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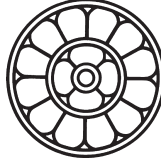
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXIX

No. 4

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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# THE INCONSCIENT AND THE TRAVELLER FIRE\*

## THE INCONSCIENT

Flame that invadest my empire of sorrow wordless and sombre,  
Arrow of azure light golden-winged, barbed with delight,  
Who was it aimed thee into this crucified Soul that for ever  
Passions and beats in the womb of a universe built for its tomb?

Lo, I am Death and I live in the boundless cavern of Nature,  
Death who cannot die, Shadow of Eternity,  
Vainly I burn in stars as they err through a Void without feature,  
Scintillant forms of my Nought vast without life, without thought.

O all my worlds, you who glitter and wander, God has devised you  
Burning nails in my heart, stones of my prisonhouse. God,  
Architect tranquil relentless and mighty, built and incised you,  
Clamped with you Time, his road towards Nothingness, Death's deep abode.

I the Inconscient have passioned for life and its beat and its glory, —  
Life that Death might die. O, was it life that He gave me?  
Pulse of my darkness, reflex and nerve-beat! More hopeless I suffer,  
Racked by the flame an obscure will in me kindled to save me.

Life? or a sorrowful throb of my Matter teaching it anguish,  
Teaching it hope and desire trod down by Time in the mire?  
Life? this joy that weeps for its briefness, this foot-path for sorrow?  
Life, this embrace of a death treasuring some transient breath?

Boons of a shortlived sweetness twisted and turned into torture, —  
Hope more blind than my Night, desire and its deadly delight,  
Bliss that is small on the wings of a moment, vivid and fragile,  
Love grown a kinsman to hate, will made an engine of Fate.

Torn with my anguish I cried out for knowledge, light on my midnight,  
Light on my symbols of dream and a power in the Light to redeem.  
Yea, was it knowledge He gave me, this thought that is tangled in darkness,  
Ignorance reading its own record in sense and in stone?

\*Circa 1934; Two handwritten manuscripts; first entitled 'Death and the Traveller Fire'.

Ignorance tracing its plans and its dreams on a canvas of error!  
 Mind this half-light in me born, like the glow of aorrowless morn?  
 Autographs, hieroglyphs of the reflexes life has engendered,  
 Spasms of matter caught into luminous figments of thought.

Nay, is not God but myself, Death's euphemism fictioned immortal,  
 Nothing eternalised, bare, yet as if one who is None,  
 Death yet for ever alive, an Inconscient troubled with seemings,  
 Matter tormented with life, a Void with its forces at strife?

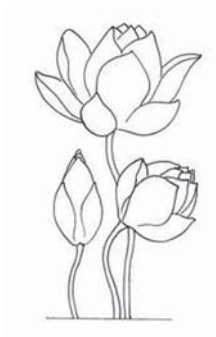
O by my thought to escape from myself out of thought into Nothing —  
 Thus I had hoped to dissolve, rapt in some tensionless Bliss,  
 Rending the Illusion I made to be immobile and formless and timeless —  
 This dream too now I leave, long not even to cease.

Into my numb discontent I have lapsed of a universe barren,  
 Goalless, condemned to survive, a spirit of matter in pain.  
 Now have I known myself as this boundless finite, this darkness  
 Shadowily self-lit, grown content to strive without end and in vain.

Fire that travellest from immortality, spark of the Timeless,  
 Why hast thou come to my night, an unbearable Idol of Light?  
 Ah from what happier universe strayedst thou kindling my torpor?  
 Thou, O spirit of Light, perturb not my vastness of Night.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, pp. 666-68)*



# **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 Four: Three Experiences of the Inner Being**

##### **Opening into the Inner Mental Self**

The three experiences of which you speak belong all to the same movement or the same stage of your spiritual life; they are initial movements of the consciousness to become aware of your inner being which was veiled, as in most, by the outer waking self. There are, we might say, two beings in us, one on the surface, our ordinary exterior mind, life, body consciousness, another behind the veil, an inner mind, an inner life, an inner physical consciousness constituting another or inner self. This inner self once awake opens in its turn to our true real and eternal self. It opens inwardly to the soul, called in the language of this Yoga the psychic being which supports our successive births and at each birth assumes a new mind, life and body. It opens above to the Self or spirit which is unborn and by conscious recovery of it we transcend the changing personality and achieve freedom and full mastery over our nature.

You did quite right in first developing the sattvic qualities and building up the inner meditative quietude. It is possible by strenuous meditation or by certain methods of tense endeavour to open doors on to the inner being or even break down some of the walls between the inner and outer self before finishing or even undertaking this preliminary self-discipline, but it is not always wise to do it as that may lead to conditions of sadhana which may be very turbid, chaotic, beset with unnecessary dangers. By adopting the more patient course you have arrived at a point at which the doors of the inner being have begun almost automatically to swing open. Now both processes can go on side by side, but it is necessary to keep the sattvic quietude, patience, vigilance, — to hurry nothing, to force nothing, not to be led away by any strong lure or call of the intermediate stage which is now beginning before you are

sure that it is the right call. For there are many vehement pulls from the forces of the inner planes which it is not safe to follow.

Your first experience is an opening into the inner mental self — the space between the eyebrows is the centre of the inner mind, vision, will and the blue light you saw was that of a higher mental plane, a spiritual mind, one might say, which is above the ordinary human mental intelligence. An opening into this higher mind is usually accompanied by a silence of the ordinary mental thought. Our thoughts are not really created within ourselves independently in the small narrow thinking machine we call our mind; in fact, they come to us from a vast mental space or ether either as mind-waves or waves of mind-force that carry a significance which takes shape in our personal mind or as thought-formations ready-made which we adopt and call ours. Our outer mind is blind to this process of Nature; but by the awakening of the inner mind we can become aware of it. What you saw was the receding of this constant mental invasion and the retreat of the thought-forms beyond the horizon of the wide space of mental Nature. You felt this horizon to be in yourself somewhere, but evidently it was in that larger self-space which even in its more limited field just between the eyebrows you felt to be bigger than the corresponding physical space. In fact, though the inner mind spaces have horizons, they stretch beyond those horizons — illimitably. The inner mind is something very wide projecting itself into the infinite and finally identifying itself with the infinity of universal Mind. When we break out of the narrow limits of the external physical mind we begin to see inwardly and to feel this wideness, in the end this universality and infinity of the mental self-space. Thoughts are not the essence of mind-being, they are only an activity of mental nature; if that activity ceases, what appears then as a thought-free existence that manifests in its place is not a blank or void but something very real, substantial, concrete we may say — a mental being that extends itself widely and can be its own field of existence silent or active as well as the Witness, Knower, Master of that field and its action. Some feel it first as a void, but that is because their observation is untrained and insufficient and loss of activity gives them the sense of blank; an emptiness there is, but it is an emptiness of the ordinary activities, not a blank of existence.

The recurrence of the experience of the receding away of thoughts, the cessation of the thought-generating mechanism and its replacement by the mental self-space, is normal and as it should be; for this silence or at any rate the capacity for it has to grow until one can have it at will or even established in an automatic permanence. For this silence of the ordinary mind-mechanism is necessary in order that the higher mentality may manifest, descend, occupy by degrees the place of the present imperfect mentality and transform the activities of the latter into its own fuller movements. The difficulty of its coming when you are at work is only at the beginning — afterwards when it is more settled one finds that one can carry on all the activities of life either in the pervading silence itself or at least with that as the support and



background. The silence remains behind and there is the necessary action on the surface or the silence is our wide self and somewhere in it an active Power does the works of Nature without disturbing the silence. It is therefore quite right to suspend the work while the visitation of the experience is there — the development of this inner silent consciousness is sufficiently important to justify a brief interruption or pause.

In the case of the other two experiences, on the contrary, it is otherwise. The dream-experience must not be allowed to take hold of the waking hours and pull the consciousness within; it must confine its operation to the hours of sleep. So too there should be no push or pressure to break down the wall between the inner self and the outer “I” — the fusion must be allowed to take place by a developing inner action in its own natural time. I shall explain why in another letter.

### **The Awakening of the Inner Being in Sleep**

Your second experience is a first movement of the awakening of the inner being in sleep. Ordinarily when one sleeps a complex phenomenon happens. The waking consciousness is no longer there, for all has been withdrawn within into the inner realms of which we are not aware when we are awake, though they exist; for then all that is put behind a veil by the waking mind and nothing remains except the surface self and the outward world — much as the veil of the sunlight hides from us the vast worlds of the stars that are behind it. Sleep is a going inward in which the surface self and the outside world are put away from our sense and vision. But in ordinary sleep we do not become aware of the worlds within either; the being seems submerged in a deep subconscious. On the surface of this subconscious floats an obscure layer in which dreams take place, as it seems to us, but, more correctly it may be said, are recorded. When we go very deeply asleep, we have what appears to us as a dreamless slumber; but in fact dreams are going on, but they are either too deep down to reach the recording surface or are forgotten, all recollection of their having existed even is wiped out in the transition to the waking consciousness. Ordinary dreams are for the most part or seem to be incoherent, because they are either woven by the subconscious out of deep-lying impressions left in it by our past inner and outer life, woven in a fantastic way which does not easily yield any clue of meaning to the waking mind’s remembrance, or are fragmentary records, mostly distorted, of experiences which are going on behind the veil of sleep — very largely indeed these two elements get mixed up together. For in fact a large part of our consciousness in sleep does not get sunk into this subconscious state; it passes beyond the veil into other planes of being which are connected with our own inner planes, planes of supraphysical existence, worlds of a larger life, mind or psyche which are there behind and whose influences come to us without our knowledge.

Occasionally we get a dream from these planes, something more than a dream, — a dream experience which is a record direct or symbolic of what happens to us or around us there. As the inner consciousness grows by sadhana, these dream experiences increase in number, clearness, coherence, accuracy and after some growth of experience and consciousness, we can, if we observe, come to understand them and their significance to our inner life. Even we can by training become so conscious as to follow our own passage, usually veiled to our awareness and memory, through many realms and the process of the return to the waking state. At a certain pitch of this inner wakefulness this kind of sleep, a sleep of experiences, can replace the ordinary subconscious slumber.

It is of course an inner being or consciousness or something of the inner self that grows aware in this way, not, as usually it is, behind the veil of sleep, but in the sleep itself. In the condition which you describe, it is just becoming aware of sleep and dream and observing them — but as yet nothing farther — unless there is something in the nature of your dreams that has escaped you. But it is sufficiently awake for the surface consciousness to remember this state, that is to say, to receive and keep the report of it even in the transition from the sleep to the waking state which usually abolishes by oblivion all but fragments of the record of sleep-happenings. You are right in feeling that the waking consciousness and this which is awake in sleep are not the same — they are different parts of the being.

When this growth of the inner sleep consciousness begins, there is often a pull to go inside and pursue the development even when there is no fatigue or need of sleep. Another cause aids this pull. It is usually the vital part of the inner being that first wakes in sleep and the first dream experiences (as opposed to ordinary dreams) are usually in the great mass experiences of the vital plane, a world of supraphysical life, full of variety and interest, with many provinces, luminous or obscure, beautiful or perilous, often extremely attractive, where we can get much knowledge too both of our concealed parts of nature and of things happening to us behind the veil and of others which are of concern for the development of our parts of nature. The vital being in us then may get very much attracted to this range of experience, may want to live more in it and less in the outer life. This would be the source of that wanting to get back to something interesting and enthralling which accompanies the desire to fall into sleep. But this must not be encouraged in waking hours, it should be kept for the hours set apart for sleep where it gets its natural field. Otherwise there may be an unbalancing, a tendency to live more and too much in the visions of the supraphysical realms and a decrease of the hold on outer realities. The knowledge, the enlargement of our consciousness of these fields of inner Nature is very desirable, but it must be kept in its own place and limits.

### A Touch of the Inner Self

In my last letter I had postponed the explanation of your third experience. What you have felt is indeed a touch of the Self, — not the unborn Self above, the Atman of the Upanishads, for that is differently experienced through the silence of the thinking mind, but the inner being, the psychic supporting the inner mental, vital, physical being, of which I have spoken. A time must come for every seeker of complete self-knowledge when he is thus aware of living in two worlds, two consciousnesses at the same time, two parts of the same existence. At present he lives in the outer consciousness, the outer being and sees within the inner self — but he will go more and more inward, till the position is reversed and he lives within in this new inner consciousness, inner self and feels the outer as something on the surface formed as an instrumental personality for the inner's self-expression in the material world. Then from within a Power works on the outer to make it a conscious plastic instrument so that finally the inner and the outer may become fused into one. The wall you feel is indeed the wall of the ego which is based on the insistent identification of oneself with the outer personality and its movements. It is that identification which is the keystone of the limitation and bondage from which the outer being suffers, preventing expansion, self-knowledge, spiritual freedom. But still the wall must not be prematurely broken down, because that may lead to a disruption or confusion or invasion of either part by the movements of the two separated worlds before they are ready to harmonise. A certain separation is necessary for some time after one has become aware of these two parts of the being as existing together. The force of the Yoga must be given time to make the necessary adjustments and openings, and to take the being inward and then from this inward poise to work on the outer nature.

This does not mean that one should not allow the consciousness to go inward so that as soon as possible it should live in the inward world of being and see all anew from there. That inward going is most desirable and necessary and that change of vision also. I mean only that all should be done by a natural movement without haste. The movement of going inward may come rapidly, but even after that something of the wall of ego will be there and it will have to be steadily and patiently taken down so that no stone of it may abide. My warning against allowing the sleep world to encroach on the waking hours is limited to that alone and does not refer to the inward movement in waking concentration or ordinary waking consciousness. The waking movement carries us finally into the inner self and by that inner self we grow into contact with and knowledge of the supraphysical worlds, but this contact and knowledge need not and should not lead to an excessive preoccupation with them or a subjection to their beings and forces. In sleep we actually enter into these worlds and there is the danger, if the attraction of the sleep consciousness is too

great and encroaches on the waking consciousness, of this excessive preoccupation and influence.

It is quite true that an inner purity and sincerity, in which one is motivated only by the higher call, is one's best safeguard against the lures of the intermediate stage. It keeps one on the right track and guards from deviation until the psychic being is fully awake and in front and, once that happens, there is no farther danger. If in addition to this purity and sincerity there is a clear mind with a power of discrimination, that increases the safety in the earlier stages. I do not think I need or should specify too fully or exactly the forms the lure or pull is likely to take. It may be better not to call up these forces by an attention to them which may not be necessary. I do not suppose you are likely to be drawn away from the path by any of the greater perilous attractions. As for the minor inconveniences of the intermediate stage, they are not dangerous and can easily be set right as one goes by the growth of consciousness, discrimination and sure experience.

As I have said, the inward pull, the pull towards going inward is not undesirable and need not be resisted. At a particular stage it may be accompanied by an abundance of visions due to the growth of the inner sight which sees things belonging to all the planes of existence. That is a valuable power helpful in the sadhana and should not be discouraged. But one must see and observe without attachment, keeping always the main object in front, realisation of the inner Self and the Divine — these things should only be regarded as incidental to the growth of consciousness and helpful to it, not as objects in themselves to be followed for their own sake. There should also be a discriminating mind which puts each thing in its place and can pause to understand its field and nature. There are some who become so eager after these subsidiary experiences that they begin to lose all sense of the true distinction and demarcation between different fields of reality. All that takes place in these experiences must not be taken as true — one has to discriminate, see what is mental formation or subjective construction and what is true, what is only suggestion from the larger mental and vital planes or what has reality only there and what is of value for help or guidance in inner sadhana or outer life.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Letters on Yoga — III, CWSA, Vol. 30, pp. 257-64)*

# THE DOOR AT ABELARD

## CHAPTER I

The village of Streadhew lay just under the hill, a collection of brown solid cottages straggling through the pastures, and on the top of the incline Abelard with its gables and antique windows watched the road wind and drop slowly to the roofs of Orringham two miles away. For many centuries the house and the village had looked with an unchanged face on a changing world, and in their old frames housed new men and manners, while Orringham beyond adapted itself and cast off its mediaeval slough. The masters of Abelard lived with the burden of a past which they could not change.

