascent and descent can easily be done. Also, to have the same witness look on the movements of Prakriti in others, seeing, understanding but not perturbed by them in any way is a very great help towards both the liberation and the universalisation of the being. I could not therefore possibly object to this movement in a sadhak.

As for the surrender it is not inconsistent with the witness attitude. On the contrary by liberating from the ordinary Prakriti, it makes easier the surrender to the

higher or divine Power. Very often when this witness attitude has not been taken but there is a successful calling in of the Force to act in one, one of the first things the Force does is to establish the witness attitude so as to be able to act with less interference or immixture from the movements of the lower Prakriti.

There remains the question of the avoidance of contact with others and there there is some difficulty or incertitude. Part of your nature has a strong turn towards contact with others, action on others, interchange, almost a need of it. This brings about some fluctuation between the turn to an inner isolation and the turn towards contact and action. There is the same double and fluctuating movement in others here like X. In such cases I generally do not stress upon either tendency but leave the consciousness to find its own poise, because I have seen that to press too much on the isolation tendency when the nature is not mainly contemplative does not succeed very well — unless of course the sadhak himself gets a strong and fixed determination that way. This may be the cause of what you felt. But the question between witness attitude and surrender does not arise, for the reason I have explained — one can very well aid or lead to the other as ours is a Yoga which joins these things together and does not keep them always separate.

*

It is by a constant repetition and development of the experience [*that the witness consciousness can become constant*]. But the witness being does not always remain as a point. It becomes something extended supporting the rest.

The Purusha and Change of the Prakriti

That is the old Vedantic idea — to be free and detached within and leave the Prakriti to itself. When you die, the Purusha will go to glory and the Prakriti drop off — perhaps into Hell. This theory is a source of any amount of self-deception and wilful self-indulgence.

*

The witness attitude is not meant as a convenient means for disowning the responsibility of one's defects and thereby refusing to mend them. It is meant for self-knowledge and, in our Yoga, as a convenient station (detached and uninvolved, therefore not subject to Prakriti) from which one can act on the wrong movements by refusal of assent and by substituting for them the action of the true consciousness from within or above.

*

You can certainly go on developing the consciousness of the Witness Purusha above, but if it is only a witness and the lower Prakriti is allowed to have its own way, there would be no reason why it [*an unquiet and disturbed condition*] should ever stop. Many take that attitude — that the Purusha has to liberate itself by standing apart, and the Prakriti can be allowed to go on till the end of the life doing its own business, — it is *prārabdha karma*; when the body falls away, the Prakriti will drop also and the Purusha go off into the featureless Brahman! This is a comfortable theory, but of more than doubtful truth; I don't think liberation is so simple and facile a matter as that. In any case, the transformation which is the object of our Yoga would not take place.

The Purusha above is not only a Witness, he is the giver (or withholder) of the sanction; if he persistently refuses the sanction to a movement of Prakriti, keeping himself detached, then, even if it goes on for a time by its past momentum, it usually loses its hold after a time, becomes more feeble, less persistent, less concrete and in the end fades away. If you take the Purusha consciousness, it should be not only as the Witness but as the Anumanta, refusing sanction to the disturbing movements, sanctioning only peace, calm, purity and whatever else is part of the divine nature. This refusal of sanction need not mean a struggle with the lower Prakriti; it should be a quiet, persistent, detached refusal leaving unsupported, unassented to, without meaning or justification the contrary action of the nature.

* * *

Chapter Three **Inner Experiences in the State of Samadhi**

Samadhi or Trance

The experience you had is of course the going inside of the consciousness which is usually called trance or *samādhi*. The most important part of it however is the silence of the mind and vital which is fully extended to the body also. To get the capacity of this silence and peace is a most important step in the sadhana. It comes at first in meditation and may throw the consciousness inward in trance, but it has to come afterwards in the waking state and establish itself as a permanent basis for all the life and action. It is the condition for the realisation of the Self and the spiritual transformation of the nature.

*

The experience you relate, the stillness, the emptiness of mind and vital and cessation of thoughts and other movements, was the coming of the state called “samadhi” in

which the consciousness goes inside in a deep stillness and silence. This condition is favourable to inner experience, realisation, the vision of the unseen truth of things, though one can get these in the waking condition also. It is not sleep but the state in which one feels conscious within, no longer outside.

*

It [*the experience of samadhi*] is not indispensable at this stage; but if it comes of itself, it can be allowed to develop. But experience in the waking state is more important for this Yoga. Samadhi is a help for reaching the inner depths of the consciousness. One is able to go more easily by it inward below the surface being, to get into direct contact with other supraphysical planes of experience, to pass into other worlds and return, to contact happenings distant in space and time, to see what is in the supraconscious and to enter into what is supraconscious to our mental status.

*

What she speaks of as losing the body consciousness is probably a tendency of the consciousness to go inside — into Samadhi of some kind. Samadhi means a state in which one is not awake and aware of outward things, but also one is not asleep, one is conscious inwardly with another than the waking consciousness. If this comes, it is not to be avoided, as Yogic realisation can take place in this condition as well as in the waking state.

*

It is a state of inner immobile silence that one gets in Samadhi when the outer mind is stilled and there is only some inner or some higher consciousness which may itself be either in silent concentration or else experiencing some state of Knowledge or Ananda or Peace.

*

Going inside does not bring always Ananda. There are many kinds of samadhi and many sorts of experience in each kind. What happens when one goes in is that one enters into the inner planes of consciousness, it may be the subconscious, it may be the mental, vital or subtle physical plane. From there one goes into the corresponding worlds or else one rises up into higher planes superconscious to us — to the ranges above our mind or to the spiritual mental plane in which one can unite with the Sachchidananda consciousness or to the Supramental. What you describe seems to be the subconscious, but that may be only a first step in the going inside.

*

In samadhi it is the inner mental, vital, physical which are separated from the outer, no longer covered by it — therefore they can freely have inner experiences. The outer mind is either quiescent or in some way reflects or shares the experience. As for the central consciousness being separated from all mind that would mean a complete trance without any recorded experiences.

*

It is the subtle parts of the physical that go up. The external consciousness can also go up, but then there is a complete trance. There is not much utility for the complete trance in this sadhana.

*

Trance in English is usually used only for the deeper kinds of samadhi; but, as there is no other word, we have to use it for all kinds.

*

Samadhi is not a thing to be shunned — only it has to be made more and more conscious.

Trance Not Essential

It is not necessary to be in samadhi to be in contact with the Divine.

*

Yes, they [*all the stages of higher realisation*] can be attained even in full activity. Trance is not essential — it can be used, but by itself it cannot lead to the change of consciousness which is our object, for it gives only an inner subjective experience which need not make any difference in the outer consciousness. There are plenty of instances of sadhaks who have fine experiences in trance but the outer being remains as it was. It is necessary to bring out what is experienced and make it a power for transformation both of the inner and the outer being. But it can be done without going into Samadhi in the waking consciousness itself. Concentration of course is indispensable.

Kinds of Samadhi

Nirvikalpa Samadhi according to tradition is simply a trance from which one cannot be awakened even by burning or branding — i.e. a trance in which one has gone completely out of the body. In more scientific parlance it is a trance in which there is no formation or movement of the consciousness and one gets lost in a state from which one can bring back no report except that one was in bliss. It is supposed to be a complete absorption in the Sushupti or the Turiya.

*

“Nirvikalpa samadhi” properly means a complete trance in which there is no thought or movement of consciousness or awareness of either inward or outward things — all is drawn up into a supracosmic Beyond. But here it cannot mean that — it probably means a trance in a consciousness beyond the Mind.

*

As to the dream, it was not a dream but an experience of the inner being in a conscious dream state, *svapna-samādhī*. The numbness and the feeling of being about to lose consciousness are always due to the pressure or descent of a Force to which the body is not accustomed but feels strongly. Here it was not the physical body that was being directly pressed, but the subtle body, the *sūkṣma śarīra* in which the inner being more intimately dwells and in which it goes out in sleep or trance or in the moment of death. But the physical body in these vivid experiences feels as if it were itself that was having the experience; the numbness was the effect on it of the pressure. The pressure on the whole body would mean a pressure on the whole inner consciousness, perhaps for some modification or change which would make it more ready for knowledge or experience; the 3rd or 4th rib would indicate a region which belongs to the vital nature, the domain of the life-force, some pressure for a change there.

*

It [*the kind of samadhi one has*] depends on the nature of the physical consciousness you keep. When there is the descent of consciousness into the body one becomes aware of a subtle physical consciousness and that can remain in samadhi — one seems to be aware of the body, but it is really the subtle body and not the outward physical. But also one can go deep within and yet be aware of the physical body also and of working upon it, but not of outward things. Finally one can be absorbed in a deep concentration but strongly aware of the body and the descent of the Force

in it. This last is accompanied with consciousness of outward things, though no attention may be paid to them. This last is not usually called samadhi, but it is a kind of waking samadhi. All conditions from the deep samadhi of complete trance to the working of the Force in the fully waking consciousness are used in this Yoga; one need not insist on complete trance always, for the others also are necessary and without them the complete change cannot take place.

It is good that the higher consciousness and its powers are descending into the parts below the head and heart. That is absolutely necessary for the transformation, since the lower vital and the body must also be changed into stuff of the higher consciousness.

*

For this Yoga these divisions [*the classifications of samadhi in Vedanta*] are not so important.

Samadhi and the Waking State

Trance is a going inside away from the waking state. What corresponds to trance in the waking state would be a complete concentration indifferent to outward movements or else a silence of the whole being in Brahman realisation, the *samāhita* state of the Gita.

*

Immersion in Sachchidananda is a state one can get in the waking condition without Samadhi — dissolution can come only after the loss of the body on condition that one has reached the highest state and does not will to return here to help the world.

*

On the contrary it is in the waking state that this realisation must come and endure in order to be a reality of the life. If experienced in trance it would be a superconscious state true for some part of the inner being, but not real to the whole consciousness. Experiences in trance have their utility for opening the being and preparing it, but it is only when the realisation is constant in the waking state that it is truly possessed. Therefore in this Yoga most value is given to the waking realisation and experience.

What you write about the work is correct; to work in this calm ever-widening consciousness is at once a *sādhana* and a *siddhi*.

*

The entire oblivion of the experience means merely that there is still no sufficient bridge between the inner consciousness which has the experience in a kind of samadhi and the exterior waking consciousness. It is when the higher consciousness has made the bridge between them that the outer also begins to remember.

Samadhi and Sleep

It [*a tendency to fall asleep while meditating*] is the result of the attempt to go above. It is not sleep that comes, but a tendency to go inside under the pressure — the old Yogas did this going above precisely in this way, by going into samadhi. For us, it has to come in the waking condition — for until it does, it cannot be made the basis for a new consciousness governing the life.

*

It [*the tendency to fall asleep during meditation*] is a common obstacle with all who practise Yoga at the beginning. The sleep disappears gradually in two ways — (1) by the intensifying of the force of concentration, (2) by the sleep itself becoming a kind of swapna samadhi in which one is conscious of inner experiences that are not dreams (i.e. the waking consciousness is lost for the time, but it is replaced not by sleep but by an inward conscious state in which one moves in the supraphysical of the mental or vital being).

*

There is no reason why one should not have a burning aspiration in sleep, provided one is conscious in sleep. In fact, the condition you describe was not sleep — it was simply that the consciousness was trying to go inside in a sort of indrawn condition (a kind of half-samadhi) while the external mind was constantly coming out of it. What you have, if you go into this indrawn condition, is not dreams but spiritual experiences or visions or experiences in other supraphysical planes of consciousness. Your burning aspiration was just such a spiritual experience.

*

No, it was not sleep. You went inside into an inner consciousness; in this inner consciousness one is awake inside, but not outside, not conscious of external things but of inner things only. Your inner consciousness was busy doing what your outer mind had been trying to do, that is to work upon the thoughts and suggestions that bring restlessness and to put them right; it can be done much more easily by the

inner consciousness than by the outer mind.

As for the things that are necessary to be done, they can be done much more easily by the Force and Peace descending (bringing the solid strength) than by your own mental effort.

*

It was not half sleep or quarter sleep or even one-sixteenth sleep that you had; it was a going inside of the consciousness, which in that state remains conscious but shut to outer things and open only to inner experience. You must distinguish clearly between these two quite different conditions, one is *nidrā*, the other the beginning at least of *samādhi* (not *nirvikalpa* of course!). This drawing inside is necessary because the active mind of the human being is at first too much turned to outward things; it has to go inside altogether in order to live in the inner being (inner mind, inner vital, inner physical, psychic). But with training one can arrive at a point when one remains outwardly conscious and yet lives in the inner being and has at will the indrawn or the outpoured condition; you can then have the same dense immobility and the same inpouring of a greater and purer consciousness in the waking state as in that which you erroneously call sleep.

*

About your experiences:

(1) The sleep which you felt when meditating was not sleep but an inward condition of the consciousness. When this inward condition is not very deep one can be aware of various scenes, voices etc. which belong not to the physical but to some inner plane of consciousness — their value or truth depends on the plane to which one reaches. Those of the surface are of no importance and one has simply to pass through them till one gets deeper.

(2) The fear, anger, depression etc. which used to rise when making the japa of the names came from a vital resistance in the nature (this resistance exists in everyone) which threw up these things because of the pressure on the vital part to change which is implied in sadhana. These resistances rise and then, if one takes the right attitude, slowly or quickly clear away. One has to observe them and separate oneself from them, persisting in the concentration and sadhana till the vital becomes quiet and clear.

(3) The things you saw (moon, sky etc.) are due to the opening of the inner vision; this usually comes when the concentration begins to open up the inner consciousness of which this subtle vision is a part. This faculty of vision has its importance in the development of the inner being, and need not be discouraged, even though too much importance should not be attached to the things seen in the earlier stages.

(4) There are some however that are part of the growing spiritual experience, such as the sun you saw overhead and the piece of golden light — for these are signs of an opening within and symbolic. Both are symbols of the Divine Truth and Light and of one action of their influence.

(5) The most important experience, however, is that of the peace and quiet which comes with a good concentration. It is this that must grow and fix itself in the mind and vital and body — for it is this peace and quiet that make a firm basis for the sadhana.

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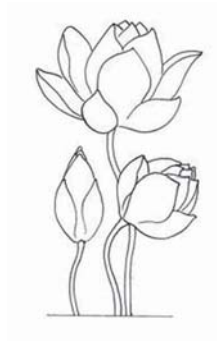
The starting of the body happens very often when it is in a kind of sleep of samadhi and something touches whether from within or without.

The Trance of Mediums

The medium trance is of a different kind — they get not into touch with Sachchidananda but with the beings of the lower vital plane. To develop the power of going into this higher kind of trance, one must have done some sadhana. As to purification, entire purification is not necessary, but some part of the being must have turned to higher things.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Letters on Yoga — III, CWSA, Vol. 30, pp. 238-56)



THE PHANTOM HOUR

Sturge Maynard rose from the fireside and looked out on the blackish yellow blinding fog that swathed London in the dense folds of its amplitude. In his hand he carried the old book he was reading, his finger was still in the page, his mind directed, not with entire satisfaction, to the tenour of the writer's imaginations. For, if these pleased his sense of the curious, they disgusted his reason. A mystic, mediaeval in epoch and temperament, the old Latinist dealt with psychological fancies the modern world has long discarded in order to bustle to the polling booth and the counting house. Numerous subtleties occurred repulsive to the rigid and definite solutions of an age which, masterful with knowledge in the positive and external, tries to extend its autocracy in the shape of a confident ignorance over the bounds of the occult world within, occult — declared the author, — only because we reject a key that is in everyone's hand, himself.

“Prosaist of mysteries,” thought Sturge, “trafficker in devious imaginations, if one could find only the thinnest fact to support the cumbrous web that is here woven! But the fog is less thick than the uncertainty in which these thoughts were content to move.”

In a passage of unusual but bizarre interest the German mystic maintained that the principle of brilliancy attended with a ceaseless activity the motions of thought, which, in their physical aspect, are flashes of a pure, a lurid or a murky light. It was, he said, a common experience with seers in intense moments of rapid cerebration to see their heads, often their whole surroundings besieged by a brilliant atmosphere coruscating with violet lightnings. Even while he wondered at these extravagances, it flashed across Sturge's memory that he himself in his childhood had been in the habit of seeing precisely such violet coruscations about his head and had indulged his childish fancy with them until maturer years brought wonder, distrust and the rapid waning of the phenomenon.

Was there then some justification of experience for the fancies of the German? With an impulse he tried vainly to resist, he fixed his eye piercingly on the fog outside the window and waited. At the moment he was aware of a curious motion in his head, a crowding of himself and all his faculties to the eye; then came the sight of violet flashes in the fog and a growing excitement in his nerves watched by a brain that was curiously, abnormally calm. A whole world of miraculous vision, of marvellous sound, of ancient and future experience was surely pressing upon him, surging against some barrier that opposed intercourse. Astonished and interested, but not otherwise disturbed, his reason attempted to give itself some account of what was happening. The better to help the effort, he fixed his eye again on the fog for repetition or disproof of what he had seen. There were no further violet flashes,

but something surely was hinting, forming, manifesting in the grey swathe outside. It became bright, it became round, it became distinct. Was it a face or a globe? With a disappointed revulsion of feeling he saw himself face to face with nothing more romantic than a clock. He smiled and turned to compare with that strong visualised image his own substantial, unmythic, workday companion on the mantelpiece. His body grew tense with a shock of surprise. There indeed was the clock, his ebony-faced, gold-lettered recorder of hours, balanced lightly on a conventional Father Time in the centre and two winged goddesses at the side; the hands, he noted, were closing upon the twelve and the five, and there would soon ring out the sound of the hour. But, by its side, what was this phantasmal and unwonted companion, fixed, distinct, aping reality, ebony-faced also, but silver-lettered, solidly pedestalled, not lightly balanced, pointing to the hour eight with the same closeness as the real clock pointed to the hour five? He had time to notice that the four of this timepiece was not lettered in the ordinary Roman numerals, but with the four vertical and parallel strokes; then the apparition disappeared.

