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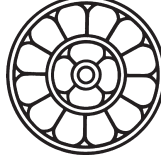
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

Sri Aurobindo

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| ‘FATE SHALL BE CHANGED BY AN UNCHANGING WILL’ (Poem) | ... | 415 |
| EXPERIENCES AND REALISATIONS IN THE INTEGRAL YOGA | ... | 417 |
| THE GOLDEN BIRD | ... | 427 |
| “GOD, THE INVISIBLE KING” | ... | 429 |

The Mother

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| “ON THE EARTH NOW I AM THE JOYFUL CHILD WHO PLAYS” | ... | 433 |
| A CONVERSATION OF 18 JULY 1961 | ... | 434 |
| A SAPPHIRE TALE | ... | 438 |

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| “NAMELESS” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO | ... | 442 |
|--|-----|-----|

Manoj Das

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI | | |
| CHAPTER LII: “LIKE GOLD — THRICE TESTED IN FIRE” | ... | 444 |

Anilbaran

| | | |
|---------------------|-----|-----|
| SONGS FROM THE SOUL | ... | 452 |
|---------------------|-----|-----|

H. G. Wells

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| SELECTED PASSAGES FROM <i>GOD, THE INVISIBLE KING</i> | ... | 461 |
|---|-----|-----|

Chitra Sen

| | | |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|
| THE MOTHER IN THE PLAYGROUND | ... | 478 |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|

‘FATE SHALL BE CHANGED BY AN UNCHANGING WILL’

“ . . . Heavy unchanged weighs still the imperfect world;
The splendid youth of Time has passed and failed;
Heavy and long are the years our labour counts
And still the seals are firm upon man’s soul
And weary is the ancient Mother’s heart.
O Truth defended in thy secret sun,
Voice of her mighty musings in shut heavens
On things withdrawn within her luminous depths,
O Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the universe,
Creatrix, the Eternal’s artist Bride,
Linger not long with thy transmuting hand
Pressed vainly on one golden bar of Time,
As if Time dare not open its heart to God.
O radiant fountain of the world’s delight
World-free and unattainable above,
O Bliss who ever dwellest deep-hid within
While men seek thee outside and never find,
Mystery and Muse with hieratic tongue,
Incarnate the white passion of thy force,
Mission to earth some living form of thee.
One moment fill with thy eternity,
Let thy infinity in one body live,
All-Knowledge wrap one mind in seas of light,
All-Love throb single in one human heart.
Immortal, treading the earth with mortal feet
All heaven’s beauty crowd in earthly limbs!
Omnipotence, girdle with the power of God
Movements and moments of a mortal will,
Pack with the eternal might one human hour
And with one gesture change all future time.
Let a great word be spoken from the heights
And one great act unlock the doors of Fate.”

His prayer sank down in the resisting Night
Oppressed by the thousand forces that deny,

As if too weak to climb to the Supreme.
 But there arose a wide consenting Voice;
 The spirit of beauty was revealed in sound:
 Light floated round the marvellous Vision's brow
 And on her lips the Immortal's joy took shape.
 "O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.
 One shall descend and break the iron Law,
 Change Nature's doom by the lone spirit's power.
 A limitless Mind that can contain the world,
 A sweet and violent heart of ardent calms
 Moved by the passions of the gods shall come.
 All might and greatnesses shall join in her;
 Beauty shall walk celestial on the earth,
 Delight shall sleep in the cloud-net of her hair,
 And in her body as on his homing tree
 Immortal Love shall beat his glorious wings.
 A music of griefless things shall weave her charm;
 The harps of the Perfect shall attune her voice,
 The streams of Heaven shall murmur in her laugh,
 Her lips shall be the honeycombs of God,
 Her limbs his golden jars of ecstasy,
 Her breasts the rapture-flowers of Paradise.
 She shall bear Wisdom in her voiceless bosom,
 Strength shall be with her like a conqueror's sword
 And from her eyes the Eternal's bliss shall gaze.
 A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,
 A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
 Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
 Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will."

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, pp. 344-46)

EXPERIENCES AND REALISATIONS IN THE INTEGRAL YOGA

PART THREE EXPERIENCES OF THE INNER CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

SECTION FOUR THE DANGERS OF INNER AND COSMIC EXPERIENCES

Chapter One The Intermediate Zone

The Nature of the Intermediate Zone

I mean by it [*the intermediate zone*] that when the sadhak gets beyond the barriers of his own embodied personal mind he enters into a wide range of experiences which are not the limited solid physical truth of things and not yet either the spiritual truth of things. It is a zone of formations, mental, vital, subtle physical, and whatever one forms or is formed by the forces of these worlds in us becomes for the sadhak for a time the truth — unless he is guided and listens to his guide. Afterwards if he gets through he discovers what it was and passes on into the subtle truth of things. It is a borderland where all the worlds meet, mental, vital, subtle physical, pseudo-spiritual — but there is no order or firm foothold — a passage between the physical and the true spiritual realms.

*

The intermediate zone means simply a confused condition or passage in which one is getting out of the personal consciousness and opening into the cosmic (cosmic Mind, cosmic vital, cosmic physical, something perhaps of the cosmic higher Mind) without having yet transcended the human mind levels. One is not in possession of or direct contact with the divine Truth *on its own levels*, but one can receive something from them, even from the Overmind, indirectly. Only, as one is still immersed in the cosmic Ignorance, all that comes from above can be mixed, perverted, taken hold of for their purposes by lower, even by hostile Powers.

It is not necessary for everyone to struggle through the intermediate zone. If one has purified oneself, if there is no abnormal vanity, egoism, ambition or other strong misleading element, or if one is vigilant and on one's guard, or if the psychic

is in front, one can either pass rapidly and directly or with a minimum of trouble into the higher zones of consciousness where one is in direct contact with the Divine Truth.

On the other hand the passage through the higher zones — higher Mind, illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind — is obligatory; they are the true Intermediaries between the present consciousness and the Supermind.

*

All these experiences are of the same nature and what applies to one applies to another. Apart from some experiences of a personal character, the rest are either idea-truths, such as pour down into the consciousness from above when one gets into touch with certain planes of being, or strong formations from the larger mental and vital worlds which, when one is directly open to these worlds, rush in and want to use the sadhak for their fulfilment. These things, when they pour down or come in, present themselves with a great force, a vivid sense of inspiration or illumination, much sensation of light and joy, an impression of widening and power. The sadhak feels himself freed from the normal limits, projected into a wonderful new world of experience, filled and enlarged and exalted: what comes associates itself, besides, with his aspirations, ambitions, notions of spiritual fulfilment and Yogic siddhi; it is represented even as itself that realisation and fulfilment. Very easily he is carried away by the splendour and the rush and thinks that he has realised more than he has truly done, something final or at least something sovereignly true. At this stage the necessary knowledge and experience are usually lacking which would tell him that this is only a very uncertain and mixed beginning; he may not realise at once that he is still in the cosmic Ignorance, not in the cosmic Truth, much less in the Transcendental Truth, and that whatever formative or dynamic idea-truths may have come down into him are partial only and yet farther diminished by their presentation to him by a still mixed consciousness. He may fail to realise also that if he rushes to apply what he is realising or receiving as if it were something definitive, he may either fall into confusion and error or else get shut up in some partial formation in which there may be an element of spiritual Truth but it is likely to be outweighed by more dubious mental and vital accretions that deform it altogether. It is only when he is able to draw back (whether at once or after a time) from his experiences, stand above them with the dispassionate witness consciousness, observe their real nature, limitations, composition, mixture that he can proceed on his way towards a real freedom and a higher, larger and truer siddhi. At each step this has to be done. For whatever comes in this way to the sadhak of this Yoga, whether it be from Overmind or Intuition or illumined Mind or some exalted Life-Plane or from all these together, it is not definitive and final; it is not the supreme Truth in which he can rest, but only a stage. And yet these stages have to be passed through, for the Supramental or the

Supreme Truth cannot be reached in one bound or even in many bounds; one has to pursue a calm patient steady progress through many intervening stages without getting bound or attached to their lesser Truth or Light or Power or Ananda.

This is in fact an intermediary state, a zone of transition between the ordinary consciousness in mind and the true Yoga-knowledge. One may cross without hurt through it, perceiving at once or at an early stage its real nature and refusing to be detained by its half-lights and tempting but imperfect and often mixed and misleading experiences; one may go astray in it, follow false voices and a mendacious guidance, and that ends in a spiritual disaster; or one may take up one's abode in this intermediate zone, care to go no farther and build there some half-truth which one takes for the whole truth or become the instrument of the Powers of these transitional planes, — that is what happens to many sadhaks and Yogis. Overwhelmed by the first rush and sense of power of a supernormal condition, they get dazzled with a little light which seems to them a tremendous illumination or a touch of force which they mistake for the full Divine Force or at least a very great Yoga Shakti, or they accept some intermediate Power (not always a Power of the Divine) as the Supreme and an intermediate consciousness as the supreme realisation. Very readily they come to think that they are in the full cosmic consciousness when it is only some front or small part of it or some larger Mind, Life-Power or subtle physical ranges with which they have entered into dynamic connection. Or they feel themselves to be in an entirely illumined consciousness, while in reality they are receiving imperfectly things from above through a partial illumination of some mental or vital plane; for what comes is diminished and often deformed in the course of transmission through these planes; the receiving mind and vital of the sadhak also often understands or transcribes ill what has been received or throws up to mix with it its own ideas, feelings, desires which it yet takes to be not its own but part of the Truth it is receiving because they are mixed with it, imitate its form, are lit up by its illumination and get from this association and borrowed light an exaggerated value.

There are worse dangers in this intermediate zone of experience. For the planes to which the sadhak has now opened his consciousness, — not as before getting glimpses of them and some influences, but directly, receiving their full impact, — send a host of ideas, impulses, suggestions, formations of all kinds, often the most opposite to each other, inconsistent or incompatible, but presented in such a way as to slur over their insufficiencies and differences, with great force, plausibility and a wealth of argument or a convincing sense of certitude. Overpowered by this sense of certitude, vividness, appearance of profusion and richness the mind of the sadhak enters into a great confusion which it takes for some larger organisation and order; or else it whirls about in incessant shiftings and changes which it takes for a rapid progress but which lead nowhere. Or there is the opposite danger that he may become the instrument of some apparently brilliant but ignorant formation; for these intermediate planes are full of little Gods or strong Daityas or smaller beings who

want to create, to materialise something or to enforce a mental and vital formation in the earth life and are eager to use or influence or even possess the thought and will of the sadhak and make him their instrument for the purpose. This is quite apart from the well-known danger of actually hostile beings whose sole purpose is to create confusion, falsehood, corruption of the sadhana and disastrous unspiritual error. Anyone allowing himself to be taken hold of by one of these beings, who often take a divine Name, will lose his way in the Yoga. On the other hand, it is quite possible that the sadhak may be met at his entrance into this zone by a Power of the Divine which helps and leads him till he is ready for greater things; but still that itself is no surety against the errors and stumblings of this zone; for nothing is easier than for the powers of these zones or hostile powers to imitate the guiding Voice or Image and deceive and mislead the sadhak or for himself to attribute the creations and formations of his own mind, vital or ego to the Divine.

For this intermediate zone is a region of half-truths — and that by itself would not matter, for there is no complete truth below the Supermind; but the half-truth here is often so partial or else ambiguous in its application that it leaves a wide field for confusion, delusion and error. The sadhak thinks that he is no longer in the old small consciousness at all, because he feels in contact with something larger or more powerful, and yet the old consciousness is still there, not really abolished. He feels the control or influence of some Power, Being or Force greater than himself, aspires to be its instrument and thinks he has got rid of ego; but this delusion of egolessness often covers an exaggerated ego. Ideas seize upon him and drive his mind which are only partially true and by overconfident misapplication are turned into falsehoods; this vitiates the movements of the consciousness and opens the door to delusion. Suggestions are made, sometimes of a romantic character, which flatter the importance of the sadhak or are agreeable to his wishes and he accepts them without examination or discriminating control. Even what is true, is so exalted or extended beyond its true pitch and limit and measure that it becomes the parent of error. This is a zone which many sadhaks have to cross, in which many wander for a long time and out of which a great many never emerge. Especially if their sadhana is mainly in the mental and vital, they have to meet here many difficulties and much danger; only those who follow scrupulously a strict guidance or have the psychic being prominent in their nature pass easily as if on a sure and clearly marked road across this intermediate region. A central sincerity, a fundamental humility also save from much danger and trouble. One can then pass quickly beyond into a clearer Light where if there is still much mixture, incertitude and struggle, yet the orientation is towards the cosmic Truth and not to a half-illuminated prolongation of Maya and Ignorance.