Stephen Abelard of Abelard, the last male of his line, had lived in the house with the old gables for the past twenty years mixing formally in the society of his equals, discharging the activities incidental to his position with a punctilious conscientiousness, but withdrawn in soul from the life around him. That was since the death of his wife in childbirth followed soon afterwards by the fading of the son to give whom she had died. Two daughters, Isabel and Aloyse, survived. Stephen Abelard did not marry again; he was content that the old line should be continued through the female side, and when his daughter Isabel married Richard Lancaster, the younger son of a neighbouring country family, he stipulated that the husband should first consent to bear the name of his wife's ancestors. This attachment to the old name was the one thing known in the lord of the old house that belonged to the past. For Stephen Abelard, in spite of his spiritual aloofness, was a man forward in thought, with a keen emancipated intellect which neither present nor past dogma could bind, and gifted with a high courage to act according to the light that he had.

A strange series of accidents had helped to bring the old family near to extinction. For the last hundred years no daughter-in-law of the house had been able to survive by many days the birth of her first male child. Girl-children had been born and no harm had happened but some fatality seemed to attend the birth of a son. Stephen's great-grandfather had male issue, Hugh and Walter, and one daughter, Bertha, who died tragically, murdered in her chamber, no one knew by whom. It was after this incident that the fatality seemed to weigh on the house and popular superstition was not slow to connect the fatality with the deed. Hugh Abelard had already a wife and two sons at the time of the occurrence, but Walter was unmarried. One year after the tragic and mysterious death of his sister he brought a bride home to Abelard and in yet another year a son had been born to him. But only seven days after the birth of her child Mary Abelard was found dead in her room, possibly from some unexplained shock to the heart, for she was strong and in good health when she perished, and

Walter, unhinged by the death of his young wife, went into foreign lands where he too died. The tongues of the countryside did not hesitate to whisper that he only paid in his affliction the penalty of an undetected crime. Hugh's sons grew up and married, but the same fatality fell upon the unions they had contracted; they died early and their sons did not live to enjoy the estate they successively inherited. Then Walter Abelard's son came with his wife and daughter and took possession. Stephen was born two years later and within three days of his birth his mother had shared the fate of all women who married into the fated house. So strong was the impression made upon Richard Abelard by this fate or this strong recurrent coincidence that when he married again, he would not allow his wife to enter the home of his ancestors. He bought a house in the neighbouring county and lived there till his death from an accident in the hunting-field. After him Stephen reigned, a man modern-minded, full of energy and courage, who returned, scornful of antiquated superstitions, to the old family house, married and had two daughters, and then — well, coincidence insisted and the male child came and the mother, adored of her husband, passed away. But there was no mystery about this death. She died of collapse after childbirth, her life fought for by skilful doctors, watched over by careful attendants, sleeplessly guarded at night by her husband. A coincidence, nothing more.

Therefore Isabel and Richard Lancaster Abelard came fearlessly to live at the fated house. The daughters of the house had been immune from any fatality, and when she became enceinte, no superstitious fears haunted the mind of any among the numerous friends and relatives who loved her for her charm and her gaiety. About three months before the birth of the child could be expected her sister Aloyse married, not as the Abelards had hitherto done, into the neighbouring families, but, contrary to all precedent, a young foreign doctor settled at Orringham, a man not only foreign, but of Asiatic blood. Popular as D<sup>r</sup> Armand Sieurcaye was in the neighbourhood, the alliance had come with something of a shock to the countryside; for the Abelards, though less wealthy than many, were the oldest of the county families. But neither Abelard nor his daughter were troubled with these prejudices. The young man had powerfully attracted them both and the marriage was as much the choice of the father as of the daughter.

Armand Sieurcaye came from the south of France, and there was only the glossy blackness of his hair and the richer tint of the olive in his face to suggest a non-European origin. His grandfather, son of the mixed alliance of a Maratha Sirdar with the daughter of a French adventurer in the service of Scindia, had been the first to settle in France purchasing an estate in Provence with the riches amassed and hoarded by battle and plunder on Indian soil. Armand was the younger of two sons and had studied medicine at Nancy and then, driven rather by some adventurous strain in his blood than any necessity, sought his fortune abroad. He went first to Bombay, but did little there beyond some curious investigations which interested his keen, sceptical and inquiring mind, but did not help his purse. At Bombay, he

met John Lancaster, Richard's brother, and was induced by him to try his fortune in the English county town aided by whatever local influence his friend, plucked by an almost miraculous cure from the grip of a fatal disease, could afford him in gratitude for the saving of his life. In twelve months Armand Sieurcaye had won for himself universal popularity, a lucrative practice, and Aloyse Abelard.

The old house, bathed in spring sunshine, had little in it of the ominous or weird to Armand Sieurcaye when with his young wife he entered it for a lengthened stay in the month of Isabel's delivery. He was attracted by its old-world quaintness, by the mass of the green ivy smothering the ancient walls, by the heavenward question of its short pointed towers; but there was nothing there to alarm or to daunt. Isabel had hurried to the study to her father, and Armand guided by Richard Lancaster repaired to the room into which the domestics had already carried his belongings.

"Awfully good of you to leave your practice and come," said Lancaster, "It's a relief to have you. Herries is a fool and I'm not used to the worry."

Armand looked at him with some surprise. He had not expected even so much nervousness in his cheerful, vigorous, commonplace brother-in-law.

"Is there any trouble?" he asked lightly, "Isabel seems strong. There can't be any reason for fear."

"Oh, there isn't. But I tell you, I'm not used to the worry," and, then, starting off from the subject, "How do you like your room?"

Armand had not looked at his room, but he looked at it now. It was a comfortable, well-furnished room with nothing apparently unmodern about it except the old oak panelling of the walls and the unusual narrowness and length of the two windows that looked out on the grounds behind the house. His eyes fell on a door in the wall to his right hand.

"What's there?" he asked. "I thought the room was the last at this end of the house."

"I haven't any idea," was the indifferent answer. "It can't be anything more than a balcony or closet."

The door attracted Armand's attention strangely. Of some slighter wood, not of the oak with which Abelard abounded, it was carved with great plainness and struck him as more modern than the rest of the house. Still it was not precisely a modern door. He walked over to it to satisfy his curiosity, but the attempt to turn the handle brought no result.

"Locked?" questioned Lancaster, a little surprised. He too sauntered over and turned the handle in vain.

"I hope it's not a haunted chamber," said Armand, making the useless attempt again. He had spoken carelessly and was not prepared for the unwonted ebullition that followed his words. Richard's face darkened, he struck the floor with his heel, angrily.

"It's a beastly house," he cried. "When old Stephen dies, I'll sell it for a song."

More and more surprised, Armand turned to look closely at his brother-in-law. It might be his fancy which told him that the young man's face was paler than ordinarily and an uneasy restless look leaped from time to time into the shallowness of his light blue eyes. It was certainly his fancy which said that Richard looked as an animal might look when it is aware of some hidden enemy hunting it. He dismissed the imagination immediately, and put away from him the thought of the door.

But it occurred to him again when, returning from a solitary walk in the grounds, he chanced to look up at the angle of the house occupied by his room and the locked closet or balcony.

A corner of wall there did jut out beyond what he judged to be the limit of his room and then curved lightly round and formed a porch supporting a small room that could not have been more than eight feet by twelve in size; over the room a peaked tower. The erection was meant to imitate and harmonise with the older pointed towers of the building, but a slight observation confirmed the Doctor's surmise that here was a later excrescence inharmoniously added for some whim or personal convenience. But the ivy was unusually thick on this side and even covered the great carved and high-arched orifices that all along the length of the erection did duty for windows. It must then be rather in the nature of a closed balcony than a room. It struck him casually how easy it would be for an intruder to climb up the strong thick growths of ivy from outside and enter the house by the balcony. The possibility, no doubt, explained the locked door. Greatly relieved, he knew not why, Armand continued his walk. But he thought of the door idly more than once before nightfall.

That night, Armand Sieurcaye, sleeping by the side of his wife, was awakened by what seemed to him a noise in or outside his room. The lamp was burning low but nothing stirred in the dimness of the room. His eyes fell on the locked door and a disagreeable attraction rivetted them upon it; to his newly-awakened senses there seemed to be something weird and threatening in the plain mass of wood. With a violent effort he flung the fancy from him and sought slumber again; the noise that awakened him was possibly some figment of senses bewildered by sleep. He knew not after how long an interval he again woke, but this time a cold air upon him, and before he opened unwilling eyes, he was aware of the door of his room being softly opened and closed. Still the lamp burned, — the room was empty. Involuntarily his eyes sought the locked door. It was swung back on its hinges, wide open! And if the closed door had alarmed something sensitive and irrational within him, how much ghastlier, more menacing seemed that open rectangle with the pit of darkness beyond!

Cursing his nerves for fools Armand Sieurcaye leaped from the bed, turned up the lamp and, conquering a nervous reluctance the violence of which surprised him, stood, lamp in hand, at the threshold of the darkness beyond. It was, as he had conjectured, a wide balcony walled in so as to form a habitable sitting or sleeping-room in summer, and it seemed as such to have been utilised; for a bare iron bedstead occupied the width of the room near the wall, an old armchair with faded and tarnished



cushions stood against the opposite end of the room. But the arched orifices were now heavily curtained with the thick folds of the climbing ivy. Otherwise the room was entirely empty. He decided to look out from these windows into the moonlit world outside.

But as he advanced into the room, he was aware of a growing disorder in his nerves which he could not control. It was not fear, so much as an intense horror and hatred — of what, he could not determine, but, it almost seemed to him, of that bare iron bed, of that faded armchair. In any case, he carefully kept his full distance from both as he crossed the room to the ivied openings and thrusting aside part of those green curtains peered into the night. A great world of dark green flooded with moonlight met his eyes. And then he noticed in the moonlight a man standing in the grounds of Abelard looking up at the balcony with a hand shading his eyes. It was Richard Lancaster Abelard, heir of the old house, he who knew nothing of the door and the balcony. And then the strong descendant of old French and Maratha fighters recoiled as if he had received a blow. He did not look again but hastily crossed the balcony and entered his room casting a glance of loathing as he passed to each side of him, once at the iron bed, once at the disused armchair. He could almost have sworn that a shadowy form lay propped upon shadowy pillows on the old iron bed, that somebody looked at him ironically from the tarnished cushions of the chair.

Wondering at himself Armand put on a dressing gown and sat down in an easy chair. "I must have it out with my nerves," he said, resolutely; "Whoever entered my room and opened the door, will, I feel sure, return to close it; I will wait, I will see him and prove to my nerves what unspeakable superstitious idiots they are. There is nothing strange in Richard Lancaster being out there in the moonlight; no doubt, he could not sleep and was taking a stroll outside to help pass away some sleepless hours. What I saw in him, was an optical effect of the moonlight — nothing more, I tell you, nothing more."

For about half an hour he kept his vigil. As he sat his mind left its present surroundings and turned to the experiments in occultism he had conducted in Bombay. From his childhood he had been a highly imaginative lad with a nervous system almost as sensitive as an animal's. But if Armand Sieurcaye had the nervous temperament of the Asiatic mystic, his brain had been invincibly sceptical not only with the material French scepticism but with the merciless Indian scepticism which, once aroused, is far more obstinate and searching than its grosser European shadow. Refusing to accept secondhand proof, however strong, and aware of his own rich nervous endowment, he had himself experimented in occult science with the double and inconsistent determination to be rigidly fair to the supernatural and allow it to establish itself if it existed, and, secondly, to destroy and disprove it for ever by the very fairness and thoroughness of his experiments. He had been able to establish as undoubtedly existing in himself a fair power of correct presentiment, but against this he had to set a number of balked presentiments; he therefore dismissed the gift

as merely a lively power of divining the trend of events. He was also aware that his personal attractions and repulsions were practically unerring; but, after all, was not this merely the equivalent in man to the instinct which so often warns children and animals of their friends and enemies? It was probable that the adventurous life of his Maratha forefathers, compelled to be always on the alert against violence and treachery, had stamped the instinct deep into the hereditary temperament of their issue. All the rest of the phenomena valued by occultists he had, he thought, proved to be sensory hallucinations or inordinate subconscious cerebral activity.

In the course of his reflections he returned suddenly to his immediate surroundings and, with a start, looked towards the balcony-chamber. The door was closed, that had been open! There it stood shut, plain, dumb, denying that it had ever been anything else. Amazed, Armand leaped to his feet, strode to the door and turned the handle, ignoring a cry within that commanded him to desist. The door yielded not; it was not only closed but locked. Was it possible for any human being to have crossed his room, closed that door and locked it, under his very eyes and yet without his knowledge? Then he remembered the completeness of his absorption and how utterly his mind had withdrawn into itself. "Nothing wonderful in that!" he said. "How often have I been oblivious to time and space and circumstance outside when absorbed in a train of thoughts or in an experiment." The visitor must have thought him asleep in the easy chair and moved quietly. There was nothing more to be done that night and he returned, baffled, to his slumbers.

The first man he met next morning was Richard Lancaster who greeted him with his usual shallow and cheerful cordiality. There was no trace of yesterday's disturbance in his look or demeanour.

"Slept well?" asked Armand casually, but carefully watching his features.

"Like a top!" answered Richard, heartily. "Didn't raise my head once from the pillow from eleven to seven."

Wondering Armand passed him and entered the library. Stephen Abelard sat deep in the pages of a book; a cup of tea stood untasted beside his elbow. After some ordinary conversation suggested by the book, Armand suddenly questioned his father-in-law:

"By the way, sir, is there a room next to mine? I noticed a locked door between."

Stephen Abelard's eyes narrowed a little and he looked at his questioner before he replied. He had raised the cup of tea to his lips, but he put it down still untasted.

"Disturbed?" he questioned, sharply.

"Not at all," parried Armand. "Why should I be?"

"Why indeed? You don't believe in the supernatural. Who does? But in our nerves and imaginations we are all of us the fools our ancestors made us. I had better tell you." Stephen Abelard began sipping his tea and then pursued with a careful deliberateness. "The room you sleep in was the chamber occupied by the unfortunate girl, Bertha Abelard, with whose name scandal in her life and superstition

after her death have been busy. You've heard all that nonsense about the curse on Abelard. I need not repeat the rubbish. But this is true that only two people have slept in the balcony-chamber since her death. One was a guest, and he refused to sleep there after the first night."

"Why?"

"Nervous imaginations! Somebody resenting his presence, somebody in the armchair opposite. What will not men imagine? The other was Hugh Abelard's youngest son and he —"

A shade crossed the face of the master of the house.

"And he —"

"Was found dead in the iron bed the next morning."

Armand Sieurcaye quivered like a horse struck by the lash. He restrained himself.

"Any cause?"

"Failure of the heart. The Abelards are subject to failure of the heart. Might it not have happened equally in any other room? It has so happened, in fact, more than once."

Armand nodded. Hereditary weakness of the heart! It might very well be. But what then was Richard Lancaster or the hallucination of him doing outside in the moonlight?

"Since that death, out of deference to prejudices the balcony is kept locked and opened twice a week only when Roberts takes the key of the door from Isabel and cleans up. Roberts has no nerves. She believes in the ghost, but argues she, 'Miss Bertha won't hurt me; I'm only keeping her quarters clean for her.'"

Armand remembered the stories in circulation in the county. Rumour had charged Walter Abelard with the responsibility for the death of his sister, partly on the ground of subsequent incidents, partly on the impossibility of an outside assassin penetrating so far or, even supposing he entered, committing the deed and effecting his escape without leaving one trace behind. Why, there was the ivy. And even if the ivy were not so thick one hundred years ago, an agile man and a gymnast could easily ascend the porch to the arched orifices and descend again after his work had been done.

"You are interested?" said Abelard, "well, we'll go at once and see the room." And he rang for a servant to bring the key of the ominous chamber.

Armand had by this time almost convinced himself that his nocturnal experience was only a peculiarly vivid and disagreeable dream. He followed Stephen with the expectation, — or was it not the hope? — of finding the room quite other than he had seen it in that uncomfortable experience. As Stephen Abelard opened the door and light overcame its native dimness, the first thing Armand saw was a bare iron bed in the width of the outer wall, the next a faded armchair with tarnished cushions against the inner masonry. The room was dim by reason of the thickness of the ivy

choking its arched stone orifices.