An optical hallucination! Probably, the mental image intensely visualised, of some familiar timepiece in a friendly sitting-room. Indeed, was it not more than familiar? Surely he knew it, — had seen it, daily, insistently, — that ebony face, that silver lettering, that strong ornamented pedestal, even that figure four! But where was it, when was it? Some curious bar in his memory baffled the mind wandering vainly for the lost details.

Suddenly the clock, his own clock, struck five. He counted mechanically the familiar sounds, sharp, clear, attended with a metallic reverberation. And then, before the ear could withdraw itself from its object, another clock began, not sharp, not clear, not metallic but with a soft, harmonious chime and a musical jangling at the end. And the number of the strokes was eight!

Sturge sat down at the table and opened his book at random. If this were a hallucination, it was a carefully arranged and well-executed hallucination. Was someone playing hypnotic tricks with his brain? Was he hypnotising himself? His eye fell on the page and met not mediaeval Latin, but ancient Greek, though unHomeric hexameters. Very clear was the lettering, very plain the significance.

“For the gods immortal wander always over the earth and come unguessed to the dwellings of mortals; but rare is the eye that can look on them and rarer the mind that can distinguish the disguise from the deity.”¹

Hypnotism again! for he knew that the original lucubrations of the old mystic, subtle in substance, but in expression rough, tedious, amorphous, persisted from the beginning to the end in their crabbed Latin and deviated nowhere into Greek,

¹ αἰεὶ γὰρ θεοὶ ἀθάνατοι περὶ γαῖαν ἀλῶνται
θνητῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἐπὶ δώματα προσβαίνουσι
κρυπτοὶ τοὺς δὲ τίς αὐτῶν προσδέρχεται ὄμμασι κρυπτοῦς;
εἶτα τί δαιμόνιον τί κενὸν καὶ σχῆμα τίς οἶδε;

flowered nowhere into poetry. There was yet more of the hexameters, he noticed, and he read on.

“And men too live disguised in the sunlight and never from their birth to their death shalt thou see the mask uplifted. Nay, thou thyself, O Pelops, hast thou seen even once the daemon within thee?”²

There the hexameters ceased and the next moment the physical page reappeared with its native lettering. But sweet, harmonious, clear in his hearing jangled once more the chimes of the phantom hour. And again the number of strokes was eight.

Sturge Maynard rose and waited for some more definite sign. For he divined now that some extraordinary mental state, some unforgettable experience was upon him. His expectation was not deceived. Once more the chimes rang out, but this time it seemed to him as if a woman’s voice were crying to him passionately under cover of that perfectly familiar melody. But were the two phantasmal sounds memories of this English land and birth or was it out of some past existence they challenged him, insisting and appealing, inviting him to remember some poignant hour of a form he had worn and discarded, a name he had answered to and forgotten? Whatever it was, it was near to him, it touched potently his heart-strings. And then immediately following the eighth stroke there came, as if far off, an unmistakable explosion of sound, the report of a modern revolver.

Sturge Maynard left the fireplace and the room, descended the stairs, put on his hat and overcoat, and moved towards the door of his house. He had no clear idea where he would go or what he must do, but whatever it might be, it had to be done. Then it occurred to him that he had forgotten his revolver which was lying in the drawer of his wardrobe. He went up, possessed himself of the weapon, loaded it, put it in his right-hand side pocket, assured himself that the pocket carried his two latchkeys, once more descended the stairs and walked out into one of the densest of London fogs, damp, choking and impenetrable.

He moved through a world that seemed to have no existence except in memory. There was no speed of traffic. Only an occasional cartman hoarsely announced from time to time the cautious progress of his vehicle. Sturge could not see anything before or around him, — except when he neared the curb and a lamppost strove to loom out on him shadowily or on the other side a spectral fragment of wall brushed his coatsleeve. But he was certain of the pavement under his feet, and he felt he could make no false turn. A surer guide than his senses and memory led him.

He crossed the road, entered the gates of Hyde Park, traversed in a sure and straight line of advance the fogbound invisible open, passed through the Marble Arch, and in Oxford Street, for the first time, hesitated. There were two women who

² χρυπτοὶ καὶ βροτοὶ ἄνδρες ἐν αὐγαῖς ἡλίου εἰσὶν
οὐδὲ τὰ τέγματ' ἀπωθοῦσιν χρυπτοὶ δὲ θανοῦνται.
καὶ σύ, Πέλοψ, πότε τὸν σὸν ἔτ' ἔνδον δαίμον' ἐπέιδες;

were dear to him, either of whom by her death could desolate half his existence. To whom should he go? Then his mind, or something within it, decided for him. These speculations were otiose. He need not go to his sister Imogen. What possible evil could happen to her in her uncle's well-appointed, well-guarded comfortable home, in the happy round of her life full of things innocently careless and harmlessly beautiful. But Renée! Renée was different.

He pursued his walk in a familiar direction. As he went, it flashed across his memory that she had forbidden him to visit her today. There was some living reminiscence of her past life coming to her, someone she did not care for Sturge to meet, she had said with her usual frank carelessness; he must not come. He had not questioned. Since he first knew her, he had never questioned, and the past of Renée Beauregard was a void even for the man to whom she had surrendered everything. There was room in that void for unusual incidents, supreme perils. He remembered now that her parting clasp had been almost convulsive in its strength and intensity, her speech vibrant with some unexplained emotion. He had been aware of it without observing it, being preoccupied with his passion. Whatever part of his mind had noted it, had confined its possible cause within the limits of the usual, as men are in the habit of doing, ignoring the unusual until it seizes and surprises them.

He reached the square and the house in which she lived, opened the door with one of the latchkeys in his pocket, divested himself of his coat and hat, and directed his steps to the drawingroom. A girl of nineteen or twenty rose, calm and pale, fronting the open doorway. The clutch of her hand on the chair, the rigid forward impulse in her frame were the index of a great emotion and an intense expectation. But her face flushed, the hand and figure relaxed, when she saw her visitor. Renée Beauregard was a Frenchwoman of the South, rich in physical endowment, in nervous vitality, in the élan of her tongue and her spirit. Her exquisite full limbs, her buoyant gait, the mobility of her crimson lips, her smiling dark eyes made great demands on life, on success, on pleasure, on love. But in the invincibly happy flame of the eyes there was at the moment the shadow of a tragic disappointment haunting and disfiguring their natural expression. This was plainly a woman with a past, — and a present. And her nature, if not her fate, demanded a future.

“Sturge!” She took a step towards the door. Sturge walked over to the fireplace and took her hand.

“I forgot your prohibition till I was too near to turn back. And there was the fog; and return was cheerless and you were here!”

“You should not have forgotten!” she said, but she smiled, well-pleased at his coming. Then the dark look re usurped those smiling eyes. “And you must go back. No, not now. In a quarter of an hour. You may stop for quarter of an hour.”

She had glanced at the clock, and his eyes followed hers. He saw an ebony-faced timepiece, silver-lettered, solidly-pedestalled, rendering the figure four in parallel strokes, and smiled at the curious tricks that his memory had played him. It

was five minutes past six.

“I will go to Imogen’s,” he said, very deliberately. She looked at him, looked at the clock, then cried impulsively, leaning towards him: “And you will come at eight and dine with me! Rachel shall lay the covers for two,” then drew back, as if repenting her invitation.

Eight! Yes, he would dine with her — after he had done his work. That seemed to be the arrangement, — not hers, but whose? The daemon’s perhaps, the god’s, within or without. They sat talking for a while, and it seemed to him that never had their talk been so commonplace in form or so vibrant with emotion. At twenty past six he rose, took his farewell and moved out to the fog; but she followed him to the door, helped him on with his overcoat, trembling visibly as she did so. And before he went, she embraced and kissed him once, not vehemently, but with a strong quietude and as if some fateful resolution had at that moment been formed in her heart, and expressed itself in her caress.

“I shall be back by eight,” he said quietly. He had accepted, but not returned her embrace.

By eight! Yes, and before. But he did not tell her that. He swung through the fog to his uncle’s residence, with a light, clear and careless mind, but an intense quiet in his heart. He reached the place, in a very aristocratic neighbourhood, and was invited in by a portly footman. Sir John was out, at the House, but Miss Imogen Maynard was at home. The next hour Sturge passed calmly and lightly enough; for in his sister’s everyday attractive personal talk coursing lightly over the surface of life, amusements and theatres, books, music, paintings varied with politics and a shade of politely hinted scandal, even his heart insensibly lost its tension and he slipped back into the usual, forgetting the within in the without.

The next hour and more. It was Imogen Maynard who rose and said:

“Ten minutes to eight, Sturge. I must go and dress. You are sure you won’t dine?”

Sturge Maynard looked at the clock and his heart stood still. He bid his sister a hasty adieu, ran down the stairs, clutched his hat and coat and was out in the fog, donning his overcoat as he walked. He made sure of the revolver and the latchkeys, then broke into a run. His great dread was that he might lose the turning in his haste and arrive after the stroke of the hour. But it was difficult to miss it, the only open space for half a mile! And the daemon? was he a spirit of prophecy only? Did he not visit to save?

He turned into Renée’s square and, as he strode to the house and ascended the steps, the agitation passed from him and it was with an even pulse and a steady nerve that he turned to the drawingroom door. He had flung aside his hat but not waited to divest himself of the coat. His hand was in the pocket and the butt of the revolver was in his hand.

The door was open and, unusual circumstance, veiled by the Japanese screen.

He stood at its edge and looked into the room which was intensely still, but not untenanted — for on the rug before the fireplace, at either end of it, stood Renée Beauregard and a man unknown to Sturge. He looking at her as if waiting for her speech; she calm, pale, resolute in silence, with the heavy burden of her past in her eyes. The stranger's back was half turned to Sturge and only part of his profile was visible, but the Englishman quivered with his hatred even as he looked at him. Was this what he had to do? He took out the revolver and put his finger on the trigger. Then he glanced at the clock, — it wanted four minutes to the hour; and at the stranger again, — in his hand, too, was a revolver and his finger also rested on the trigger. Sturge Maynard smiled.

Then the man's voice was heard. "It has to be then, Idalie!" he said, in a thin, terrible, mournful plaint, "You have decided it. Don't bear any grudge. You know it can't be helped. You have to die."

Sturge remembered that Idalie was Renée's second name, but she had always forbidden him to use it. The thin voice continued, this time with a note of curious excitement in its plaintiveness.

"And you throw it all on me! What does it matter how I got you, what I did afterwards? Everything's allowed to a lover. And I loved you. It's dangerous to play with love, Idalie. You find it now!"

Sturge looked at the man. Danger for her there was none, but great danger for this rigid, thin-voiced assassin, this man whom Sturge Maynard hated with every muscle in his body, with every cell of his brain. It seemed to him that each limb of him greatened and vibrated with the energy of the homicide, with the victorious impulse to slay. There was a fog outside, what a fog! and he could easily dispose of the body. Really that was a good arrangement. God did things very cleverly sometimes. And he laughed in himself at the grimness of his conceit. Yet somehow he believed it. God's work, not his. And yet his, too, preordained — since when? But the doomed voice was going on.

"I give you still a chance, Idalie — always, always a chance. Will you go with me? You've been false to me, false with your body, false with your heart. But I'll forgive. I forgave your desertion, I'll forgive this too. Come with me, Idalie. And if not, — Renée Idalie, it is going to strike eight, and when the hour has done striking, I strike. It's God shoots you with this hand of mine, — the God of Justice, the God of Love. It's both you have offended. Will you come?"

She shook her head. A deadly pallor swept over the man. "It's done then," he cried, "you've done it. You have got to die." He trained the pistol on her and his finger closed on the trigger. Sturge remained motionless. Nothing could happen before the hour struck. That was the moment destined, and no one could outrun Fate by a second. The man went on:

"Don't say it till the clock strikes! There's time till then. When I shoot you, Rachel will run up and I will shoot her. I left the door open so that she might hear

the sound. Who else in England knows that I exist? I shall go out — oh, when you are both dead, not before. There's a fog, there's not a soul about, and I shall walk away very quietly. No one will see, no one will hear. God with his fog has blinded and deafened the world. You see it's He or it would not have been so perfectly arranged for me."

Very grimly Sturge Maynard smiled. Men who hated each other might, it seemed, have very similar minds. Perhaps that was why they clashed. Well, if it was God, He was a tragic artist too and knew the poetical effectiveness of dramatic irony! Everything this man reckoned on or had arranged for his deed and his safety, had been or would be helpful to his own executioner! And then the consciousness came upon him that this had all happened before. But not here, not in these English surroundings! A great blur of green came before his eyes, obscuring the clock. Then it leaped on him — green grass, green trees, green-covered rocks, a green sea and on the sward a man face downward, stabbed in the back, over him his murderer, the stiletto fresh-stained with blood. A boat rocked on the waters; it had been arranged for the assassin's escape, and in it there lay a woman, bound. Sturge knew those strange faces very well and remembered how he had lain dead on that sward. It was strange to see it all again in this drawingroom with the fateful modern ebony-faced timepiece seen through the green of Mediterranean trees! But it was going to end very differently this time.

Then the voice of the woman rang out, cold, strong, like the clang of iron. "I will not go," she said, simply. And the hour struck. It struck once, it struck twice, thrice, four times. And then she lifted her eyes and saw Sturge Maynard walking forward from the side of the screen. He was a good shot and there was no chance of his bungling it and killing her. But he would make sure!

The woman in her intensity had summoned up a marvellous self-control, and it did not break now; she neither moved, nor uttered a sound. But a look came into her eyes poignant in its appeal, terrible in its suggestion. For it was a cry for life, a command to murder.

The doomed man was looking at the clock, not at her, still less at any possible danger behind. He looked up as the eighth musical jangle died away and Sturge saw his light, steady, cruel eyes gleaming like those of a beast. He pressed his finger on the trigger.

"It is finished!" cried the man. And as he spoke, Sturge Maynard fired. The room rang with the shot, filled with the smoke. When the smoke cleared, the stranger was seen prostrate on the rug: his head lay at the feet of the woman he had doomed. There was a running of steps in the passage and the maid Rachel entered, — as the man who lay there had foreseen. She was trembling when she came, but she saw the man on the rug, paused, steadied herself, and smiled. "We must carry it out at once into the fog," she said simply in French. With a simultaneous impulse both she and Sturge approached the corpse. Then Renée, breaking into excited motion, ran to

Sturge and putting her hand on his shoulder made as if to push him out of the room.

“I will see to that!” she panted, “Go!”

He turned to her with a smile.

“You must go at once,” she reiterated, “For my sake, do not be found in this house. Others besides Rachel may have heard the shot.”

But he took her by the wrists, drew her away from the fireplace and set her in a chair.

“We lose time, Monsieur,” said Rachel, again.

“It is better to lose time, Rachel,” he said, “we will give ten minutes to Fate.”

And the serving-woman nodded and proceeding to the corpse began to tie up the wound methodically in her apron. The others waited in absolute stillness, Sturge arranging in his mind the explanation he would give, if any had heard the report and broke in on them. But silence and fog persisted around the house.

They took up the body. “If anyone notices, we are carrying a drunken man home,” said Sturge. “Carry it carefully; there must be no trail of blood.” And so into the English fog they carried out the man who had come living from foreign lands, and laid him down in the public road, far from the house and the square where he had perished. When they returned to the room, Rachel took up the bloodstained rug and apron, sole witnesses of the thing that had been done.

“I will destroy these,” she said, “and bring the rug from Madame’s room. And then,” she said, as simply as before, “Monsieur and Madame will dine.”

Renée shuddered and looked at Sturge.

“I remain here,” he said, “till the body is found. We are linked henceforth indissolubly and for ever, Idalie.” And as he stressed lightly the unwonted name, there was a look in his eyes she dared not oppose.

That night, when Renée had gone to her room, Sturge, sitting over the fire, remembered that he had not told her the strange incident which had brought about one tragedy today and prevented another. When he went into her chamber, she came to him, deeply agitated, and clasped him with violence.

“Oh, Sturge, Sturge!” she cried, “to think that if you had not chanced to come, I should be dead now, taken from you, taken from God’s beautiful world!”

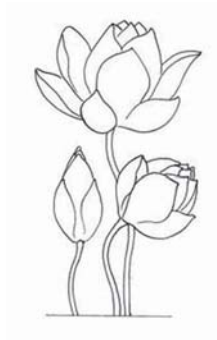
Chanced! There is no such thing in this creation as chance, thought Sturge. But who then had given him that mystic warning? Who had put the revolver in his hand? or sent him on a mission of slaughter? Who had made Imogen rise just in time? Who had fired that shot in the drawingroom? The God within? The God without? The Easterns spoke of God in a man. This might well be He. And then there returned to his memory those fierce emotions, the hatred that had surged in him, the impulse and delight of slaughter, the song of exultation that his blood yet sang in his veins, because a man that had lived, was dead and could not return to life again. He remembered, too, the command in Renée’s eyes. God in a man? — was God in a man a murderer then? In him? and in her?

“It is to enquire too curiously to think so,” he concluded, “but very strangely indeed has He made His world.”

Then he told her about the German mystic and the chime of the phantom hour that had brought him to her in the tragic moment of their destinies. And when he spoke of the daemon within, the woman understood better than the man.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Plays and Stories — II, CWSA, Vol. 4, pp. 953-64)



‘THE HYMN OF GLADNESS OF THY DIVINE AND PERMANENT PRESENCE’

May 24, 1914

O my sweet Master, let me not be submerged by outer things. They have no interest, no savour for me. If I busy myself with them, it is because I feel that such is Thy will and the work must be accomplished integrally, down to the least details of the action and substance. But it is quite enough to turn one’s attention to them and infuse Thy forces into them as much as possible. They must not be allowed to take precedence of the true realities in one’s consciousness.