I have described in general terms with its main features and possibilities this state of consciousness just across the border of the normal consciousness, because it is here that these experiences seem to move. But different sadhaks comport

themselves differently in it and respond sometimes to one class of possibilities, sometimes to another. In this case it seems to have been entered through an attempt to call down or force a way into the cosmic consciousness — it does not matter which way it is put or whether one is quite aware of what one is doing or aware of it in these terms, it comes to that in substance. It is not the Overmind which was entered, for to go straight into the Overmind is impossible. The Overmind is indeed above and behind the whole action of the cosmic consciousness, but one can at first have only an indirect connection with it; things come down from it through intermediate ranges into a larger mind-plane, life-plane, subtle physical plane and come very much changed and diminished in the transmission, without anything like the full power and truth they have in the Overmind itself on its native levels. Most of the movements come not from the Overmind, but down from higher mind ranges. The ideas with which these experiences are penetrated and on which they seem to rest their claim to truth are not of the Overmind, but of the higher Mind or sometimes of the illumined Mind; but they are mixed with suggestions from the lower mind and vital regions and badly diminished in their application or misapplied in many places. All this would not matter; it is usual and normal, and one has to pass through it and come out into a clearer atmosphere where things are better organised and placed on a surer basis. But the movement was made in a spirit of excessive hurry and eagerness, of exaggerated self-esteem and self-confidence, of a premature certitude, relying on no other guidance than that of one's own mind or of the "Divine" as conceived or experienced in a stage of very limited knowledge. But the sadhak's conception and experience of the Divine, even if it is fundamentally genuine, is never in such a stage complete and pure; it is mixed with all sorts of mental and vital ascriptions and all sorts of things are associated with this Divine guidance and believed to be part of it which come from quite other sources. Even supposing there is any direct guidance, — most often in these conditions the Divine acts mostly from behind the veil, — it is only occasional and the rest is done through a play of forces; error and stumbling and mixture of Ignorance take place freely and these things are allowed because the sadhak has to be tested by the world-forces, to learn by experience, to grow through imperfection towards perfection — if he is capable of it, if he is willing to learn, to open his eyes to his own mistakes and errors, to learn and profit by them so as to grow towards a purer Truth, Light and Knowledge.

The result of this state of mind is that one begins to affirm everything that comes in this mixed and dubious region as if it were all the Truth and the sheer Divine Will; the ideas or the suggestions that constantly repeat themselves are expressed with a self-assertive absoluteness as if they were Truth entire and undeniable. There is an impression that one has become impersonal and free from ego, while the whole tone of the mind, its utterance and spirit are full of vehement self-assertiveness justified by the affirmation that one is thinking and acting as an instrument and under the inspiration of the Divine. Ideas are put forward very

aggressively that can be valid to the mind, but are not spiritually valid; yet they are stated as if they were spiritual absolutes. For instance, equality, which in that sense — for Yogic Samata is a quite different thing — is a mere mental principle, the claim to a sacred independence, the refusal to accept anyone as Guru, the opposition made between the Divine and the human Divine etc., etc. All these ideas are positions that can be taken by the mind and the vital and turned into principles which they try to enforce on the religious or even the spiritual life, but they are not and cannot be spiritual in their nature. There also begin to come in suggestions from the vital planes, a pullulation of imaginations romantic, fanciful or ingenious, hidden interpretations, pseudo-intuitions, would-be initiations into things beyond, which excite or bemuse the mind and are often so turned as to flatter and magnify ego and self-importance, but are not founded on any well-ascertained spiritual or occult realities of a true order. This region is full of elements of this kind and, if allowed, they begin to crowd on the sadhak; but if he seriously means to reach the Highest, he must simply observe them and pass on. It is not that there is never any truth in such things, but for one that is true there are nine imitative falsehoods presented and only a trained occultist with the infallible tact born of long experience can guide himself without stumbling or being caught through the maze. It is possible for the whole attitude and action and utterance to be so surcharged with the errors of this intermediate zone that to go farther on this route would be to travel far away from the Divine and from the Yoga.

Here the choice is still open whether to follow the very mixed guidance one gets in the midst of these experiences or to accept the true guidance. Each man who enters the realms of Yogic experience is free to follow his own way; but this Yoga is not a path for anyone to follow, but only for those who accept to seek the aim, pursue the way pointed out upon which a sure guidance is indispensable. It is idle for anyone to expect that he can follow this road far, much less go to the end by his own inner strength and knowledge without the true aid or influence. Even the ordinary long-practised Yogas are hard to follow without the aid of the Guru; in this which as it advances goes through untrodden countries and unknown entangled regions, it is quite impossible. As for the work to be done it also is not a work for any sadhak of any path; it is not, either, the work of the “impersonal” Divine — who, for that matter, is not an active Power but supports impartially all work in the universe. It is a training ground for those who have to pass through the difficult and complex way of this Yoga and none other. All work here must be done in a spirit of acceptance, discipline and surrender, not with personal demands and conditions, but with a vigilant conscious submission to control and guidance. Work done in any other spirit only results in an unspiritual disorder, confusion and disturbance of the atmosphere. In it too difficulties, errors, stumblings are frequent, because in this Yoga people have to be led patiently and with some field for their own effort, by experience, out of the ignorance natural to Mind and Life to a wider spirit and a

luminous knowledge. But the danger of an unguided wandering in the regions across the border is that the very basis of the Yoga may be contradicted and the conditions under which alone the work can be done may be lost altogether. The transition through this intermediate zone — not obligatory, for many pass by a narrower but surer way — is a crucial passage; what comes out of it is likely to be a very wide or rich creation; but when one founders there, recovery is difficult, painful, assured only after a long struggle and endeavour.

The Dangers of the Intermediate Zone

As for the letter, I suppose you will have to tell the writer that his father committed a mistake when he took up Yoga without a Guru — for the mental idea about a Guru cannot take the place of the actual living influence. This Yoga especially, as I have written in my books, needs the help of the Guru and cannot be done without it. The condition into which his father got was a breakdown, not a state of siddhi. He passed out of the normal mental consciousness into a contact with some intermediate zone of consciousness (not the spiritual) where one can be subjected to all sorts of voices, suggestions, ideas, so-called inspirations which are not genuine. I have warned against the dangers of this intermediate zone in one of my books.¹ The sadhak can avoid entering into this zone — if he enters, he has to look with indifference on all these things and observe them without lending any credence; by so doing he can safely pass into the true spiritual light. If he takes them all as true or real without discrimination, he is likely to land himself in a great mental confusion and if there is in addition a lesion or weakness of the brain — the latter is quite possible in one who has been subject to apoplexy — it may have serious consequences and even lead to a disturbance of the reason. If there is ambition or other motive of the kind mixed up in the spiritual seeking, it may lead to a fall in the Yoga and the growth of an exaggerated egoism or megalomania — of this there are several symptoms in the utterances of his father during the crisis. In fact one cannot or ought not to plunge into the experiences of this sadhana without a fairly long period of preparation and purification (unless one has already a great spiritual strength and elevation). Sri Aurobindo himself does not care to accept many into his path and rejects many more than he accepts. It would be well if he can get his father to pursue the sadhana no farther — for what he is doing is not really Sri Aurobindo's Yoga but something he has constructed in his own mind and once there has been an upset of this kind, the wisest course is discontinuance.

*

1. The Riddle of This World. *Sri Aurobindo is referring to the preceding letter, which appeared in this book. — Ed.*

All these experiences of yours belong to what I have called the intermediate zone; a large proportion of them are of the vital plane. In the vital plane there are all kinds of things, good and bad, helpful and dangerous, true, half true and false, genuine and deceptive. One has therefore to be very careful and be always vigilant and turned towards the true source of Light. The difficulty is that here one may have a true spiritual experience and afterwards all sorts of imitative deceptions come in and bring with them the danger of a false experience. One has to watch, observe one's experiences and try to discriminate and understand, — waiting for two things, the opening of a wider higher consciousness from above and the coming forward of the psychic being from behind. When these two things happen, then the chance of error is diminished and the true inner guidance begins to make itself more and more felt in the sadhana.

Lights are of all kinds, supramental, mental, vital, physical, divine or Asuric — one has to watch, grow in experience and learn to know one from another. The true lights however are by their clarity and beauty not difficult to recognise.

The current from above and the current from below are familiar features of Yogic experience. It is the energy of the higher Nature and the energy of the lower Nature that become active and turned towards each other and move to meet, one descending, the other ascending. What happens when they meet, depends on the sadhaka. If his constant will is for the purification of the lower by the higher consciousness, then the meeting results in that and in spiritual progress. If his mind and vital are turbid and clouded, there is a clash, an impure mixture and much disturbance.

The division of the being into two parts — one a large consciousness behind, the other a smaller consciousness in front, is also a familiar feature of sadhana. In itself it is a necessary movement; it should naturally result in the growth of a larger Yogic consciousness prevailing over the small external consciousness and becoming a means for transformation under the pressure of the Divine Shakti. But here too it is possible for errors to take place — especially an outside Force may come in and replace the larger consciousness behind by a larger vital ego which pretends to be that. One must be on one's guard against any such intrusion; for many sadhaks suffer long and severely owing to such an intrusion which spoils the course of the sadhana.

On the whole aspire for the growth of the psychic and its control of the rest of the nature and for the opening, not to a larger vital consciousness, but to the higher consciousness above. And at all stages open yourself to the protection of the Mother and her grace and call on that for your safeguard and your guidance.

There is no utility in such experiences; they may happen on the vital plane so long as one has still to pass through the vital range of experiences, but the aim should be to get beyond them and live in a pure psychic and spiritual experience. To admit or call the invasion of others into one's own being is to remain always in the confusions of the intermediate zone. Only the Divine should be called into one's personal adhar — by which is not meant the loss of one's personal being or any idea of becoming the Divine, for that should be avoided. The ego has to be overcome, but the central personal being (which is not the ego but the individual self, soul, a portion of the Divine) has to remain a channel and instrument of the Divine Shakti. As for others, sadhaks etc. one can feel them in one's universalised consciousness, be aware of their movements, live in harmony with them in the Divine All, but not allow or call their presence within the personal adhar. Very often that leads to the invasion of the consciousness by vital powers or presences which assume the forms of those who are so admitted — and that is most undesirable. The sadhak must make his basic consciousness silent, calm, pure, peaceful and preserve or attain an absolute control over what he shall or shall not admit into it — otherwise, if he does not keep this control, he is in danger of becoming a field of confused and disorderly experiences or a plaything of all sorts of mental and vital beings and forces. Only one rule or influence other than one's own should be admitted, the rule of the Divine Shakti over the adhar.

Avoiding the Dangers of the Intermediate Zone

You are taking the first steps towards the cosmic consciousness in which there are all things good and bad, true and false, the cosmic Truth and the cosmic Ignorance. I was not thinking so much of ego as of these thousand voices, possibilities, suggestions. If you avoid these, then there is no necessity of passing through the intermediate zone. By avoid I mean really not admit — one can take cognizance of their nature and pass on.

*

Anybody passing the border of the ordinary consciousness can enter into this [*intermediate*] zone, if he does not take care to enter into the psychic. In itself there is no harm in passing through, provided one does not stop there. But ego, sex, ambition etc., if they get exaggerated, can easily lead to a dangerous downfall.

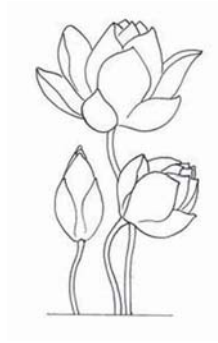
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It [*the breaking of the veil*] comes of itself with the pressure of the sadhana. It can also be brought about by specific concentration and effort.

It is certainly better if the psychic is conscious and active before there is the removing of the veil or screen between the individual and the universal consciousness which comes when the inner being is brought forward in all its wideness. For then there is much less danger of the difficulties of what I have called the intermediate zone.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Letters on Yoga — III*, CWSA, Vol. 30, pp. 293-307)



THE GOLDEN BIRD

It was in the forests of Asan that the Golden Bird first flew out from a flower-besieged thicket and fluttered before the dazzled eyes of Luilla. It was in the forests of Asan, — the open and impenetrable, the haunt of the dancers and the untrodden of human feet, coiling place of the cobra and the Python, lair of the lion and the jaguar, formidable retreat of the fleeing antelope, yet also the green home of human safety where a man and a maiden could walk in the moonlit night and hear unconcerned the far-off brool of the kings of the wilderness. It was into the friendly and open places that the golden bird fluttered, but it came no less from the coverts of dread and mystery. From the death and the night it flew out into the sunlight where Luilla was happily straying.

Luilla loved to wander on the verges of danger just where those flower-besieged thickets began and formed for miles together a thorny and tangled rampart full at once of allurement and of menace. She did not venture in, for she had a great fear of the thorns and brambles and a high respect for her radiant beauty, her constant object of worship and the daily delight of all who dwelt for a while on earth labouring the easy and kindly soil on the verges of the forests of Asan. But always she wandered close to the flowery wall and her mind, safe in its volatile incorporeality, strayed like a many-hued butterfly far into the forbidden region which the gods had so carefully secluded. Perhaps secretly she hoped that one day some kingly and leonine head would thrust itself out through the flowers and compel her with a gaze of friendly and majestic invitation or else that the green poisonous head of a serpent, reposing itself on a flower, would scrutinise her out of narrow eyes and express a cunning approval of her beauty. It was not out of fear of the lions and the serpents that Luilla forbore to enter the secret places. She knew she could overcome the most ferocious intentions of any destroyer in the world, four-footed or footless, if only he would give her three minutes before making up his mind to eat or bite her. But neither lion nor serpent strayed out of their appointed haunts. It was the golden bird that first fluttered out from the thickets to Luilla.

Luilla looked at it as it flitted from bough to bough, and her eyes were dazzled and her soul wondered. For the little body of the bird was an inconstant flame of flying and fleeting gold and the wings that opened and fluttered were of living gold and the small shapely head was crested gold and the long graceful quivering tail was feathered trailing gold; all was gold about the bird, except the eyes and they were two jewels of a soft everchanging colour and sheltered strange looming depths of love and thought in their gentle brilliance. On the bough where it perched, it seemed as if all the soft shaded leaves were suddenly sunlit. For as Luilla accustomed her eyes to the flickering brightness of the golden bird, it hovered at last over a

branch, settled and sang. And its voice also was of gold.