No dream then, but a reality! Someone had twice entered his room, once to open, once to shut the door of ill omen. Was it M<sup>rs</sup> Roberts, somnambulist, vaguely drawn to the door she alone was accustomed to unlock? But where at night could she get the key? for it was, Stephen had said, with Isabel Abelard. Again, it was as if a blow struck him. For, if the key was with Isabel, only Richard Lancaster could easily have got it from her at night, only he or she could have made that nocturnal entry. And it was Richard Lancaster he had seen under the balcony when he looked out into the moonlight. Was it the heir of the house who had entered, opened the door, gone out to look up at the room from outside and afterwards returned to shut it? But on what conceivable impulse? Was it the memory of a somnambulist returning to Armand's question of the morning? That was a very likely explanation and fitted admirably with all the circumstances. Or was his action in any way linked to those nervous perturbations so new and out of place in this shallow, confident and ordinary nature? That was a circumstance into which the theory did not fit quite so easily. A great uneasiness was growing on Armand Sieurcaye. In a supernatural mystery he did not believe, but he was too practised in life not to believe in natural human mysteries underlying the even surface of things. He knew that men of the most commonplace outside have often belied their appearance by their actions. A presentiment of dangerous and calamitous things was upon him, and he remembered that his presentiments had more often justified themselves than not. But to Stephen Abelard he said nothing; least of all did he say anything to Richard Abelard of that nocturnal outing which he had so glibly denied.

## CHAPTER II

Another week had passed by, but Armand's nerves were not reconciled to the door of ill omen that looked nightly at him with the secret of Bertha Abelard's death behind it. Yet nothing farther had happened of an unusual nature. Richard Abelard was often absent and distracted, a thing formerly unknown in him, and his speech was occasionally irritable, but there was nothing out of the ordinary in his action. He walked, smoked, shot, rode, hunted, played billiards and read the light literature that pleased him, without any deviation from his familiar habits. Armand noticed that on some days he was entirely his old self, and then he invariably spoke with great satisfaction of the profound sleep he had enjoyed all night. Sieurcaye finally dismissed the presentiment from his mind. He had accepted the somnambulist theory; it was sleeplessness that was telling on Richard's nerves. The whole mystery received a rational explanation on that simple hypothesis.

Two nights after he arrived at this cheerful conclusion, he woke at night for the first time after the experience of the open door. Every night he had thought of

watching for the somnambulist, but, though he had been accustomed all his life to light slumbers, a sleep as profound as that of which Richard Lancaster boasted, glued his head to the pillow. On this particular night his wife was not with him, for, to satisfy a caprice of Isabel's, she was sleeping with her sister in their old nursery. Armand turned on his pillow, noticed with the surprise of a half-sleeping man the absence of his wife, then glanced about the room and observed that the door of his chamber was slightly open. A meaningless detail at first, the circumstance began to awaken a sort of indolent wonder — had Aloyse come into the room to visit his sleep and gone back to the nursery? Or was it Richard the somnambulist driven by the monomania of the locked room? And then, as if galvanised by a shock of electricity, he sat up in bed, suddenly, violently, and stared at the door with unbelieving eyes. It had come back to him that, before turning into bed, on the spur of some unaccountable impulse, he had locked his room and lain down wondering at his own purposeless action. And there now was the door he had thus secured, open, with the key in the lock, challenging him for an explanation. Had he got up himself in his sleep and opened it? Had he too grown a somnambulist? He remembered the profound slumber, so unusual to him, so similar to Lancaster's, that had surprised him for the last few nights. Then an idea occurred to his rapidly working mind; he got out of bed, went to the inner door and turned the handle. It opened! He looked into the room with the iron bed. There was no one there, only the bed and the armchair. Then he closed the door, walked over to his own door, locked it, put the key under his pillow and got into bed again. His heart was beating a little faster than usual as he lay gazing at the door of Bertha Abelard's death chamber. And then a very simple explanation flashed on him. Baulked by the locked door, Richard had climbed up by the ivy from outside and effected his entry from Bertha's chamber. But Isabel was not with Richard tonight — how could he have got possession of the key? Well, conceivably, Isabel might have left her keys by oversight in her own chamber, or the somnambulist might have entered the nursery and detached what he needed from his wife's chatelaine. But what settled waking idea, what persistent fancy of sleep drove Richard Lancaster to the ominous chamber, forced him to devise entrance against every obstacle and by such forbidden means? Armand shuddered as he remembered the story of Bertha Abelard's death and his own theory of the means by which her assassin had gained entrance.

As he expected, he soon fell asleep. Rising the next morning, his first action was to walk over to the inner door and try it. It was locked! Well, that was natural. Somnambulists were often alert and keen-minded even beyond their waking selves and Richard, foiled again by the locked door, had climbed up once more by the ivy to efface all proof of his nocturnal visit.

Armand contrived that morning to be alone with Isabel in order to ask her where she kept the key of Bertha Abelard's chamber. She turned to him with laughing eyes.

“You are not haunted, Armand? No? It's always with me and the ghost, if

she's there, must get through solid wood to invade your room. I keep my chatelaine at night under my pillow."

"You had it there last night?"

"Armand! I am positive our ancestress has visited you. Yes, last night too." And then suddenly, "Why, no, it was not. I put it last night in the box where I kept my doll and my toys. Don't look surprised, Armand. I'm a great baby still in many things and I wanted to have everything last night just as it was when we were children. I was a very careful and jealous little housewife, and before I slept I used always to lock up my chatelaine with my doll and playthings and treasure the tiny key of my box in a locket under my nightgown. I did all that last night. If you have been haunted, I'm not responsible."

"Did you tell anybody what you were going to do?"

"I did not think of it till we went to bed. Only Aloyse knew."

"Does anybody else know of this habit of your childhood?"

"Only Roberts and papa. They don't remember, probably. I had forgotten it myself till last night. What is puzzling you, Armand?"

"Oh, it is only an idea I had," he replied, and rapidly escaped from farther question to the sitting-room set apart for himself and Aloyse.

The thing was staggering. Somnambulism did not make one omniscient, and it was impossible that Richard Abelard should have known this arrangement of Isabel's far-off childhood, extracted the key from his sleeping wife's locket, the chatelaine from the box and restored them undiscovered, when his need was finished. The theory involved such a chain of impossibilities and improbabilities that it must be rejected. And then, as always, a solution suggested itself. Richard Abelard must have taken, long ago, the impress of the key and got a duplicate of it made for his own secret use. But if so, what unavowable design, what stealthy manoeuvres must such a subterfuge be intended to serve? What legitimate need could Richard Abelard have of this secret and ominous exit or entry? Was it not Armand's duty to warn Stephen Abelard of proceedings that must conceal in them something abnormal, perilous or even criminal? But there was the danger that Isabel might come to hear of it and receive a shock. Armand decided to wait till after her delivery.

A knock at the door roused him from his thoughts and in response to his invitation Richard Abelard himself entered. He walked up to the fireplace, flung himself into a chair opposite Armand and jerked out abruptly:

"D<sup>r</sup> Armand, you are a dab at medical diagnosis. Can't you tell me what's the matter with me?"

"Name your symptoms."

"You've seen some of them yourself. I've observed you noticing me. But that's nothing. It's the mind."

"What of the mind?"

"Oh, how should I know? Dreams, imaginations, sensations, impulses. Yes,

impulses." He grew pale as he repeated the word.

"Can't you be more precise?"

"I can't; the thing's vague." He paused a moment; and then his features altered, a look of deep agony passed over them. "Somebody is hunting me," he cried, "somebody's hunting me."

A great dread and sickness of heart seized upon Armand Sieurcaye as he looked at his brother-in-law.

"Steady!" he cried, "it's a nervous disorder, of course, nothing more. But you are hiding something from me. That won't do."

"Nerves! Don't tell me I'm going mad! Or if I am, prevent it, for Isabel's sake."

"Of course, I'll prevent it. But you have got to be frank with me. I must know everything."

A visible hesitation held Richard for a few seconds, then he said, "I've told all I can think of, all that's definite." Then, suddenly, striking the arm of his chair with his closed hand, "It's this beastly house," he cried; "there's something in it! There's something in it that ought not to be there."

"If you think so, you must leave it till your nerves are restored. Look here, why not take John's yacht and go for a cruise, oh, to America, if you like, — or to Japan. Japan will give you a longer spell of the sea."

"I'll do it," cried Richard Lancaster, "as soon as Isabel's safe through this, I'll go. Thank you, Armand." And with a look of great relief on his face, he rose and left the room.

Armand had not much time to ponder over this singular interview, though certain phrases Richard had used, kept ringing in his brain; for that night the pangs of childbirth came upon Isabel and she was safely delivered of a male child. An heir was born to the dying house of Abelard. The strong health of Isabel Abelard easily shook from it the effects of the strain. There was no danger for her and the child seemed likely to inherit the robust physique of his parents. As for Richard, he was joyous, at ease and seemed to have put from him his idea of a flight from Abelard.

But on the third night after the delivery Armand Sieurcaye had troubled dreams and wandered through strange afflictions; the rustling of a dress haunted him; a pang of terror, a movement of agony seemed to come from someone's heart into his own, and there was a laughter in the air he did not love. And in the grey of the autumn morning, Stephen Abelard with a strange look in his eyes stood by his side.

"Get up, Armand; dress and come. Do not disturb Aloyse."

In three minutes Armand was outside on the landing where Stephen Abelard was pacing to and fro under the whip of the sorrow that had leaped upon him.

"Isabel is dead," he said briefly.

With a dull brain that refused to think Armand followed the father to the death chamber of his child. The wall lamp was flaring high above the bed. A night-lamp

that no one had thought to put out, burned on the toilette-table. In a chair far from the bed Richard Lancaster with his face hidden in his hands sat rocking himself, his body shaken by sobs. When Armand entered, he uncovered his face, cast at him a tragic look from eyes full of tears, and went swaying from the room.

Armand stood at the bedside and looked at the dead girl. As he looked, a pang of fear troubled his heart, for his practised perceptions, familiar with many kinds of death, gave him an appalling intimation. Isabel had not died easily! Then something peculiar in the pose of the head and neck struck his awakened brain. He bent down suddenly, then rose as suddenly, his olive face sallow with some strong emotion, strode to the toilette table, seized the night-lamp and returning held it to Isabel's neck.

"What is it?" asked Stephen Abelard. One could see that he was holding himself tight to meet a possible shock. Armand carefully put back the lamp where it had stood and returned to the bedside before he answered. In the shock of his discovery he had forgotten his surroundings, forgotten to whom he was about to speak.

"It is a murder," he said, slowly and mechanically.

"Armand!"

"It is a murder," he continued, unheeding the cry of the father, "I cannot be mistaken. And effected by unusual means. There is a spot in the body which has only to be found by the fingers and receive a peculiar pressure and a man dies suddenly, surely, with so light a trace only the eyes of the initiate can discover it — not even a trace, only an indication, but a sure indication. The Japanese wrestlers know the device, but do not impart it except to those who are too self-disciplined to abuse it. That is what has been done here."

Stephen Abelard seized Armand's shoulder with a tense, violent grip. "Armand," he cried, "who besides yourself knows of this means of murder?"

"John Lancaster knows it."

Stephen's hand fell limply from his son-in-law's shoulder. After a time he said in a voice that was again calm, "Armand, my child died of heart-failure as so many of the Abelards have done."

"It is best so," replied Armand Sieurcaye.

"Now go, Armand," continued Stephen quietly, "go and leave me alone with my child."

Armand did not return to his chamber, but went into his sitting-room, lighted a candle and sat, looking at the chair in which Richard Abelard had consulted him only three days ago. John Lancaster, Richard's brother, who alone near Orringham knew of the Japanese secret! What share had John Lancaster, friend of Armand Sieurcaye, in the murder of Isabel Abelard? Was it for his entry that Richard had provided, by the duplicate key, by his strange and perilous manoeuvres with the ivy and the balcony room? But why not open the front door for him or leave unshuttered one of the lower windows, a much easier and less dangerous passage? Then he remembered that the great dog, Brilliant, lay at the bottom of the stairs and would



not allow any but an inmate to pass unchallenged. John Lancaster was his friend, his benefactor, but Armand knew the man, a reckless flamboyant profligate capable of the most glorious and self-immolating actions and capable equally of the most cruel and cynical crimes. He remembered, too, how he himself had taught John that peculiar trick of the Japanese art of slaying. In a certain sense he himself was responsible for Isabel's death. How wise were the Easterns in their rigid reticence when they taught only to prepared and disciplined natures the secrets that might be misused to harm mankind! And then his mind travelled to Isabel and her sorrowful end slain in the supreme moment of a woman's joy by the husband she loved. What grim and inexorable Power ruling the world, Fate, Chance, Providence, had singled out for this doom a girl whose whole life had been an innocent shedding of sunshine on all who came near? Providence! He smiled. There were still fools who believed in an overruling Providence, a wise and compassionate God! And then the insoluble problem returned to baffle his mind, what possible motive moved Richard to compass this heartless crime or John to assist him?

All that day of sorrow Richard was absent from the house, and Armand had no chance of probing him. It was late at night, about eleven, that he entered. Armand met him on his way to his room, candle in hand.

"I should like a word with you, Richard," he said.

Richard turned on him, laughing with a terrible gaiety. "No use, Doctor Armand. You could not save me, you see. The thing was too strong. Mark my words, the thing will be too strong even for you." And he strode to his room leaving Armand amazed on the staircase.

Aloÿse had elected to sleep that night with her dead sister's child and Armand once more found himself alone in Bertha Abelard's chamber with no companion except the locked door, accomplice perhaps in the tragedy that had darkened the house. Again his slumbers were troubled and he dreamed always of the locked door open and someone traversing the room on a mission of evil, a work of horror. He woke with a start, his heart in him dull and heavy as lead and full of the conviction, which it called knowledge, that the tragedy was not finished but more crimes mysterious and unnatural were about to pollute the old walls of Abelard. Then his thoughts flew to Aloÿse. He dressed himself hastily and went to the room where she was sleeping. Aloÿse was asleep and the child's nurse slept on a bed some five feet away, but Armand cast only a fleeting glance at the two women, for between the beds was the cradle of Isabel's child and over it was a figure stooping, and as it lifted its face towards the opened door, he saw a face that was and yet was not the face of Richard Lancaster. Richard immediately moved over to the door. As he neared, Armand drew away from it with the first pang of absolute terror in his heart he had ever experienced since his childhood. Richard Lancaster noted the emotion and it seemed to amuse him, for he laughed. And again there was something in the laugh that was not in the laugh of Richard Lancaster or of any human mirth to

which Armand Sieurcaye had ever listened. As soon as Richard had left the room, Armand almost ran to the door, locked it and sat down at his wife's bedside shaking with an excitement he could not control. He soon recovered hold of his nerves, but he did not leave the room and its unconscious inmates. He sat there motionless till at four o'clock in the morning a light knock at the door startled him. When he opened it, Stephen Abelard entered. He took Armand's presence as a matter of course and went calmly to the side of the child and began looking down on the heir of his house, the little baby who was all that was left to him of Isabel. When he turned from the cradle, Armand spoke.

"Sir, you must do something about Richard."

Stephen looked at him. "Come to my room, Armand," he said, "We will talk there." Before following Stephen, Armand woke the nurse and bade her watch over the child. "Lock the door," he added, "and keep it locked till I return." As he went through the corridors, he passed Richard's room. The door was open, but the room absolutely dark; still his practised eyes perceived in the doorway a figure standing which drew back when he looked at it, obviously not the figure of Richard, for it was shorter, slenderer. When he was entering Stephen's room, it occurred to him that he had unconsciously carried away in his mind the impression that it was the figure of a woman. After the first disagreeable feeling had passed, he shook the absurdity from him; it must have been the dressing-gown that gave him the idea of a woman's robe. After a brief talk with Stephen, the two were pulling in silence at the cigars they had lighted, when, perhaps half an hour after his leaving the nursery, someone knocked at the door and the nurse appeared and beckoned to Armand Sieurcaye. There was a look of terrible anxiety on her face that brought Armand striding to the door.

"Will you come, sir?" she said, "I don't know what's the matter with the child."

"Did you lock the door?" asked Armand, as they went.

The nurse looked troubled. "I thought I did, though I could not understand why you wanted it; but it seems I can't have turned the key well. For when I dozed off for two minutes, I woke to find the door open." Then she paused and added with great hesitation. "And I almost felt, sir, as if I had noticed a woman in the room standing by the cradle, but I was too sleepy to understand. It wasn't M<sup>rs</sup> Sieurcaye, for I had to wake her up afterwards."

A woman! And the locked door that opened! Armand groaned; he could understand nothing, but he knew what he would find even before he bent with the already awakened and anxious Aloyse over the dead child who had thus so swiftly followed his mother to the grave. And it was by the same way.

That morning Stephen Abelard spoke to his elder son-in-law. "Richard," he said, "you will start for your sea-voyage today. Take John's yacht at Bristol. You need not wait for the funeral nor mind what people will say. If I were you, I'd have a doctor on board."

Richard Lancaster was very calm and deliberate as he replied, "I had settled that, sir, before you spoke. I'm going on a long journey and I'm going direct, not by Bristol nor in the yacht. As you suggest, I'll not wait for the funeral and I'm past caring what people will say."