O my sweet Master, I aspire for Thee, for the knowledge of what Thou art, for identification with Thee. I ask for a greater love, growing always purer, always vaster, always more intense and I find myself as it were submerged in Matter; is this Thy reply? As Thou hast Thyself accepted to be thus submerged in Matter so as to awaken it gradually to consciousness, is this the result of a more perfect identification with Thee? Is this not Thy answer to me: “If thou wouldst learn to love truly, this is how thou shouldst love . . .” . . . in darkness and unconsciousness?

O my Lord, my sweet Master, Thou knowest that I belong to Thee and that always I want what Thou willest; but do not let any doubt about what Thou willest arise in me. Enlighten me in some way in the immutable peace of the heart. Let me be submerged in darkness if that is necessary, but at least let me know that it is Thou who willest it.

Lord, in response, I hear singing within my heart the hymn of gladness of Thy divine and permanent Presence.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 155)

THE GREAT SECRET

Six Monologues and a Conclusion

A play by the Mother in collaboration with

Nolini (*The Writer*) Pavitra (*The Scientist*)
André (*The Industrialist*) Pranab (*The Athlete*)

Letter of the Mother concerning *The Great Secret*

My dear André,

I know that you are a very busy man and that you do not have much time to spare. However, I am going to ask you to do something for me and I hope that it will be possible for you to do it.

The thing is this.

For the first of December I am preparing something which does not fall into any category of dramatic art and which certainly cannot be called a play, but, nevertheless, it will be put on the stage and I hope that it will not be without interest. I am putting words into the mouths of men who have had very different lives and careers, and it would be better, naturally, if they did not all speak the same language; I mean that their styles should differ. I have asked several people to put themselves in the shoes of one character or another, and to write down for me what, according to them, this character would say. If afterwards there is any touching up to do, I shall do it.

I am enclosing the introduction, which will be read out before the curtain rises; it will give you some idea of what I want to do and help you to understand what I mean.

Among the characters, you will see that there is an industrialist, a big businessman. I am not very familiar with industrial terms and language and I thought that you could help me to write something true to life. The man tells the story of his life and I want it to be the life of a big magnate (American or other) on the lines of Ford, for example. I am making them speak one after another; they each have a maximum of ten minutes to relate their lives, their great triumphs which, at this critical hour, leave them unsatisfied and yearning for something which they do not know or understand. At the same time I am sending you the conclusion of the industrialist's speech as I conceive it, but of course you can make any changes you find necessary.

I have asked Pavitra to write the account of the scientist, Nolini is dealing with the man of letters, Pranab has already written what the sportsman will say (in English, but I shall put it into French), I have already outlined the statesman, I am taking care of the artist and of course the Unknown Man, since I shall be speaking through him.

Afterwards we shall still have to decide who the actors will be; Debou will play the Unknown Man, Hriday the sportsman, I am trying to persuade Pavitra to embody the scientist, Manoj will play either the artist or the writer. Naturally, the ideal would be for you to come and speak what you have written — but maybe you will regard that as an unrealisable folly . . . To tell the truth, this is only a feeler; we shall speak about it again later . . . I hope I have not left out anything important. But if you want any further details, I shall send them to you.

7 July 1954

The Great Secret

Six Monologues and a Conclusion

Six of the world's most famous men have been brought together, apparently by chance, in a life-boat in which they have taken refuge when the ship that was carrying them to a world conference on human progress sank in mid-ocean.

There is also a seventh man in the boat. He looks young or, rather, ageless. He is dressed in a style belonging to no period or country. He sits at the helm, immobile and silent, but listens attentively to what the others are saying. They treat him as a nobody and take no notice of him.

The persons are:

The Statesman

The Writer

The Scientist

The Artist

The Industrialist

The Athlete

The Unknown Man

Water is running out, provisions have come to an end. Their physical suffering is becoming intolerable. No hope on the horizon: death is approaching. To take their minds off their present miseries, each one of them in turn tells the story of his life.

The curtain rises

THE STATESMAN

Since you ask me, I will be the first to tell you what my life has been.

Son of a politician, I was familiar from childhood with government affairs and political issues. All that was freely discussed at the dinners which my parents gave for their friends and which I used to attend from the age of twelve onwards. The opinions of the various political parties were no mystery to me and my enthusiastic young mind would find a simple solution to every difficulty.

Naturally, my studies ran along these lines and I became a brilliant student of Political Science.

Later, when the time came to pass from theory to practice, I had to face the first serious difficulties and I began to understand how virtually impossible it is to put one's ideas into practice. I had to resort to compromises and my great ideal gradually crumbled away.

I also noticed that success does not really correspond to a person's worth, but rather to his capacity to adapt himself to circumstances and to make himself agreeable. For that, one must flatter people's weaknesses rather than attempt to correct their imperfections.

No doubt, all of you know about my brilliant career, so I shall not dwell upon it. But I should like to tell you that as soon as I became Prime Minister and my position gave me some real power, I remembered the humanitarian ambitions of my youth and tried to be guided by them. I tried not to be a "party man". I wanted to find a solution to the great conflict between the various political and social trends that are tearing the world apart and all of which, nevertheless, in my opinion, have their advantages and disadvantages. None of them is perfectly good or wholly bad, and a way should be found to adopt what is good in each one in order to form a harmonious and practicable whole. But I was not able to discover the formula of the synthesis that would reconcile these contraries, not to speak of being able to translate it into action.

Thus, I wished for peace, concord, understanding between nations, collaboration for the good of all, and I was compelled by a force greater than mine to wage war and to triumph by unscrupulous means and uncharitable decisions.

And yet I am considered a great statesman, I am overwhelmed with honours and praise and people call me "a friend of humanity".

But I feel my own weakness and I know that I have lacked the true knowledge and power which would have enabled me to fulfil the beautiful hopes of my childhood.

And now that the end is near, I feel that I have done very little and perhaps even very badly, and I shall cross the threshold of death sad and disillusioned.

THE WRITER

With winged words I sought to capture the beauty and the truth that throb in our mortality. This panorama of creation that lies extended before our eyes — men and creatures, beings and things, scenes and happenings — and the other one equally extended in our feelings and perceptions, in our consciousness, they make a mysterious web, a Daedalus' complex. They cast their spell upon me and I heard their voice calling me to know, understand and seize, a voice sweeter and more compelling than any Aegean siren could command. The ring of that voice I sought to give to my words.

I aimed at uttering the mystery of things, I aimed at making the Sphinx speak out. What lies hidden, what lies sealed, what moves from its secrecy suns and stars and hearts, that I endeavoured to unveil and present in the broad light of day. The labour of things, mundane or supra-mundane, is a dumb and even confused pantomime; I offered speech and consciousness to them. Words appeared to me a most marvellous instrument, the instrument *par excellence*. It has just the consistency to embody and to express, neither so fluid as to be vague, nor so concrete as to be opaque. The word pertains to two worlds at once. It is of the material world and therefore can give a form of matter: and it is sufficiently immaterial to be in contact with subtle things, forces and vibrations, principles and ideas. It can materialise the immaterial, embody the disembodied; and above all, it can give the meaning of things, the precise sense enclosed in a form.

In my lyrics I sought to uncover the yearnings of the heart, in man or in nature, what things cry for, what their tears are for. On a larger canvas, through legends and parables, I portrayed the various facets of life's moods and urges, its rare wisdoms and common foolishnesses, gave a pulsating accent and a meaningful concreteness to episodes that constitute history, the history of man's and nature's consciousness. The tragedies and comedies of life I cast in the dramatic form too, and it is not for me to say how pleased you were to see the ancient form serving magnificently the needs and demands of the modern temperament. I moulded in unforgettable individualities figures and characters of living forces. A wider and still more explicit instrument is the novel which is perhaps more agreeable to the scientific and enquiring spirit of the age. For it is both illustrative and explanatory. I have given you the life history of individuals and social aggregates and I have attempted to give you too something of the life history of humanity taken as a whole, the massive aggregate in its circling, coiling, mounting movements. But I knew and I felt that it is not mere extension, largeness — the wide commonalty — that is enough for the human spirit. It needs uplift. It needs the grand style. So I gave you my epic. It was indeed a whole life's labour. Well, many of you do not and did not understand, more were overawed, but all felt its magic vibration. Yes, it was my desperate attempt to tear open the veil.

I have varied the theme and I have varied the manner. Like a consummate scientist I juggled with my words, I knew how to change their constitution and transmute them as it were, make them carry a new sense, a new tone, a new value. I could command something of the Ciceronian swell, something of the Miltonic amplitude, something of the Racinian suavity; I was not incapable of the simplicity of Wordsworth at his best, nor was even the Shakespearean magic quite unknown to me. The sublimity of Valmiki and the nobility of Vyasa were not peaks too high for me to compass.

And yet I have not achieved. I am not satisfied. I am unhappy. For, after all, these are dreams that I have created, “dreams have I sown in the air”. I feel I have not touched the true truth of things nor their soul beauty. I have scratched the mere surface, I have caressed the outer robe that Nature puts on herself; but her very body, her own self has escaped me. I have woven a gossamer around creation’s limbs, however seemingly true, however apparently delightful. The means, the instrument itself which I once thought in its nature to be faultless and perfect in its capacity to penetrate and reveal and express and embody, I found in the end failing me. A great silence, a sheer dumbness, I thought at last to be nearer the heart of things.

THE SCIENTIST

Unlike some of you, I did not set out in life with any intention of improving the condition of my fellow-men. In my case, knowledge rather than action was the main attraction — knowledge in its modern guise: Science. I felt that nothing could be more wonderful than to lift a corner of the veil that screens from us the secrets of Nature, to understand a little more of her hidden springs. I assumed, perhaps unconsciously, the postulate that any increase of knowledge must necessarily result in an increase of power, and that any new mastery over Nature must sooner or later bring about an improvement in man’s condition, his moral as well as his material well-being. For me, as for all other thinkers who have their roots in the last century, the century of the foundations of science, ignorance was the primary if not the only evil. It was this that held back mankind in its drive towards perfection. We admitted, without any discussion, the endless perfectibility of the human race. Progress might be rapid or slow, but it was nonetheless sure. Having come so far, we knew that we could go further. For us, to know more was automatically to understand more, to become wiser, more just — in short, to become better.

There is another postulate that we also accepted implicitly: that it is possible for us to know the Universe as it really is, to grasp its laws objectively. This seemed so obvious that it was never questioned. The Universe and I — we both exist, the function of the one being to understand the other. Undoubtedly, I am part of the

Universe, but in the process of knowing it, I stand apart from it and view it objectively. I admit that what I call the laws of Nature exist independently of me, of my mind; they exist in themselves and they will be the same for any other mind capable of perceiving them.

I started my work inspired by this ideal of pure knowledge. I chose the science of Physics and more particularly the study of the atom, of radioactivity, the field in which Becquerel and the Curies had mapped out a royal road. It was the period when natural radioactivity was being superseded by artificial radioactivity, when the dreams of the alchemists were coming true. I worked with the great physicists who discovered uranium fission and I saw the birth of the atom bomb: years of hard, dogged and one-pointed labour. It was at this time that I conceived the idea which was to lead me to my first discovery, the one which enables us today to obtain electric power directly from intra-atomic or nuclear energy. As you all know, this discovery resulted in a radical change in the economic condition of the whole world, because it brought energy at a low cost within the reach of all. If this discovery was so sensational, it was because it freed man from the curse of toil, from the need to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.

So I realised the dream of my youth — a great discovery — and at the same time I saw its importance for humanity — to which, without especially intending to do so, I had brought this great boon.

I had reason enough to be fully satisfied, but if I was, it was not for long. For soon after — I can tell you this because we are now within an inch of death and my secret will probably be buried with me — soon after this, I say, I discovered the way to free atomic energy not only from uranium, thorium and some other rare metals, but from most of the common metals such as copper and aluminium. But then I was faced with a stupendous problem that strained me almost to breaking-point. Should I make known my discovery? To this day, no one knows this secret except me.

All of you know the story of the atom bomb. You know that it has been succeeded by an infinitely more destructive weapon, the hydrogen bomb. You also know as well as I do that humanity is staggering under the impact of these discoveries, which have placed in its hands an unequalled power of destruction. But if I now revealed my new discovery, if I unveiled my secret, I would place a diabolical power in the hands of just anybody. And without any control or restriction . . . Uranium and thorium were easily monopolised by the governments, first on account of their relative scarcity, but mostly because of the difficulty of activating them in atomic piles. But you can well imagine what would happen if any criminal or crank or fanatic could in any make-shift laboratory put together a weapon capable of blowing up Paris, London or New York! Would that not be the finishing blow for humanity? I too have reeled under the weight of my discovery. I hesitated a long time and have not yet been able to come to any decision which satisfies both my reason and my heart.

Thus the very first postulate with which I set out as a young scientist in quest of Nature's secrets, has fallen to pieces. Even though an increase in knowledge may bring an added power, it does not follow at all that humanity will be automatically bettered. Scientific progress does not necessarily imply moral progress. Scientific and intellectual knowledge is powerless to change human nature, and yet that has become the pressing need. If human greed and passion remain what they are today, almost the same as they were in the Stone Age, then humanity is doomed. We have reached a point where, unless there is a rapid and radical moral change, mankind will destroy itself with the power it has in its own hands.

Now what has happened to the second postulate of my youth? Can I at least have the joy of pure knowledge, can I be certain that I have grasped something of the hidden mechanism of Nature? Can I hope to enjoy the understanding of the true laws that govern Nature? Alas! I fear that here too my ideal has failed me. We men of science have long ago given up the idea that a theory must be either true or false. We now say only that it is convenient, that it fits the facts and gives a working explanation of them. But as for knowing whether it is true, that is to say, whether it conforms to reality — that is quite another thing. And perhaps the question itself is meaningless. Undoubtedly there are, I should say, certainly there are other theories which explain the same facts just as well and are therefore just as valid. After all, what are these theories? They are nothing but symbols. They are certainly useful, since they enable us to predict; they tell us how things happen, but not the why or wherefore. They do not bring us into touch with reality. One always has the impression of circling around the truth, the reality, of approaching it from different angles, from different points of view, without ever being able to discover it or grasp it; nor does it spring forth and reveal itself.

Then again, on the other hand, we ourselves interfere with all the measurements that we take, expecting them to tell us something about the external universe. By the very fact of measuring we disturb, however slightly, the outer phenomena and thus alter the aspect of the world. And so the knowledge that these measurements give us is not at all sure. All that we can deduce from them is a probable state of the world, not a certainty. For phenomena on our own scale, the uncertainty is negligible, but this is not the case with the infinitely small, the world of the atom. Here, it is an essential incapacity, an obstacle that we can never hope to surmount. It is due to the very nature of things and not to the imperfection of our methods of investigation, so that we shall never succeed in casting away the tinted glasses through which we study the universe. All my measurements, all my theories contain me, the human mind, just as much as they contain the universe. They are subjective as well as objective and perhaps, in fact, they exist only in my mind.

On the shores of the Infinite, I discovered a footprint and I sought to reconstruct the being which had left its mark on the sands. I succeeded at last and found that it was myself. This is where I stand — where we all stand — and I see no way out.

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But after all, perhaps the fact that I do not have any certitudes about the world, only probabilities, leaves a ray of hope — that the fate of humanity is not finally sealed.

THE ARTIST

Born into a thoroughly respectable bourgeois family where art was considered as a pastime rather than a career and artists as rather unreliable people, prone to debauchery and with a dangerous disregard for money, I felt, perhaps out of contrariness, a compelling need to become a painter. My entire consciousness was centred in my eyes and I could express myself more easily by a sketch than in words. I learnt much better by looking at pictures than by reading books, and what I had once seen — landscapes, faces or drawings — I never forgot.

At the age of thirteen, through much effort, I had almost mastered the techniques of drawing, water colour, pastels and oil painting. Then I had the chance to do some small commissions for friends and acquaintances of my parents, and as soon as I earned some money, my family began to take my vocation seriously. I took advantage of this to pursue my studies as far as I could. When I was old enough to be admitted, I joined the School of Fine Arts and almost immediately started taking part in competitions. I was one of the youngest artists ever to win the Prix de Rome and that gave me the opportunity to make a thorough study of Italian art. Later on, travelling scholarships allowed me to visit Spain, Belgium, Holland, England and other countries too. I did not want to be a man of one period or one school, and I studied the art of all countries, in all forms, oriental as well as occidental.

At the same time I went ahead with my own work, trying to find a new formula. Then came success and fame; I won first prizes in exhibitions, I sat on juries, my paintings were shown in the leading museums of the world and snatched up by the art dealers. It meant wealth, titles, honours; even the word “genius” was used . . . But I am not satisfied. My conception of genius is quite different. We have to create new forms, with new methods and processes, in order to express a new kind of beauty that is higher and purer, truer and nobler. So long as I still feel bound to human animality, I cannot free myself completely from the forms of material Nature. The aspiration was there, but the knowledge, the vision was lacking.

And now that we are about to die, I feel that I have produced nothing of what I wanted to produce, I have created nothing of what I wanted to create. And in spite of all the fame that has been heaped upon me, I feel that I am a failure.

THE INDUSTRIALIST

Since we are all opening our hearts and, moreover, since what I am going to say cannot be used by my competitors or by those who resent my success — my so-called success — I shall tell you the story of my life as I see it and not as it has been so often related.

The facts themselves have been correctly reported. My father was a blacksmith in a small country town. From him I inherited a liking for metal-work; it was he who taught me the joy of a work well done and the satisfaction of giving oneself entirely to one's task. He also instilled into me the desire to do always better — better than others, better than before. The desire for gain was not his chief motive, but he never denied that he was proud of being at the top of his profession and he enjoyed the praise of his fellow-townsmen without any false modesty.

At the beginning of the century, when the internal combustion engine made its first appearance, we small boys were thrilled by the possibilities it opened up, and to build a horseless carriage, or a motor-car as it was beginning to be called, presented itself as a goal worthy of our greatest efforts. For the few models we had already seen were very far from perfect.

The first car, built with my own hands from parts collected here and there and never intended for the use to which I put them, undoubtedly gave me the greatest joy of my whole life. Perched precariously on a somewhat uncomfortable seat, I drove the few hundred yards from my father's workshop to the Town Hall, and nothing seemed more beautiful to me than this odd contraption, wobbling and puffing its way along, scattering the pedestrians and making the dogs bark and the horses rear.