The bird sang in its own high secret language; but Luilla's ear understood its thoughts and in Luilla's soul as it thirsted and listened and trembled with delight, the song shaped itself easily into human speech. This then was what the bird sang — the bird that came out of the death and night, sang to Luilla a song of beauty and of delight.

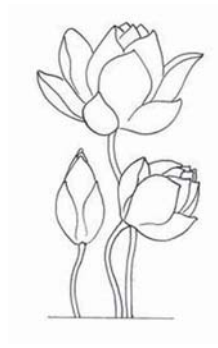
“Luilla! Luilla! Luilla! green and beautiful are the meadows where the children run and pluck the flowers, green and beautiful the pastures where the calm-eyed cattle graze, green and beautiful the cornfields ripening on the village bounds, but greener are the impenetrable thickets of Asan than her open places of life and more beautiful than the meadows and the pastures and the cornfields are the forests of death and night. More ensnaring to some is the danger of the jaguar than the attractive face of a child, more welcome the foot-tracks of the lion as it hunts than the pastures of the cattle, more fair and fruitful the thorn and the wild-briar than the fields full of ripening grain. And this I know that no such flowers bloom in the safety and ease of Asan's meadows, though they make a thick and divine treading for luxurious feet, as I have seen blooming on the borders of the wild morass, in the heart of the bramble thicket and over the mouth of the serpent's lair. Shall I not take thee, O Luilla, into those woods? Thou shalt pluck the flowers in the forests of night and death, thou shalt lay thy hands on the lion's mane.

“O Luilla! O Luilla! O Luilla!

(Incomplete)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Plays and Stories, CWSA, Vol. 4, pp. 996-98)



“GOD, THE INVISIBLE KING”¹

A remarkable book with this title by the well-known writer and thinker, Mr. H. G. Wells, has recently appeared, of which only a few extracts are before us, but these are sufficient to reveal its character and thought. It is on the part of the writer, speaking not for himself personally alone but as scribe to the spirit of his generation, a definite renunciation of the gospel of an all-sufficient rationalism, a discovery of God, a profession of faith in spirituality as the one lever by which mankind can rise out of the darkness and confusion of its present state into a more perfect living. He professes his faith in the God within, the invisible King, who is the immortal part of us, in a coming kingdom of God upon earth which shall not only be a spiritual state in the individual, but the open brotherhood of a divine rule among men, and in self-identification with God, service of him, absolute surrender to him as the whole rule of life for the enlightened modern man. This is, indeed, a remarkable change of spirit and change of mental outlook and, if Mr. Wells' claim is just that he is writing as a scribe to the spirit of his generation, it means a revolution in Europe far more important than the Russian with all its idealism and its hopes for a new and beneficent change in politics and society. It means the union of Eastern spiritual knowledge and religious faith with Western pragmatic idealism and their fusion into the basis of a new culture and, we will not say a new universal religion, — for religion must vary with the variations of human nature, — but a new practical spirituality in which all mankind can become one.

There is much in Mr. Wells' statement of his new-born belief that is imperfect, limited and a little crude, much that is grasped with an over-hasty zeal, as was inevitable in the first light of an unripe awakening. Some of the old limitations of the rationalistic Western mind with its too external outlook upon things still cling about his new spiritual discovery. He tells us that the kingdom of God on earth is “not a metaphor, not a mere spiritual state, not a dream, not an uncertain project, . . . it is the close and inevitable destiny of mankind.” This classing of the inner spiritual state, the kingdom of God within us, with a metaphor, a dream, an uncertain project reveals the lingering taint of an excessive pragmatism. The spiritual state is the one thing indispensable; until the mass of mankind can awaken into it, the dream of a perfect society, an open brotherhood of God's rule, must end in failure and disappointment. The kingdom of God within is the sole possible foundation for the kingdom of God without; for it is the spirit by which man lives that conditions the outer forms of his life.

1. Published in the *Arya* in July 1917 and in *Views and Reviews*.

Misled by this external view of things Mr. Wells, evidently, still believes that a political and social action is sufficient to bring about the millennium. He has discovered that this action must be driven by a spiritual motive, pursued in the passion of a true religious fervour, consecrated to the indwelling God, effective only by an absolute self-surrender to the Divine. But he has a limited vision of his God and brings to it all the aggressiveness and something of the fanaticism of all such limited religious conceptions. "The new conceptions," he writes, "do not tolerate either kings or aristocracies or democracies. Its implicit command to all its adherents is to make plain the way to the world theocracy. Its rule of life is the discovery and service of the will of God which dwells in the hearts of men and the performance of that will" in the life of the believer, the individual, and of the nation of which he is a part. "I give myself to God not only because I am so and so, but because I am mankind. . . . I become a knight in God's service. . . . I become a responsible minister of my king. I take sides against injustice, disorder, and against all those temporal kings, emperors, princes, landlords and owners who set themselves against God's rule and worship. Kings, owners and all who claim rule and decision in the world's affairs, must either show themselves clearly the fellow-servants of the believer or become the object of his steadfast antagonism."

All this is very forcibly said, but it shows that the writer has not grasped the whole spiritual truth; he has not gone deep enough inward. As once he dreamed of a class of scientific and rational supermen establishing a perfect social rule upon earth, so now he thinks that by the action of his banded servants of the invisible King declaring political and social war upon godless Czars, Kaisers, rulers and capitalists the same end can be achieved. With them is God; in them God dwells, in the others, presumably, he does not dwell; those who have surrendered absolutely to him are the citizens of the kingdom and on them shall be peace; those who do not surrender or even fall short in their surrender, are interlopers, against them the sword. A very old kind of militant religionism in a very modern form. It ignores two ancient, two eternal spiritual truths; first, that God dwells in all and, secondly, that only by becoming conscious of the God within from within can humanity be saved. God dwells in all and not only in the believer who is conscious of him, — dwells disguised and veiled, and it is by helping others to awaken to the veiled Divine within them that we go the straight way to the founding of his kingdom on earth. True, an outward battle also has to be fought, but against forces, against institutions which stand in the way of the spreading of the light and the reign of brotherhood, not against men as unbelievers, — in a spirit of understanding, of knowledge, of firm will, but also of charity for ignorance and of love for the misled. God, says Mr. Wells, is boundless love, but this boundless love, it seems, is not infinite enough to embrace those who do not believe with you; it rejects them with a steadfast antagonism, it banishes them as "interlopers". God's work least of all should be pursued in a spirit of partisan and sectarian antagonism, but rather with a remem-

brance that the battle is only a way to peace and the peace must come by the inner submission of the opponent through his recognition of the Divine, through his awakening. It is not enough that the believer should perform God’s will and fight for the performance of that will “in the acts and order of the state and nation of which he is a part.” The nation also must be brought not only to believe, but to know, to see, to live in God, otherwise the national performance of God’s will, even if momentarily secured, will soon degenerate into a form. It is possible that what the old religions called “the rule of the saints” may be a preliminary step to the establishment of the full kingdom of God, but that rule can only become secure by the light and fire which is in them kindling itself in the hearts of all mankind.

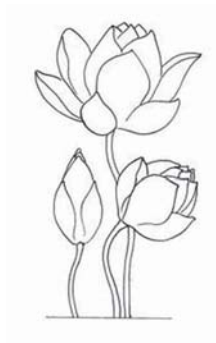
These defects of outlook come from a defect in the conception of the Divine. It consists of “complete Agnosticism in the matter of God the Creator and entire faith in the matter of God the Redeemer”. A distinction is made between the Veiled Being behind the universe and the living reality in our lives; the latter alone is the true God. He is a personal and intimate God. He is finite. He is a spirit, a single spirit and a single person. He has come, we know not whence, into the conflict of life. He has begun and will never end. And yet he is the immortal part and leader of mankind, our friend and brother and light of the world. And from these first principles is drawn a description of God as certain qualities, boundless love, boundless courage, boundless generosity, thought and steadfast will, and as having motives, characteristics, an aim. “This is the belief of the modern mind”, read, the modern Western mind, “with regard to God.”

We can see whence the crudities of this belief arise. The Western mind is still burdened with its scientific vision of the universe as a play of brute force, of life as a struggle, the world a material entity, and therefore of the Spirit of the world, if any there be, conceived agnostically or with a sort of materialistic Pantheism as standing for these things only, the Breath of a physical universe, a sort of mechanical, inconscient Soul of things. Out of this pure materiality mind and soul inexplicably evolve. God appears only in man and his aspiration, his longings for a higher order of things, for love, universal sympathy, immortality. This God and the mechanical inconscient Spirit of the world the Western mind finds it difficult — and no wonder — to bring under the same term. The simple harmonious truth that God is veiled in the material universe which is only the lowest term, the first appearance of the cosmic Reality, that he unveils himself partially and progressively in man and to man, and that man by growth into self-knowledge and God-knowledge can grow into the whole truth of God and existence, which is one truth, — this seems still to be hidden from these wise men of the West. His partial unveiling in man seems to them a birth of the once nonexistent Divine, a coming of God into the world, one knows not whence; and because man appears to be finite, God whom they conceive of as the sum of human aspiration to good, truth, beauty, immortality, is also conceived of as finite. But how is that which has begun in Time secure against

ending in Time? and how can a finite God be infinite love, courage, strength? Only that which was from ever, can be for ever, and only that which is infinite in being, can be infinite in force and quality. We have here an echo of the inconsequent Christian paradox of a soul born by the birth of the body, yet immortal to all eternity, combined with the metaphysical dogma of a God existent, not in being, but in becoming. There is an element of truth and value in this belief, but it brings disabling limitations into our inner realisation of God and the practice of a divine life to which it gives a foundation.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Early Cultural Writings, CWSA, Vol. 1, pp. 585-89)



‘ON THE EARTH NOW I AM THE JOYFUL CHILD WHO PLAYS’

May 17, 1914

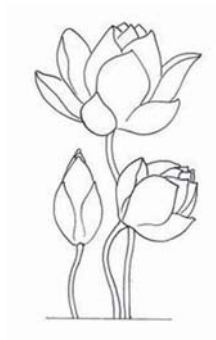
O Lord, deliver me from the mental influences which weigh upon me, so that, completely free, I may soar towards Thee.

O Thou, Universal Being, Supreme Unity in perceptible form, through an irresistible aspiration I nestled within Thy heart, then I was Thy heart itself, and I knew then that Thy heart is no other than the Child who plays and creates the worlds. Thou didst tell me, “One day thou wilt be my head but for the moment turn thy gaze towards the earth.” And on the earth now I am the joyful child who plays.

These were the two sentences I wrote yesterday by a kind of absolute necessity. The first, as though the power of the prayer would not be complete unless it were traced on paper. The second, as though the stability of the experience could not be had unless I unburdened my mind of it by noting it down in writing.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 145)



A CONVERSATION OF 18 JULY 1961

The question which introduces this talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's aphorism: "Sin is that which was once in its place, persisting now it is out of place; there is no other sinfulness."

What are the very first things that the Supramental Force intends to drive out, or is trying to drive out, so that everything may be in its place, individually and cosmically?

Drive out? But will it "drive out" anything? If we accept Sri Aurobindo's idea, it will put each thing in its place, that's all.

One thing must necessarily cease, and that is the distortion, that is to say, the veil of falsehood upon Truth, because that is what is responsible for everything we see here. If this is removed, things will be completely different, completely. They will be what we feel them to be when we come out of this consciousness. When one comes out of this consciousness and enters into the Truth-consciousness, the difference is such that one wonders how there can be anything like suffering and misery and death and all that. There is a kind of astonishment in the sense that one does not understand how it can happen — when one has really tipped over to the other side. But this experience is usually associated with the experience of the unreality of the world as we know it, whereas Sri Aurobindo says that this perception of the unreality of the world is not necessary in order to live in the supramental consciousness — it is only the unreality of Falsehood, not the unreality of the world. That is to say, the world has a reality of its own, independent of Falsehood.

I suppose that is the first effect of the Supermind — the first effect in the individual, because it will begin with the individual.

It is probable that this state of new consciousness will have to become a constant state. But then a problem arises: how can one remain in contact with the world as it is in its deformation? Because I have noticed one thing: when this state is very strong in me, very strong, so strong that it is able to resist anything that comes to bombard it from outside, then when I say something, people do not understand at all, not at all; so this state inevitably does away with a useful contact.

Taking only the earth, for example, how could there be a little supramental creation, a nucleus of supramental action and radiation upon earth? Is it possible? One can conceive very well of a nucleus of superhuman creation and of supermen, that is to say, men who were men and who through evolution and transformation (in the true sense of the word) have succeeded in manifesting the supramental forces; but their origin is human and since their origin is human there is necessarily a

contact; even if everything is transformed, even if the organs are transformed into centres of force, there remains nonetheless something human, like a colouring. It is these beings, according to the traditions, who will discover the secret of direct supramental creation, without passing through the process of ordinary Nature, and it is through them that the truly supramental beings will take birth, the ones who must necessarily live in a supramental world. But then how would the contact be made between these beings and the ordinary world? How is one to conceive of the transformation of Nature, a transformation sufficient to bring about the supramental creation upon earth? I do not know.