"Don't forget the doctor," insisted Stephen.

"The doctor can't come," said Richard, "And he wouldn't like the voyage. I'm not mad, sir, — worse luck!"

The two sons-in-law of Stephen Abelard left the house-steps together, Armand for a stroll in the grounds to steady his heated brain and his shaken nerves, Richard in the direction of the stables.

When Armand was returning to the house, a pale-faced groom ran up to him and pointed in the direction of the great avenue of stately trees before Abelard.

"M<sup>r</sup> Richard's lying there," he faltered, " — shot!"

Armand stood stock-still for a moment, then ran to the spot indicated. Of this last tragedy he had had no presentiment. What was it? What was this maddening and bloody tangle? This death dance of an incomprehensible fate which had struck down mother, father and child in less than thirty hours? No gleam of motive, no shred of coherence illuminated the nightmare. His reason stood helpless at last in the maze. It was the locked door, he thought, that opened and revealed nothing. But his reason insisted. Richard Abelard was mad, and in his madness he had used the device John must have incautiously taught him to slay wife and child; and this last act of self-slaughter was the natural refuge of a disturbed brain made aware by Armand's looks and by Stephen's words of discovery.

Richard Abelard lay dead on the grass by the avenue, shot through the heart and the revolver lay fallen two feet from his outstretched and nerveless hand. Armand, bending to assure himself that life was extinct, caught sight of a small piece of paper lying close to the knee of the dead man. When he rose, he turned to the groom. "M<sup>r</sup> Richard's dead," he said, "go and tell M<sup>r</sup> Abelard and bring men here to carry him in."

The man reluctantly departed and Armand caught up the paper and put it swiftly into his pocket. It was not till an hour later that he had time to take it out in his parlour and look at it. As he had suspected, it was a brief note in Richard's handwriting, and thus it ran, brief, pointed, tragic, menacing.

"Armand, you knew! But it was not I. God is my Witness, I am not guilty of murder. I can say no more; but in mercy to Aloyse, look to yourself!"

For a long time Armand Sieurcaye held in his hand the dead man's mysterious warning. Then he flung it into the fire and watched its whiteness blacken, shrivel and turn into ashes.

### CHAPTER III

*[The story was abandoned here.]*

SRI AUROBINDO

## “OH, TO BE THE PURE FLAWLESS CRYSTAL . . .”

May 25, 1914

O Divine Master of love and purity, grant that in its least stages, its smallest activities, this instrument which wants to serve Thee worthily may be purified of all egoism, all error, all obscurity, so that nothing in it may impair, deform or stop Thy action. How many little recesses lie yet in shadow, far from the full light of Thy illumination: for these I ask the supreme happiness of this illumination.

Oh, to be the pure flawless crystal which lets Thy divine ray pass without obscuring, colouring or distorting it! — not from a desire for perfection but so that Thy work may be done as perfectly as possible.

And when I ask Thee this, the “I” which speaks to Thee is the entire Earth, aspiring to be this pure diamond, a perfect reflector of Thy supreme light. All the hearts of men beat within my heart, all their thoughts vibrate in my thought, the slightest aspiration of a docile animal or a modest plant unites with my formidable aspiration, and all this rises towards Thee, for the conquest of Thy love and light, scaling the summits of Being to attain Thee, ravish Thee from Thy motionless beatitude and make Thee penetrate the darkness of suffering to transform it into divine Joy, into sovereign Peace. And this violence is made of an infinite love which gives itself and a trustful serenity which smiles with the certitude of Thy perfect Unity.

O my sweet Master, Thou art the Triumpher and the Triumph, the Victor and the Victory!

THE MOTHER

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 1, p. 156)*

# THE ASCENT TO TRUTH

**A Drama of Life  
in a Prologue, Seven Stages  
and an Epilogue**

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

THE PHILANTHROPIST  
THE PESSIMIST  
THE SCIENTIST  
THE ARTIST  
THREE STUDENTS  
TWO LOVERS  
THE ASCETIC  
TWO ASPIRANTS

Prologue: In the Artist's studio, preliminary meeting.

Seven stages of the ascent, of which the seventh is at the summit.

Epilogue: The new world.

\* \* \*

## ***PROLOGUE***

*In the Artist's studio*

*Evening, at night-fall; the end of a meeting held by a small group of people united in a common aspiration to find the Truth.*

*Present:*

*The man of goodwill, the philanthropist.*

*The disillusioned man who no longer believes in the possibility of happiness on earth.*

*The scientist who seeks to solve the problems of Nature.*

*The artist who dreams of a more beautiful ideal.*

*A group of three students (two boys and a girl) who have faith in a better*

*life and in themselves.*

*Two lovers who are seeking for perfection in human love.*

*The ascetic who is prepared for any austerity in order to discover the Truth.*

*Two beings brought together by a common aspiration, and who have chosen the Infinite because they have been chosen by the Infinite.*

*The curtain rises.*

## **ARTIST**

My dear friends, our meeting is drawing to an end and before we close and take the final resolution which will unite us in action, I must ask you once again if you have anything to add to the declarations you have already made.

## **PHILANTHROPIST**

Yes, I would like to state once again that I have devoted my whole life to helping humanity; for many years I have tried all known and possible methods, but none has given me satisfactory results and I am now convinced that I must find the Truth if I want to succeed in my endeavour. Yes, unless one has found the true meaning of life, how can one help men effectively? All the remedies we use are mere palliatives, not cures. Only the consciousness of Truth can save humanity.

## **PESSIMIST**

I have suffered too much in life. I have experienced too many disillusionments, borne too much injustice, seen too much misery. I no longer believe in anything, I no longer expect anything from the world or from men. My last remaining hope is to find the Truth — always supposing that it is possible to find it.

## **FIRST ASPIRANT**

You see us together here because a common aspiration has linked our lives; but we are not bound by any carnal or even emotional ties. One single preoccupation dominates our existence: to find the Truth.

## **ONE OF THE LOVERS** (*indicating the Aspirants*)

Unlike our two friends here, we two (*he puts his arm around his beloved*) live only by each other and for each other. Our sole ambition is to realise a perfect union, to

become a single being in two bodies, one thought, one will, one breath in two breasts, one beat in two hearts that live only by their love, in their love, for their love. It is the perfect truth of love that we want to discover and live: to that we have dedicated our lives.

## ASCETIC

It does not seem to me that the Truth can be reached so easily. The path that leads to it must be difficult, steep, precipitous, full of dangers and risks, of threats and deceptive illusions. An unshakable will and nerves of steel are needed to overcome all these obstacles. I am ready for every sacrifice, every austerity, every renunciation in order to make myself worthy of the sublime goal I have set before me.

## ARTIST (*turning to the others*)

You have nothing more to add? No. So we are all agreed: together, by uniting our efforts, we shall climb this sacred mountain that leads to the Truth. It is a difficult and arduous enterprise, but well worth the attempt, for when one reaches the summit, one can look upon the Truth and all problems must necessarily be solved.

So tomorrow we shall all meet at the foot of the mountain and together we shall begin the ascent. Good-bye.

*All withdraw after saying good-bye.*

\* \* \*

## SEVEN STAGES OF THE ASCENT

### FIRST STAGE

*A kind of green plateau from which one has a view of the whole valley. From this plateau, the path which has been easy and wide so far suddenly narrows and winds round the spurs of the massive and rocky mountain rising to the left.*

*All arrive together, full of energy and enthusiasm. They look down on the valley below. Then the Philanthropist calls them together with a gesture.*

## PHILANTHROPIST

Friends, I must speak to you. I have something serious to tell you. (*Silence. All listen attentively.*)



Sketch by the Mother (to illustrate the ascent)



Cheerfully, easily, we have climbed the mountain all together as far as this plateau from which we can look at life and better understand its problems and the cause of human suffering. Our knowledge is becoming vaster and deeper and we are nearer to finding the solution I am seeking . . . (*Silence*)

But here we come to a decisive turning-point. Now the ascent will become steeper and harder and above all, we are going to cross over to the other side of the mountain where we shall no longer be able to see the valley and men. This means that I shall have to give up my work and betray my pledge to help humanity. Do not ask me to stay with you; I must leave you and return to my duty. (*He starts back on the downward path. The others look at one another in surprise and disappointment.*)

### **ASCETIC**

Poor friend! He has gone back, vanquished by his attachment to his work, by the illusion of the outer world and its appearances. But nothing should slow us down; let us continue on our way, without regret, without hesitation.

*They set out once more.*

\* \* \*

### **SECOND STAGE**

*A part of the path where the slope becomes steeper and turns at right angles, so that it is impossible to see where it goes. Below, a long, white, very dense cloud completely isolates it from the world.*

*They all pass by more or less cheerfully except the Pessimist who comes last, dragging his feet, and sinks down on the bank by the roadside. He holds his head in his hands and sits there without moving. The others notice that he is not following them and look back. One of the Students retraces his steps and touches him on the shoulder.*

### **FIRST STUDENT**

Well, well, what's the matter with you? Are you tired?

**PESSIMIST** (*waving him away*)

No, leave me, leave me alone. I have had enough! It's impossible!

**FIRST STUDENT**

But why? Come on, take heart!

**PESSIMIST**

No, no, I tell you I am worn out. It's a stupid and impossible venture. (*Pointing to the cloud beneath their feet.*) Just look at that! We are completely cut off from the world and life. Nothing, nothing is left on which we can base our understanding.

(*He looks back towards the point where the path turns at right angles.*) And there! We can't even see where we are going! It is an absurdity or a delusion — perhaps both! After all, there might not even be any Truth to discover. The world and life are only a dead end — a hell in which we are imprisoned. You can go on if you like, but I won't move, I refuse to be taken in!

*He buries his head in his hands once more. The Student, losing all hope of convincing him and not wanting to linger, leaves him to his despair and joins the others. They continue their climb.*

\* \* \*

**THIRD STAGE**

*The Scientist and the Artist arrive together after the others, as if they had dropped behind while talking. They are nearing the end of their conversation.*

**SCIENTIST**

Yes, as I was telling you, I believe we set out on this adventure a little rashly.

**ARTIST**

It is true that so far our ascent seems to have been rather fruitless. Of course, we have made some very interesting observations, but these observations have not had much result.

**SCIENTIST**

Yes, I prefer my own methods — they are much more rational. They are based on constant experimentation and I do not take a step forward until I am sure of the

validity of the previous one. Let us call our friends — I think I have something to communicate to them. (*He beckons and calls to the others. They draw near and the Scientist addresses them.*)

My dear friends and fellow-travellers, as we move further and further away from the world and its concrete reality, I have the growing feeling that we are behaving like children. It was revealed to us that if we climbed this precipitous mountain whose summit no one has yet been able to scale, we would reach the Truth — and we set out without even bothering to study the way up. How do we know that we have not taken the wrong path? Where is our assurance that the result will conform to our hopes? It seems to me that we have acted with unpardonable imprudence and that our endeavour is not at all scientific. I have therefore decided, although to my great regret, since my friendly feelings towards you all remain intact, that I must stop here in order to study the problem and if possible to form some certainty about the path to follow, the right path, the one which leads to the goal.

(*After a pause*) Besides, I am convinced that if I can find the secret of the composition of the smallest thing in Nature, for example this humble stone on the path, I shall have found the Truth we are seeking. So I shall stay here and bid you *au revoir* — yes, *au revoir*, I hope; for perhaps you will come back to me and to scientific methods. Or else, if I find what I am looking for, I shall come to you to bring you the good news.

## ARTIST

I too am thinking of leaving you. My reasons are not the same as those of our friend the scientist, but they are just as compelling.

During this interesting climb of ours, I have had some experiences: new beauties have been revealed to me; or rather, a new sense of beauty has taken birth in me. At the same time, I have been seized with an ardent and imperious need to express my experience in concrete forms, to cast them in Matter, so that they may serve for the education of all and especially so that the physical world may be illumined by them.

I am going to leave you, then, regretfully, and stay here until I can give form to my new impressions. When I have said all that I have to say, I shall take up the ascent again and rejoin you, wherever you are, in quest of new discoveries.

Good-bye, and good luck!

*All the others look at one another in some dismay. The second Student (the girl) cries out:*

## SECOND STUDENT

What do we care about these defections! Each one follows his destiny and acts

according to his own nature. Nothing can turn us away from our endeavour. Let us continue on our way, courageously, boldly, without weakening.

*They all go on except the Scientist and the Artist.*

\* \* \*

#### **FOURTH STAGE**

*The two Aspirants and the Ascetic pass by together without stopping and continue their ascent at a firm and steady pace.*

*Behind them, the two Lovers, absorbed in each other, walk hand in hand, taking no notice of the others.*

*Just behind them the three Students arrive, visibly tired. They stop.*

#### **FIRST STUDENT**

Well, my friends! This is what I call a climb! What a path! It goes up and up without a break — there's no time to catch your breath. I am beginning to feel tired.

#### **SECOND STUDENT**

What! You too want to give up? That's not very sporting of you!

#### **FIRST STUDENT**

No, no, there's no question of giving up. But why don't we rest a while and sit down for a moment to get our breath back? My legs are hurting me. We shall climb much better after relaxing a little. Have a heart, let's sit down for a moment, only for a moment. Afterwards we shall set out with more enthusiasm. You'll see!

#### **THIRD STUDENT**

All right! We don't want to leave you here moping all alone. Besides, I feel rather tired too. Let's sit down together and tell each other what we have seen and learnt.

#### **SECOND STUDENT** *(after a moment's hesitation, she too sits down)*

Well, it's only because I don't want to part company with you. But we must not stay here long. It is dangerous to linger on the way.

*The Lovers look back and seeing them sitting there, continue on their way.*

\* \* \*

### **FIFTH STAGE**

*Much higher up. The path is narrower and overlooks a wide horizon. The valley is still hidden from sight by dense white clouds. To the left, just off the path, stands a small house facing the sky. The first three pass on without stopping. Then the Lovers arrive arm in arm, absorbed in their mutual dream.*

**GIRL** (*noticing that they are alone*)

Look, no one is left . . . We are alone.

What do the others matter! We don't need them — aren't we perfectly happy together?

**BOY** (*seeing the house on the roadside*)

Look, darling, look at that little house on the hillside, isolated and yet so welcoming, so intimate and yet opening onto infinite space. What more do we need? An ideal place to shelter our union. For we have realised, we two, a perfect, total union, without shadow or cloud. Let us leave the others to their climb towards a problematic Truth — we have found our own, our own truth. That is enough for us.

**GIRL**

Yes, my love. Let us settle in this house and enjoy our love without a care for anything else.

*Still arm in arm, they leave the path and go towards the house.*

\* \* \*

### **SIXTH STAGE**

*The end of the path has become extremely narrow and stops abruptly at the foot of a huge rock whose sheer wall rises towards the sky so that the summit is out of sight. To the left, there is a kind of small plateau at the far end of*

*which a small low hut is visible. The whole scene looks bare and deserted.*

*The last three climbers arrive together. But the Ascetic stops and halts the others with a gesture.*

## **ASCETIC**

I have something important to communicate to you. Will you kindly listen to me, both of you? In the course of our ascent I have discovered my true being, my true Self. I have become one with the Eternal and nothing else exists for me, nothing else is necessary. All that is not That is illusory, worthless. So I consider that I have reached the end of the path. (*He gestures towards the plateau on the left.*) And here is a sublime and solitary spot, a place that is truly favourable to the life I shall lead from now on. I shall live here in perfect contemplation, far from earth and men, free at last from the need to live.

*Without another word, without a gesture of farewell, without looking back, he goes straight towards the realisation of his personal goal.*

*Left to themselves, the two Aspirants look at each other, moved by the greatness of his gesture. But they recover themselves immediately and the girl cries out:*

## **SECOND ASPIRANT**

No! That cannot be the Truth, the whole Truth. The universal creation cannot be merely an illusion from which one has to escape. Besides, we have not yet reached the summit of the mountain, we have not yet completed our ascent.

**FIRST ASPIRANT** (*indicating the end of the path stopping short at the wall of rock that rises almost vertically*)

But here the pathway stops. It seems that no human being has ever gone any further. To climb this sheer rock that rises before us and seems to be inaccessible, we must discover for ourselves the way to go on step by step, by our own efforts, with no other guide or help than our will and our faith. No doubt we shall have to hew our own path.

## **SECOND ASPIRANT** (*eagerly*)

Never mind! Let us go on, ever onwards. We still have something left to find: the creation has a meaning that we have yet to discover.