I shall not dwell on the years that followed, on the hostility of those who proclaimed that the horse had been created by God to draw carriages and that it was already quite impious enough to have made railways without going even further and launching these new diabolical inventions upon the roads and in the cities. Even more numerous were those who could see no future in a temperamental machine that could only be handled by experts or single-minded cranks. The few adventurous souls who lent me my first dollars to set up a small workshop, hire a couple of hands and buy some steel, seemed to have the same blind faith as the first gold-seekers who went out in pursuit of a problematical and elusive fortune in a hostile and desolate country.

As for me, I was not seeking fortune but only the satisfaction of manufacturing a motor-car that would be easier to handle and cheaper than the existing models. I felt somehow that this means of transport should be economical because, after all, its driving power would only have to be fed while it was working. If its purchase price could be made low enough, many people would buy it who would shy at the permanent expense of maintaining a team of horses.

Everybody still remembers my first mass-produced model. It was high on its wheels so that it could run on country roads, it was robustly built to stand up to the rough handling of the crudest farm-hand, but somewhat despised by those who still considered the motor-car a luxury for the wealthy. And yet this model, which could be driven easily, almost effortlessly, already foreshadowed the time when motor-cars would be handled even by the most inexperienced drivers.

Still it was not until the First World War that the motor-car won its first great victory over the horse. Ambulances, ammunition transports, everything that had to move fast, everything that was unusually heavy was “motorised”. My factory reached a tremendous pitch of activity. The huge quantities ordered by the Army gave me the opportunity to improve my equipment and perfect new methods of manufacture and assembly.

By the end of the War, I had a smooth-running organisation which, however, seemed out of proportion to civilian needs. My assistants got scared. They urged me to reduce the rate of manufacture, to dismiss some of the employees, to cancel orders placed with suppliers and to wait some time to see where the actual demand would stand. This was wise, no doubt; but here was an opportunity, probably unique, to produce the cheapest car in the world. Slowing down the production would mean an increase in costs. So I decided that the problem lay in selling our output rather than in producing what people were willing to buy from us. Within six months, after a brilliant advertising campaign, I had proved my point.

From then onwards my company moved forward almost by itself. More and more I had to leave important decisions to my assistants and to confine myself to laying down the guiding principles. These were, to produce at the lowest cost without sacrificing quality and without reducing wages — actually, my workers should be the highest paid in the world; to sell at the lowest price in order to go on reaching ever new markets — not only should the profit margin be brought down to a minimum without jeopardising the stability of the company, but the advertising should be handled so as to obtain the required turnover without unduly increasing the cost of production; finally, in case normal suppliers demanded too much profit, to have no hesitation in undertaking the manufacture of our own spare parts, semi-finished products and even raw materials.

My business began to grow as if it were a living thing. Whatever I undertook seemed to become successful. This is how I became almost a legendary figure, a demi-god who had created a new way of life, an example to follow, so much so that any trifling word of mine, any act however insignificant was analysed, turned inside out, made into a great principle and presented to the masses as a new gospel.

Is there anything real in all this? My business survives only by getting bigger. Any check to its growth would be fatal. For the general expenses, which do not lag far behind the increasing production, would soon swallow up the profit margin, which is very narrow in comparison with the overall turnover. My business is growing

so rapidly that it now looks more like an inflated balloon than a living body moving harmoniously and steadily towards maturity. For instance, some departments have to drive their workers like galley-slaves in order to keep pace with the rest, and as soon as this is corrected at one point by improving the equipment, it reappears at another. I feel helpless in face of this state of affairs, because any disruption in the production line would only result in more hardship for the workers.

And what have I contributed to humanity? Men travel more easily. Do they understand each other any better? Following my example, all sorts of labour-saving gadgets have been mass-produced and made available to an increasing number of customers. How far has this done anything more than to create new needs and a corresponding greed for gain? My workers are well paid but it seems that I have only succeeded in arousing in them the desire to earn always more — and above all more than workers in other factories. I feel that they are dissatisfied, unhappy in fact. Contrary to my hopes, raising their standard of living, assuring their security, has not induced them to develop their human personality. Indeed, the mass of human suffering remains practically unchanged, as formidable as ever, and, it seems, incurable by the means I have used. There is something fundamentally wrong which my actions fail to correct and which I even fail to understand. I feel that there is a secret yet to be discovered; and without this discovery all our efforts are in vain.

THE ATHLETE

I was born in a family of athletes. Both my parents were very good performers in all sorts of games, sports and physical exercises. The speciality of my mother lay in swimming, diving, archery, fencing and dancing. She was well known for her skill in these events and she also held several local championships.

My father was a wonderful fellow. Whatever he touched turned out a success. In his student days he was a renowned footballer, basketball and tennis player. In boxing and cross-country running he was already the best in our district. Then, later, he entered a circus troupe and became famous in the flying trapeze and in horse-riding displays. But his speciality was in body-building and wrestling. He won a wide reputation for these activities.

Naturally these were ideal conditions to be born in and grow into a healthy, strong and capable state of physical fitness. All the physical qualities that were acquired by my parents by ardent practice of the different athletic exercises were easily passed on to me. Moreover, my athlete parents wanted to see their dream fulfilled in me, — they wanted me to be a great and successful athlete. So they brought me up carefully, devoting to me all their knowledge and experience of attaining health, strength, vigour and vitality; and they would let nothing that would help me to achieve this end escape. From my very birth, they fulfilled all the best

conditions of health and hygiene, as regards food, clothing, sleep, cleanliness, good habits and so on, that were materially possible. Afterwards, through well-planned physical exercises, they brought out gradually in my body symmetry, proportion, grace, rhythm and harmony. Then they cultivated in me agility, a daring spirit, alertness, accuracy and co-ordination, and finally I was trained to acquire strength and endurance.

I was sent to a boarding school. Naturally the programme of physical education appealed to me the most. I started taking keen interest in it and in a few years I gradually took my place among the good players and athletes of my school. Then my first success came when I won the inter-school boxing championship. How happy and proud my parents were when they saw their dream on the way to fulfilment! I was very much encouraged by my success, and henceforth put all my determination with earnestness, care and hard effort into mastering the technique and acquiring the skills of all the branches of physical education. I was taught to develop all the different capacities of the body by participating in all the sporting activities. I believed that by an all-round physical training one could be highly successful and be master of more than one or even a few activities. That is why I participated in all the sporting items that opportunity offered me. Year after year, in open championship I regularly won the wrestling, boxing, weight-lifting, body-building, swimming, track and field events, tennis, gymnastics and many other activities also.

Now I was eighteen years old. I wanted to compete in the national games championship. As a believer in all-round development I selected the Decathlon event as my item in the national championship. It is the toughest of all events, — it demands a supreme test of speed, strength, endurance, co-ordination and many other qualities. I got down to training and after six months of hard work I took the championship easily, keeping my second man far behind.

Naturally my success made the national organisers of physical education think of sending me to compete in the world Olympics. I got an offer to represent my country in the world Olympiad which was going to be held within the next two years, in the Decathlon event. It is no joke to compete in the world championship, where the cream of the world's best athletes come together. There was not much time to waste.

So I got down to training under my father's coaching and mother's care. I had to do a lot of hard work. Sometimes the progress seemed impossible and everything seemed so difficult. But I pushed on in my work day after day, month after month, and then finally came the date of the world Olympic sports.

I should not boast, but I did much better than even I had expected. Not only did I become the world champion in the Decathlon event, but I scored so high as had never been done before, nor has again been repeated. Nobody thought it was possible. But so it happened, and the highest ambition both of myself and my parents was fulfilled.

But something strange happened in me. Though I was on the pinnacle of success and glory, I noticed a kind of sadness, a kind of emptiness was slowly approaching me; — as if somebody was saying within me that something was missing, something had to be found out, something had to be established in me. It seemed to be saying: perhaps there is something more for which my physical skill, capacity and energy may be better utilised. But I had not the slightest idea what it could be. Then slowly this condition passed away. Afterwards I joined many important competitions and did very well in all of them. But I noticed this feeling used to possess me after each success.

My reputation caused a batch of young people to gather round me. They asked me to help them in different activities of physical training, which I gladly did. Then I found that there was a great joy in helping others in my favourite occupation, that is, games, sports and physical exercises. I was also doing well as a coach. Many of my students were showing wonderful results in different events of games, sports and physical activities. Seeing my success as a teacher of physical education and because I liked games and sports so much that I did not want to lose touch with them, I thought of taking up this teaching as my life's work. In order to prepare myself in the theoretical side of it, I took my admission in a famous college of physical education and in four years I got my degree in physical education.

Being a master of both practice and theory in the subject of physical education I got down to work. So long as I was an athlete, my sole purpose had been to gain health, strength, skill, physical beauty and to reach a high perfection in my own body. Now I started helping others in order to make them do the same. I organised teachers' training centres all over my country and trained very good instructors and directors of physical education. With the help of them I opened innumerable centres of physical education in every corner of my country. The object of these centres was to spread the popularity and practice of health, physical education and recreation in a scientific way among the general masses of our country. They did their work very well and after several years the general health of my country was very much improved. They showed good results at home and abroad in games and sports. Soon my country got a very high international reputation in the sporting world. I must admit that I was helped and backed by the government of my country and a special portfolio was given to me as the Minister of Physical Education. That is why I could do so much.

Soon my name spread to every part of the world as a great physical educator and organiser, and I was considered an authority on physical education in the international sphere. I was invited to many countries by the authorities to speak on and introduce my system of physical education to their land. Letters were pouring in from every corner of the earth asking me about my method and seeking my advice on their special problems in the field of Physical Education.

But in the midst of my busy hours often I was feeling that all my energy and

skill, all my country-wide organisation and the power that was growing from it, all the strong influence that I had in the international sphere, could be used perhaps for some higher, some nobler and loftier purpose and then only all that I did could have some true meaning. But up to now I could not know what it might be.

Even sometimes I have been called “superman”; but I am not a superman. I am still the slave of nature, a man with all his ignorance, his limitations and incapacities, at the mercy of an accident or illness or one of those human passions that empty you of all your energy. I feel that after all I am not above all these things and that there is something else to learn and to realise.

Now, when I am standing face to face with death, I am not afraid in the least to die. The thought of extreme suffering, hunger and thirst does not disturb me. But I am sorry that I could not solve my problems in my lifetime. I achieved a great success in life, got fame, honour, wealth and everything that a man could dream of. But I am not satisfied because I have no answers to my questions: —

“What is it that I miss so badly in the midst of all? What could be the highest use of my physical perfection and ability? For what purpose could the power of my country-wide organisation and my international influence be best utilised?”

Then the voice of the Unknown Man is heard, calm, gentle, clear, full of a serene authority.

THE UNKNOWN MAN

What you want to know, I can tell you.

All of you have had a similar experience, although your activities are so different in their nature and scope. All six of you have come to a similar conclusion in spite of the success that has crowned your efforts. For you have been living in the surface consciousness, seeing only the appearance of things and unaware of the true reality of the universe.

You represent the élite of mankind, each one of you has achieved in his own sphere the utmost of what man is capable of; you are therefore at the summit of the human race. But from this summit you look down into an abyss and you can go no further. None of you are satisfied but at the same time none of you know what to do. None of you know the solution to the twofold problem presented by life and your own goodwill. I say a twofold problem, for in fact it has two aspects, one individual and the other collective: how can one fully realise one’s own good and the good of others? None of you have found the solution, for this riddle of life cannot be solved by mental man, however superior he may be. For that, one must be born into a new and higher consciousness, the Truth-Consciousness. For behind these fleeting appearances there is an eternal reality, behind this unconscious and warring multitude

there is a single, serene Consciousness, behind these endless and innumerable falsehoods there is a pure, radiant Truth, behind this obscure and obdurate ignorance there is a sovereign knowledge.

And this Reality is here, very near, at the centre of your being as it is at the centre of the universe. You have only to find it and live it and you will be able to solve all your problems, overcome all your difficulties.

This, you may say, is what the religions preach: most of them have spoken of this Reality, calling it God, but they have supplied no satisfactory solution to your problem, no convincing answer to your questions, and they have totally failed in their attempt to provide a remedy to the ills of suffering humanity.

Some of these religions were based on prophetic revelation, others on a philosophical and spiritual ideal, but very soon the revelation changed to rituals and the philosophical ideal to dogmas, and so the truth they contained vanished. Moreover, and most important, all religions, almost without exception, offer man an almost identical other-worldly solution, based on death, not on life. Their solution amounts to this: bear all your miseries without complaining, for this world is irremediably evil, and you shall be rewarded for your meekness after death; or else: renounce all attachment to life and you shall escape forever from the cruel necessity of living. This certainly cannot provide any remedy to the sufferings of humanity on earth nor to the condition of the world in general. On the contrary, if we want to find a true solution to the confusion, chaos and misery of the world, we have to find it in the world itself. And this is in fact where it is to be found. It exists potentially, we have only to discover it; it is neither mystic nor imaginary; it is altogether concrete and disclosed to us by Nature herself, if we know how to observe her. For the movement of Nature is an ascending one; from one form, one species, she brings forth a new one capable of manifesting something more of the universal consciousness. All goes to show that man is not the last step in terrestrial evolution. The human species will necessarily be succeeded by a new one which will be to man what man is to the animal; the present human consciousness will be replaced by a new consciousness, no longer mental but supramental. And this consciousness will give birth to a higher race, superhuman and divine.

The time has come for this possibility, promised and anticipated for so long, to become a living reality upon earth, and that is why you are all unsatisfied and feel that you have been unable to obtain what you wanted from life. Nothing but a radical change of consciousness can deliver the world from its present obscurity. Indeed, this transformation of the consciousness, this manifestation of a higher and truer consciousness, is not only possible but certain; it is the very aim of our existence, the purpose of life upon earth. First the consciousness must be transformed, then life, then forms; it is in this order that the new creation will unfold. All Nature's activity is in fact a progressive return towards the Supreme Reality which is both the origin and the goal of the universe, in its totality as well as in its smallest element.

We must become concretely what we are essentially; we must live integrally the truth, the beauty, the power and the perfection that are hidden in the depths of our being, and then all life will become the expression of the sublime, eternal, divine Joy.

*There is a silence as the six men exchange glances, showing their approval.
Then:*

THE WRITER

Your words have a compelling force, a contagious power. Yes, we feel that a new door has opened before us, a new hope is born in our hearts. But it will take time to realise, a long time perhaps. And now death awaits us, the end is near. Alas, it is too late.

THE UNKNOWN MAN

No, it is not too late, it is never too late.

Let us unite our wills in a great aspiration; let us pray for an intervention of the Grace. A miracle can always happen. Faith has a sovereign power. And if indeed we are to take part in the great work to be done, then an intervention will come and prolong our lives. Let us pray with the humility of the wise and the candid faith of a child; let us invoke with sincerity this new Consciousness, this new Force, Truth and Beauty which must manifest, so that the earth may be transformed and the supramental life realised in the material world.

They all concentrate in silence. The Unknown Man continues:

“O Supreme Reality, grant that we may live integrally the marvellous secret that is now revealed to us.”

They all repeat the prayer softly and remain in silent concentration. Suddenly the Artist cries out:

Look! Look!

*A ship appears, like a dot on the horizon, and slowly comes closer.
Exclamations. The Unknown Man says:*

Our prayer is heard.

When the ship becomes clearly visible, the Athlete jumps up onto the gunwale waving a white handkerchief which he pulls from his pocket. The ship comes nearer. The Scientist exclaims:

They have seen us. They are coming!

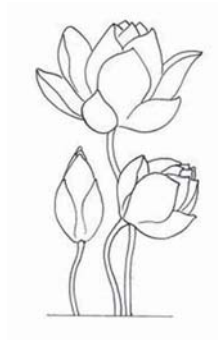
And the Unknown Man says slowly:

Here is salvation, here is new life!

Curtain.

THE MOTHER

(*On Education*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 12, pp. 471-96)



**“BEYOND” —
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO**

Sri Aurobindo —

Any quality here? Does the language catch the symbolic force of the poetic vision?

Now dream-gods die, extinguished by a deep
Incomprehensible breath of sudden sleep,
A dark breath craving for diviner bliss! . . .
O night of soul, art thou a secret kiss
Sworn to an ultimate Bridegroom yet unknown,
Some giant goldenness waiting alone
Beyond the half-lit dalliance of star-skies
That wove¹ a mesh of myriad paradise?
Art thou a virgin hunger for Truth's one
Love-splendoured mouth of sacramental sun? . . .

[*Amal's question:*]

1. “weave”?

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

1. Yes.

It does — perfect — with a real splendour of poetic style.

15 November 1935

[Version from *The Secret Splendour — Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, 1993, p. 490:]

Now dream-gods die, extinguished by a deep
Incomprehensible breath of sudden sleep,
A dark breath craving for diviner bliss!
O night of soul, are you a secret kiss
Sworn to an ultimate Bridegroom yet unknown,
Some giant goldenness waiting alone
Beyond the half-lit dalliance of star-skies
That weave a mesh of myriad paradise?
Are you a virgin hunger for Truth's one
Love-splendoured mouth of sacramental sun?

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of January 2016)

Chapter: XLIX

The “Sweet Letter” Turns Bitter

Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk.

Henry David Thoreau¹

The “First Information of the Case” had been filed in the court of Mr. Birley, Magistrate, Alipore, on the 17th of May 1908. The trial in the same court commenced on the 19th. Case against the first batch of accused was sent to the court of the Additional Sessions Judge, Mr. C. P. Beachcroft, I.C.S., on the 19th of August and against the second batch on the 14th of September. Trial in that higher court began on the 19th of October and continued till the 13th of April 1909. While the Magistrate’s court had devoted 76 working days to the case, the Sessions court devoted 131 days. The Assessors gave their verdict on the 14th of April 1909 and Mr. Beachcroft delivered his judgment on the 6th of May 1909.