Naturally, for such a thing to happen, a considerably long time is needed, this we know; and there will probably be stages, steps, things which will appear, things which for the moment we do not know or do not conceive, and they will change the conditions of the earth — but that means seeing some thousands of years ahead.

There remains the problem: is it possible to make use of this notion of space, I mean the space on the terrestrial globe?¹ Is it possible to find a spot where one could create the embryo or seed of the future supramental world? The plan came in all the details, but it is a plan which in its spirit and consciousness does not at all conform to what is possible on earth at present; yet in its most material manifestation, it was based on terrestrial conditions. It is the concept of an ideal town which would be the nucleus of an ideal country, a town which would have contacts, purely superficial and extremely limited in their effect, with the outside world. One would therefore already have to conceive — but this is possible — of a power sufficiently strong to be at the same time a protection against aggression or ill-will (this would not be the most difficult protection to obtain) and against infiltration and admixtures. But if necessary, one can conceive of that. From the social point of view, from the point of view of organisation, from the point of view of the inner life, these are not problems. The problem is the relation with what is not supramentalised, to prevent the infiltration, the admixture: that is to say, to prevent the nucleus from falling back into an inferior creation — it is a problem about the period of transition.

All those who have given thought to the problem have always imagined something unknown to the rest of humanity, like a gorge in the Himalayas, for example, a place unknown to the rest of the world. But this is not a solution; it is not a solution at all.

No, the only solution is an occult power, but this already implies that before anything can be done, a certain number of individuals must have reached a great perfection of realisation. But one can conceive that if this can be done, one can have a spot which is in the midst of the outside world and yet isolated (without any contacts, you see), a spot where everything would be exactly in its place — as an

1. Later, when asked about the meaning of this phrase, the Mother laughed and said: "I said that of the other side! — the side where the notion of space is not so concrete."

example. Each thing is exactly in its place, each person exactly in his place, each movement exactly in its place — and in its place in an ascending progressive movement, without any relapse, that is to say, quite the contrary to what happens in ordinary life. Naturally, this presupposes a kind of perfection, this presupposes a kind of unity, this presupposes that the different aspects of the Supreme can be manifested and, of course, an exceptional beauty, a total harmony and a power strong enough to command obedience from the forces of Nature. For example, even if this spot were surrounded by forces of destruction, they would not have the power to act; the protection would be sufficient. All this requires the utmost perfection in the individuals who would be the organisers of such a thing.

(*Silence*)

Indeed, nobody knows how the first men were formed, the first mental realisation. One does not know whether they were isolated individuals or groups, whether this happened in the midst of others or in isolation. I do not know. But there may be an analogy with the future case of the supramental creation. It is not difficult to conceive that in the solitude of the Himalayas or in the solitude of a virgin forest an individual would begin to create around him his little supramental world. It is easy to conceive. But the same thing would be necessary: he would have to have reached such a perfection that his power would act automatically to prevent intrusion, so that automatically his world would be protected; that is to say, all contrary or foreign elements would be prevented from approaching.

Stories of the kind have been told, of people who lived in an ideal solitude. It is not impossible at all to conceive that. When one is in contact with this Power, at the moment it is in you, you see quite well that it is child's play; it is even possible to change certain things, to exert an influence on surrounding vibrations and forms, which automatically begin to be supramentalised. All that is possible, but it is on an individual scale. Whereas, take the example of what is happening here, the individual dwelling at the very centre of all this chaos: there lies the difficulty! Does it not follow from this very fact that it is impossible to reach a kind of perfection in the realisation? But then too, the other example, that of the solitary in the forest, does not at all prove that the rest of mankind will be able to follow; whereas what is happening here is already a much more radiating action. This is what must happen at a given moment, this must happen inevitably. But the problem remains: can this happen at the same time or before the other thing is realised — at the same time or before the individual, the one individual is supramentalised?

Evidently, the realisation under the conditions of community or the group is much more complete, integral, total and probably more perfect than any individual realisation, which is always, *necessarily*, on the external, material plane, absolutely limited, because it is only one mode of being, one mode of manifestation, one

microscopic set of vibrations that is touched.

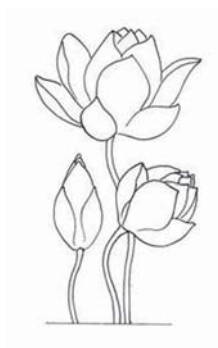
But from the point of view of the easiness of the work, I believe there is no comparison.

(*Silence*)

The problem remains. All people like Buddha and the others, had *first* realised and then entered into contact with the world: well, this is very simple. But with regard to what I have in view, is it not an indispensable condition, for the realisation to be total, that one remains in the world?

THE MOTHER

(*Words of the Mother — III*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 15, pp. 383-87)



A SAPPHIRE TALE

Once upon a time, far away in the East, there was a small country that lived in order and harmony, where each one in his own place played the part for which he was made, for the greatest good of all.

Farmers, craftsmen, workmen and merchants — all had but one ambition, one concern: to do their work as best they could. This was in their own interest, firstly because, since each one had freely chosen his occupation, it suited his nature and gave him pleasure, and also because they knew that all good work was fairly rewarded, so that they, their wives and their children could lead a quiet and peaceful life, without useless luxury, but with a generous provision for their needs, which was enough to satisfy them.

The artists and scientists, few in number but each devoted to his science or art — his purpose in life — were supported by the grateful nation, which was the first to benefit from their useful discoveries and to enjoy their ennobling works. Thus sheltered from the cares of the struggle for life, these scientists had a single aim: that their experimental research, their sincere and earnest studies should serve to allay the sufferings of humanity, to increase its strength and well-being by making superstition and fear draw back as far as possible before the knowledge that brings solace and enlightenment. The artists, whose whole will was free to concentrate upon their art, had only one desire: to manifest beauty, each according to his own highest conception.

Among them, as friends and guides, were four philosophers, whose entire life was spent in profound study and luminous contemplations, to widen constantly the field of human knowledge and one by one to lift the veils from what is still a mystery.

All were content, for they knew no bitter rivalries and could each devote themselves to the occupation or the study that pleased him. Since they were happy they had no need for many laws, and their Code was only this: a very simple counsel to all, “Be yourself”, and for all a single law to be strictly observed, the law of Charity, whose highest part is Justice, the charity which will permit no wastage and which will hinder no one in his free evolution. In this way, very naturally, everyone works at once for himself and for the collectivity.

This orderly and harmonious country was ruled by a king who was king simply because he was the most intelligent and wise, because he alone was capable of fulfilling the needs of all, he alone was both enlightened enough to follow and even to guide the philosophers in their loftiest speculations, and practical enough to watch over the organisation and well-being of his people, whose needs were well known to him.

At the time when our narrative begins, this remarkable ruler had reached a

great age — he was more than two hundred years old — and although he still retained all his lucidity and was still full of energy and vigour, he was beginning to think of retirement, a little weary of the heavy responsibilities which he had borne for so many years. He called his young son Meotha to him. The prince was a young man of many and varied accomplishments. He was more handsome than men usually are, his charity was of such perfect equity that it achieved justice, his intelligence shone like a sun and his wisdom was beyond compare; for he had spent part of his youth among workmen and craftsmen to learn by personal experience the needs and requirements of their life, and he had spent the rest of his time alone, or with one of the philosophers as his tutor, in seclusion in the square tower of the palace, in study or contemplative repose.

Meotha bowed respectfully before his father, who seated him at his side and spoke to him in these words:

“My son, I have ruled this country for more than a hundred and seventy years and although, to this day, all men of goodwill have seemed content with my guidance, I fear that my great age will soon no longer allow me to bear so lightly the heavy responsibility of maintaining order and watching over the wellbeing of all. My son, you are my hope and my joy. Nature has been very generous to you; she has showered you with her gifts and by a wise and model education you have developed them most satisfactorily. The whole nation, from the humblest peasant to our great philosophers, has a complete and affectionate trust in you; you have been able to win their affection by your kindness and their respect by your justice. It is therefore quite natural that their choice should fall on you when I ask for leave to enjoy a well-earned repose. But as you know, according to age-old custom, no one may ascend the throne who is not *biune*, that is, unless he is united by the bonds of integral affinity with the one who can bring him the peace of equilibrium by a perfect match of tastes and abilities. It was to remind you of this custom that I called you here, and to ask you whether you have met the young woman who is both worthy and willing to unite her life with yours, according to our wish.”

“It would be a joy to me, my father, to be able to tell you, ‘I have found the one whom my whole being awaits’, but, alas, this is yet to be. The most refined maidens in the kingdom are all known to me, and for several of them I feel a sincere liking and a genuine admiration, but not one of them has awakened in me the love which can be the only rightful bond, and I think I can say without being mistaken that in return none of them has conceived a love for me. Since you are so kind as to value my judgment, I will tell you what is in my mind. It seems to me that I should be better fitted to rule our little nation if I were acquainted with the laws and customs of other countries; I wish therefore to travel the world for a year, to observe and to learn. I ask you, my father, to allow me to make this journey, and who knows? — I may return with my life’s companion, the one for whom I can be all happiness and all protection.”

“Your wish is wise, my son. Go — and your father’s blessing be with you.”

* * *

Amid the western ocean lies a little island valued for its valuable forests.

One radiant summer’s day, a young girl is walking slowly in the shade of the wonderful trees. Her name is Liane and she is fair among women; her lithe body sways gracefully beneath light garments, her face, whose delicate skin seems paler for her carmine lips, is crowned with a heavy coil of hair so golden that it shines; and her eyes, like two deep doors opening on limitless blue, light up her features with their intellectual radiance.

Liane is an orphan, alone in life, but her great beauty and rare intelligence have attracted much passionate desire and sincere love. But in a dream she has seen a man, a man who seems, from his garments, to come from a distant land; and the sweet and serious gaze of the stranger has won the heart of the girl — now she can love no other. Since then she has been waiting and hoping; it is to be free to dream of the handsome face seen in the night that she is walking amid the solitude of the lofty woods.

The dazzling sunlight cannot pierce the thick foliage; the silence is hardly broken by the light rustle of the moss beneath the footsteps of the walking girl; all sleeps in the heavy drowse of the noonday heat; and yet she feels a vague unease, as if invisible beings were hiding in the thickets, watchful eyes peeping from behind trees.

Suddenly a bird’s song rings out clear and joyful; all uneasiness vanishes. Liane knows that the forest is friendly — if there are beings in the trees, they cannot wish her harm. She is seized by an emotion of great sweetness, all appears beautiful and good to her, and tears come to her eyes. Never has her hope been so ardent at the thought of the beloved stranger; it seems to her that the trees quivering in the breeze, the moss rustling beneath her feet, the bird renewing its melody — all speak to her of the One whom she awaits. At the idea that perhaps she is going to meet him she stops short, trembling, pressing her hands against her beating heart, her eyes closed to savour to the full the exquisite emotion; and now the sensation grows more and more intense until it is so precise that Liane opens her eyes, sure of a presence. Oh, wonder of wonders! He is there, he, he in truth as she has seen him in her dream . . . more handsome than men usually are. — It was Meotha.

With a look they have recognised each other; with a look they have told each other of the long waiting and the supreme joy of rediscovery; for they have known each other in a distant past, now they are sure of it.

She places her hand in the hand he offers her, and together, silent in a silence filled with thoughts exchanged, they wend their way through the forest. Before them appears the sea, calm and green beneath a happy sun. A great ship sways

gently near the shore.

Meekly, trustingly, Liane follows Meotha into the boat which awaits them, drawn up on the sand. Two strong oarsmen put it to sea and soon bring them alongside the vessel.

Only as she sees the little island disappearing below the horizon does the girl say to her companion:

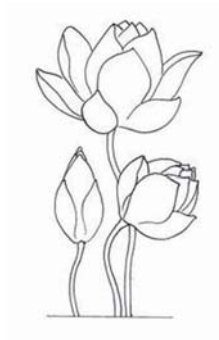
“I was waiting for you, and now that you have come, I have followed you without question. We are made for each other. I feel it, I know it, and I know also that now and forever you will be my happiness and my protection. But I loved my island birthplace with its beautiful forests, and I would like to know to what shore you are taking me.”

“I have sought you throughout the world, and now that I have found you, I have taken your hand without asking you anything, for in your eyes I saw that you expected me. From this moment and forever, my beloved shall be all to me; and if I have made her leave her little wooded isle, it is to lead her as a queen to her kingdom, the only land on earth that is in harmony, the only nation that is worthy of Her.”

October 1906

THE MOTHER

(Words of Long Ago, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 2, pp. 8-12)



“NAMELESS” —
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

As I had kept awake till late in the night, reading a book, I lay down after breakfast for further rest. My body felt very heavy and I could not make up my mind to get up from the semi-daze and dress up for pranam. Then suddenly I dreamt that a certain friend was showing me a poem of his; I went through the poem and was very much struck by its closing lines. They gave me an impulse to write a poem myself and all my fatigue and heaviness vanished in a moment. The resulting composition was different from what I had expected, but the inspiring idea is there all the same.

Give her no name,
Let silence fall:
Your heart shall know the wordless way to call
With a tongue of flame —

A tongue whose keen
Effulgence-cry
Lifts ever to the sempiternal sky,
Home of all sheen . . .

Not by your gaze
But through a deep
Forgetful discipline of sacred sleep
You'll know¹ her face —

An² alchemy
Of shadowless will:
Truth-core of light plucked from the Unknowable
To gem³ your eye.