*They set out once more.*

**SEVENTH STAGE***The Summit*

*The two Aspirants who have valiantly withstood every test, haul themselves up with a supreme effort to the summit, bathed in brilliant light. Everything is light except the little patch of rock on which they stand and which is hardly big enough for their feet.*

**FIRST ASPIRANT**

The summit at last! The shining, dazzling Truth, nothing but the Truth!

**SECOND ASPIRANT**

Everything else has disappeared. The steps by which we so laboriously climbed to the summit have vanished.

**FIRST ASPIRANT**

Emptiness behind, in front, everywhere; there is only room for our feet, nothing more.

**SECOND ASPIRANT**

Where do we go now? What shall we do?

**FIRST ASPIRANT**

The Truth is here, Truth alone, all around, everywhere.

**SECOND ASPIRANT**

And yet to realise it we must go further. And for that another secret must be found.

**FIRST ASPIRANT**

Obviously, all possibility of personal effort ends here. Another power must intervene.

**SECOND ASPIRANT**

Grace, Grace alone can act. Grace alone can open the way for us, Grace alone can perform the miracle.

**FIRST ASPIRANT** (*stretching his arm towards the horizon*)

Look, look over there, far away, on the other side of the bottomless abyss, that peak resplendent with brilliant light, those perfect forms, that marvellous harmony, the promised land, the new earth!

**SECOND ASPIRANT**

Yes, that is where we must go. But how?

**FIRST ASPIRANT**

Since that is where we must go, the means will be given to us.

**SECOND ASPIRANT**

Yes, we must have faith, an absolute trust in the Grace, a total surrender to the Divine.

**FIRST ASPIRANT**

Yes, an absolute self-giving to the Divine Will. And since all visible paths have disappeared, we must leap forward without fear or hesitation, in complete trust.

**SECOND ASPIRANT**

And we shall be carried to the place where we must go.

*They leap forward.*

\* \* \*



**EPILOGUE**

*The Realisation*

*A land of fairy light.*

**FIRST ASPIRANT**

Here we are, borne upon invisible wings, by a miraculous power!

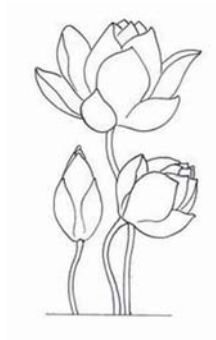
**SECOND ASPIRANT** (*looking all around*)

What marvellous splendour! Now we have only to learn to live the new life.

*Curtain.*

THE MOTHER

(*On Education*, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 12, pp. 497-512)



## THE MOTHER'S MESSAGE OF APRIL 24, 1957

(Reprinted from *Mother India*, May 1957, pp. 2-4)

This Message of the Mother —

In the eternity of becoming, each Avatar is only the announcer, the forerunner of a more perfect realisation —

has prompted in some minds the question: Is the work of establishing the Supermind on earth not the work of the culminating Avatar, not the fulfilment of earth-existence but only a step further, like so many earlier steps, on an endless path where every realisation proves to be imperfect in comparison to what comes after it?

Behind this question there are a number of misconceptions. It is indeed true that no end can be set to the Divine's manifestation on earth. If the Divine is the Infinite, then His manifestation can never be exhausted: depth after depth must keep disclosing itself. When the Supermind, the Vijnana-plane, has established its splendour amongst us, it will serve as the beginning of a movement towards establishing the wonder that is the Ananda-plane. After that, other secrets of the Supreme will work out their revelation. But we must not overlook a great difference between the Supermind's manifestation and the manifestation of divine powers that have preceded it. And we must not omit to note that the Mother's April Message, in its complete form, has a second sentence running:

And yet men have always the tendency to deify the Avatar of the past in opposition to the Avatar of the future.<sup>1</sup>

This sentence makes us throw a glance backward at man's spiritual history and it suggests in relation to the Supermind the error of sticking to past realisations as if they were ultimate instead of preparatory of the Supermind's epiphany. The opposing tendency spoken of can take two forms. One is to deny the supramental revelation and make a jealous cult of what Rishi and Saint and Prophet have taught in ages gone. The other is to consider this revelation of today nothing save the old truth retold in novel terms and therefore fit for acceptance by those who like novelty but not imperative for acceptance by all.

Of course, as we have said, the supramental realisation also is not final. And the Mother's second sentence does not imply its finality. But by the word "past" contraposed to the word "future" it brings the generality of the first sentence to a

certain particularisation which, without making a fresh fetish of today against tomorrow, flashes out the need of opening the eyes to the new Day of God that has dawned.

The new Day can be seen in proper focus by divesting the epithet “supramental” of all looseness of significance. Every Yoga has sought for what is “supra”, or superior, to the mental. But Sri Aurobindo attaches a special meaning to the epithet he has brought into use. People not intimate with his thought understand by it one of two things. Either they apply it to an infinite and eternal Silence exceeding all cosmic activity and making the whole cosmos seem an inexplicably created enigma that has no basic reality — or else they apply it to a spiritual Force beyond the mind, standing against the background of that Silence and governing its own creation, this universe in which the souls of creatures rise from birth to birth but in which, despite all spirituality, a certain imperfection is inherent and irreducible. The first conception culminates in a sense of *Maya*, World-Illusion; the second in a sense of *Lila*, World-Play. But both point in the end to a fulfilment above the earth — the one to a merger in the sheer Absolute, the other to a heavenly abiding within the Godhead.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the Supreme is totally defined by neither of these conceptions. Each has certainly a validity in experience. The sense of World-Illusion comes by experience of the utter freedom of the Divine from the universe of forms, an entire independence that can be asserted by turning away from the phenomena of body, life and mind as if they were trifles and even phantoms adding nothing to the essential self-existence of the Spirit. The sense of World-Play comes by experience of a constant sustainment of phenomena by that self-existence as if they emerged from its own being and lived by its conscious force and expressed, overtly or covertly, its boundless delight.

But the Supreme, for Sri Aurobindo, is not only the utter freedom above cosmic existence, not only the inalienable divine presence within cosmos and the Lord and Lover of it: He also renders possible a fulfilment of the terrestrial adventure in its own terms of mind, life and body. The Supreme holds a divine mentality, a divine vitality, a divine physicality awaiting to manifest by a descent from above where they stand in open glory and by an emergence from below where they lie hidden in the profundities of all that appears the very opposite of the Divine. The Supreme, as unfolding from His absolute freedom this threefold Truth of Nature and dynamising this Truth in an evolutionary self-expression, is the Supermind. By the Supermind a godlike evolution in the most literal sense can result: the formation of an earthly being who by his very nature shall be free from ignorance, incapacity and the deathward movement that is all embodied life at even its most puissant.

Once the Supermind is realised on the earth we have no longer a disparity between Spirit and World. Nothing of Here and Now will fall short of the Divine who is infinite and eternal. The division of basic reality from phenomenon, of the Creator from the creation, will be abolished without putting away form and becoming.

Thus a radical change will take place which will distinguish the supramental realisation from all others. Hence to say that this realisation is not final is never the same thing as to say that the realisations before the Supermind's advent are not final but part of an endless process of world-perfection. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, there is conversion before the Supermind and progression after it. Until the supramental change has occurred, something of the phenomenal and the created remains imperfect and needs to be converted. With the occurrence of that change, what remains is only the inexhaustible exploration of the perfect: what remains is the "more perfect" in the sense of more quantity, as it were, of the perfection hidden in the Divine and not the "more perfect" in the sense of a superior quality. After the supramental realisation the Divine cannot be diviner but He can still be various and show design on miraculous design of ordered flawlessness in an eternity of becoming.

This fact should also clarify the problem of Avatarhood. Avatarhood, essentially manifesting the supreme Godhead, takes place from various planes of being by an incarnation of the central Divine Personality poised on a plane. It can take place from the Mind plane to establish the rule of an ideal and Spirit-touched Dharma answering to the finest mental aspiration; or from the Overmind plane to bring a many-sided direct impulsion from a spiritual state that is vaster than the mental and beyond all merely ethico-religious rule. Again, it can take place straight from the supreme Truth-Consciousness, the Supermind, where the ultimate marvel of the Transcendent is organised for time-creation and the all-transformative archetype of earth-existence is dynamic. The Avatarhood from the Supermind carries not only in the inward but also in the outward the utter Godhead and all potentialities of future Avatarhood are continuous with those which it manifests and come not so much from a higher plane as from a plane in its own background. A new form or incarnation for a new manifestation is no longer a necessity. It is the intuitive inkling of this absence of further embodiment, rather than the anomalous idea of putting a term to the Infinite's manifestation on earth, that has led Hinduism to speak of Kalki as the last Avatar.

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

### Reference

1. In the eternity of becoming, each Avatar is only the announcer, the forerunner of a more perfect realisation.

And yet men have always the tendency to deify the Avatar of the past in opposition to the Avatar of the future.

Now again Sri Aurobindo has come announcing to the world the realisation of tomorrow; and again his message meets with the same opposition as of all those who preceded him.

But tomorrow will prove the truth of what he revealed and his work will be done.

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 22)

# **SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI**

*(Continued from the issue of March 2016)*

## **Chapter: L**

### **“Divinely Inspired”**

We all had just sat down to our usual discussions as on any other day, when all on a sudden the court-room seemed to grow silent and still. Chittaranjan’s voice rose slowly in a crescendo of measured tones. We all stood up and listened intently attentive in pin-drop silence as Chittaranjan went on speaking, as if divinely inspired and like one god-possessed.

Nolini Kanta Gupta<sup>1</sup>

I knew you are great; but I never knew you are so great!

Sister Nivedita<sup>2</sup>

(to C. R. Das, congratulating him for his role in the Alipore trial)

The case was approaching its final stage, excitement, anxiety and expectations among the people growing critical. Those who keenly followed the proceedings from the beginning found relief in the fact that the blatant lies that constituted Gossain’s tutored confessions asserting that he knew Sri Aurobindo very well and he also knew very well that he was the sole leader of the conspirators and that it was he who financed them and that he not only bore all the expenses of a gang on a dacoity mission at Rangpur but also himself handed over to them pistols and ammunition<sup>3</sup> had been rejected by Justice Beachcroft.

But the Government must have hoped that the process of retribution the colleagues of the accused had launched would influence the judge to pronounce exemplary punishment for those already in the net. Only a fortnight after the beginning of the trial in the Sessions Court an attempt was made on the life of Sir Andrew Fraser, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. That was on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 1909. Just after that incident, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November, Nandalal Banerji, the smart Police Inspector who had chased and caught Prafulla Chaki was shot dead in a Calcutta street in broad daylight. It was followed by the killing of Ashutosh Biswas, the Crown Prosecutor, inside the court premises.

Such developments of the hour could very well have biased a lesser man on

the seat of judgment against the accused. In fact the Anglo-Indian Press hinted at the need of a pro-active judicial policy against the extremists. Wrote *The Statesman*, after condemning the aforesaid incidents:

It would seem that the Government and the police have to deal with fanatics who believe that by carrying on a bloody vendetta they can paralyse the administration of justice. The conspiracy will fail of its object. That goes without saying. . . . The problem of the hour is to discover a remedy. Alike upon the European and Indian communities the conviction is steadily forcing itself that our regular judicial procedure, however well adapted to ordinary conditions, is too complicated and cumbrous for the suppression of political crime, when the daring and cunning of the assassin create new and unforeseen dangers.<sup>4</sup>

But Mr. Beachcroft seems to have steered clear of any influence from either his own élite English society or the British-controlled press. It was a coincidence with a touch of irony that Nandalal Banerji who was a major architect of the approver in Gossain fell to the assassin's bullet the very day Mr. Beachcroft dismissed as inadmissible all the so-called confessions of Gossain.

Sri Aurobindo, as the trial proceeded, had stopped giving any suggestion to C. R. Das. This is how it came about:

Then something happened which I had not expected. The arrangements which had been made for my defence were suddenly changed and another Counsel stood there to defend me. He came unexpectedly, — a friend of mine, but I did not know he was coming. You have all heard the name of the man who put away from him all other thoughts and abandoned all his practice, who sat up half the night day after day for months and broke his health to save me, — Srijut Chittaranjan Das. When I saw him, I was satisfied, but I still thought it necessary to write instructions. Then all that was put away from me and I had the message from within, "This is the man who will save you from the snares put around your feet. Put aside those papers. It is not you who will instruct him. I will instruct him." From that time I did not of myself speak a word to my Counsel about the case or give a single instruction, and if ever I was asked a question, I always found that my answer did not help the case. I had left it to him and he took it entirely into his hands, with what result you know. I knew all along what He meant for me, for I heard it again and again, always I listened to the voice within; "I am guiding, therefore fear not. Turn to your own work for which I have brought you to jail and when you come out, remember never to fear, never to hesitate. Remember that it is I who am doing this, not you nor any other. Therefore whatever clouds may come, whatever dangers and sufferings, whatever difficulties, whatever impossibilities, there is nothing

impossible, nothing difficult. I am in the nation and its uprising and I am Vasudeva, I am Narayana, and what I will, shall be, not what others will. What I choose to bring about, no human power can stay.”<sup>5</sup>

In the previous chapter we have seen C. R. Das’s arguments trashing the lie that was the ‘Sweets letter’. Let us look at a few more passages from his immortal oration in defence of his client, including the inaugural and the concluding passages — the latter by now a widely popular quotable quote. The entire indented text is from *The Alipore Bomb Trial* by Bejoy Krishna Bose, published in 1922.<sup>6</sup> (The phrase “My friend” or “My learned friend” refers to Mr. Norton, the Counsel for the King Emperor.)

May it please your honour, and gentlemen assessors, — it is a matter of congratulation for us all, that at last this trial has come to a close. It is especially a matter of congratulation for the prisoners at the bar because they have been in jail for the best part of a year and the time has now come, gentlemen, for you to consider the evidence which has been placed before you to find out whether the charges brought against them by the prosecution are true or not.

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In a case like this, the first thing to do is to prove that a conspiracy did exist and the next thing is to connect the particular persons with the conspiracy. What has been the method followed by my friend? Whether he discussed oral evidence or documentary evidence he started with the assumption that these persons are guilty. He assumed their guilt and then tried to connect them with the evidence. He reads a letter and finds a reference to A.G. What is his argument? Does he refer to any proof to show that A.G. stands for Aurobindo Ghose? No. His argument is ‘I tell you that is Aurobindo Ghose.’ In order to try the accused persons you must start with the assumption that they are guilty and after that to look into the evidence connecting them.

Take the Chattra Bhandar. Aurobindo Ghose is a conspirator because he is connected with the Chattra Bhandar. I submit that is entirely a wrong procedure to adopt — a procedure which has never been adopted before in any Court of Justice. He ought to have told you that you must proceed on the assumption that these persons are innocent of all the charges brought against them and if by pursuing the evidence you come to the conclusion that the evidence is unmistakable proof of their guilt, then and then only can you convict them.

There is another point — that is with regard to Aurobindo’s domestic letters. Read those letters and you will find that they throw no light on the

charges against these accused. The sanctity of his private correspondence has been wantonly and improperly violated. Was it for the purpose of proving to you that these men are guilty? I submit not. There is nothing in those letters from beginning to end which throws a light on the charges for which these men are being tried. There again my friend's argument was 'Don't read the letters as they stand but read between the lines.' That is to say, although the letters don't support the conspiracy and don't suggest any offence, yet you must not be deceived by them. Don't you know Aurobindo is guilty? Don't you know he is connected with bombs? Don't you know he has waged war against the King? Take that for granted and you find him guilty. His movement in Baroda is stated to be in connection with bombs. His articles in the *Bande Mataram* are referred to. There is no evidence at all reliable which is put forward to show that he is responsible for every article in the *Bande Mataram*. The articles breathe the idea of freedom. My friend began his speech by saying that those were ideals which no Englishman would quarrel with. Those articles, I repeat, if they show anything, show that Aurobindo Ghose was preaching from beginning to end that ideal of freedom which, we were told over and over again, no Englishman would quarrel with. Does not that argument involve the same fallacy to which I referred, namely that you must assume that Aurobindo Ghose was in the conspiracy and after starting with that to read the articles? Here although he preaches those ideals, you must read into those articles, bombs and conspiracy to warfare. Throughout the whole course of his argument the same fallacy was repeated over and over again.