While 222 witnesses had been examined at the Magisterial court, the number was reduced to 206 in the Sessions court. Over 5000 exhibits and 4000 documents were produced by the authorities representing the “Emperor” to substantiate their accusation.² The Prosecution probably thought that the mind-boggling monument of documents itself would impress the judge as well as the jurors like a veritable witness against the accused. Alas, parts of the monument began to crumble, when least expected, before an exasperated Norton, the much vaunted barrister hired costing a fortune to the government.

CID reports of numerous speeches of Sri Aurobindo had been produced. But an unimpressed judge observed that the whole lot of that category of evidence might very well have been omitted as it proved nothing beyond the fact that Sri Aurobindo “was received with acclamation wherever he went”!³

The values of the exhibits naturally proved to be highly relative, depending on the stance of the two opposite parties, namely the “Emperor” and his enemy, the latter personified by “Aurobindo Ghose”. So far as the Daniel of a judge, Mr. Beachcroft was concerned, many of them were superfluous. However, some of them are highly valuable for posterity, to researchers in particular, for reasons quite

different from those for which the Prosecution presented them. Here is a sample:

Amballa, September 2-07.

To

Srijut Arabinda Ghose,
Wellington Square, Calcutta.

Dear Sir,

The following telegraphic message was sent to you from here on the 22nd August but from its non-appearance in the columns of *Bande Mataram*, I am afraid it has not reached you: —

“Heaven ahead, thou blessed son of Mother India and promulgator of the true political Dharma. Every patriot’s heart is with you.”

The message attracted the attention of the local Railway police, and, scenting some sedition, they at once wired its text to their boss at Lahore and expect to make some fun out of it. It is possible that its delivery may have been detained and I would, therefore, be glad to know if it has reached you or not.

May we take this opportunity to express our deep sense of admiration at the undaunted manner in which you have been preaching the gospel of genuine nationalism to our countrymen from day to day? You can scarcely form an idea of the keen sense of interest and concern with which we, in the Punjab, read your divine writings and what revolution in our thoughts has *Bande Mataram* wrought within the brief course of one single year. Among literate people forward thoughts and notions may, no doubt, enter with ease and rapidity, but it is amazing to find with what celerity even the illiterate masses turn their backs on old ideas and betake themselves to the new and how, by very little preaching, the new ideas rapidly rise up and gradually come to fill the whole atmosphere of a village life; and how, notwithstanding all that seems alarming and preposterous in them, the new ideas readily command acceptance. We may not tangibly perceive their force in the beginning for they yet represent only a mental state of society and cannot, like physical forces, be counted into so many units of armed troops but if the universally accepted principle of philosophy that “Thoughts are great forces” is really true, and if the dictum that — “Everything is first worked-out in the unseen before it is manifested in the seen, in the ideal before it is realised in the real, in the spiritual before it shows forth in the material” is likewise correct, the nationalists may reasonably count on new thoughts gaining every day new adherents and swelling, unseen in volume and force.

The nationalists have faith in the righteousness and justice of their cause

and the Almighty Providence will soon bring matters right. All that you, under the present circumstances, could do was to galvanise the new thoughts into the hearts of as wide a section of the people as possible and in this task you have been eminently successful.

The country may not, in its present condition of helpless servility, be able to redeem the deep debt of gratitude and obligation you have placed it under, but you may rest assured that our hearts rise up to Heaven in heart-felt prayer for the grant of a prolonged, happy and prosperous life unto you, so that your versatile genius may shed its lustre on, and benefit, us for a long time to come.

Ever yours in the bonds of fraternity,

(Sd.) Alakh Dhari.⁴

Written while the *Bande Mataram* Seditious Case was going on, the letter produced as a document to support the allegation of sedition against Sri Aurobindo reveals several aspects of the condition prevailing then: how communication between the nationalists was being clandestinely censored; the role the newspaper *Bande Mataram* played in promoting the ideal of nationalism and the indefatigable faith the likes of the signatory had in the ultimate victory of the cause — and the great faith and warm love they — in this case the compatriots in Punjab — had reposed in Sri Aurobindo. Unknown to him and unwittingly as well, the widespread terror Sri Aurobindo had created in the collective mind of the ruling class was amazing. The entire network of investigation seems to have been conducted chiefly keeping in view the necessity to implicate him in the Conspiracy. The police set-up had been alerted accordingly. They seem to have imaginatively constructed a spectre of the leader which like Frankenstein's creation haunted them relentlessly.

Here is an instance, out of many similar ones, to justify this assumption:

Soon after the police raid of Murari Pukur Garden a number of places and residential houses were searched. Among them was the large house of Amarendranath Chattopadhyay at Uttarpara. The operation was led by one D. G. Rayan, the Superintendent of Police for District Hooghly. Holder of a Ph.D. degree he had joined the Police Service because he could not pass the I.C.S. He was not happy that the city authorities should oblige him to act against any resident of the district that was under his charge, for it was a reflection on his intelligence! He took a liking for the young and ebullient Amarendranath and advised him not to collaborate with the active agitators.

“What do you mean by active agitators?” asked Amarendranath.

“Aurobind's party!” answered the Sahib, smiling. Probably he would not believe that anybody could miss the import of his observation. Then he said

confidently, “There is no harm if you are in Suren Babu’s party. But danger is unavoidable for those who are in extremist politics.”⁵

Nothing could describe the anguish of Mr. Norton at the trial proceeding not according to his confident expectations, better than Sri Aurobindo’s own observation:

It gave me great happiness that Mr. Norton had chosen me as the protagonist of this play. Like Satan in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, in Mr. Norton’s plot at the centre of the mighty rebellion stood I, an extraordinarily sharp, intelligent and powerful, bold, bad man! Of the national movement I was the alpha and the omega, its creator and saviour, engaged in undermining the British empire. As soon as he came across any piece of excellent and vigorous writing in English he would jump and loudly proclaim, Aurobindo Ghose! All the legal and illegal, the organised activities or unexpected consequences of the movement were the doings of Aurobindo Ghose! and when they are the doings of Aurobindo Ghose then, even when lawfully admissible, they must contain hidden illegal intentions and potentialities. He probably thought that if I were not caught within two years, it would be all up with the British empire. If my name ever appeared on any torn sheet of paper, Mr. Norton’s joy knew no bounds. With great cordiality he would present it at the holy feet of the presiding magistrate. It is a pity I was not born as an Avatar; otherwise, thanks to his intense devotion and ceaseless contemplation of me for the nonce, he would surely have earned his release, *mukti*, then and there and both the period of our detention and the government’s expenses would have been curtailed. Since the sessions court declared me innocent of the charges, Norton’s plot was sadly shorn of its glory and elegance. By leaving the Prince of Denmark out of *Hamlet* the humourless judge, Beachcroft, damaged the greatest poem of the twentieth century. If the critic is allowed his right to alter poetic compositions, such loss of meaning can hardly be prevented. Norton’s other agony was that some of the witnesses too seemed so cussed that they had wholly refused to bear evidence in keeping with his fabricated plot. At this Norton would grow red with fury and, roaring like a lion, he would strike terror in the heart of the witness and cower him down. Like the legitimate and irrepressible anger of a poet when his words are altered, or of a stage manager when the actor’s declamation, tone or postures go against his directions, Norton felt a comparable loss of temper.⁶

The last formidable “evidence” against Sri Aurobindo on which rested the Prosecution’s hope — nay — it projected the stuff as a clinching evidence — was what came to be known as the Sweets Letter. According to the Prosecution’s submission, it was written by Barindra Kumar camping at Baroda (Vadodara) to Sri Aurobindo who was also camping at Baroda, during the Famous Surat Congress,

1907. But before we come to the issue of this notorious evidence manufactured by a master forger identified by the Defence and have a look at some passages from C. R. Das's historic submission, let us have a glimpse of at least one more Defence Lawyer's argument. Here is R. C. Bonnerjea, defending Barindra Kumar, Upendranath Bandopadhyay, Indubhusan Rai, Bibhuti Bhusan Sarkar, Paresh Chandra Maulik, Hrishikesh Kanjilal, Sudhir Kumar Sarkar, Nirapada Roy and Ullaskar Dutt:

Mr. R. C. Bonnerjea referred to certain newspapers which had trampled British justice by calling the accused as "Bengal Anarchists" while the case is subjudice. He submitted the confessions were induced by promise held out by Inspector Ramsadai Mukerjea, that they were inadmissible and even if admissible they did not prove the charges drawn up against the accused. Thinking of a "far off revolution" is not waging war against the king, and collection of "eleven revolvers, four rifles and one gun" does not look like preparation for waging war. The case had done more harm than good to the country. Barin by keeping arms in the garden, did not commit any offence as he was a British born subject — born in England. When a person has committed an offence he cannot be charged with concealment of the design to commit that offence as well. An attempt to wreck the L. G.'s train is not waging war against the King. Barin said they made no other plans to kill anyone else. Was this waging war or attempting to do so? A plan to punish officers for supposed grievances is not waging of war. Barin said he never thought political murder would bring independence. Taking the prosecution case as a whole if any case was made out it was only a case under sec. 122 against Barindra, Upendra and Ullaskar and against no other. Regarding the searches, what was the use of hearing search witnesses, men who could not sign their names even but were said to have put cross marks. Major Black was no authority on explosives, but only a chemist and his evidence about bombs was worthless. The position of the garden, its accessibility from all sides, the open manner in which they lived there rendered it impossible that ammunitions were made there.⁷

We return to the Sweets Letter. Written from "Bengal Camp, Near Ajits" on the 27th of December 1907, this was the text of the letter:

Dear Brother,

Now is the time. Please try and make them meet for our conference. We must have sweets all over India readymade for emergencies. I wait here for your answer.

Yours affectionately,
Barindra Kumar Ghose

In his celebrated concluding address C. R. Das said about this letter:

Your Honour will find that having regard to the circumstances as disclosed in the evidence of this case, Your Honour cannot accept the document as being in the hand-writing of Barindra Kumar Ghose, or that it was sent to Aurobindo Ghose. What does it show? The letter is supposed to have been written by one brother to another at Surat. Therefore if this letter is genuine both the brothers were at Surat at that time. I submit that it is utterly improbable, assuming that both the brothers are conspirators, that one brother should write to another brother in this way. There they could have talked to each other, explained their thoughts — each to the other — without writing at all. The letter states ‘we must have sweets all over India readymade for emergencies. I wait here for your answer.’ . . . Barin used to address Aurobindo as ‘Shejda’. Did Barin forget this when writing this letter? He writes ‘Dear brother’. In this country no younger brother would write to any elder brother, as ‘Dear brother’ except to the eldest brother.

Judge — What do they write?

Mr. Das — Mejda, Shejda etc. only the eldest brother is addressed as brother. The fact that both the brothers being at Surat, Barin wrote to Aurobindo, is extremely improbable.

I draw Your Honour’s attention to the fact that Barin signs ‘Barindra Kumar Ghose’. My learned friend says that Aurobindo and Barindra are Europeanised. But Barin came to India at the venerable age of one year. I left England 15 years ago, I do not know whether the custom has changed there. But when I was in England I noticed that a brother never set out his full name when writing to another brother.

Judge — I would not put my full name. I would omit my surname.

Mr. Das — Nobody would sign like that. Considering the probabilities I submit that when a brother desires to communicate something to another brother, the proper form of signing his name is not to give the full name like Barindra Kumar Ghose.

Mr. Das continuing said, ‘this Sweets Letter is taken with Aurobindo and treasured down. It is taken to different places in the Bombay Presidency. It is brought to Calcutta back again. It is kept at 23, Scott’s Lane for a couple of months and the Police are lucky enough to find the letter at 48, Grey Street. It is grossly improbable. I submit that under the circumstances, Your Honour will hesitate to accept this as evidence and proof against Aurobindo Ghose.’⁸

Between the bitter shock received by the Prosecution at Sri Aurobindo’s acquittal and the quick formation of its determination to arrest him somehow again, the “Sweets Letter” case was repeatedly discussed with anguish in the colonial hierarchy, orally

and through confidential correspondence, during which F. C. Daly, D.I.G. in charge of Special Branch and C.I.D. wrote in his confidential report:

I have already referred to a letter known as the “sweets” letter, which was considered one of the most damning pieces of evidence against Arabindo Ghosh. The defence argued ingeniously that this letter had been forged by the police, and strengthened their arguments by drawing attention to the fact that one of the C.I.D. informers, who had been used all along in the watching on the Manicktolla garden, a person named Sarat Chandra Das, was an old forger of currency notes and had originally come into the pay of the C.I.D. as an informer in the investigation of note forgeries. Mr. Beachcroft, while not going so far as to hold that the letter was really a forgery, regarded it with misgiving and it was practically on his disbelief in the genuineness of this letter that the case turned in Arabindo’s favour, and he was acquitted. There may be reasonable grounds for doubt whether Arabindo Ghosh had actually encouraged his brother in that particular line of campaign but it is hard to see how on the evidence laid before the Court the Judge could have believed that Arabindo had no guilty knowledge of what was going on and that it did not have his tacit approval, if not enthusiastic encouragement. Though Arabindo may be regarded as a man too clever and foreseeing to believe that success would attend a little effort of this kind at revolution, he possibly believed that an open demonstration of murder by bombs and an exhibition of the audacity to which Bengali youths had been brought by the new system of training, would have a stimulating effect on the spirits of others and would excite the minds of the young men throughout India and develop in them a spirit of reckless daring that would be of great use in the big venture which he possibly had in his mind’s eye and for which he intended to wait a suitable opportunity, such as the embarrassment of England in a big foreign war. The full history of the Manicktolla bomb case can be best learnt by a study of the judgement and paper book of the case. The full confession of Noren Gossain will give an indication of the wide nature of the conspiracy, and how it had spread to many districts in both Bengals. There was not a Bengali-speaking district in the whole province, which was entirely free from it. Bankura, Midnapore, Hooghly, Howrah, Nadia, Khulna, and Jessore may all be regarded as districts where the revolutionary movement had got a very firm hold.⁹

It is curious that some scholars should think the Sweets Letter to have been a genuine document. This author is unable to agree with the hypothesis. Despite all his foolhardiness, Barindra Kumar, at that time was not thinking of a future when he would have the glorious opportunity of taking upon himself the entire responsibility of the extremist activities. Foolhardy though he was, he could not have been that

childish to write a letter of such dangerous import to his brother — for symbolic terms similar to “Sweets” were in use even during the “Sepoy Mutiny” — while staying at the same place, and then as if to leave no confusion on the issue, to write his full name as if the communication was being addressed to someone who would not recognise him or his handwriting otherwise. Absent-minded though Sri Aurobindo might have been, it will be exaggerating that trait in him to believe that he would, instead of destroying, treasure that kind of a chit for the police to discover it one day. It was a forged item.

(To be continued)

MANOJ DAS

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SONGS FROM THE SOUL

(Continued from the issue of January 2016)

(The Mother made this selection from Anilbaran's prayers offered to her. She termed the collection a "Spiritual dictionary".)

PEACE

Peace is the foundation on which the edifice of spiritual life is to be built up — peace, deep and unshakable, pervading every part of our being.

A restless soul torn by passions and attachments cannot receive the light from above, cannot have the taste of pure divine joy, and constantly loses balance and self-control. Such a soul pulled in all directions falls an easy prey to the forces of falsehood. We hanker after work, thirst for knowledge, feverishly pursue the transient joys of the senses. We are anxious for gains, afraid of losses, impatient of obstacles and failures. The source of all this restlessness is our ignorant belief that we are the masters of our work, and that our egoistic self-satisfaction and enjoyment is the sole aim and meaning of our life. True peace comes only with the knowledge that it is the Divine who does everything, and that the whole world including ourselves exists solely for the sake of the Divine.

Firmly established in this divine knowledge, we should discard all desires and passions which are the real enemies of peace and spiritual life. We must not allow anything to move us unless it be an impulse from the Divine Mother. Unassailable and unshakable, we should sit tight in the fundamental calmness of our being. Only then will it be possible for the Mother to work in us and raise us to her own life.

* * *

Our life is a series of actions and reactions going on blindly for the satisfaction of the lower needs of nature. Objects and forces constantly act on us from the outside and move our mind and the senses, which rush out to seize them, to possess them and mould them egoistically; hence arise thoughts and actions, passions and emotions, which in their totality form what we know as our human life.

Herein lies our bondage, this capacity of forces acting on us to produce reactions. On account of this, we are at the mercy of the forces of nature which surround us and are ceaselessly acting upon us. If we can withhold ourselves and stop these reactions, if we can receive all touches from the outside absolutely unmoved, then

we shall be really free; and it is only in a heart and mind so calm and free from reactions that the joys and the glories of a higher divine life can manifest.

As the sea receives innumerable streams of water into itself without being in the least perturbed by them, so we must receive all touches from the outside without any perturbation, and must not allow anything to draw us out, unless it be an impulse directly from the Divine Mother. And this is possible only by dissociation from the movements of the lower nature, which we should regard as being merely the interaction of natural forces on one another. Practising this dissociation from the lower movements, always seeking our union with the Divine Mother, all perturbations and reactions will cease in us, and a fundamental peace will be established in every part of our being. Only then will the foundation of a higher divine life be truly laid in us.

* * *

Mere retirement or cessation of work does not bring real peace; as long as the mind and the life and the body continue to submit passively to external influences, there is no real surrender, and we cannot expect their transformation.

There is still much inertia and obscurity in my mind. It constantly opens itself to all sorts of ideas and suggestions from the outside, and mechanically moves round and round about them. These restless, senseless movements obstruct the descent of the Truth on the one hand, and open the being to all sorts of hostile forces on the other.

So the vital and the physical are still passive and ignorant; excited by the slightest impact from the outside, they tend helplessly to start on their old blind movements. All these parts have to be roused, illumined, and made alert; with a silent but resolute exercise of the will, their outward and downward course has to be withheld, and they are to be turned again and again towards the immobile peace and silence of the inner self; then and only then can real peace descend on every part of the being.

Firmly established in this peace, we have to continually surrender ourselves to Thee, Mother, and ceaselessly aspire to the higher life. Only under these conditions will the Divine Grace act and victoriously bring about our transformation.