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

It is a very fine poem, full of weight of thought and speech and a fine restraint. I am doubtful about the last line, the figure seems too fanciful and ornamental for the severity of style of the poem.

[undated]

[*Amal's questions:*]

1. Instead of “know”, I’d like to put “find”, because “Unknowable” occurs so soon after. Will it do? Or should I put “Invisible” in the penultimate line?
2. What is really better — “Her” or “An”?
3. In the last line, “heaven” suggests itself to me, to replace “gem”. It seems to be in tune with the turn of language in stanza 2.

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

1. + 3. I think the change to “Invisible” and “heaven” is best.
2. “An” is better.

[*undated*]

NAMELESS

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Let silence fall:
Your heart shall know the wordless way to call
With a tongue of flame —

A tongue whose keen
Effulgence-cry
Lifts ever to the sempiternal sky,
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Not by your gaze
But through a deep
Forgetful discipline of sacred sleep
You’ll know her face —

An alchemy
Of shadowless will:
Truth-core of light plucked from the Invisible
To heaven your eye.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of May 2016)

Chapter: LII

“Like Gold — Thrice tested in Fire”

The love which my countrymen have heaped on me in return for the little I have been able to do for them, amply repays any apparent trouble or misfortune my public activity may have brought upon me. I attribute my escape to no human agency, but first of all to the protection of the Mother of us all who has never been absent from me but always held me in Her arms and shielded me from grief and disaster, and secondarily to the prayers of thousands which have been going up to Her on my behalf ever since I was arrested. If it is the love of my country which led me into danger, it is also the love of my countrymen which has brought me safe through it.

From Sri Aurobindo’s “Letter to the Editor”
(published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* dated the 18th of
May 1909 as well as in *The Bengali* and probably in some
other publications.)

Coming out of the Alipore prison on the 6th of May 1909, Sri Aurobindo first paid a visit, at the request of several lawyers who had gathered to welcome him, to the Bar Library. We read in the confidential files of the Political Department, Government of West Bengal:

He was treated with great respect, one or two pleaders going so far as to touch their foreheads with the dust from his feet. From the Bar Library he went with the other acquitted prisoners to the house of his counsel, Mr. C. R. Das at Bhowanipore.¹

Details of the proceedings at the Bar Library are not available. But we have more than one first-hand report of the events at Sri Aurobindo’s next destination, the residence of Chittaranjan Das.

Recollects Aparna Devi, Chittaranjan’s daughter:

I can never forget our festive home at Russa Road the day Sri Aurobindo and his fellow-prisoners were set free. Whose magic touch was it that made the otherwise serene and silent home get filled with jubilation by our countrymen? As Sri Aurobindo and others entered our house, the women folk greeted them blowing conch-shells and with cheers. A heap of new *dhoties* had been secured for them. Shouting “Bande Mataram” the guests plunged into our pond. The water seemed to be surging up with the lively joy of the liberated ones. Their chorus of the national song [was] vibrant in the air and the sky.

Mother and others were busy cooking. We, the little brothers and sisters, eager to witness that feast of gods, engaged ourselves in cleaning the banana leaves and the earthen tumblers. “The delight cannot be described” — was the emotional state of us all. The spacious courtyard in front of Father’s office was the chosen site for the feast. Singing, swimming and playing in the water for about an hour, the guests emerged from the pond and were attired in new clothes. With dots of sandalwood paste on their foreheads, these worthy children of our motherland sat down for lunch with their colossal appetite. Again they shouted “Bande Mataram”. Mother and others felt gratified by serving them. Since we too were extremely eager to assist, we were allowed to serve salt, water and sweet. We were in heaven. I still remember with a sense of pride that I had placed *Sandesh* on Sri Aurobindo’s leaf. Father partook of food along with them. . . . That day, upon that courtyard, Bengal seemed to bow down to Hari and Hara in the persons of Sri Aurobindo and Chittaranjan.²

The way newspapers and magazines all over India were effusive in their praise of Sri Aurobindo and in expressing their joy at his acquittal was not only unprecedented, but also amazing, considering the fact that he had always tried his best to be away from the limelight and, in any case, he had been in the open political arena for no more than a mere four years.

So that readers in general and scholars interested in the history of the time may have an idea of the sentiment Sri Aurobindo aroused in the hearts of innumerable people of the time, we reproduce extracts from some of the numerous editorials, letters and special articles that seemed to excel one another in paying their tributes to the young Sri Aurobindo of the day, years before his unique vision of the destiny of man was to be revealed and he be revered as the Mahayogi.

We begin with an article running into twelve pages in the November 1909 number of the most outstanding monthly review of the day edited by Ramananda Chatterjee (1865-1943), the highly respected scholar-editor of that era. The author of the article, Jitendralal Bandopadhyay (1881-1943) “took his Master’s degree in English Literature from the Presidency College obtaining the first position in First Class in 1902 and became a legend in the field of English teaching as a Professor of English.” In politics he was a follower of Surendra Nath and also a Member of the

Legislative Council of Bengal, according to an authentic biographical sketch of his.³ But he was obviously not crippled by the passivity of the Moderates. What he wrote echoed the feeling of so many others of that singular class of people — intellectuals involved in politics.

We reproduce a few passages from this highly readable article:

“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.”

Such were the eloquent words with which Mr. C. R. Das brought to a close his magnificent oration in defence of Babu Aravinda Ghose at the State trial which dragged its weary length from November to March in the Court of Mr. Beachcroft, the Sessions Judge of Alipore. *Poet of patriotism, Prophet of Nationalism, Lover of humanity* — what a ring of passionate emphasis there is in these words! — and how fervently have they been re-echoed in the hearts of myriads of men and women all over the country! And yet the man who called forth this remarkable eulogy in his favour, whose release has been hailed with quiet happiness even by those who are in no sense his followers in politics, whose every word is hung upon with fond and reverent enthusiasm by multitudes of admiring fellow-countrymen, who has inspired with wholesome terror a bureaucracy, vigorous, triumphant, almost omnipotent, a man moreover against whom the police and the executive directed their whole artillery and whom yet they failed to crush — three short years ago what was he? An obscure school master in a far off province of India . . . a man unknown, unheard of, an altogether negligible factor in the stirring and slow-heaving political atmosphere of the time. Even in 1905 when the clouds of coming unrest were gathering upon the political horizon of Bengal, when the country was passing through the birth-pangs of that National Movement which has since had such remarkable developments, who knew, who could even dream that Aravinda Ghose would come up from his work in the far Western corner of India and would ride the whirlwind and direct the storm? Had we no leaders of our own — men of tried virtue and proved ability — men of note, experience and tradition, veteran helmsmen who had weathered many a storm and grown grey in the service of the country? Would we not abide by their counsel, take our watchwords from their lips, and follow in their footsteps wheresoever they might lead? How was a young reticent stranger from distant Baroda to replace these giants of old? How was he to grasp in his young and unproven hands the reins which were slipping from the rougher, stronger hands of others? And yet these things have

come to pass. The quiet and grave young man, “fresh from long years at Cambridge” (as Mr. Nevinson described him with a slight pardonable inaccuracy), with his many silences and few golden utterances, has established himself firmly in the hearts and minds of his countrymen; and today the magic of his name has spread its spell over the whole broad continent of India and his every word comes as a gospel of healing, a message of salvation to thousands of people living therein.

How has this marvellous change come about? What is the secret of that mysterious personality which has drawn to itself so much love, hope and reverence? What sort of a man is Aravinda Ghose? We propose in the following pages to lay before the reader such brief glimpses of the man as we have had from time to time, and leave the reader to draw his inference therefrom. We shall attempt, in this paper, no analysis of the character of Mr. Ghose. Such an attempt will be both futile and superfluous: futile because the personality of the man is elusive and defies analysis, and superfluous, because Babu Aravinda Ghose in his public and general capacity is by no means an unknown quantity to the world. His faith, his creed, his views and opinions — he has laid them bare before the world for men to read them and judge him thereby. Still we admit that there is a private aspect of a man’s life, some knowledge of which may help men to a better understanding of his character, and therefore to a better appreciation of his views. Thomas Carlyle used to say that the authentic *portrait* of a man was worth bushels of nonsense written about him. Such an authentic portrait or rather the vague outline of one, together with some slight estimate of Aravinda’s distinctive contribution to the development of our National life — we shall attempt to present in the following pages.

The author then focuses on Sri Aurobindo’s parentage and gives an outline of the personality of his maternal grandfather — referring to the honour bestowed on that great man by his compatriots and contemporaries as “the Grandfather of Indian Nationalism” — and says:

But Raj Narayan Bose was something more than the passionate and impulsive lover of his country; and certainly he was no man to cling blindly to the old, worn-out rags of the past . . . there was realised in his character that rare and curious combination — the ardent, almost militant defender of his country, dwelling side by side with the aggressive social reformer who shocked the effete orthodoxy of his time by the plainness of his speech and the directness of his action.

There was, however, little in common between this forceful and dominant old man and Aravinda’s father, Babu Krishnadhan Ghose. Sweetness, tenderness, geniality and a perpetual sunshine in the heart which warmed and

comforted whoever might come in contact with them — these were the common characteristics of both; but beyond this their path widely diverged.

The author then narrates Dr. Ghose's excessive commitment to the British way of life that influenced him while he was in England for his higher medical studies and how he "came back to India more anglicised than Anglo-Indians themselves" but continued to be "the same sunny, genial, sweet and tender-souled creature as before". He left his children in England but could not provide them with adequate means for their sustaining themselves in the far-away land. Thereafter the author proceeds to remove a misconception that might have been nurtured by some people about Sri Aurobindo's interest in radical politics:

It will be a mistake to say, as so many have said before, that his failure to enter the Civil Service altered the whole subsequent course of Aravinda's life and that, but for it, he would have been today a complaisant Member of the Civil Service instead of being the fiery patriot that he is. This, besides being an utter misconception of the man's nature, is contradicted by the bare outer facts of his life. For, . . . he entered a service which offered him prospects of worldly advancement almost as high as those which the Civil Service itself could offer. And yet, while there and drawing a comfortable salary as Vice-Principal of the Baroda College, he renounced comfort, position, wealth — all that men set their hearts upon — when the call of his country first sounded in his ears and smote the chord of his heart.

The author then briefly focuses on Sri Aurobindo's Baroda days and observes:

His long, close and intimate familiarity with European life and habits had done an invaluable service to him: Western civilisation had lost its gloss and glamour for him. He had penetrated behind its glittering outer shell of painted brilliance and had sounded to the depth all its baldness, coarseness, barrenness . . . the soulless splendour of the material civilisation of Europe, its inadequate solution of the pressing problems of life and society, its failure to reconcile the respective claims of the individual and the community — all this had been forcing itself upon the attention of our quiet and heedful student of men and affairs, and his heart had long been wistfully yearning for that deep peace and harmony, that large synthesis of conflicting claims and jarring susceptibilities which is of the essence of the ancient civilisation of the East. And, now, at last, the time had come when he could steep himself in the culture and civilisation of the land of his fathers, when he could reconstruct that link with his country and his race which had been snapped by his too early transference to England, and when he could readjust bit by bit his relations with that complex social structure,

through which and through which alone individual life can reach its highest manifestation in India. Indeed the twelve years of his residence in Baroda form a very important portion in his life. They were the seed-time of his soul in the strict literal sense of the word; and more than that, they were absolutely necessary in order that he might identify himself with the life, thought and culture of contemporary India. . . . He was popular among the students and well thought of by the public and held in high estimation by the Gaekwar. Still in the prime vigour of his life, he might have ascended, if he had so liked, step by step, to the highest position of trust and dignity in the princely state of Baroda. But this life of rest and ease was not for him. The God of India had other and nobler work to do for the chosen son than to rust in disuse in the cloistered seclusion of Baroda . . .

In the meantime great deeds had been doing in the far eastern corner of India — in that province from whose loins so many bards, heroes and sages and Aravinda himself had sprung. The New Movement of which Aravinda was to be the chief prophet and apostle, and the glory whereof like a Pharos-light was to be the wonder and admiration of a new universe — had come . . .

The author proceeds to present a precise account of the misdeeds of “a reactionary Viceroy”, Curzon, culminating in his dividing Bengal and how “the long-restrained passion of the people, baffled, outraged and mortified so often, broke forth in a flood of volcanic impatience and rage”.

The author then describes, pointedly and forcefully, the incomparable role Sri Aurobindo played in editing the *Bande Mataram* and as the Founder-Principal of the National College and the chain of developments leading to the dramatic events at the Surat Session of the Congress. He then asks, “What was the character of his teaching which distinguished Aravinda Ghose in such a remarkable degree from the other exponents of Nationalism? What was the quality and value of his contribution to the development of the principle of Swadeshism?”

And the author goes on:

In the first place, note the loftiness of the ideal which Aravinda has so consistently and courageously held up before his countrymen. This ideal is neither ‘loyal cooperation with the Government’, nor ‘obtaining for the people a larger share in the administration of the country’, nor even the ‘attainment of Colonial Self-Government’; it is nothing more or less than the fulfilment of our life as a nation. Note, by the way, that this ideal is not only broader and loftier than the other so-called ideals which have been dangled before us time and again; it is the only adequate satisfaction of our legitimate aspirations, the only logical ideal which seems to be worth striving after. Alone among his compeers Aravinda Ghosh has boldly declared that it is as a nation that we claim to live

and to perish. But Aravinda has not been satisfied with merely stating the demand; he has placed it on a rational and philosophical basis. Intensely spiritual by nature, he holds that man's mission in the world, the task which he has been set to accomplish, is to realise God, to fulfil Him in our outer appointments. This realisation can be effected only by fulfilling ourselves in our individual life, in the family, in the community, in the nation and lastly in humanity at large.