I have already told you that the correspondence of Aurobindo has been placed before you; in fact, gentlemen, his whole life has been laid bare before you. My friend's contention is that on that evidence which deals with his inner life you will see signs of conspiracy and waging war. I shall confidently take my stand upon that very correspondence and material. I shall show you that during the whole life of Aurobindo, beginning with his first work up to the day of his arrest, he was actuated by a noble ideal. I shall take you through the correspondence dealt with while he was at Baroda, his utterance whether in the press or on the platform, and I shall show you that there is not one single suggestion of any conspiracy to wage war against the Government. He has throughout been actuated by a nobler idea. You will find from the middle of 1904, 1905, 1906, and almost up to a few days before his arrest that he was actuated by that noble idea. It will not be out of place here before I come to deal with the particular points in the case to give you a short sketch of those ideals. My friend throughout the whole course of his address did not hesitate to scoff at it. But that is a matter of no concern to me. So far as the nation was concerned he preached that lofty ideal of freedom. So far as the individual was concerned his idea always was to go there himself and look for the godhead



within. It is a familiar ideal of our country. It is difficult for those not familiar with it to understand it. But to you, gentlemen, it is familiar.

The doctrine of Vedantism is that man is not dissociated from God: that is to say, if you want to realise yourself you must look for the God within you. It is within your heart and within your soul, that you will find that God dwells and as no man can attain to his own salvation without reaching to that God that is within you; so also in the case of nations: without any national question arising — no nation can attain this unless it realises the highest and noblest and the best of that nation. As in the case of individuals you cannot reach your God with extraneous aid, but you must make an effort — that supreme effort — yourself before you can realise the God within you; so also with a nation. It is by itself that a nation must grow; a nation must attain its salvation by its unaided effort. No foreigner can give you that salvation. It is within your own hands to revive that spirit of nationality. That is the doctrine of nationality which Aurobindo has preached throughout and that was to be done not by methods which are against the traditions of the country. I ask your particular attention to that. It was not Aurobindo's philosophy that salvation was to be attained by methods inconsistent with the whole history and traditions of the writer and therefore when you find Aurobindo leaving Baroda and coming to Calcutta you find that the doctrines he preaches are not doctrines of violence but doctrines of passive resistance. It is not bombs, but suffering. He deprecates secret societies and violence and enjoins them to suffer. If there is a law which is unjust and offensive against the development of the nation, break that law by all means and take the consequences. He never asked you to apply force in a single utterance of his either in the press or on the platform. If the Government thought fit to bring in a law which hinders you from attaining that salvation, Aurobindo's advice is to break that law if necessary in the sense of not obeying it. You owe it to your conscience; you owe it to your God. If the law says you must go to jail, go to jail. That was the cardinal feature of the doctrine of passive resistance which Aurobindo preached. Is not the doctrine of passive resistance preached throughout the world on the same footing? Is it peculiar to this country — this movement which has met with such abusive language from Mr. Norton? Have not the people of England done it over and over again? I say that this is the same doctrine that Aurobindo was preaching almost up to the very day when those handcuffs were put on his hands. He was oppressed with a feeling of disappointment, because his country was losing everything, having lost their faith. Therefore you find whenever he preached freedom he brought out that feature clearly. He says, believe in yourself; no one attains salvation who does not believe in himself. Similarly, he says, in the case of the nation. If the nation does not feel that it has got something within it to be free to attain that salvation then there is no hope for that nation. Accordingly we

find Aurobindo preaching ‘you are not cowards, you are not a set of incapable men, because you have got divinity. Have faith in yourself and in that faith go on towards that goal and become a self-developed nation.’

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So far as these articles are concerned I submit that the charge of racial antipathy cannot be brought against the *Bande Mataram*. The particular note in the *Bande Mataram* was love for its own people and if that in itself involved some antipathy it may be expected, but what I want to lay stress on is, that the dominant note was not antipathy but love for its own people, and in dealing with that it may be that the articles have referred to other nations not in very complimentary languages. If you read the whole thing you will find that the object is not to attack any nation at all, but to point out that we must fall back upon our own resources, and stand on our own legs or in other words, as I have pointed out before, that you cannot attain your ideal except through your own salvation. The *Bande Mataram* had to attack other nations because it pointed out that the people of this country were under the spell of foreign civilisation, under alien civilisation and wanted to dispel by these articles that peculiar hypnotism that was cast on the people of this country by European nations. Not that European civilisation is bad, but that European civilisation is for “Europeans”. European nations must develop in their own way; they must rise to the noblest and best in them according to their own traditions. So also with the Indians; they must also take their own stand. Not that European civilisation is bad — I want you to particularly notice that — you won’t find that in the articles — but that European civilisation applied to us, European traditions brought into this country, are not the materials upon which this nation can grow. That is the philosophy underlying all the articles. The European civilisation is as a tree which grows in the soil of England; if you bring that tree here, it will not attain the same growth because the soil is not congenial. In the same way the development of a nation must be based on its own traditions. If you base it on any other traditions the soil will not be congenial. As for antipathy and dislike for humanity they are not to be found in those articles. I submit they breathe all that my friend denies. I say according to these people nationalism has no rational basis to go upon unless it be for humanity. I ask your permission here to read an article which comes into this period. It is written in very figurative language, but the thing it brings out is the inner philosophy of this school.

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[He reads the article entitled “Nation Day” October 16<sup>th</sup>.]

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[Counsel next referred to the period from April 1907 to September 1907, i.e. up to the acquittal of Aurobindo Ghose in the sedition case. In this period, counsel said, Aurobindo's activities were confined to the National College and *Bande Mataram*. In this connection counsel read a letter written to Aurobindo from Tokyo sympathising with him in his trouble with the *Bande Mataram* Trial.]

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[Mr. Das read a long unpublished article by Aurobindo Ghose entitled 'What is Extremism'. Referring to a sentence 'the law was made for man and not man for the law', the Judge asked if each person was entitled to pass his own judgment on the law.

Mr. Das emphatically replied 'Yes'. After all, he continued, the principles of a man's life must be guided by his own conscience.

Mr. Das, continuing with his argument, put the question 'Is it not the same view which obtains in other countries with regard to passive resistance? Have not the people often disobeyed the provisions of the law and taken the penalty?'

Mr. Norton — Not on the ground that the law is wrong.

Mr. Das — That is Aurobindo's view.

Proceeding Mr. Das said that Aurobindo put it on the ground of organic unity between the Government and the people. They were not judging the man on account of his ideals. So far as the infringement of the law was concerned it was the same in other countries. The Government does a certain thing and the people say it is wrong and unjust. If they are fined, they are prepared to pay the fine.]

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In the language of Aurobindo you have got here an authority which has not sprung from the nation as a part of its organism. The Government has not sprung here from within the people as the Government of other countries. No one can gainsay the truth of that. Aurobindo never hesitated to put that forward over and over again. I object to the Government of this country not because it is an autocratic Government, not because it is not democratic Government or of its particular actions which are criticised by others. My objection is based on the philosophy that this Government has not sprung from the people as a part of an organism.

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[Mr. Das referred to the evidence of several other witnesses and commented on them, after which he summed up. He said,]

I must thank Your Honour and gentlemen assessors for the very kind and patient hearing you have given me throughout this case. My only wish was that the task might have fallen on other hands to place this case before the Court; but as it fell on my hands I did all I possibly could to place the evidence in this case before the Court in a connected form. There is one point which struck me at the outset of this case but I did not refer to it so long, as I thought it could be dealt with more conveniently and appropriately after I had finished dealing with the evidence oral and documentary, on the record. Your Honour will find that my learned friend's case is that Aurobindo is the head of this conspiracy. He has credited Aurobindo with vast intellectual attainments and with vast powers of organisation and his case was that he was directing this conspiracy and was working from behind. Now it is with reference to this that I make my submission before Your Honour, that having regard to the nature of the conspiracy which has been established by the evidence, — if it has been established at all — it is impossible that Aurobindo could ever have believed that that conspiracy was likely to succeed. If you say that Aurobindo is not gifted with the intellectual powers with which you have credited him that is another matter. But if you say that he is all that you have been kind enough to say he is and concomitant with that he is the head of the conspiracy and is directing the conspiracy, my answer to that is, the conspiracy is of such a nature that it is impossible to believe that Aurobindo could ever have thought in his mind that it could succeed. My learned friend has referred to the thousand and one ramifications of that conspiracy and he has argued that there was a conspiracy from Calcutta to Tuticorin and other places and in order to substantiate this vast conspiracy as it were, he has not hesitated to bring a charge of conspiracy against persons of whom there is not the slightest evidence on record to show that they were in any way connected with it. I ask you to disregard all that; the conspiracy is in my learned friend's imagination; I do not for a moment suggest that he does not believe it to be true; I don't suggest that he does not believe every word of what he has said and that he has no misgivings on the point. I wholly concede that he fully believed in the conspiracy which he has put forward before the Court and the only way I can explain that and the only suggestion that I can make is that he has been under the tutelage of the police for a long time and the police have poisoned his mind during the last ten months and no doubt he sincerely believed in it and put it forward before the Court.

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My appeal to you therefore is that a man like this who is being charged with the offences imputed to him stands not only before the bar in this Court but stands before the bar of the High Court of History and my appeal to you is this: That long after this controversy is hushed in silence, long after this turmoil, this agitation ceases, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India, but across distant seas and lands. Therefore I say that the man in his position is not only standing before the bar of this Court but before the bar of the High Court of History.

The time has come for you, sir, to consider your judgment and for you, gentlemen, to consider your verdict. I appeal to you, sir, in the name of all the traditions of the English Bench that forms the most glorious chapter of English history. I appeal to you in the name of all that is noble, of all the thousand principles of law which have emanated from the English Bench, and I appeal to you in the name of the distinguished Judges who have administered the law in such a manner as to compel not only obedience, but the respect of all those in whose cases they had administered the law. I appeal to you in the name of the glorious chapter of English history and let it not be said that an English Judge forgets to vindicate justice. To you gentlemen I appeal in the name of the very ideal that Aurobindo preached and in the name of all the traditions of our country; and let it not be said that two of his own countrymen were overcome by passions and prejudices and yielded to the clamour of the moment.

*(To be continued)*

MANOJ DAS

### References and Notes

1. *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. VII; Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry.
2. Soon after the trial concluded, a tired C. R. Das went to Darjeeling for rest. This was Sister Nivedita's exclamation on a chance meeting with him on the road. Pramoda Ranjan Ghose (former Principal, Visva Bharati): *Sri Aurobinder Jivan Katha O Jiban Darshan* (Bengali); Orient Book Co., Kolkata.
3. The series of eight main points implicating Sri Aurobindo in the conspiracy stated by Gossain is recorded by Prof. Dr. Gobinda Sen Gupta in *Oi Darun Biplab Majhe Taba Sankhadhwani Baje* (Bengali); Naba Chalanika, Kolkata.
4. *The Statesman*, Nov. 10, 1908. "The Statesman — An Anthology: 1875-1975"; The Statesman Ltd. Kolkata.
5. Sri Aurobindo: *The Uttarpara Speech*; SABCL, Vol. 2, pp. 5-6.
6. Bejoy Krishna Bose's was the first elaborate compilation of the different aspects of the Case. Several other works on the case have followed.

## SONGS FROM THE SOUL

*(Continued from the issue of March 2016)*

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

### DIVINE GRACE

I am my own worst enemy, Mother; no one can help me unless I help myself. Thy Grace is always there to respond to a sincere and earnest call; it can work wonders in us, but it will not act unless the full support of our own will be forthcoming.

Hostile forces lie in wait all around us; the more they are rejected the more insistent they become; driven from the front door they seek to enter by the back; they know only too well all our defects and points of weakness and are always prompt to take advantage of them; they come in all guises and with all gifts and promises acceptable to us. They can overtake the most vigilant, and one can never be wholly safe from their attack, unless and until he is fully changed and transformed.

But they cannot hide their falsehood before sincere seeking and aspiration; they cannot bear the light of truth; they cannot stand before resolute will. The divine Grace is always there to protect those who sincerely seek its protection.

Thou knowest fully all my defects and weaknesses, Mother; I have taken my absolute refuge in Thee; if Thou do not bear with me in patience and save me from my own ignorance and weakness, to whom shall I turn? Save Thy child, Mother, give me more light, give more strength to my will, support me with Thy Grace while I sincerely try to keep my temple clean and pure for Thy abiding presence.

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We ourselves cannot change our nature and rise to the divine life. We keep in check the lower movements in us; we can replace one movement by another, but we cannot annihilate nor effectively transform them. Only the power of the Divine descending from above can effect the transformation.

The Divine is always pressing on us from above and urging us from below; but until we can consciously and voluntarily surrender ourselves to it, it cannot take up the work of transformation in us. On the one hand, our physical nature does not believe in higher possibilities and it obstinately resists all attempts at change and transformation; on the other hand, the forces of falsehood and darkness easily find an opening in us and keep us under their sway. Thus, the divine power cannot work

in us and we seem to be hopelessly involved in the lower life.

But once we have the will to be transformed, at once the Divine finds a chance in us. We cannot ourselves change the nature of the different parts of our being, but we can make them consent to be changed and submit to the working of the divine power. We cannot ourselves conquer the hostile forces, but we can resolutely refuse to invite them or tolerate them; we cannot remove our darkness, but we can call the divine light to illumine us; we cannot raise ourselves, but we can constantly, sincerely aspire to rise. When we shall fulfil these conditions, the highest Divine Grace will descend and conquering all our defects and obstacles will raise us to the life divine.

## YOGA

To live according to the truth of our being is our *sadhana*. All our life is an attempt to express that truth, but ordinarily it is a blind and groping attempt which constantly leads to perversion and falsehood. Consciously to know the truth and realise that in our life — that is Yoga.

We have to change and mould our body, our life, our mind so as to make them plastic instruments, perfect vehicles of the truth; but the beliefs and habits ingrained in them are the greatest obstacles to such a change. The body does not believe that the laws known to it and followed by it can ever be changed or altered, and it is the same with the vital and the mental parts — nowhere is there the light of true consciousness, the belief in higher divine possibilities; our movements go on eternally in a blind, groping, mechanical series.

The first essential thing is to hold fast to the faith in our divine possibilities in every part of our being, the faith that our whole nature can be and has to be completely changed and transformed. Established firmly in this faith, freeing ourselves from all ignorant notions of impossibility, we should open every part of our being to the Divine Mother and ceaselessly and sincerely aspire to the higher divine life. Only under these conditions will the truth manifest in us and mould us into its own nature.

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Let me merge my personality completely in Thee, Mother, so that no trace of the old life may be left in me. Only thus I shall realise the truth of my being, for my identification with Thee is the real truth, and my separation from Thee is a falsehood, which is the root of all misery and trouble.

In seeking this reunion with Thee, Mother, it is not sufficient that we physically touch Thy feet or occasionally sit in meditation; we must give up all preoccupations and associate with Thee in all Thy work, in all Thy movements. Our life is still full of old ideas and thoughts, of old interests and associations, of old habits and

tendencies, and these constitute a great obstacle to our union with Thee, Mother. We must turn away from these and identify ourselves with the great work Thou art accomplishing, the work of manifesting the supramental Truth on the earth; we should turn all our attention to the creation of conditions favourable to this manifestation and to the removal of all obstacles.

And in all our thoughts and feelings and works, we should seek direct inner touch and inspiration from Thee, Mother. Thus united with Thee within ourselves, as the source of all light and strength and joy, and united with Thee outside in the great work Thou hast undertaken, we shall complete our identification with Thee, Mother, and really become a part and parcel of Thy own divine self.

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Yoga is not merely thinking of Thee, Mother, with the mind, or bowing the head at Thy feet; these are certainly great aids and starting-points, but in themselves they cannot take us very far. We must fill our whole being with Thy living presence, we must constantly live in active and integral union with Thee — that will be Yoga in the real sense of the term.

There is no movement in us, conscious or unconscious, voluntary or involuntary, that has not some support, even conscious support in some part of our being. We must constantly seek Thy light, vigilantly find out the false movements in us, resolutely withdraw all our support from them and sincerely call in Thy force to throw them away — that will be a real process of *Yogic sadhana*.

Then we must know Thy will in the world and sincerely devote ourselves to Thy service, always seeking inspiration and guidance from Thyself. We must keep ourselves full of the purest joy that rises from sincere love and devotion to Thee; the gods will come down from above to taste that divine joy in us and help us to grow in divine life — that is the process of Yoga which will surely give us the highest *siddhi*.

## THE GOAL

Ours is a great cause, Mother, we are the fighters in a divine fight, and Thou hast come down to lead us to victory.