* * *

To preserve peace and equanimity under all circumstances and at every moment of our life, that is an essential condition of our progress. Light and power and joy will manifest only on a solid foundation of all-pervading peace.

And peace is the real truth of our being, all perturbation and restlessness being only a movement of falsehood, a perversion of our true nature. Our true self is

eternal and immutable; it wants nothing, desires nothing, is full and complete in itself, enjoying its own delight of existence; unmoved and immobile, it supports all the movements in the universe. It is the ego in us, our lower self, that is at the mercy of every passing current in life, drifting helplessly, moved and tossed by every wave. We must free ourselves from this ego and stand on the immutable peace of our true self — that is the first essential condition of a higher divine life.

Established in this peace, firmly refusing to be moved by anything that may come to us or happen to us, we must always look up to Thee, Mother, to manifest our true nature. When Thou hast willed to uplift us, to give us divine life, what fear, what anxiety need we have? With complete surrender to Thee, Mother, let us calmly await our self-fulfilment through Thy divine will and Thy all conquering Grace.

ASPIRATION

Aspiration is our only *tapasya*, aspiration is the only fire we are to keep burning in our heart at all times and under all circumstances. We need light no other fire, we need no other askesis or austerity.

If difficulties insurmountable obstruct us on the path, if the forces of falsehood surround us and lure us with dangerous fascination, we have only to tend our heart's fire assiduously, and all obstacles will vanish, all hostile forces, however powerful, will be conquered.

If we fall even to the lowest depths and all hope seem to disappear, if there be no one to help us, cheer us, guide us, if we lose all and be forsaken by all, yet if we can continue our aspiration ceaselessly, sincerely, help will surely come from above and we shall be raised even from the lowest depths.

If depression and inertia overtake us and we cannot make any progress, if darkness beset us on all sides and we cannot see our way, yet if we can keep our aspiration alive and earnestly look up to the divine Power above, fresh vigour and enthusiasm will soon be infused into us, and we shall clearly see the path before us.

Aspiration will awaken what is best in us, aspiration will gather up all our energies and turn them upward, all dissensions and conflicts in our nature will be merged in a single purpose and devotion, and in response will come from above Grace and divine Love. Aspiration will bring us Love and Love will lead us to victory.

* * *

Let me be like a flame always burning upward to Thee, Mother, let all my soul be consumed in love to Thee; it is thus that I shall have a new birth in Thy divine life.

Thoughts and ideas continually seek to enter into my mind from the outside

and disturb the flame of my aspiration; bless me, Mother, so that I may resolutely throw away all such disturbing thoughts and keep my mind absolutely pure and clear.

Desires and attachments from the vital world always seek to obscure and extinguish my flame; bless me, Mother, so that I may persistently reject all such low desires and keep my heart absolutely clear and pure.

All sorts of attacks are made on my body in order to weaken the flame of my aspiration; bless me, Mother, so that I may defy all such attempts and keep my body hale and hearty for worshipping Thee.

Let unbounded faith feed my flame and immutable calm and peace prevail all over my being. With Thy blessings, Divine Mother, I shall steadily grow into the divine life.

* * *

My inner being has left the old world behind and has discarded the old ways of life; but in my outer nature interest in the old life still lingers; and thus recur again and again in me old thoughts and desires. How can I completely get rid of them unless Thou, Mother, take possession of me and completely fill me with Thyself?

As soon as old thoughts and ideas enter into my mind, I shall aspire towards Thee, Mother, and Thou wilt have to fill my mind with the light of Thy truth.

As soon as desires and passions rise in me, Mother, I shall aspire towards Thee, and Thou wilt have to fill my heart with Thy unsurpassable sweetness and delight.

As soon as false and perverted movements appear in me, Mother, I shall aspire towards Thee, and Thou wilt have to fill my life with Thy harmony and grace.

In all my imperfections and ignorance, I shall continually look up to Thee, Mother, hoping and aspiring that a day will soon come when Thou wilt take entire possession of myself and make me divine.

ANILBARAN

(To be continued)

(Songs from the Soul, Amiya Library, Calcutta, 1946, pp. 15-23)

VEDIC SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

(Continued from the issue of January 2016)

2

The Vedic Rishis were not naturalistic barbarians interested in merely describing the operations of physical Nature, as has been made out by some devout and enthusiastic but yet ignorant commentators. In their hymns they did not refer to household animals because of their usefulness in their pastoral life nor were they anthropomorphic in their approach to the powers of Nature. It is our present-day accepted view that the history of ancient religious thought is a progression from the physical to the supraphysical, from the naturalistic to the psychological and the spiritual. This is unacceptable, for the Vedic Rishis had already advanced from the naturalistic stage and were capable of presenting together both the pastoral-natural as well as the psychological-spiritual in the same symbol. The hymns, therefore, have a dual significance, naturalistic for the uninitiated seeker and inner psychological and symbolic for the spiritual seeker. The Rishis could not isolate the commoner in the pastoral, rural situation from being benefited by their realisations. The majority, following the naturalistic and ritualistic significance of the *mantras*, were still able to reap the inner and outer benefits of *yajñas* in some measure. This came as a result of the integral realisation of the Rishis. The Sun, for example, not only symbolises the supramental but is also its manifestation in the physical universe. What is infinite Light and Force at the highest level is also an inexhaustible source of physical light and energy in the terrestrial world. Likewise, everything in the universe is a mode, a projection in the physical of the truth of the supraphysical. The greatness of the Vedic Rishis lies in their presentation of both the inner and external realities through the medium of the same symbol.

We will discuss in this light a few of the symbols found in the Vedas.

(i) *Āryan*

The root *ar*, as Sri Aurobindo clarifies, indicates a movement of effort, striving, struggle to overcome and surpass, to march forward and is applied to climbing, fighting and lifting which is the essence of Vedic Yoga — *Ārata* means to push forward and upward. The Aryan is one who fights his way towards greater heights. He is the one “who seeks to fulfil himself by the Vedic action, the internal and external *karma* or *apas*, which is of the nature of a sacrifice to the gods.”¹

1. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 252.

He is the Aryan who accepts and does the most difficult of works to fulfil the divine Will upon earth. He is the seeker of Light and battles for it against the powers of Darkness. He aspires for solar Illumination, the Light of *satyam ṛtam bṛhat* and a life of Immortality in the solar Heavens. Rishi Vasistha speaks of the Aryans as those “who are led by the light, *jyotiragrāḥ*, having the light in their front.”

*Trayaḥ kṛnvanti bhuvaneṣu retas
tisraḥ prajā āryā jyotiragrāḥ.
trayo gharmāsa uṣasam sacante
sarvān it tān anu vidurvasiṣṭhāḥ.*²

Their thoughts are those that are always true and full of light with a will to work for the Truth.

“... the work of the Aryan”, says Sri Aurobindo, “is a sacrifice which is at once a battle and an ascent and a journey, a battle against the powers of darkness, an ascent to the highest peaks of the mountain beyond earth and heaven into Swar, a journey to the other shore of the rivers and the ocean into the farthest Infinity of things.”³ The Aryan is the tireless traveller of the Infinite, the joyous pilgrim of the Eternal, the seeker, the sacrificer, and in the sacrifice finds the divine Word, the *mantra* of the Truth. The Aryan is the desirer of the godheads, and seeks ceaselessly to increase his own being and the godheads within him by the sacrifice. He is the thinker of the word and possesses the seer-mind and the seer-knowledge. He finds the sacred Word of illumination to be the great harmoniser, and seeks to discover and harmonise the truths of all the planes of Reality and passes beyond into the transcendental harmony of them all.

(ii) *Aśva*

One of the most important symbols in the Vedic system is that of *aśva*, the Horse. Dawn in the Vedic conception is an inner awakening; it is the dawn of illumination in the human mind.

*Devānām cakṣuḥ subhagā vahantī
śvetam nayantī sudṛśīkamaśvam.
uṣā adarśi raśmibhirvyaktā
citrāmaghā viśvamanu prabhūtā.*⁴

2. *Ṛg Veda*, VII.33.7.

3. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 225.

4. *Ṛg Veda*, VII.77.3.

Happy, bringing the gods' eye of vision, leading the white Horse that has perfect sight, Dawn is seen expressed entirely by the rays, full of her varied riches, manifesting her birth in all things.

*Asme śreṣṭhebhīrbhānubhīrvi
bhāhyuṣo devī pratirantī na āyuh.
īsam ca no dadhatī viśvavāre
gomadaśvādrathavacca rādhaḥ.⁵*

O goddess dawn, illumine us with your light, guide us and sustain us, give us food and grant us the felicity of chariots and cows and horses.

Cows symbolise the rays of Light and horses the vital Energy. Light and Energy, Consciousness and Force are the two aspects of infinite existence. Ashwa is also used as “a figure of the Prana, the nervous energy, the vital breath, the half-mental, half-material dynamism which links mind and matter.”⁶ It is the steed of Life and indicates the essential tendencies of Life-Energy, such as impulsion, force, possession and enjoyment. Words in the early Aryan language were more alive, suggestive as well as expressive of the sense behind them. Ashwa, in the Vedic parlance, is an image of an intense and immense Life-force, of the vital and nervous energy, and is associated with other images that symbolise consciousness, illumination and awakening.

*Trīṇi ta āhurdivi bandhanāni
trīṇyapsu trīṇyantaḥ samudre.
uteva me varuṇaśchantsyarvan yatrā ta
āhuḥ paramaṁ janitran.⁷*

They say, you have three stations in heaven and three in the waters and three in the interspace. You resemble the Lord of the Waters, most charming while arising out of the waters which is your place of residence.

The wealth for which the Vedic Rishis aspired, prayed and worked for is not physical and material; it is purely spiritual. Coupled or associated with the symbolic image of the Cow, Ashwa stands for “the perfectly-seeing force of divine will in its works”.⁸ Constantly connected with the image of Dawn, Ashwa means the great

5. *Ibid.*, VII.77.5.

6. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 46.

7. *Rg Veda*, I.163.4.

8. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 130.

power of illumination. The hymns of Dirghatamas in the Veda, as well as the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, clearly bring out the symbolism of the Horse.

*Auṁ uṣā vā aśvasya medhyasya śiraḥ.
 sūryaścakṣurvātaḥ prāṇo
 vyāttamagnirvaiśvānaraḥ
 saṁvatsara ātmāśvasya medhyasya.
 dyauḥ pṛṣṭhamantarikṣamudaraṁ
 pṛthivī pājasyaṁ diśaḥ pārśve
 avāntaradiśaḥ parśava rtavoṅgāni
 māsāścārdhamāsāśca parvāṇi
 ahorātrāṇi pratiṣṭhā nakṣatrāṇyasthīni
 nabho māmsāni. ūvadhyam sikatāḥ
 sindhavo gudā yakṛcca klomānaśca parvatā
 oṣadhayaśca vanaspatayaśca lomāni
 udyan pūrvārdho nimlocañjaghanārdho
 tadvijṛmbhate tadvidyotate
 yadvidhūnute tatstanayati yanmehati
 tadvarṣati vāgevāsya vāk.*

*aharvā aśvam purastānmahimānvajāyata
 tasya pūrve samudre yonī
 rātrirenaṁ paścānmahimānvajāyata
 tasyāpare samudre yonir
 etau vā aśvam mahimānāvabhitaḥ sambabhūvatuḥ.
 hayo bhūtvā devānavahad
 vājī gandharvānarvāsuraśvo manuṣyān
 samudra evāsya bandhuḥ samudro yoniḥ.⁹*

“Om, Dawn is the head of the horse sacrificial. The sun is his eye, his breath is the wind, his wide open mouth is Fire, the universal energy, Time is the self of the horse sacrificial. Heaven is his back and the mid-region is his belly, Earth is his footing, the quarters are his flanks and these intermediate regions are his ribs; the seasons are his members, the months and the half-months are that on which he stands, the stars are his bones and the sky is the flesh of his body. The strands are the food in his belly, the rivers are his veins, the mountains are his liver and lungs, herbs and plants are the hairs of his body; the rising day is his front portion, and the setting day is his hinder portion. When he stretches himself, then it lightens; when he shakes himself, then it thunders; when he urinates, then it rains. Speech verily is the voice of him. Day was the grandeur

9. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.1.1.

that was born before the horse as he galloped, the Eastern Ocean gave it birth. Night was the grandeur that was born in his rear and its birth was in the Western waters. These were grandeurs that arose into being on either side of the horse. He became Haya and carried the Gods, — Vajin and bore the Gandharvas, — Arvan and bore the Titans, — Ashwa and carried mankind. The sea was his brother and the sea his birthplace.”¹⁰

This powerful passage, full of vast and vigorous imagery and replete with mystic symbolism, is suggestive of the upward movement of creation out of the material-physical into the psychological-spiritual. The horse is symbolic of cosmic force and dynamism that pervades and permeates Time and space. “. . . while the Cow is the symbol of consciousness in the form of knowledge, the Horse is the symbol of consciousness in the form of force.”¹¹ The Horse is the symbol of the onward march of the evolutionary force in creation. Ashwa symbolises the illumined vital, mental and spiritual energies that bear us on our journey through eternity — the journey through the night of ignorance to the divine Light. It is the war-steed in the battle for Light, ‘a symbol of power, spiritual strength, force of *tapasyā* — a symbol of the affluence of spiritual dynamism, firmness of will and steadfast movement.’ “The Rishis, it must be remembered,” says Sri Aurobindo, “were seers as well as sages, they were men of vision who saw things in their meditation in images, often symbolic images which might precede or accompany an experience and put it in a concrete form, might predict or give an occult body to it . . . The mystics were and normally are symbolists, they can even see all physical things and happenings as symbols of inner truths and realities, even their outer selves, the outer happenings of their life and all around them.”¹²

When the Vedic Rishi invokes Agni and asks for the boon of a ‘horse-form cow-in-front’, he is not asking for a number of horses with cows walking in front, but he is desirous of gaining a spiritual power illumined by a higher consciousness. It is Ashwa again that by its full force of vitality, action and enjoyment helps the sacrificer in his endeavour to gain integral perfection. Life itself is an esoteric horse that even bears us onward and upward toward the goal. Ashwa then is the universal Life-Force, the strength, the solidity, speed, dynamism and enjoyment that constitutes the material world and that which helps the yogi-sacrificer to gather, organise and harness all his energies to leap forward.

(iii) *Haṅsa* (bird)

Bird is a symbol of the liberated soul; also symbol of the liberated energies winging upwards towards the highest truth of our being, towards attaining luminous

10. Sri Aurobindo’s translation, *SABCL*, Vol. 12, p. 399.

11. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 114.

12. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 11, p. 12.

knowledge. Birds signify the winged energies accompanying the Dawn. Hansa is that awakened and realised soul that is a fighter and a traveller beyond the heaven of mind by the ascending path of the Truth to realise the luminous Godhead seated in the triple divine Principle and in beatitude — Sachchidananda.

(iv) *Bull*

It is the symbol of strength and force, of the male-power in Nature, a Vedic image of the gods and the *vāhana* of Lord Shiva. It is the Purusha, the soul of conscious being, whereas the cow stands for Prakriti, the creative power of the Supreme Consciousness. It is only “by the fertilising of the triple luminous consciousness by the triple luminous soul of the Truth-being”,¹³ as Sri Aurobindo puts it, that the higher consciousness becomes active, creative and fruitful in humanity, — that the Godhead, the son, is created.

*Irāvātīrvaruṇa dhenavo vām
madhumad vām sindhavo mitra duhve.
trayastasthurvr̥ṣabhāsastisṛṇām
dhiṣaṇānām retodhā vi dyumantaḥ.*¹⁴

“Your fostering cows have their streams, O Varuna, O Mitra, the rivers milk out their honeyed yield. There stand wide three luminous Bulls and cast their seed into the three Thoughts.”¹⁵

(v) *Cave*

The *dasyus* or *dānavas*, *vṛitra* and *paṇis* are the children of Diti, the powers of Inconscience, of Darkness and Falsehood and Evil who are constantly at war with the *devas* and the Rishis in the vast arena of earth, heaven, and the mid-region. The lower world of Night and Inconscience is symbolised “in the image of the mountain which rises from the bowels of earth to the back of heaven”.¹⁶ The darkness of this world is represented by ‘the secret cave’ which is at the heart of this hard and cruel will. Though this cave is the home of the Adversary, the Adversary itself operates in the triple world of the physical-vital-mental in disguised ‘forms of apparent knowledge’. The seers as the collaborators, instruments, as well as the great supporters of *devas* wage a relentless battle against the dark, deceptive and beguiling forces of the Adversary. They increase the integral truth-content of their own being, as well as strengthen the influx of *daivic* energies into the bowels of the lower hemisphere. Cave, therefore, symbolises the home and breeding ground of the forces of Darkness.

13. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 484, fn.

14. *R̥g Veda*, V.69.2.

15. Sri Aurobindo’s translation, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, pp. 483-84.

16. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 224.

(vi) *Ghṛtam*

It means, ordinarily, clarified butter but symbolically, *ghṛta* is constantly used in connection with mind. Indra represents the illumined mentality and *ghṛta*, the purified intellect. Philologically it means rich or warm brightness, the root *ghṛ* conveys the idea of a strong and rich brightness. Outwardly it indicates ‘clarified butter’, but, as Sri Aurobindo elucidates, “inwardly a rich and bright state or activity of the brain-power, *medhā*, as basis and substance of illumined thought.”¹⁷ It symbolises bright and rich mental activity. Triple *ghṛtam* symbolises the threefold clarity of the liberated sensation, of the thought-mind and of the truth itself.

Fire, Soma and *ghṛta* are the very means of sacrifice and are supplied to the sacrificer by the gods. *Ghṛta* “is the shining yield of the shining cow; it is the formed light of conscious knowledge in the mentality which is stored in the illumined consciousness and it is liberated by the liberation of the Cow”.¹⁸ *Ghṛta*, again, is the clarity of the solar light in the human mentality. Agni, the Vedas say, grows by the *ghṛta*, Indra becomes forceful with the luminous strength and joy of the Soma. And these gods help the Angirasas to recover the herds of the Sun.