But how is this 'fulfilment of our life as a nation' to be effected? Obviously it can never be done so long as all national life remains crushed and smothered by the perpetual domination of a virile alien civilisation, nor can it be done by quietly merging our identity in the identity of an alien race and alien people. To quote the words of Aravinda himself: "We seek this fulfilment by realising our separateness and pushing forward our individual self-realisation."

And the readiest and most effective way in which this can be done is by Swadeshism — "Swadeshi in commerce and manufacture, in politics, in education, in law and administration, in short, in every branch of human activity." This then is the creed of Aravinda Ghosh; and observe how closely it hangs together: — To realise God is the mission of man; we can realise him only by fulfilling ourselves in our individual and national life, in order to fulfil our national life, we must realise our separateness as a people and we can best realise our separateness by being Swadeshi in all departments of human activity. Observe also that this creed of Aravinda is not merely political, behind it there is a comprehensive world-philosophy, a philosophy which leads us back to the dimmest days of Indian antiquity, to the time of the Upanishads.

But it may be asked — the fulfilment of individual and national life, does it not presuppose freedom? No doubt it does; and this we take to be the special merit of Aravinda that alone among Indian politicians he has displayed no nervous hesitation to claim freedom in the widest sense of the word, as the goal of all national progress.

And here, when one chapter of his life has come to a definite close, we think it is time to part company with Babu Aravinda Ghosh. For a brief while, we have accompanied him in his toilsome pilgrimage through the weary ways of the world. We have tried to give an outline of the short outer history of his life, and we have tried with the help of his speeches, writings and actions to get at a right understanding of the sort of man that he is. Since his release from gaol, Aravinda has gone about from place to place giving eloquent discourses on the doctrines of Nationalism and wherever he has gone, he has been greeted with fervent and affectionate enthusiasm. The people have drunk in his words with avidity and have lifted up their hands and blessed him for his message of strength, hope and consolation. His one year's seclusion in gaol has deepened the strength of his faith and has brightened, not quenched, the fire of his zeal.

He is like gold, thrice tested in fire. . . . Yes, Aravinda Ghose is a dreamer — but he has dreamed golden dreams for his country and people — visions of glory and triumph, yet visions as they are, not untouched by a gleam of far-off prophecy.⁴

Although numerous magazines and newspapers hailed and praised Sri Aurobindo in an upsurge of enthusiasm that had never been the case with any other leader, we quoted from *The Modern Review* because it was adored for its impartiality and objective assessment of issues, often men like Tagore and Acharya Jadunath Sarkar consulting on intricate issues its renowned editor Ramananda Chatterjee, several times penalised for his fearless criticism of the colonial rule.⁵

So, Sri Aurobindo was the one who ‘rode the whirlwind and directed the storm’, he was the one ‘who replaced the giants of old’ and became ‘the chief prophet and apostle of the new movement’, he was the one ‘who alone among Indian politicians displayed no nervous hesitation to claim freedom in the widest sense of the term’. A question arises: How far have the later historians of our freedom movement taken note of such observations made by the distinguished author of this article as well as by so many more direct witnesses of that turbulent early phase of our struggle for freedom? Needless to say, it does not matter for Sri Aurobindo for whom wishing for any recognition was the last thing imaginable; but it matters for history and, alas, it has mattered most seriously.

But that is a different matter.

(To be continued)

MANOJ DAS

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SONGS FROM THE SOUL

(Continued from the issue of May 2016)

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

THE MECHANISM OF THE LOWER NATURE

As long as I lived the life of ignorance, the mechanism of egoism and desire was necessary for my self-development. But now that I am being taken up into the light of Thy consciousness, Mother, that mechanism is absolutely unnecessary; it is, on the other hand, a great obstacle and must disappear.

Let me no more act from attachment or desire or blind instinct, but respond only to impulses coming directly from Thee; let me not seek to satisfy the ego, but offer all my life and action as a sacred sacrifice to the supreme Divine. Let me not seek light and power for my own sake, in my own limited way, but offer my whole being and self to Thee to be used absolutely for Thy purpose in Thy own perfect and divine manner.

But the old mechanism of the lower Nature is so persistent! The physical mind with its crude light, most limited and ignorant, would not believe in divine possibilities; it persistently interferes and creates confusion. The impure vital cannot show up itself in the full light of Thy presence, but hiding its desires in dark corners seems to bide its time. The mind eagerly receives whatever light it can from Thee and seeks to use it in its own way for its own purpose.

I cannot escape from the bonds of this terrible mechanism unless Thou, in Thy Grace, lift me and take up my whole life into Thy divine being and consciousness.

REALISATION AND ITS METHODS

The mechanical thoughts that play in my mind do no more belong to me than the roaring of the sea. Both are movements in the Universal, both enter into my consciousness from the outside. Yet in my egoistic ignorance I identify myself with those thoughts; thus, my consciousness becomes clouded, and I am cut off from the higher Light.

So with the movements in the vital and the physical; they come from the outside, and through my identification with them obstruct the descent of the higher Power

and Joy. There is something in me which still takes an interest in these movements; there is still such obscurity in me as identifies me with these movements; there is still much inertia and weakness in me, and I cannot always watch, discriminate and reject these movements of the lower Nature.

But as Thy *ananda* descends into me, the lower play diminishes in interest. Remove this ignorance and this weakness completely from me, Mother; give me more and more of Thy Light and Joy, and keep me occupied with Thy service, so that I may rise completely out of this lower life, and Thy divine rule may be established in me.

* * *

The outward-going habit of the mind makes us liable to all sorts of disturbances; if only we can keep our mind always turned inwards to Thee, Mother, and habituate ourselves to receive all our ideas and inspirations from Thee, we shall be firmly established in calm and peace, which is the indispensable condition of all progress.

The outward running of the senses opens the door to the hostile forces, and constantly makes us liable to attack from the outside; if we can draw our senses inward and turn them to Thee, Mother, we shall taste the immortal joy which will enable us to conquer all temptations in the world.

The blind inertia of our physical nature makes us yield to influences of all kinds from the outside, and thus places us at the mercy of the evil forces; if we can open our will to Thee, Mother, and keep it alert with Thy light and power, nothing will be able to move us, except an impulse coming directly from Thee.

To open our whole nature to Thee, Mother, to check all outward tendencies in us, to constantly aspire to the higher life in Thee, to resolutely reject everything that is impure and undivine, undisturbed by all failure, undaunted by all difficulties however great or serious, — that is our *sadhana* which will steadily advance us towards the Life Divine.

* * *

To rise above all human imperfections is the most difficult task that has ever been set before man. It is only under Thy direct guidance and protection, Mother, only by Thy special Grace that we can hope to attain that great achievement.

It is not sufficient that we have the right intention to reject all falsehood and accept only the Truth; we must strenuously carry it out in every detail at every moment of our life. Few men deliberately intend to be bad but hell, it is said, is paved with good intentions.

It is not sufficient that we refuse to invite the evil or even be unwilling to tolerate it; but there must not be any slackness in us to reject it integrally. Evils often

come to us unasked and uninvited, and humbly seek a little shelter in some obscure corner, promising absolutely to do no harm. But if suffered thus to remain, they will grow in silence and obscurity, and one day rob us of all our treasure. We must resolutely prevent anything untrue or undivine even from approaching us. But how many can do this? Only those who have Thy special protection can hope to achieve this victory, great Mother.

Thou wilt show up whatever is untrue or undivine in us; Thou wilt give strength to our will to reject it integrally and persistently; Thou wilt support us with Thy infinite forbearance and love; only then can we hope to conquer all our imperfections and rise to the divine life, which is our destiny.

* * *

It is no use worrying over the old movements that still persist in us; they will continue until our nature is fully transformed. We should calmly watch them as a part of a universal movement, persistently reject them as they occur in us, and wait in silence and perfect faith for the Grace of the Mother to conquer them completely.

But we must always remember that these old ignorant movements in the mental, the vital, and the physical, make us liable to the attack of the forces of falsehood. We should have sufficient strength of will always to deny them and resist their hostile suggestions; we should never allow ourselves to be careless or indolent as long as the rule of the Mother is not fully established in us.

We cannot altogether give up our thoughts and feelings and works; Nature will have her way. The best course is to connect all our movements, all our life with the Divine Mother. When we think, we should pray for her light to illumine our mind; when we work, we should pray for inspiration from her. At all times we should be able to turn towards the Mother. This must be our ideal, in whatever we do or think or feel we should try to keep in touch with the Mother.

Thus, we shall grow in faith and surrender, in peace and purity, and the Mother gradually descending into us will take up all our activities, all our life, and we shall attain the highest transmutation.

* * *

Let my aspiration ceaselessly rise towards Thee, Mother; let me resolutely turn away from the lower life.

I will not tolerate indolence or laziness in me; on the other hand, I will not allow myself to be carried away by the restless craving for work. Always alert for Thy service, I will look up to Thee for inspiration, and whatever work Thou givest me I will do as Thy instrument regardless of consequence.

I will not tolerate any obscurity or darkness in me but I will not allow the

restless activity of the doubting, reasoning mind to make my confusion worse. I will always keep myself open to Thy light and call it to illumine every obscure corner in me.

I will not discourage the yearning of my soul for beauty and love and joy; but I will firmly withhold the outward running of the senses. Freed from all egoistic hankering, I will peacefully accept whatever joy comes to me through Thy Grace; all the joys in the world that come to my lot, I will accept as a divine gift from Thee. Thus I will resolutely turn away from the lower nature and ceaselessly aspire to the divine life that Thou hast promised to me in Thy boundless love.

THE DIVINE CALL

Never in my life did I come to grief or sorrow by following what I clearly recognised to be the voice of the Divine in me; it took me higher and higher, to ever-increasing power and glory and joy; and at last it has brought me to Thee, Mother, my Divine Guide and Friend in the human form.

When we give up old ways and old habits, and turn to a new life, a new mode, dread and anxiety seize us as to what will happen to us, what will become of us; but wherever we may go in response to the divine call, we find the Divine surely present everywhere to guide us, to befriend us, to love us with an unfathomable love, though remaining hidden behind the veil. But this time, in Thy grace, Thou hast come out of Thy hiding, Mother, and taken direct and personal charge of me; all my fears and anxieties are ended.

We foolishly think that we can take better care of ourselves than the Divine, or can love ourselves better than our Divine Beloved. Those who can entirely rely on Thee, Mother, Thou takest their entire charge, and thus end all their troubles and anxieties for ever; they live and grow in the utmost safety in the peace and joy of Thy infinite love.

DIVINE PRESENCE

Thou art always with me, Mother, Thou art inside my heart and above my head; if ever I do not feel or realise Thy presence, that is entirely my own fault, due to a still lingering play of the old nature in me.

Thou art not only with me, but Thou art also helping me always to realise Thy presence and by all means trying to draw me towards Thyself. Thou descendest into my mind in the form of luminous truths; Thou descendest into my work in the form of omnipotent will; Thou descendest into my heart, removing all dryness from it, flooding it with the divine joy of Thy love. External Nature, ever renewing its forms

of beauty, indicates Thy play of self-manifestation in the universe. The infinite, immutable, silent sky, pervading everything in the world, takes me out of my finite ego and continually reminds me of my highest self, from where I can truly realise Thy divine play. Thy Grace and protection is always with me, Mother, whether I am conscious of it or not.

If Thou hast given me so much, Mother, give me also the integral consciousness, in which I shall be able always to feel Thy presence in me and make my whole life a conscious, constant devotion to Thee.

* * *

Thou art so near to me, my Lord, living in the heart of my heart; yet in my ignorance I think Thee to be so distant, so far away from me!

Thou art with me every moment of my life, standing by me in my joy and my sorrow, in my glory and my shame, in my virtue and my sin; Thou art always supporting me, cheering me, with the utmost care leading me out of misery and darkness to joy and light. Yet in my ignorance I think that I am a helpless mortal wandering alone on the earth; that Thou, my Lord, dost not at all care for me, dost not even think of me.

Thou art seeking my love and homage in infinite ways; Thou appearest before me in various guises in the world and attractest me towards Thee. Whichever way I may turn, Thou always placest Thyself in my front; yet in my ignorance blindfolded I can see Thee nowhere, and live in misery.

Now I do realise that Thou art more near and dear to me than what I regard to be my own self; Thou takest more care of me than ever I can take of myself; in the form of the Divine Mother Thou hast come to me, my Lord, and openly declared Thy love; all my misery has ended, I do now consciously owe Thee as my best beloved.

* * *

Thou art continually working in and through me, Mother; Thou art always pressing upon me from above; yet in my ignorance I think that Thou art far away from me; I fear that Thou art not taking care of Thy child; shut up in my egoism, I do not feel Thy presence and, thus, cannot live in direct and conscious union with Thee, though Thou art always with me.

When I feel great joy in my work, it is the expression of Thy will through me. When my whole being becomes filled with gladness, it is the touch of Thy love on me. When my darkness is dispelled by inner illumination, it is the appearance of Thy light in me. Yet I think that all these are only movements of my egoistic self; thus, I cannot live in direct and conscious union with Thee, Mother, though Thou

art always working in me.