Over humanity now rule the forces of darkness and falsehood. In vain search of light and power and joy, men move round and round eternally and keep the divine in them in perpetual bondage. Our fight is to free the involved divine, to lead the way to the highest fulfilment of humanity. We shall subdue the hostile forces, we shall establish the rule of light on earth, we shall fulfil the will of God in humanity. Ours is a divine fight, Mother, and Thou art our divine leader.



Thou hast assumed the limitations of humanity in order to show the way to overcome them; we are Thy chosen soldiers; the gods have come down to help us in response to Thy call. Faith is our shield, obedience to Thee our discipline, aspiration the force that leads us on. We see the goal before us, the Kingdom of Heaven is within our reach. Victoriously led by Thee, fully supported by the sanction and the will of the Supreme Divine, we shall overcome all obstacles and open the gates of divine light and power and joy to all mankind.

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Ours is not to forsake life, but to seek its true fulfilment. We want to escape from the falsehood and misery of the lower life so that we may realise our highest possibilities.

We must have the eye to see that all movements in life are movements in the Universal, and that there is a truth, a meaning behind every movement, and that each in its essence is a movement of light and power and joy. Through our egoism and ignorance these movements are distorted and deformed in us, and we live a life of falsehood and imperfection.

Individual beings are only fields or vehicles where the universal movements manifest themselves according to the nature of the field or the vehicle. We must be able to detach ourselves from these movements, observe them as they are and discriminate the truth from the falsehood that is in them. Persistent rejection of the false and the acceptance of the true are the essential conditions of our highest self-realisation.

Thou embodiest in Thyself, Mother, all the true movements in life; by taking our absolute refuge in Thee, we shall find out our true life. By Thy light we shall know the true from the false; by the aid of Thy will we shall persistently reject the falsehood. Thou wilt establish us in the true movements of light and power and joy. Ours is not to forsake life but to seek its highest fulfilment in and through Thee, Mother Divine.

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The true test of our aspiration is that we must dissociate ourselves completely from the ordinary ways and modes of mankind; we must not look with a longing on the life we have consciously and deliberately left behind.

Men run wildly after transient joys and find an intense interest in the feverish pursuit of sense-desires; these little, imperfect, conditional satisfactions are not for us; we are to look forward to the infinite and absolute delight of the Spirit in itself. Bound to their egoism, men are torn by the greed of possession, by ambition, jealousy, rivalry, vanity, arrogance; they live in constant conflict and discord; this poor, miserable life is not for us; we look up to the higher life in the unity and harmony of the

all-pervading, all-embracing Divine.

Men work blind, restless, aimless like the rocking, thundering waves in the sea, impelled by the hidden forces of their own desires; moving round their own ego, ignorantly they think that they are making progress; this is a sheer waste of time and energy from our point of view. We should seek the perfect skill in work in complete union with the Divine Mother.

Men are satisfied with limited power, limited joy, limited light, limited life. We seek immortality and infinite power and joy; we aspire to be identified with the Truth and to make it the very stuff of our life. We seek to exceed humanity and become supermen; we must resolutely turn our back on the ways and modes of mortal life on earth.

### THE PATH

Our path is so simple, yet so difficult! We have only to leave ourselves entirely in Thy hands, Mother Divine, and everything else will be done for us; but against this simple act of surrender the whole of our nature and the whole world seem to stand, and we have to win every inch of ground by stern, resolute, courageous fight and struggle.

Yet everywhere the principle is the same; whenever there is any obstacle, any difficulty, any imperfection in our being, we have simply to surrender it to Thee and wait with patient hope and aspiration. And this is so natural, so in harmony with the true nature of things! Our mind and life and body are living in falsehood and perversion, and their highest perfection lies in identification with Thee. Only it is ignorance and lack of faith and inertia which make them refuse or revolt. Once the faith in divine life is born and the will to attain it, the rest becomes simple and easy.

With even a little of this faith and surrender, the obstacles begin to disappear. With surrender comes peace, comes joy, comes hope. Growing in joyful surrender, we grow in devotion to Thee, Mother, and the greater the sincerity of devotion, the nearer we approach the light, the joy, the power, the peace of Thy divine consciousness, and we become more and more one and integrally identified with Thee. And it is so easy, so natural, so intensely joyful to be devoted to Thee, Mother Divine! Our path is simple and all difficulties and obstacles, however great and powerful, inevitably disappear before simple, sincere, earnest devotion.

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Our life is to be guided not by any human standard, but by the divine. It is not sufficient that we fulfil what can be expected from men; we must pass through the tests applicable to the gods.

The limited and mixed pleasures after which human beings strive are not for us; we aspire after the taste of immortal joy. The little conquests attained by great struggle and effort are not for us; our aim is to make the world forces yield to our will. The imperfect knowledge, full of ignorance and falsehood, attained by the reason and the understanding, is not for us; we seek the light which, blazing like the sun from within, will dispel all our darkness.

Nothing mean, nothing impure, nothing undivine is to be tolerated by us. We must rise above the human passions, above the little joys and sorrows which disturb men, above the small pursuits which keep human beings occupied. What is impossible to achieve for a mortal man shall be achieved in us through the divine Grace. We must always aspire to follow not the human standard but the divine.

And that divine standard is Thy own Self, Mother, Thou art our ideal and our guide. To know Thy will in every detail and to follow it under all circumstances, that is the standard we have accepted for our life.

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My sole aspiration, Mother, is to make myself a perfect vehicle for the manifestation of the Truth, and to make my life a real extension of Thy divine life. Everything that I call “me” and “mine” shall be replaced by “Thee” and “Thine”; all the conditions for the higher divine life shall be fully and strictly fulfilled, that is my sole work, my sole *sadhana*.

My thoughts and feelings and willings, going on in their old way, keep me bound to the lower life of ignorance and falsehood; all these have to be thrown away entirely and replaced by the reflections of Thy thoughts, feelings and willings, — that is the way to the realisation of the life divine. Thou hast placed Thyself before us as the embodiment of the Truth, as the ideal to be attained by us. It is by making ourselves perfectly plastic and responsive to Thy touch and influence that we shall conquer all our human limitations.

We now depend on the mind for our light and guidance, hence we grope and stumble. Let us free our mind from all thoughts and desires, all prejudices and attachments, and keep it always open and turned towards Thee, so that Thou mayest intuitivise and transform it. We must make our mind worthy of reliance, before we rely on it. With a mind pure and transformed, we shall steadily follow the light and rise to the life divine which Thou hast held before us as our ultimate goal.

\* \* \*

Thou hast clearly shown the path to us, Mother, we have only to follow it up; Thou wilt guide us at every step, help us in all our difficulties, support us with Thy infinite love and grace; we have only to turn towards Thee with all our heart and soul.

Thou dost not require anything from us which is beyond our power to give; Thou dost not give us any work which we cannot carry out; we have only to make the best use of our light and power, we have to fulfil the part assigned to us; whatever else is necessary, Thou wilt do for us.

But our efforts must be sincere, persistent, and determined. We must not allow inertia or lethargy to overtake us; we must not allow falsehood to mix up with our aspiration. We must watch every thought or desire that may rise in us, and constantly open ourselves to Thee, Mother. We must not leave anything to chance, but consciously and ceaselessly strive to fulfil all the conditions of our transformation in their minutest detail.

Thou hast made our task perfectly clear to us; but it is a great and difficult task, and it is only by devoting all our heart and soul to it that we can ever hope to achieve it.

\* \* \*

It is not that our *sadhana* will bear fruit only in some distant date in the future; it is fulfilling itself every moment and is a course of progressive self-realisation. Even a little of it delivers us from great sorrow and sin; every step brings new joy, new life.

Our very resolution to turn away from the lower things in life and to realise the Divine, brings forth all that is best in us. By holding firmly to our faith, we are delivered from the torments of doubt and uncertainty. By aspiration we easily conquer the forces which would pull us down. By giving up desires we strike at the root of all misery and sin. By getting rid of egoism we rise above the conflicts of the world and realise the unity and harmony of the higher life. By surrender to Thee, Mother, we are relieved from the great burden of life, and taste true freedom and peace. Sincere self-giving and devotion to Thee, Mother, brings such a joy as has no parallel in the lower life of the senses.

The more we advance in *sadhana*, the more we grow in purity and peace, in light and harmony, in power and joy; every step we take brings its own reward; even a little of it delivers us from great sorrow and sin. Thus, we advance to the glories of the divine life.

(To be continued)

ANILBARAN

(Songs from the Soul, Amiya Library, Calcutta, 1946, pp. 24-40)

## VEDIC SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

(Continued from the issue of March 2016)

### 3

#### (i) Gold

Gold, *hiranya*, “is the concrete symbol of the higher light, the gold of the Truth”,<sup>1</sup> and it is this wealth of supramental radiance that the Vedic Rishis prayed and strived for, and not the earthly yellow metal. The Ashwins are the gods who grant this boon and bring about the great change from “the inner obscurity to the illumination”. The Rishis increased this wealth by the gods who themselves got enriched by the former’s performance of *yajñas*.

Gold symbolises “the shining wealth of a divine Sun — the true light, *ṛtaṁ jyotiḥ*”.<sup>2</sup> The Rishis are guided in their spiritual efforts by the Light — *hiranyaṁ jyotiḥ*, the golden light of *satyaṁ ṛtaṁ bṛhat*.

*Trayaḥ kṛṇvanti bhuvaneṣu retas-  
tisraḥ prajā āryā jyotiragrāḥ.  
trayo gharmāsa uṣasaṁ sacante  
sarvān it tān anu vidurvasiṣṭhaḥ*<sup>3</sup>

As Sri Aurobindo explains *ārya*, *ṛta*, *hiranya* are the “three epithets of the solar light . . . [which are] mutually illuminative and almost equivalent.”<sup>4</sup> They signify that the Vedic Rishis are in possession of the light and substance of the Truth.

#### (ii) Heaven and Earth

A world for the Vedic Rishis is primarily a formation of consciousness; it is a physical formation of things only secondarily. Man is a miniature universe; he is an organised and epitomised form of all existence which reflects totally the entire constitution of the universe. He contains and repeats in himself the same arrangement of states and play of forces.

Reality, according to the Vedic Rishis, is constituted of various psychological levels; each level is considered as a world in itself. “Man, subjectively, contains in

1. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 125.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

3. *R̥g Veda*, VII.33.7.

4. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 217.

himself all the worlds in which, objectively, he is contained.”<sup>5</sup> Heaven and Earth are referred to as the aged parents of the world, representing the mental and physical consciousness, who have grown old and weak. It is because of the Ribhus that their youth is repeatedly restored.

*Bhūriṃ dve acarantī carantaṃ  
padvantāṃ garhhamapadī dadhāte.  
nityaṃ na sūnuṃ pitrorupasthe  
dyāvā rakṣataṃ pṛthivī no abhvāt.*<sup>6</sup>

The two, Heaven and Earth, though motionless and footless, nurture varied creatures having feet and movement. Like parents nursing their children clasping them to their bosom, O Heaven and Earth protect us from peril and suffering.

*Urvī sadamanī bṛhatī ṛtena  
huve devānamavasā janitrī.  
dadhāte ye amṛtaṃ supratīke  
dyāvā rakṣataṃ pṛthivī no abhvāt.*<sup>7</sup>

I invoke Heaven and Earth — the two wide, beautiful and lofty realms, the parents of the gods and mighty progenitors of plenty to bring us life. O Heaven and Earth protect us from peril and suffering.

Heaven and Earth are the tinders by which Agni is struck out; they are the parents of Agni.

The system of the world is an important feature of Vedic symbolism. There are three cosmic divisions which the Rishis speak of: earth, the *antariksha*, or middle region, and heaven, *dyau*. There is another, a greater heaven, *bṛhad dyau*, the Wide World also called the Great Water, *maho arṇaḥ*. It is described as *ṛtaṃ bṛhat*, or as *satyaṃ ṛtaṃ bṛhat*. The three worlds referred to correspond to the Vedic conception of *vyāhṛtis* — the three realms in the *Gāyatri mantra* — *Om bhūh bhuvah svaḥ . . .* whereas the fourth world of the Vastness and Truth corresponds to the fourth *vyāhṛti* mentioned in the Upanishads as *mahas*. The Puranas add three more — *jana*, *tapas* and *satya* and make them seven. The Vedas, too, speak of three supreme worlds, but do not name them. The seven worlds in the *Purāṇas*, as well as in Vedanta, correspond to seven psychological principles or forms of existence — Sat, Chit, Ananda, Vijnana, Manas, Prana, and Anna. Vijnana, the fourth principle is the truth of things. In the Puranic system, Vijnana is followed in the ascending order by Jana, the world of Ananda, whereas in the Veda it leads to Ananda. Both the systems are

5. *Ibid.*, p. 275.

6. *Rg Veda*, I.185.2.

7. *Ibid.*, I.185-6.

identical and depend on the same idea of seven principles of subjective consciousness formulating themselves as seven objective worlds.

Man dwells upon the earth and is conscious only of his mortality; he is a child of Heaven, too, which holds the promise of immortality for him, provided he chooses to rise and enter into the other higher worlds “seated in a luminous secrecy”. Below him are the worlds, subconscious and inconscient, above him the superconscient world. He has subjective faculties hidden in him which correspond to all the worlds that are above and below him in the physical cosmos.

The Earth is shaped out of the Night of inconscient existence. It always lifts its children towards the peaks of higher existences. The Heaven sends downward its rivers of light and truth and bliss into our physical, vital, mental and psychic existence. Such is the odyssey of the soul’s spiritual ascension that the Vedic Rishis read in the symbols of Heaven and Earth.

### (iii) *Hill*

It is the symbol of physical nature especially of the inconscient existence which conceals and imprisons the light of knowledge. *Adri*, or rock, is a psychological image of this granite ignorance of human nature that keeps suppressed the truth of light from manifestation. It is the rock of darkness, recalcitrance, resistance and ignorance that rises “from the bowels of earth to the back of heaven”. It is the fortress-residence of the ambushed Enemy; it is out of this rock that the herds of light are liberated by Indra. The rock is rent asunder by the hoofs of Indra’s powerful white horses, and the rays of light thus released in turn help the manifestation of the supramental in the earth-nature and human nature. The rivers of Truth then descend upon earth making the mental being fertile for the action of the Truth. Even the streams of Soma are milked out of the rock, and the luminous and ambrosial contents are delivered from its womb for the well-being and growth of the seeker. It is out of the bowels of physical consciousness that the divine light and divine delight are extracted which is offered to the gods by the seeker-sacrificer as the most delicious and precious food.

### (iv) *Hotrās*

There are seven categories of energies in the human being corresponding to the seven constituents of his psychological existence. These are body, life, mind, supermind, Ananda, Will, and essential being. Any wrong relation caused among them by *avidyā*, or obscuration of knowledge, results in evil and suffering. When these energies are sacrificed or offered to the Lord of Knowledge, *Sūrya*, they are placed in their right relation and harmony by the Lord of Truth. It is through such an integral offering that man realises in himself the all-embracing affirmation of the Divine, and experiences the all-knowledge and action of the Supreme within him and in the universe around him. The result of such a realisation is a constant integral creation and manifestation. The seven categories are the seven sacrificial energies,

*hotrās*, which the Rig-Veda speaks of. *Hotri*, or *Hotā*, has a special significance in the Veda. Ordinarily, and as part of tradition, *hotā* is the priest who offers the libation. But originally it did not denote a sacrificial priest.

Yoga for the ancient Aryans was a battle between the forces of Light and those of Darkness, between the *devas* and the *daityas*. The *devas*, made strong by the effective practice of yoga done by the seekers, fought the *daityas* and gained victory for the seekers. Agni is one such deva — a warrior par excellence. He is the mighty, effective and fighting force against the *daityas* and provides an effective control over Nature. It is Agni again who brings *jñānam*, *ānanda* and *mukti* to the seeker. Agni, therefore, is the *hotā*, the *purohita*.

#### (v) *Night and Dawn*

In the Vedas, Night is the symbol of ignorance, of the lack of will, of inconscience and obscure consciousness. It is, as such, the symbol of all evil, sin and suffering. It is the Night of Mortality, the divided and veiled consciousness of the mortal being in which the higher, undivided, infinite consciousness is concealed in the cave of the hill — the hill representing the involved, hardened, material existence. It denotes the ignorant mentality.

She is the sister of Dawn and alternates with her; Night herself is the mother of Light which is revealed by Dawn. Night and Day, *naktoṣāsa*, like the other gods in the Veda, are symbolic and are subject to divine control. Day symbolises “the state of illumined Knowledge that belongs to the divine Mind of which our mentality is a pale and dulled reflection.”<sup>8</sup> Day and Night stand for the alternation of divine and human consciousness in man. The Night holds and prepares all that the Dawn brings into conscious being. Dawn is the image of the secret impulse in the Unmanifest towards manifest existence. Creation is no longer nursed in the womb of *Hiranyagarbha*; in the symbol of Dawn, it is emerging and is on the verge of manifestation.