Ghṛta is the yield of the shining Cow, and is triply secreted by the Panis in the cave; it is the clear light of the mentality reflecting the Truth, and is hidden by the Panis. The Rishi calls on Agni as priest of the sacrifice “to flood the offering with a mind pouring *ghṛta*, *ghṛtapruṣā manasā* and so manifest the Seats . . . the three heavens each of them and manifest the Gods. . . .”¹⁹

(vii) *Go* (cow)

The word *go* means both ‘cow’ and ‘light’. This is clear when the Vedic Rishis speak of the Cows of the Sun or of those of the Dawn. Light is a symbol of spiritual knowledge. The Dawn is described in the Veda as *gomatī aśvavatī*; the cow symbolising the powers of illumined human consciousness. Cows are symbolic of the felicity of Light, of spiritual good fortune and enlightenment.

*Ā gāvo agmannuta bhadramakran
tsidantu goṣṭhe raṇayantvasme.
prajāvatīḥ pururūpā iha syurindrāya
pūrvīruṣaso duhānāḥ.*²⁰

*Na tā naśanti na dabhāti taskaro
nāsāmāmitro vyathirā dadharṣati.
devānśca yābhīryajate dadāti ca
jyogit tābhiḥ sacate gopatiḥ saha.*²¹

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

19. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 11, p. 12.

20. *Ṛg Veda*, VI.28.1.

21. *Ibid.*, VI.28.3.

“The Cows have come and brought us good fortune. May they stay contented in our stalls and bring forth many-coloured calves for us and yield abundant milk to be offered to Indra each day.”

“Let not the cows be lost, let no robber carry them away, let no enemy mislead them. May they stay with the sacrificer for long who serves the Gods with their offering.”

Gomatī means the one that brings the rays of light which again is an image of mental illumination. The cow is the outer symbol, the inner meaning is illumination of the human mind, the Light. “The cow is really Aditi, the infinite consciousness hidden in the subconscious, and the triple *ghṛtaṁ* is the triple clarity of the liberated sensation finding its secret of delight, of the thought-mind attaining to light and intuition and of the truth itself, the ultimate supramental vision.”²² Cow is the symbol of inner radiances, of the primal Light manifest in human existence. The Cow, being Aditi, is Bhaga, Soma and Indra:

*Gāvo bhago gāva indro me acchān
gāvaḥ somasya prathamasya bhakṣaḥ.
imā yā gāvaḥ sa janāsa indra
icchāmiddhṛdā manasā cidindram.*²³

It is the most important of all the Vedic symbols, and when the Vedic Rishi prays to the Dawn,

Gomad viravad dhehi ratnaṁ uṣo aśvāvat

he is certainly not asking for material or physical wealth but seeking confirmation in him of “a state of bliss full of light, of conquering energy and of force of vitality’.”²⁴

*kṣetrasya patinā vyaṁ
hiteneva jayāmasi.
gāmaśvaṁ poṣāyitnvā
sa no mṛṭatīdṛṣe.*²⁵

22. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 99.

23. *Ṛg Veda*, VI.28.5.

24. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 119.

25. *Ṛg Veda*, IV.57.1.

“May we, with the help of the Lord of the Field who is our friend and well-wisher, be victorious in obtaining plenty of food for our cattle and horses. May he graciously bestow upon us his favour — the wealth of cattle and horses and nourishment.”

The physical ‘cow’ is thus only a concrete image of inner mental illumination. The Vedas constantly speak of ‘the stolen cows’ and their recovery. The Panis steal them and Indra restores them to the sacrificer. Dawn is often described as ‘the mother of radiances or cows’, as the one who is drawn in her chariot by cows or horses. The Cows are helpful in removing the darkness and extending the Light. The shining herds which the Dawn gives are the shining troops of Light recovered by the gods and the Angirasa Rishis.

Several times the Dawn is invoked not for illumination alone but also for luminous impulsion:

*Uta no gomatīriṣa
ā vahā duhitardivaḥ.
sākaṁ sūryasya raśmibhiḥ śukraih
śocadbhirarcibhiḥ sujāte aśvasūnṛte.*²⁶

“Bring to us, O Daughter of Heaven, newly-born and sincerely adored, the gift of luminous vigour — along with the pure and effulgent rays of the Sun.”

Thus *go* is the Cow of Light and symbolises the light of Dawn, which again is the symbol of inner illumination. Usha is described in the Vedas as the Mother of the Cows; Aditi, the mother of gods, is the mother of all radiances, and, as such, is also described as the Mother of the Cows. Whereas Diti is the divided consciousness and mother of Vritra and other *dānavas* who steal the cows and are enemies of the gods and of man in his evolutionary progress. The image of the cow is therefore the key to the esoteric understanding of the Veda.

Along with the Cow and the Horse, the other elements of spiritual wealth acquired by the sacrificer are *hiraṇya* (gold), *vīra* (men or heroes), *ratha* (chariot) and *prajā* or *apatya* (offspring). While gold is the concrete symbol of higher light — the golden Light of Truth-Consciousness, *vīra* is suggestive of heroes of mental and moral energies who resist the assault of evil, falsehood and ignorance. The offspring which the sacrificers aspire for are new soul-formations which constitute the divine personality; these are symbolic of the new births of the seekers. All these are helpers and means towards the opening of the higher worlds, the ascent to the

26. *Ṛg Veda*, V.79.8.

solar heavens, the attainment of Bliss and Immortality in the heaven of Truth. Indra is the hero, the leader-warrior in the battle for Light, who wins for man the Light and the Force. He is therefore referred to as *gopati*, the Master of herds, the Bull of the herds, Vrishabha. Cows in the Veda are thus inner illuminations of the Sun, the shining Mother of Radiances, and not physical cattle.

(To be continued)

V. MADHUSUDAN REDDY

*(The Vedic Epiphany, Volume One,
Institute of Human Study, Hyderabad, 1991, pp. 49-58)*

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

Nevertheless the bonds are many and intricate. The most difficult of all their knots is egoism, the delusion that we have an individual existence sufficient in itself, separate from the universal and only being, ekamevadwitiyam, who is one not only beyond Time, Space and Causality. Not only are we all Brahman in our nature and being, waves of one sea, but we are each of us Brahman in His entirety, for that which differentiates and limits us, nama and rupa, exists only in play and for the sake of the world-drama.

Sri Aurobindo

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

THE MOTHER IN THE PLAYGROUND

(Continued from the issue of January 2016)

ATHLETICS AND NOVELTY RACES

In the first meet of 1946, there were runs in the Playground along with a few Novelty races. For the game of croquet, matches were arranged for the girls. Minoo won all the games and became the champion and as reported already had the golden opportunity to play a game with the Mother. Here is a sample of the prize card, printed in our press, which the participants received:

(The Mother's symbol)

PLAYGROUND
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
ANNUAL SPORTS MEET

May 19....

On the prize card the name of the contestant, the item, and the placing were indicated. All the cards were signed by the Mother.

Urmila R. Patel who came as a student in 1945 and was staying in the recently-opened hostel for the children, remembers that she was not very interested in physical education activities and tried to avoid them. The Mother would coax her to join. "You will become strong," the Mother would tell Urmila. Then one day, the Mother asked Urmila to join the Novelty races. Urmila was hesitant, feeling nervous about it. But the Mother told her, "No, no, no. You will do well." So, Urmila joined and got a prize! She remembers that the prizes were page-marks made by folding red and white cellophane papers. There were also paper cards supplied by our press, painted by our artists. We were happy to get these simple, beautiful prizes.

It was during these meets of 1947 and 1948 that the Mother played on the harmonium for the 'Musical chairs' item in which only the children of group A participated. One of them, Sumedha, remembers: "The Mother played on the harmonium for 'Musical chairs' in our Novelty race. There were a few groups. As each group completed their turn and the winner went to the Mother, she sang a little for the winner. When all the groups had completed and our item was over, she sang again for a little while. Hearing this we, all the little children, quickly gathered

around her to hear her sing.”

I remember that a small table was brought in front of the Mother’s classroom in the Playground and a harmonium was placed on it. This happened in 1948. The Mother came out of her room, stood in front of the harmonium. I was standing just behind her. Before playing for the children, she moved her fingers lightly on the keyboard and hummed a tune. I was taken by surprise. Her voice was sweet, and the notes sung were on a very high key. It was different from the type of voice we were accustomed to hear. I have heard good Indian singers, but, her voice trained in Western music was absolutely new to my untrained ears!

The Annual Sports Meet of 1947 included some athletics items such as races over different distances. We did not have any place of our own for these items, so they were conducted on the Beach Road at about 6.30 a.m. in the morning. The participants belonged to the Groups B, C, and E. The distance varied with each group, the shortest being 75m and the longest 800m. 100m was the distance decided for the girls’ group. High jump for the boys of group C was held in the courtyard of the School.

Matches were also organised for some team-games. In 1947 the following players, Kumud, Lilou, Amita, Paru, Urmila, Snehlata, Dhanvanti and Bhavatarini participated in the final matches of croquet. These matches were played in the morning at 6.30 a.m. in the Playground. We also had matches of kabaddi and volley-ball in the evenings. Ring tennis or tenicoit was included for senior ladies only for that year. The players were Millie Pinto, Saraswati, Kamala, Anusuya, Vasudha, Sarada, Icchaben and Kausalya. The boys’ group played hand-ball in the morning, and, volley-ball and kabaddi in the evening. Groups A and B played kabaddi in the Playground. The last two days were reserved for the Novelty races in which all the groups participated. In 1947, there was also a Fancy Dress competition open to all.

The Mother distributes the prizes

On 30.4.1947 and 1.5.1947, the Mother was present during the annual meet and watched the Novelty races in the Playground and distributed prizes to the contestants. For the Fancy Dress competition the Mother gave the 1st prize to our English pair, Norman Dowsett’s daughter and son who came in as a nurse and a wounded R.A.F. pilot on a wheelchair! Another prize went to Atindra who as a rickshaw puller brought Ambu to the Playground. The Mother was amused on seeing Ambu come down from the rickshaw and start an argument about the fare!

In 1948, the Annual Sports Meet was conducted on similar lines as the previous year.

Group B (young boys and girls about 11 to 13 years old) played kabaddi matches in four teams with seven players in each team.

Group E had seven teams of seven members each for kabaddi.

Group C (boys 14 years and above) had four teams of six members each in hand-ball.

New items in Runs and Jumps added

Group D had Rope Climbing, *Dunds* or straight dips, along with other items. The number of participants had also increased. A notice was put up inviting those not participating regularly in Playground activities to take part in this function if they wished. Thus two new temporary groups were formed for the Novelty races — group F, older men, had fourteen new contestants; and group E5 for ladies who wished to participate. Here also there were fourteen entries. The items for them were Pot-balancing and Spoon-and-Lemon race. The Pot-balancing race was very interesting. We wondered how these ladies could walk so fast with clay pots on their heads! Needless to say that quite a few pots fell on the ground and were broken — to the delight of the spectators! However, some ladies like Saraswati-ben and Lakshmi-bai had remarkable control! As for Lakshmi-bai, we used to see her daily carrying a wooden tray on her head, packed with flowers in vases for the Mother. How effortlessly she covered the distance from her house to the Ashram main building! No wonder she won this race. These ladies could also participate in the kabaddi team contest.

There used to be many types of races. We mention here a few of the Novelty races in which the members of E group took part: a) Running Backwards; b) Spoon-and-Lemon race; c) Three-legged race; d) Walking with a Pot on the head; e) Thread the Needle race, where participants had to run a certain distance and there thread a needle and run back to the starting line with the threaded needle in hand; f) Breaking a clay pot with a stick — a clay pot kept at a fixed distance, with the eyes blindfolded; g) Potato race, where a number of potatoes were placed on the ground at equal distance. Participants had to run to the first potato, pick it up and run back to the starting line, put it in a basket and again repeat the movement for every potato on one's own lane, till all of the potatoes were collected in the basket. It was a very exciting race which drew the attention of all who were present.

In 1948, Pillow-fight and Tug-of-war were added to the list of Novelty races. In Pillow-fight, two contestants sat astride a high wooden horizontal pole seven or eight inches in diameter. The pole had supports at either end. Each contestant held a long cotton pillow in his hands and tried to hit the opponent with it so as to make him lose balance and fall down. Whoever managed to throw off the opponent was considered the winner.

A notice signed by the Mother was put up on the Notice Board. The rules to be followed were as follows: a) The pole shall not be held by the arms or hands; b) The opponent's pillow shall not be caught or pulled; c) The opponent's body shall not be touched except with the pillow; d) The referee shall decide other points as they arose.

Members of group D and F took part in this item.

As we did not yet have a weighing machine, members of group D and those of the new F group taking part in the Tug-of-war, had to go to the 'Harpagon' Workshop to get themselves weighed. The big weighing machine there was meant for weighing heavy materials needed for the construction work. However, the participants happily got themselves weighed there! There were ten teams. Two teams reached the finals: (1) Udar (captain), Govindraj, Dayakar, Anil Bhatt, Chandrakant and Biren Chundra; 2) Purani (captain), Manibhai, Tulsi, Harikant, Bhiman, Balgaud. Purani's team practised by tying the rope around a coconut tree! The final was held on 1st May and Purani's team won.

Prizes were awarded to the groups by the Mother. For Groups A and B the prizes were: cards, small writing pads and packets of peppermints. For the groups C, D and E the first prize was a silver cup and a card; the second prize was a letter pad, a card, and a packet of peppermints; the third prize was just a card and a packet of peppermints.

We find some interesting information in the file of Physical Education for 1948. There is a sample of a prize card where we read: "certificate of participation" written in the Mother's own hand and her signature. From the next year, the cards were printed accordingly.

From 1949 onwards, the Novelty races for all the groups were held in the Playground after the completion of the Athletics Competitions in the Tennis Ground. As in previous years, each group was allotted one type of Novelty race for the competition. Tug-of-war, a new item for some, was included for groups B, C, and E. As mentioned earlier, we went to the 'Harpagon' Workshop to get ourselves weighed. We reproduce here the contents of the notice put up on the Notice Board concerning this item : "1) The following are the entrants for the Tug Of War with their weights. 2) Teams of six-a-side have to be formed by the entrants themselves. 3) The total weight of each team should not exceed 285 kg. 4) Teams should be submitted to Vishnou before the 5th August, 1949."

There were 36 entrants from group E and there was quite a hectic activity among the participants; they chose the team, gave it a name and had to submit these within the stipulated time. That year, the winning team was 'Golconde Minus1' comprising Mona, Kusumben, Kumud, Lilou, Mridula and Maniben, — all of them worked in Golconde. The runner-up was 'Will', with Millie, Anju, Tapati, Minoo, Pushpita and Chitra. The 'Golconde Minus1' was a very strong team and it was the winner for a few consecutive years.

In her book of reminiscences in Bengali, *Abismaraniya Muhurta* (p. 196), Priti Das Gupta writes: "Of all the items performed in the Playground, Tug-of-war was the most exciting. Everyone, participants as well as the spectators would watch this with interest. Udar Pinto used to call the groups to get ready and give the signal to start the pull. Once, at the end of the competitions, Udar suddenly called out, 'Mother's

group vs E group.’ We, who sat beside the Mother, were nonplussed. This group — Gauri-di, Millie-di, Minnie-di, Violette, Priti and Vasudha — had never participated in any game. We looked helplessly at the Mother. Udar had announced ‘Mother’s group’. It was as if the Mother herself took up the challenge! Perhaps Udar did not realise who he was challenging! The Mother looked at us and told us, ‘Go, all of you.’ We went into the field keeping the Mother in our minds. We felt helpless and lost in the midst of this large gathering of spectators. We had never learnt how to hold the rope, or how to pull it, not even how to stand! On the other side, the girls of E group were experienced players. However, we held the rope and when Udar gave the signal to start, we were calling the Mother ‘Ma, Ma, Ma’ as we pulled. We do not know what happened. The Mother’s group won easily. The Mother’s Force made the impossible possible. We came back to her with grateful hearts and the Mother praised us — she specially praised Gauri and Violette.”

In 1950 Pillow-fight was included in the programme for groups C and E. Many E group members were enthusiastic about the event. Following are the names of the competitors: Pushpa, Sujata, Millie, Tapati, Kusumben, Maniben, Lilou, Anju, Mona, Sumitra, Kumud, Lata, Kala, and Sushila. The format of the competition was as in knock-out systems. The final bout was between Sujata and Sumitra.

One rather funny incident comes to mind. Millie Pinto (Udar’s sister) was then a D group member. The fight was between Bhavani Prasad and Millie Pinto. Both straddled the pole. “Bhavani Prasad being a puritanical Brahmin from North India could not even dream of touching a woman! But he would neither let Millie win without a fight. So he began to twirl the pillow over Millie’s head, but never once touched her, whereas his opponent kept pounding him. Millie was quite plump so while swinging her pillow she lost her balance and tumbled down. There was laughter all around and Bhavani Prasad was declared the winner without having hit Millie a single blow.” (Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, *I Remember*, p. 87)

The Mother very much enjoyed watching the Tug-of-war and the Pillow-fights. The participants as well as the spectators also enjoyed these performances.

In 1951, our athletics competitions were held in the Sports Ground. From then on, the different types of Novelty races were meant mostly for the children. Older groups participated mainly in Tug-of-war. These would take place in the large central field or in the small ground on the side. The Mother would sit in her low chair and we watched the item either sitting or standing near her. She used to watch with a keen interest and enjoyed the performances. We often shouted ourselves hoarse encouraging one team or the other. How we enjoyed seeing all this with the Mother!

For a few more years, Pillow-fights were included in the programme. These were held in the Playground. However, this was discontinued from 1953, but the Tug-of-war competitions continued. Even when the venue for the competition was shifted to the Sports Ground, the participants received their prizes from the Mother in the Playground.