When I fall into error and yield to the suggestions of falsehood, when movements from the outside world move and disturb me, when my defects and imperfections rise up in magnified forms, it is only the result of the spirit of perfection working in me. Yet I fear that Thou art not taking care of me, Mother; thus, I cannot live in conscious union with Thee, Mother, though Thou art always pressing upon me from above.

Remove this egoism and ignorance from me, Mother, let me tear away the veil that separates me from Thyself; let me feel Thy touch in all my movements, at every moment of my life; let me constantly live in Yoga with Thee, Mother, who art guiding my whole life, seated within the heart of my heart.

* * *

Often I find Thee, Mother, more inside myself than outside; Thou enterest into me with all Thy majesty and grace filling me with Thy power and light and joy. It is then that my union with Thee becomes most intimate and Thou seemest to mingle with every part of my being.

This most happy state is to be made lasting and permanent; but the rushing out of my mind and the senses towards the external life is still a great obstacle and interruption. When I can withdraw myself from the outer consciousness and turn to the silent, *sakshi* Purusha that is in me, when I find my real self to be delightful in its self-existence, wanting nothing, desiring nothing, then the disturbances of the lower life cease in me or appear to be quite outside myself; and established in the peace and the purity of the inner self, I can fully open my individual nature to Thee, Mother, and intimately receive Thee within me.

As Thy light dawns in me, my consciousness becomes more and more pure and peaceful and clear, and I am ceaselessly aspiring to the condition when I shall get Thee permanently inside myself, completely mingling with and transforming every part of my being.

DEDICATION

Let me live a truly dedicated life, Mother, let every thought and movement in me turn towards Thee; Thou art rapidly developing the great potentialities of my soul, Thou art bringing out my best possibilities. In all sincerity, I dedicate all this to Thee, Mother, in an integral self-giving.

Thy light is descending into me from above; in this light I am gradually appreciating Thy divine greatness; this light increases my faith and devotion, this light makes me more and more fit to be an humble servant of Thine.

Thy power is descending into me; let me hold it as a trust, let me never use it for any selfish or egoistic purpose; let me work only according to Thy will, Mother, for serving Thy purpose in the world.

Thy joy is descending into me; Thy love has filled my heart with immense delight; let me offer it as my best worship to the Divine Lord within my heart, and accept all joy and delight as His *prasad*. His grace.

My new life is entirely a gift of Thee, Mother; let me continually dedicate it to Thee in an entire self-giving.

DEVOTION

The Mother is coming into thee, my soul, give up all thy preoccupations, clear away all obstacles, make thy temple clean and pure. The queen of queens, the supreme Mother is coming to thee, my soul, welcome her with all the devotion of thy heart.

The Mother has given me her assurance, she has said to me in her divine voice: "Fear nothing, care for nothing, give thy love and devotion to me; I shall take care of thee, I shall deliver thee from all crises, I shall protect thee absolutely from all danger and grief; I am coming to thy heart, turn away from everything else and worship me with thy heart's devotion."

Yes, Mother, I shall be absolutely fearless and careless; I shall entrust my all, my life and soul into Thy hands and be delivered. Fill me with Thy presence, enter into every cell of my body, into every part of my consciousness; think with my every thought, move with my every movement, take up my whole being into Thy divine consciousness.

When will that day come, Mother, when I shall be a free, plastic, perfect channel for Thy divine play?

* * *

We measure our love and devotion to Thee, Mother, by external show and appearance. We are satisfied if we can perfect our formal worship to Thee; we are disturbed if there be any defect in our formality. This is due to our old habit to be guided more by show or appearance than by reality, to care more for what we appear to others than for what we actually are.

Thou sittest within our heart, Mother, and carest more for the inner working of our soul than for the outward appearance we keep up. Our external conduct is meant only to be an aid, a support for our inner development. If we can perfect our inner relation to Thee, Mother, the outer form will take care of itself.

Thou demandest our love for our own sake. The test of our love is not how we make a show of it, but how far it increases our own happiness, how far it helps our

inner purification and transformation, how far it helps to raise us to the divine life. Thou, Mother, wilt judge our love and devotion only by that standard and nothing else.

* * *

Thou art working wonders in me, Mother; I feel the greatness of Thy work, though I may not be able adequately to express my experiences.

My defects and imperfections often come uppermost to my mind, whenever I try to speak to Thee; and it is right that it should be so, as this is the only way of getting rid of them. By the touch of Thy grace weakness turns into strength, defect turns into merit, pain turns into pleasure.

Thy work is becoming more and more evident in me as I steadily grow in faith and light, in peace and purity, in knowledge and power. But the great joy that arises from my personal devotion and love to Thee, Mother, where shall I find adequate words to describe it? But Thou Thyself art the source and knowest it too well. Thy love is its own reward, and I have not to wait for some future date for its fulfilment. It will sustain me in all my *sadhana* and will carry me victoriously through all crises, all difficulties.

LOVE

Love is the great force which surely leads us to the Divine, and it grows by constant and sincere self-giving.

In self-giving we give up not the self but our selfishness, and that is an indispensable condition of happiness and self-realisation. The more we give to the Divine, the more we get; what we give in dross, we get back in gold; when we offer what is dearest and most valuable to us in life, our gain becomes highest and we get the greatest joy.

When we offer anything to the Divine, we must not make any condition or demand, for that will contradict our self-giving, and defeat its own end. We should completely merge ourselves in the Divine, making her joy our joy, her power our power, her life our life. By the solvent touch of this devotion and love, our egoism will completely melt away, we shall realise that essentially we are one with the Divine Mother; that we are made of the same stuff, we are nothing else but herself reproduced in so many individual forms.

Then will disappear all distinctions between mine and not-mine, all conflicts between self and not-self; we shall feel identified with the one self of all; we shall see the Divine everywhere; and in everything and every movement we shall taste the joy of the divine *lila*.

Essentially we are one with the Divine, yet we are differentiated so that we may ardently reunite through love — that is the highest truth of our existence.

* * *

I have found the true joy of life in identification with Thee, Mother; my whole being becomes full of real delight when I feel Thy touch intimately within myself.

I receive Thy touch in various ways, and each has its own peculiar joy. When Thy light descends into my mind and finds expression through my ideas and words, I feel the great joy that arises from the perception and expression of truth; but when my mind follows its own way, it becomes a dry and tedious movement going on in a blind and mechanical manner.

When I feel that I am working for Thee and that Thy power is working in me, I feel a great delight and satisfaction in my work; but when I work for my own sake, impelled by desires, with a sense of my own responsibility, it becomes a mere drudgery, bringing in all the miseries of egoistic effort.

When I feel an inner touch with Thy physical body, the very substance of which is pure bliss, even my most material cells throb with a deep and intense joy and get a taste of immortality; but when I cannot open myself, the body remains dull and inert, producing more pain than pleasure by its blind groping movements.

My aspiration is to perfectly identify myself with Thee, Mother, in every part of my being, so that my whole life may become full of divine and immortal joy.

(To be continued)

ANILBARAN

(Songs from the Soul, Amiya Library, Calcutta, 1946, pp. 68-90)

SELECTED PASSAGES FROM *GOD, THE INVISIBLE KING*

This book sets out as forcibly and exactly as possible the religious belief of the writer. That belief is not orthodox Christianity; it is not, indeed, Christianity at all; its core nevertheless is a profound belief in a personal and intimate God. There is nothing in its statements that need shock or offend anyone who is prepared for the expression of a faith different from and perhaps in several particulars opposed to his own. The writer will be found to be sympathetic with all sincere religious feeling. Nevertheless it is well to prepare the prospective reader for statements that may jar harshly against deeply rooted mental habits. It is well to warn him at the outset that the departure from accepted beliefs is here no vague scepticism, but a quite sharply defined objection to dogmas very widely revered. Let the writer state the most probable occasion of trouble forthwith. An issue upon which this book will be found particularly uncompromising is the dogma of the Trinity.

* * *

This is a religious book written by a believer, but so far as their beliefs and religion go it may seem to them more sceptical and more antagonistic than blank atheism. That the writer cannot tell. He is not simply denying their God. He is declaring that there is a living God, different altogether from that Triune God and nearer to the heart of man.

* * *

. . . but he is zealous to liberate, and he is impatient with a reverence that stands between man and God. He gives this fair warning and proceeds with his matter.

His matter is modern religion as he sees it. It is only incidentally and because it is unavoidable that he attacks doctrinal Christianity.

* * *

In this present book there is no . . . attack on philosophical or metaphysical questions. Here we work at a less fundamental level and deal with religious feeling and religious ideas. But just as the writer was inclined to attribute [*in an earlier work* — First and Last Things] a whole world of disputation and inexactitudes to confused thinking about the exact value of classes and terms, so here he is disposed to think that interminable controversies and conflicts arise out of a confusion of intention due to a double meaning of the word “God”; that the word “God” conveys not one idea or

set of ideas, but several essentially different ideas, incompatible one with another, and falling mainly into one or other of two divergent groups; and that people slip carelessly from one to the other of these groups of ideas and so get into ultimately inextricable confusions.

* * *

Putting the leading idea of this book very roughly, these two antagonistic typical conceptions of God may be best contrasted by speaking of one of them as God-as-Nature or the Creator, and of the other as God-as-Christ or the Redeemer. One is the great Outward God; the other is the Inmost God. The first idea was perhaps developed most highly and completely in the God of Spinoza. It is a conception of God tending to pantheism, to an idea of a comprehensive God as ruling with justice rather than affection, to a conception of aloofness and awe-striking worshipfulness. The second idea, which is opposed to this idea of an absolute God, is the God of the human heart. The writer would suggest that the great outline of the theological struggles of that phase of civilisation and world unity which produced Christianity, was a persistent but unsuccessful attempt to get these two different ideas of God into one focus. It was an attempt to make the God of Nature accessible and the God of the Heart invincible, to bring the former into a conception of love and to vest the latter with the beauty of stars and flowers and the dignity of inexorable justice. There could be no finer metaphor for such a correlation than Fatherhood and Sonship. But the trouble is that it seems impossible to most people to continue to regard the relations of the Father to the Son as being simply a mystical metaphor.

* * *

But the writer throws out these guesses at the probable intentions of early Christian thought in passing. His business here is the definition of a position. The writer's position here in this book is, firstly, complete Agnosticism in the matter of God the Creator, and secondly, entire faith in the matter of God the Redeemer. That, so to speak, is the key of his book. He cannot bring the two ideas under the same term God. He uses the word God therefore for the God in our hearts only, and he uses the term the Veiled Being for the ultimate mysteries of the universe, and he declares that we do not know and perhaps cannot know in any comprehensible terms the relation of the Veiled Being to that living reality in our lives who is, in his terminology, the true God. Speaking from the point of view of practical religion, he is restricting and defining the word God, as meaning only the personal God of mankind, he is restricting it so as to exclude all cosmogony and ideas of providence from our religious thought and leave nothing but the essentials of the religious life.

* * *

Every possible change is rung in the great religions of the world between identification, complete separation, equality, and disproportion of these Beings; but it will be found that these two ideas are, so to speak, the basal elements of all theology in the world. The writer is chary of assertion or denial in these matters. He believes that they are speculations not at all necessary to salvation. He believes that men may differ profoundly in their opinions upon these points and still be in perfect agreement upon the essentials of religion. The reality of religion he believes deals wholly and exclusively with the God of the Heart. He declares as his own opinion, and as the opinion which seems most expressive of modern thought, that there is no reason to suppose the Veiled Being either benevolent or malignant towards men. But if the reader believes that God is Almighty and in every way Infinite the practical outcome is not very different. For the purposes of human relationship it is impossible to deny that God PRESENTS HIMSELF AS FINITE, as struggling and taking a part against evil.

The writer believes that these dogmas of relationship are not merely extraneous to religion, but an impediment to religion. His aim in this book is to give a statement of religion which is no longer entangled in such speculations and disputes.

Let him add only one other note of explanation in this preface, and that is to remark that except for one incidental passage . . . nowhere does he discuss the question of personal immortality.

* * *

Whether we live forever or die tomorrow does not affect righteousness. Many people seem to find the prospect of a final personal death unendurable. This impresses me as egotism. I have no such appetite for a separate immortality. God is my immortality; what, of me, is identified with God, is God; what is not is of no more permanent value than the snows of yester-year.

* * *

The renascent religion that one finds now, a thing active and sufficient in many minds, has still scarcely come to self-consciousness. But it is so coming, and this present book is very largely an attempt to state the shape it is assuming and to compare it with the beliefs and imperatives and usages of the various Christian, pseudo-Christian, philosophical, and agnostic cults amidst which it has appeared.

The writer's sympathies and convictions are entirely with this that he speaks of as renascent or modern religion; he is neither atheist nor Buddhist nor Mohammedan nor Christian. He will make no pretence, therefore, to impartiality and detachment. He will do his best to be as fair as possible and as candid as possible, but the reader must reckon with this bias. He has found this faith growing up in himself; he has found it, or something very difficult to distinguish from it, growing independently

in the minds of men and women he has met. They have been people of very various origins; English, Americans, Bengalis, Russians, French, people brought up in a “Catholic atmosphere”, Positivists, Baptists, Sikhs, Mohammedans. Their diversity of source is as remarkable as their convergence of tendency. A miscellany of minds thinking upon parallel lines has come out to the same light. The new teaching is also traceable in many professedly Christian religious books and it is to be heard from Christian pulpits. The phase of definition is manifestly at hand.