*Ushas* itself etymologically means “coming into manifest being”. It symbolises the sublime yearning of the Unmanifest to become manifest. It is therefore described as the head of the sacrificial Horse “that faces and looks out upon other worlds”. “Day,” Sri Aurobindo observes, “is the symbol of the continual manifestation of material things the *vyākṛta*, the manifest or fundamentally in Sat, in infinite being; Night is the symbol of their continual disappearance into *avyākṛta*, the Unmanifest or finally into *asat*, into infinite non-being.”<sup>9</sup>

The meaning and the significance of Dawn is not limited to the awakening of earthly life in the physical dawning. It refers to a perceptive vision in the mental consciousness. Dawn itself is that perceptive vision, that mental and higher illumination. It symbolises the way to the Truth and the Bliss which constitute and ensure immortality. It is the leader of happy truths and of spiritual wealth and felicity. The

8. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 365.

9. *Ibid.*, Vol. 12, pp. 405-06.



wealth is, *gomad, aśvavad, vīravad*. The Dawn is described as *gomatī, aśvavatī*.

*Asme śreṣṭhebhīrbhānubhīrvi  
bhāhyuṣo devī pratirantī na āyuh.  
iṣam ca no dadhatī viśvavāre  
gomadaśvādrathavacca rādhaḥ.*<sup>10</sup>

Illumine us, O Goddess, with your light, guide us, sustain us prolonging our life. Bestow us food, grant us happiness, give us horses, cattle, and chariots.

*Śravaḥ sūribhyo amṛtaṁ vasutvanam  
vājān asmabhyaṁ gomataḥ.  
codayitrī maghonaḥ sūnṛtāvaty-  
uṣā ucchadapa sridhaḥ.*<sup>11</sup>

Give to our seekers wealth and immortal fame; Grant us food and herds of kine. O shining Dawn, you who are most graceful and encourage the generous and truthful, drive away from us our foes.

It is through the Dawns that the supreme Truth-Consciousness has been pouring itself into the human consciousness, and there has been an unbroken succession of dawns. It is in this way that the supreme evolution is being slowly effectuated on earth. In the Veda “. . . everywhere Dawn comes as a bringer of the Truth, is herself the outshining of the Truth. She is the divine Dawn and the physical dawning is only her shadow and symbol in the material universe.”<sup>12</sup>

Night and Day are two aspects of the Eternal and the Infinite, and Dawn is symbolic of divine illumination breaking upon the earth. “As the Sun is image and godhead of the golden Light of the divine Truth, so Dawn is image and godhead of the opening out of the supreme illumination on the night of our human ignorance. Dawn daughter of Heaven and Night her sister are obverse and reverse sides of the same eternal Infinite.”<sup>13</sup>

#### (vi) *Ocean*

The Vedas speak of two Oceans, — the ocean of the dark subconscious and that of the luminous superconscious. In between these two, and enveloped by them, is human existence. The upper is constantly flowing downward into the life of humanity. The ocean is the image of the infinite and eternal existence.

10. *Ṛg Veda*, VII.77.5.

11. *Ibid.*, VII.81.6.

12. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 125.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 429.

*Samudra jyeṣṭhaḥ salilasya madhyāt-  
punānā yantyanivīsamānāḥ.  
indro yā vajrī vṛṣabho rarāda  
tā āpo dēvīriha māmavantu.*<sup>14</sup>

The divine waters with the ocean as their chief ceaselessly flow from the depths of the firmament following the channels dug by the Thunderer. May these waters protect me.

The image of Vishnu, sleeping after the *pralaya* on the folds of the snake Ananta upon the ocean of sweet milk, signifies the sleep of the all-pervading Supreme in the periods of non-creation, on the coils of the Infinite, in the ocean of pure bliss.

(vii) *Saraswati*

Saraswati is a symbol which represents not only one of the seven rivers of the Vedic age but also the goddess of Inspiration. The word Saraswati itself literally means, “she of the stream, the flowing movement”<sup>15</sup> and is therefore psychologically associated with the idea of the river of inspiration. In Greek mythology too, as Sri Aurobindo points out, inspiration is associated with a river in the legend of the springing of the foundations of the Horse. Hippocrene is the stream that sprang from “the hoof of the divine horse Pegasus” when it smote the rock of physical existence. In Vedic symbolism Adri is the rock of formal existence, and it is out of this that the herds of the Sun are released and the waters flow. Also the streams of Soma are said to be milked out of this rock. The river of inspiration thus became an obvious symbol. In the Indian spiritual tradition, rivers have always had a symbolic significance. The Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati in Tantric imagery are such Yogic symbols.

Saraswati is also connected with other psychological symbols as are goddesses Mahi and Ila. These three are always called upon by Agni to adorn the *yajña-pīṭha* at the sacrifice.

*Īā saraswati mahi tisro devīrmayobhuvah  
barhiḥ sidantvasridhaḥ*<sup>16</sup>

May Ila, Saraswati and Mahi, three goddesses who give birth to bliss, take their place on the sacrificial seat, they who stumble not.

(To be continued)

V. MADHUSUDAN REDDY

(The Vedic Epiphany, Volume One,  
Institute of Human Study, Hyderabad, 1991, pp. 59-65)

14. *Ṛg Veda*, VII.49.1.

15. Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 88.

16. *Ṛg Veda*, I.13.9.

## THE MOTHER IN THE PLAYGROUND

(Continued from the issue of March 2016)

### GIRLS PARTICIPATE IN THE 'ROUTE MARCH' OF JULY FOURTEEN

Joining the celebrations of the French Republic Day — *La Retraite aux Flambeaux* — served as a great step forward for the girls. Here is the interesting story.

July 14 is the French Republic Day. Pondicherry, the capital of French India, celebrated this event in quite an elaborate way. The celebration started on the eve, the 13<sup>th</sup> of July. There would be a march around the town in which the different sporting groups of Pondicherry participated. Bearers carried lighted lanterns beside them all along the route. This was known as the *Retraite aux Flambeaux* commemorating the fall of the Bastille.

The young men of the Ashram, already playing football matches with other clubs in the town, were invited by the physical education committee to join the celebration. In 1945, they joined the march. In 1946, when the Mother was approached for her approval, she said to the organisers that there would be some improvements over the previous year. She renamed our Physical Education Organisation J.S.A.S.A. *Jeunesse Sportive de l'Ashram de Sri Aurobindo* and gave us a flag. This flag is a full-blown lotus in gold with two rows of petals (4 inside around a single circle at the centre and 12 outside) exactly in the centre of a silvery blue square. This blue is the blue of the Spirit, and, the gold is the colour of the supreme Mother. Abhay Singh was chosen as the standard-bearer. One bass-drum and one kettle-drum were hired for this purpose. She chose eight young men who would carry the lamps beside the group. She fixed their positions and even wanted two of them to be careful and carry lighted torches! When the men returned after the march the Mother expressed to Pranab-da her decision to send the girls too the following year.

Lieutenant Bouhard, the French Military commander of Pondicherry and the President of the Pondicherry Sports Committee, met the Mother a few times at 'Nanteuil'. The Mother wanted the girls to participate but she wanted to be assured of their safety. Finally, when the Lieutenant assured her that he would personally take charge of the safety of the girls participating in the celebration of 13<sup>th</sup> July, that no harm would come to them, the Mother consented to let the girls participate.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1947, the Mother came to the Playground accompanied by Mme. Baron, the wife of the then French Governor of Pondicherry. Mme. Baron had herself had some military training and she taught us marching with the orders in French (as in the French army). She showed the various turns in the marching which

were very different from the British way of marching.

The Mother informed Sri Aurobindo about the participation of the girls in the *Retraite*.

Then started the preparations for the event.

She gave instructions to Albert-da about our new uniform. Within a few days he stitched for thirty-six girls white trousers and half-sleeved white jackets. The Mother's symbol was printed in blue on the left upper side of the jacket where normally badges are pinned. Then, we embroidered in sky-blue thread the printed symbol. Each one had to embroider this symbol on her own jacket. Much time was spent in choosing the white double-buttons that would give a little decorative touch to the plain jackets. Some Ashram ladies volunteered to help Albert-da. Eventually, after checking the details of the uniform, each one of us received her uniform from the Mother.

We were to march in four files. In the Playground, we stood in one file while the Mother personally checked our height. When in doubt, she made the girls stand back to back to ascertain their correct position in the line. Another day, she took her seat facing west, on the southern side of the Playground in front of the small room where she held her interviews. Some girls were asked to march, one by one, with Pranab-da's orders. The Mother was watching the performance. A few of them were asked to repeat the marching. The following day, when Lumière (Light Ganguli) met the Mother, she was told that there was a prize for her. She had been chosen as the standard-bearer for the girls' group for the *Retraite*. The girls were to have a new flag: the Mother's symbol in blue on a white background. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, before the march, Lumière formally received the flag from the Mother.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> evening, the participants had to assemble in the Playground before joining the *Retraite*. 'Dortoir', the first boarding house for children, was adjacent to the Playground. As per the Mother's instructions, all of us went there to put on our new uniform — the uniform, socks and shoes were all white; our hair was tied neatly round the head in two plaits. The Mother was particular that the uniform should in no way be creased or crumpled, as could have happened had we come all the way from home wearing it. We were on the first floor, getting ready, when the Mother herself reached the Dortoir, a little earlier than expected. On hearing this we rushed downstairs to the courtyard of the building. We found that food from the Ashram Dining Room was kept ready on a long table and the Mother was present there. We received some biscuits, took a dish and each of us had her meal under the Mother's watchful eyes. The Mother had asked Pavitra-da to show us how to sit on the floor without creasing our trousers. We sat for our meals in the Dortoir courtyard, on mats of the same type as we have in our Dining Room. Some of us chose other suitable places, careful not to spoil the uniform. The Mother asked us repeatedly if we had really had enough or would we have some more.

At that time, it all seemed very natural: a happy bunch of young girls having the

privilege of taking their meals in the presence of the Mother. But now we wonder. . . . True, it could have been her concern about the physical well-being of the girls, but why was the meal not served to the others, the young men as well? None of the Mother's activities remain bound to one limited plan. So who can say why it was done that way?

With the Mother's approval, four coolies were hired, who would carry petromax lamps alongside the group of the girls. Every detail of the activity was planned under her direction and often personally supervised by her.

From the Playground we walked up to the street behind the Town Hall, opposite the police station, and took our position there. One bass-drum played by Hriday Bhattacharya and two kettle-drums played by Biren Chundar and Debou Bhattacharya respectively was all our band party then. They led the groups. Then stood Abhay Singh, the standard-bearer, Pranab-da took his place behind him as our leader. Then followed the group of the Ashram men in white shorts and shirt, white socks and shoes. After them stood Lumière Ganguli leading the girls' group with the Mother's flag. The girls' group stood a little behind the standard-bearer. Anu Purani, the captain of the girls' group, took her position on the left side of the first line and marched beside the rows of the girls. Behind the girls' group were the retired officers of the French army. Then came the police preceded by their band. The police jeep crept behind with Lieutenant Bouhard half hanging out of it, keeping his vigil. Other sporting groups marched behind these leaders.

At the appointed time, the march began. From our position in front of the police station, we turned right to reach the Beach Road. Normally, the first destination of this procession was the Governor's building where he received the salute, and after that the procession went round the town. However, that year there was a change in the route. The Governor, Monsieur Baron, a devotee of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, had decided to take the salute from the Mother's balcony standing beside her. This was joyous news for us. The public willy-nilly would be saluting the Mother as well! So, we marched northward on the Beach Road, turned left and proceeded on the present Rangapillai Street, again turned to the right, keeping the Governor's building to our left and marched on Saint Louis Street. We turned left again at Rue Saint Gilles and headed west towards the Ashram balcony. From there, the procession would go to the West Boulevard, turn beside the Public Works Department on Bussy Street and come back to the starting point.

We went round the town. Young girls of good families marching in the streets with men, and that too in trousers and jacket, this was too much for the public. It was a revolutionary, unheard-of and unexpected move on the part of the Mother. At that time, the attitude of the public at large here was rather hostile towards the Ashram. Consequently, there were some unpleasant incidents as we marched. Even before we started, someone spat on our captain who was standing beside our formation. At the corner of the Governor's house, our standard-bearer was hit by a

stone on her chest. Some onlookers spat on her and she even received a blow from a spectator. Then, Lieutenant Bouhard moved up his jeep in front and stayed beside her all through the route. As we marched on, there was some booing, spitting, stray hits by pebbles or scratching on the arm. But, for us, nothing mattered. We did not even notice what was happening around us. The Mother wanted us to march and so we marched on — our heads held high, proud daughters of the Mother Divine. Of course, there were others who appreciated our march. As we passed by the Public Works Department there was clapping of hands to encourage us. The French officer who used to come to teach Pranab-da orders in French, was all smiles the next day. He reported that the whole town had appreciated the march by the girls and had said that they marched very well. “Next best to the police were the Ashram girls” was the comment we heard. The Mother was pleased with our performance and that was all we cared for. She had mentioned her pleasure to Lumière’s father the next day.

As we passed by the Ashram balcony, with the command from Pranab-da, we saluted the Mother and M. Baron standing beside her. Anu Purani, our captain as she turned her head left to salute, saw that the shutters of one of the windows of Sri Aurobindo’s room were open and an arm could be seen there. It was Champaklalji’s arm. But what a joy it was for her when she came to know the following day that Sri Aurobindo himself had glanced at the girls passing by. O blessed, thrice blessed were the children of the earth!

After our return to the Ashram we went immediately to the Meditation Hall. The Mother, seated there, blessed us with her heavenly smile and gave each one of us a juicy orange and biscuits and a flower, the yellow Allamanda signifying ‘Victory’.

Dyuman-bhai informed us that after taking the salute the Mother had been in deep trance till our return. She must have been surrounding us with her protective atmosphere.

The distance covered at that time seems negligible now. But stepping just out of our semi-secluded life, it seemed a long one. It was the physical distance compounded with the psychological barriers which made it seem so. The Mother made us overcome it.

That was the beginning of the concrete expression of the Mother’s work of liberating Indian women from their age-old shackles.

In 1947, for the school annual day both the cultural programme and the physical demonstration took place in the Playground — one in the morning, the other in the evening. A stage was put up on the western side for the cultural programme and the same stage was used for the invitees to watch the physical culture demonstration held in the open ground in front of the stage.

## YOUNG LEADERS GET TRAINED

### The Mother watches their Activities

In 1948, instead of doing his own exercises, Pranab-da started conducting twice a week a training course in gymnastics for the captains. Thus the recently chosen captains of boys' and girls' groups as well as those of the young men had the opportunity of being trained by Pranab-da in the evening hours after our regular physical education activities were over. The Mother would be sitting on a very ordinary long wooden bench which Gauri-di would cover with a clean cloth and put a cushion for her. A small foot-stool was kept for her. Six or seven lady-disciples who accompanied the Mother wherever she went in the Playground sat on the floor at her feet. She watched with interest all our activities. We, the captains (both boys and girls) were coached in Parallel Bars, Roman Rings, and Vaulting. Pranab-da himself would also take part in these exercises. Pranab-da would be spotting. Sushila, one of the captains, tells us: "For our training we did the Vaulting Box, Parallel Bars and other exercises. The Mother was paying all her attention to guide us for perfection. She once told me to keep the toes always pointed and not to keep the legs too far apart when we perform any figure." Freehand, strengthening exercises such as different types of *dunds* (push-ups), many types of full and half-knee bends etc. were also part of the training. Here again, Pranab-da himself participated in these activities with us. For this a large circle would be formed in the ground by the participants. The boys in a semi-circle on one side (the southern side) and the girls in a semi-circle on the other side of the ground.

On others days, after completing our group activities, we would be waiting for the Mother to come out of her room to go back to the Ashram. During this period some of us would practise different exercises like 'rising' on the parallel bars, push-ups, abdominal exercises on the mats etc. — we all wanted to become stronger!

*(To be continued)*

CHITRA SEN



The two Standard-Bearers, Light Ganguli and Abhay Singh Nahar on the first floor of the Ashram building.





March past of the girls' group in the Playground in 1948. They are wearing the uniform which the girls wore for the Route March of 13 July 1947. Here Anu Purani, as captain, is leading the group; and Light Ganguli is the Standard-Bearer.





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