I remember here a beautiful incident. It happened in the mid-fifties. Once, when the Mother came out of her room in the Playground, and started walking towards the main exit gate, I approached her as I had something to tell her. We were talking and going slowly towards the main gate. Suddenly, she said, “You know, we would make very good partners in the ‘Three-legged Race’.” Taken aback, I said, “But why, Mother?” She pointed with her fingers to our feet, “Look, we have the same length of strides!”

THE MOTHER WATCHES PRANAB-DA’S EXERCISES

The Mother did not at all approve of body building exercises with weights. Here is a very interesting piece of information: “One day, some time in 1947, when the Mother came as usual for the Vegetable Darshan at mid-day (that was the time when she would inspect all the vegetables that would be used in the Dining Room). She noticed a set of barbells lying in the courtyard, in front of the staircase (the one next to Nirod-da’s room). She never seemed to have had a high opinion of barbells and weightlifting. So, she enquired as to who would use them. Pranab-da replied, ‘Mother, it’s me.’ The Mother, perhaps a little surprised, said, ‘I do not want you to die young!’ And then, she asked Udar to take away the set and to get them melted forthwith. So it was done!

“Soon, Pranab-da discovered that Udar had another unused old barbell set. He resumed his exercises with it. Not for long could it be kept a secret. The Mother came to know about it and she wanted to see what it was like. So, one day, everything was arranged for Pranab-da to give a good display with the barbells. Very pleased, the Mother told him: ‘Very good exercises. Henceforth, you’ll do them in front of me.’ From then on, the Mother after all Her Playground activities were over, watched Pranab-da thrice a week, at about 9 p.m., do his weight-lifting exercises for about forty-five minutes.” (*Sport Spirit* Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 6)

She used to sit near the southern wall where we now have the map of India. This was in 1948. Many of us would be sitting on the ground near her and watch Pranab-da. One day, when Pranab-da was not there for a short time, she called me, pointed to a smaller size iron rod with a small weight at both ends and asked me to lift it up. When I did it she asked me to lift it up again overhead. I did that too. She appreciated my action. Did this small act develop the liking in me of doing exercises with weights like light barbells or dumbbells?

GROUPS REORGANISED

Young leaders chosen

With the increased number of different activities, proper age-groups were formed to run the physical education activities more efficiently in separate groups:

A1 – Children up to 6 years of age. This group was under the leadership of two older girls.

A2 – Children from 6 to 10 years. This group was overseen by two other older girls.

Initially only the little ones of groups A1 and A2 were guided by captains.

In 1946, Pranab-da had the ‘Madras eye’ (Conjunctivitis). He used to conduct the children’s activities and he did not want them to catch the infection. So, Tara Jauhar and Usha Raojibhai volunteered to take up the charge of the group and they were allowed to do so. After Dada recovered, he found that they were doing their job very well and made them captains of the children’s group.

These young girls, Tara, Nirata, Usha and Aruna, all barely 12 years old, were selected for their capacities of leadership and the possibility of their becoming instructors. Pranab-da guided them and they worked as captains all through the years. To encourage them, the Mother herself wrote for these young captains, in a notebook, the daily lessons to be given to the children.

B – Children from 10-14 years. This group was under the leadership of 2 girls and 2 boys chosen by Pranab-da from the group itself. They were Ajit, Chandra, Parul and Arunkant.

Right from the inception of the physical education programme, there had been a conscious effort to choose and build up a team of young participants who would be trained into future leaders. The following is an account of how it was done for different groups:

C – Boys from 14 to 18 years:

Biren-da took charge of these young boys of Group C. The aim was to encourage all the positive qualities along with those meant for leadership. Every month, this group was divided into two subgroups, each with one boy selected for that month to lead it. A competition was held at the end of every month. Each group led by their monitor-captain performed some item. Group-marching was one item of their competition. The winning group captain was given a prize by the Mother. Ultimately, the Mother chose five boys to become captains permanently: Mona, Manoj, Sumantra, Narendra and Harit.

D – Men above 18 years, under various leaders from their own group.

E – Women and girls above 14 years.

One day, in the beginning of 1947, we (the girls’ group) were asked to assemble and Pranab-da gave each one a blank paper asking us to write the name of the

person we would like to have as our captain in each of the three items in which we took part: freehand exercises, croquet and volley-ball. We wrote the names of those we chose on the papers and submitted them to Pranab-da. The result was that Anu-ben was chosen for freehand exercises — she had had three years of training in Almora with Uday Shankar's Dance organisation and she could do the exercises far better than the rest of us. Minoo, who was one of the very good croquet players was chosen as captain for croquet. Chitra was chosen for volley-ball. The Mother presented to the three recently-chosen group captains special buckles for the belts of their group uniform. The Mother asked Anu-ben to take charge of our group as the main captain with Chitra and Minoo as helper-captains.

In 1947, one day we (the members of the girls' group) were asked to assemble in the courtyard of the Ashram main building, in front of Dyuman-bhai's room. We stood in a formation facing the building. The Mother came and stood on the terrace. We performed our exercise-sequences as taught by Pranab-da. Anu-ben as the captain of the group gave the orders. We had hardly learnt any marching yet, but, I remember that after our movements were over, just as we turned and started to move out of the area, Anu-ben suddenly started giving the orders for marching, quite loudly — 'Left, right, left, right!' We were surprised. We were novices and had just started learning how to do marching, so, we could hardly move properly with her orders and felt very embarrassed.

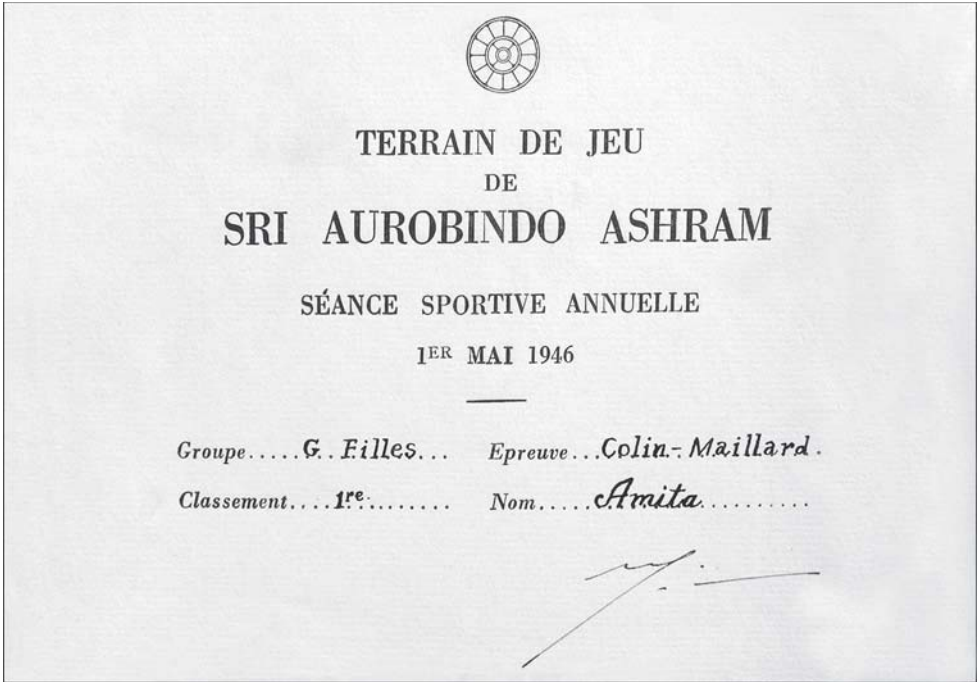
The number of girls joining the group was constantly on the rise and, in 1949, after we had received our new uniform of shorts and shirt, nine more girls — Sujata, Amita, Kusumben, Maniben, Kumud, Mridula, Sushila, Tapati and Bhavatarini were also appointed by the Mother as captains of the group. Soon Tapati decided to withdraw her name from the list. Minoo also discontinued due to health reasons. Arati was then made a captain. In early 1949, Anu-ben discontinued participating in the group activities because she had too many dance classes and the Mother chose Chitra as the main captain. At that time Leena Dowsett was selected as captain for the elderly ladies.

(To be continued)

CHITRA SEN



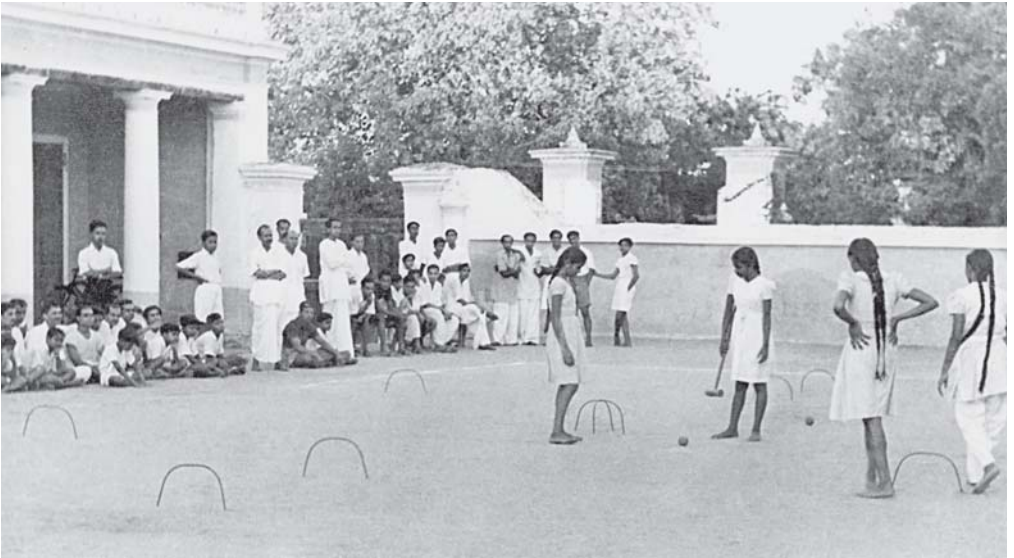
Winners of the croquet match in 1946



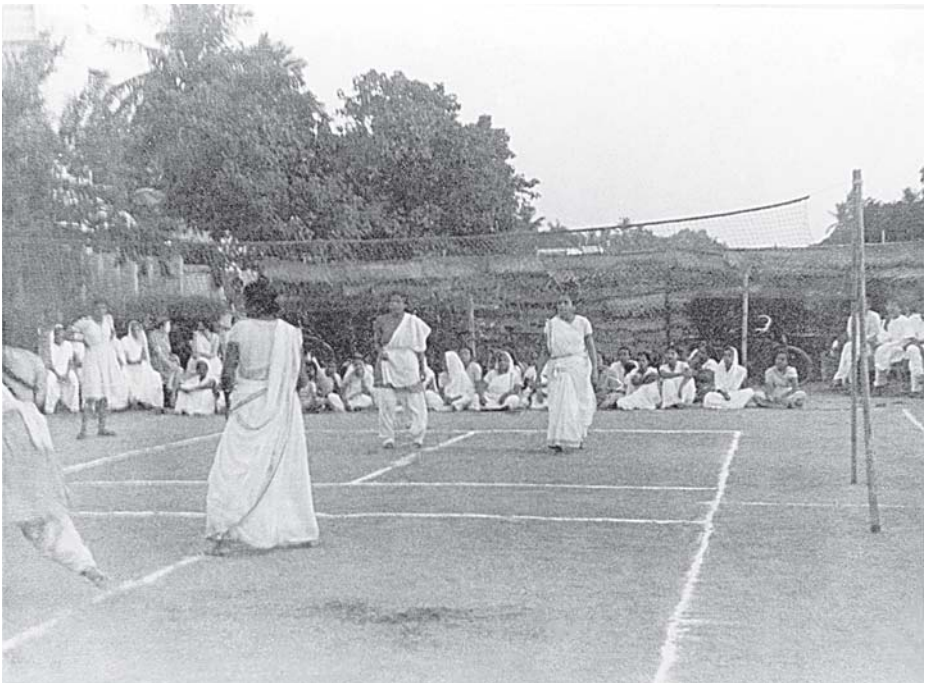
Prize card of the Annual Meet



Musical chairs



Croquet match in the Playground



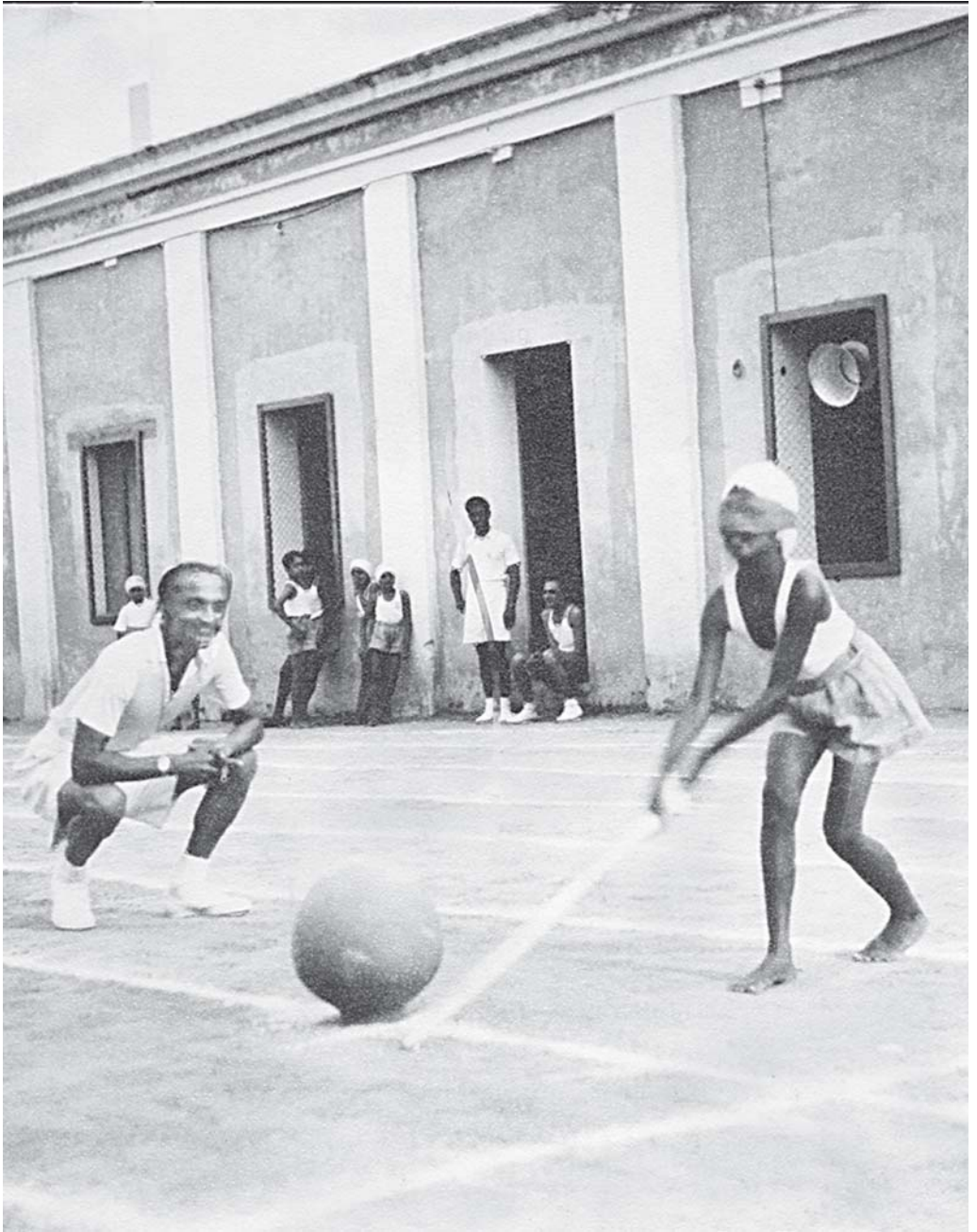
Ring tennis in Volley-ball Ground



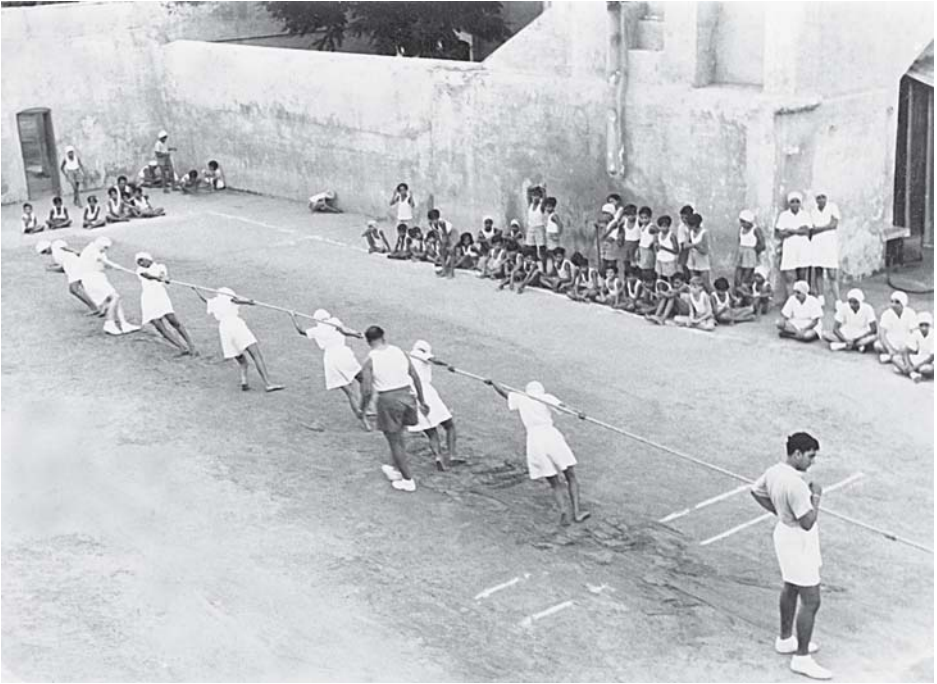
Fancy Dress



Pot-balancing



Blindfold pot breaking



Tug-of-war — 1950



Pillow-fight — 1950

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