* * *

The modern religious man will almost certainly profess a kind of universalism; he will assert that whensoever men have called upon any God and have found fellowship and comfort and courage and that sense of God within them, that inner light which is the quintessence of the religious experience, it was the True God that answered them. For the True God is a generous God, not a jealous God; the very antithesis of that bickering monopolist who “will have none other gods but Me”; and when a human heart cries out — to what name it matters not — for a larger spirit and a stronger help than the visible things of life can give, straightway the nameless Helper is with it and the God of Man answers to the call. The True God has no scorn nor hate for those who have accepted the many-handed symbols of the Hindu or the lacquered idols of China. Where there is faith, where there is need, there is the True God ready to clasp the hands that stretch out seeking for him into the darkness behind the ivory and gold.

The fact that God is FINITE is one upon which those who think clearly among the new believers are very insistent. He is, above everything else, a personality, and to be a personality is to have characteristics, to be limited by characteristics; he is a Being, not us but dealing with us and through us, he has an aim and that means he has a past and future; he is within time and not outside it. And they point out that this is really what everyone who prays sincerely to God or gets help from God, feels and believes.

* * *

It is a very childish and unphilosophical set of impulses that has led the theologians of nearly every faith to claim infinite qualities for their deity.

* * *

There has always been a demand upon the theological teacher that he should supply a cosmogony. It has always been an effective propagandist thing to say: “OUR God made the whole universe. Don’t you think that it would be wise to abandon YOUR deity, who did not, as you admit, do anything of the sort?”

* * *

For us life is a matter of our personalities in space and time. Human analysis probing with philosophy and science towards the Veiled Being reveals nothing of God, reveals space and time only as necessary forms of consciousness, glimpses a dance of atoms, of whirls in the ether. Some day in the endless future there may be a knowledge, an understanding of relationship, a power and courage that will pierce into those black wrappings. To that it may be our God, the Captain of Mankind will take us.

That now is a mere speculation. The veil of the unknown is set with the stars; its outer texture is ether and atom and crystal. The Veiled Being, enigmatical and incomprehensible, broods over the mirror upon which the busy shapes of life are moving. It is as if it waited in a great stillness. Our lives do not deal with it, and cannot deal with it. It may be that they may never be able to deal with it.

* * *

So it is that comprehensive setting of the universe presents itself to the modern mind. It is altogether outside good and evil and love and hate. It is outside God, who is love and goodness. And coming out of this veiled being, proceeding out of it in a manner altogether inconceivable, is another lesser being, an impulse thrusting through matter and clothing itself in continually changing material forms, the maker of our world, Life, the Will to Be. It comes out of that inscrutable being as a wave comes rolling to us from beyond the horizon. It is as it were a great wave rushing through matter and possessed by a spirit. It is a breeding, fighting thing; it pants through the jungle track as the tiger and lifts itself towards heaven as the tree; it is the rabbit bolting for its life and the dove calling to her mate; it crawls, it flies, it dives, it lusts and devours, it pursues and eats itself in order to live still more eagerly and hastily; it is every living thing, of it are our passions and desires and fears. And it is aware of itself not as a whole, but dispersedly as individual self-consciousness, starting out dispersedly from every one of the sentient creatures it has called into being. They look out for their little moments, red-eyed and fierce, full of greed, full of the passions of acquisition and assimilation and reproduction, submitting only to brief fellowships of defence or aggression. They are beings of strain and conflict and competition. They are living substance still mingled painfully with the dust. The forms in which this being clothes itself bear thorns and fangs and claws, are soaked with poison and bright with threats or allurements, prey slyly or openly on one another, hold their own for a little while, breed savagely and resentfully, and pass. . . .

This second Being men have called the Life Force, the Will to Live, the Struggle for Existence. They have figured it too as Mother Nature. We may speculate whether it is not what the wiser among the Gnostics meant by the Demiurge. . . .

* * *

God comes we know not whence, into the conflict of life. He works in men and through men. He is a spirit, a single spirit and a single person; he has begun and he will never end. He is the immortal part and leader of mankind. He has motives, he has characteristics, he has an aim. He is by our poor scales of measurement boundless love, boundless courage, boundless generosity. He is thought and a steadfast will. He is our friend and brother and the light of the world. That briefly is the belief of the modern mind with regard to God. There is no very novel idea about this God, unless it be the idea that he had a beginning. This is the God that men have sought and found in all ages, as God or as the Messiah or the Saviour. The finding of him is salvation from the purposelessness of life. The new religion has but disentangled the idea of him from the absolutes and infinities and mysteries of the Christian theologians; from mythological virgin births and the cosmogonies and intellectual pretentiousness of a vanished age.

Modern religion appeals to no revelation, no authoritative teaching, no mystery. The statement it makes is, it declares, a mere statement of what we may all perceive and experience. We all live in the storm of life, we all find our understandings limited by the Veiled Being; if we seek salvation and search within for God, presently we find him. All this is in the nature of things. If every one who perceives and states it were to be instantly killed and blotted out, presently other people would find their way to the same conclusions; and so on again and again. To this all true religion, casting aside its hulls of misconception, must ultimately come.

* * *

Modern religion bases its knowledge of God and its account of God entirely upon experience. It has encountered God. It does not argue about God; it relates. It relates without any of those wrappings of awe and reverence that fold so necessarily about imposture, it relates as one tells of a friend and his assistance, of a happy adventure, of a beautiful thing found and picked up by the wayside.

So far as its psychological phases go the new account of personal salvation tallies very closely with the account of "conversion" as it is given by other religions. It has little to tell that is not already familiar to the reader of William James's "Varieties of Religious Experience". It describes an initial state of distress with the aimlessness and cruelties of life, and particularly with the futility of the individual life, a state of helpless self-disgust, of inability to form any satisfactory plan of living. This is the common prelude known to many sorts of Christian as "conviction of sin"; it is, at any rate, a conviction of hopeless confusion. . . . Then in some way the idea of God comes into the distressed mind, at first simply as an idea, without substance or belief. It is read about or it is remembered; it is expounded by some teacher or some happy convert. In the case of all those of the new faith with whose personal experience I have any intimacy, the idea of God has remained for some time simply

as an idea floating about in a mind still dissatisfied. God is not believed in, but it is realised that if there were such a being he would supply the needed consolation and direction, his continuing purpose would knit together the scattered effort of life, his immortality would take the sting from death. Under this realisation the idea is pursued and elaborated. For a time there is a curious resistance to the suggestion that God is truly a person; he is spoken of preferably by such phrases as the Purpose in Things, as the Racial Consciousness, as the Collective Mind.

I believe that this resistance in so many contemporary minds to the idea of God as a person is due very largely to the enormous prejudice against divine personality created by the absurdities of the Christian teaching and the habitual monopoly of the Christian idea. The picture of Christ as the Good Shepherd thrusts itself before minds unaccustomed to the idea that they are lambs. The cross in the twilight bars the way. It is a novelty and an enormous relief to such people to realise that one may think of God without being committed to think of either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost, or of all of them at once. That freedom had not seemed possible to them. They had been hypnotised and obsessed by the idea that the Christian God is the only thinkable God. They had heard so much about that God and so little of any other. With that release their minds become, as it were, nascent and ready for the coming of God.

Then suddenly, in a little while, in his own time, God comes. This cardinal experience is an undoubting, immediate sense of God. It is the attainment of an absolute certainty that one is not alone in oneself. It is as if one was touched at every point by a being akin to oneself, sympathetic, beyond measure wiser, steadfast and pure in aim. It is completer and more intimate, but it is like standing side by side with and touching someone that we love very dearly and trust completely. It is as if this being bridged a thousand misunderstandings and brought us into fellowship with a great multitude of other people. . . .

“Closer he is than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.”

The moment may come while we are alone in the darkness, under the stars, or while we walk by ourselves or in a crowd, or while we sit and muse. It may come upon the sinking ship or in the tumult of the battle. There is no saying when it may not come to us. . . . But after it has come our lives are changed, God is with us and there is no more doubt of God. Thereafter one goes about the world like one who was lonely and has found a lover, like one who was perplexed and has found a solution. One is assured that there is a Power that fights with us against the confusion and evil within us and without. There comes into the heart an essential and enduring happiness and courage.

There is but one God, there is but one true religious experience, but under a multitude of names, under veils and darknesses, God has in this manner come into countless lives. There is scarcely a faith, however mean and preposterous, that has not been a way to holiness. God who is himself finite, who himself struggles in his

great effort from strength to strength, has no spite against error. Far beyond halfway he hastens to meet the purblind. But God is against the darkness in their eyes. The faith which is returning to men girds at veils and shadows, and would see God plainly. It has little respect for mysteries. It rends the veil of the temple in rags and tatters. It has no superstitious fear of this huge friendliness, of this great brother and leader of our little beings. To find God is but the beginning of wisdom, because then for all our days we have to learn his purpose with us and to live our lives with him.

* * *

Closely related to the Heresy of God the Avenger, is that kind of miniature God the Avenger, to whom the nursery-maid and the overtaxed parent are so apt to appeal. You stab your children with such a God and he poisons all their lives. For many of us the word "God" first came into our lives to denote a wanton, irrational restraint, as Bogey, as the All-Seeing and quite ungenerous Eye. God Bogey is a great convenience to the nursery-maid who wants to leave Fear to mind her charges and enforce her disciplines, while she goes off upon her own aims. But indeed, the teaching of God Bogey is an outrage upon the soul of a child. . . . The reason rebels and is crushed under this horrible and pursuing suggestion. Many minds never rise again from their injury. They remain for the rest of life spiritually crippled and debased, haunted by a fear, stained with a persuasion of relentless cruelty in the ultimate cause of all things.

I, who write, was so set against God, thus rendered. He and his Hell were the nightmare of my childhood; I hated him while I still believed in him, and who could help but hate? I thought of him as a fantastic monster, perpetually spying, perpetually listening, perpetually waiting to condemn and to "strike me dead"; his flames as ready as a grill-room fire. He was over me and about my feebleness and silliness and forgetfulness as the sky and sea would be about a child drowning in mid-Atlantic. When I was still only a child of thirteen, by the grace of the true God in me, I flung this Lie out of my mind, and for many years, until I came to see that God himself had done this thing for me, the name of God meant nothing to me but the hideous scar in my heart where a fearful demon had been.

I see about me to-day many dreadful moral and mental cripples with this bogey God of the nursery-maid, with his black, insane revenges, still living like a horrible parasite in their hearts in the place where God should be. They are afraid, afraid, afraid; they dare not be kindly to formal sinners, they dare not abandon a hundred foolish observances; they dare not look at the causes of things. They are afraid of sunshine, of nakedness, of health, of adventure, of science, lest that old watching spider take offence. The voice of the true God whispers in their hearts, echoes in speech and writing, but they avert themselves, fear-driven. For the true God has no

lash of fear. And how the foul-minded bigot, with his ill-shaven face, his greasy skin, his thick, gesticulating hands, his bellowings and threatenings, loves to reap this harvest of fear the ignorant cunning of the nursery girl has sown for him! How he loves the importance of denunciation, and, himself a malignant cripple, to rally the company of these crippled souls to persecute and destroy the happy children of God! . . .

* * *

God is courage.

* * *

God is a person.

* * *

God is youth.

The third thing to be told of the true God is that GOD IS YOUTH.

God, we hold, began and is always beginning. He looks forever into the future.

* * *

One of the sayings about God that have grown at the same time most trite and most sacred, is that God is Love. This is a saying that deserves careful examination. Love is a word very loosely used; there are people who will say they love new potatoes; there are a multitude of loves of different colours and values. There is the love of a mother for her child, there is the love of brothers, there is the love of youth and maiden, and the love of husband and wife, there is illicit love and the love one bears one's home or one's country, there are dog-lovers and the loves of the Olympians, and love which is a passion of jealousy. Love is frequently a mere blend of appetite and preference; it may be almost pure greed; it may have scarcely any devotion nor be a whit self-forgetful nor generous. It is possible so to phrase things that the furtive craving of a man for another man's wife may be made out to be a light from God. Yet about all the better sorts of love, the sorts of love that people will call "true love", there is something of that same exaltation out of the narrow self that is the essential quality of the knowledge of God.

Only while the exaltation of the love passion comes and goes, the exaltation of religious passion comes to remain. Lovers are the windows by which we may look out of the prison of self, but God is the open door by which we freely go. And God never dies, nor disappoints, nor betrays.

The love of a woman and a man has usually, and particularly in its earlier phases of excitement, far too much desire, far too much possessiveness and exclusiveness, far too much distrust or forced trust, and far too great a kindred with jealousy to be like the love of God. The former is a dramatic relationship that drifts to a climax, and then again seeks presently a climax, and that may be satiated or fatigued. But the latter is far more like the love of comrades, or like the love of a man and a woman who have loved and been through much trouble together, who have hurt one another and forgiven, and come to a complete and generous fellowship. There is a strange and beautiful love that men tell of that will spring up on battlefields between sorely wounded men, and often they are men who have fought together, so that they will do almost incredibly brave and tender things for one another, though but recently they have been trying to kill each other. There is often a pure exaltation of feeling between those who stand side by side manfully in any great stress. These are the forms of love that perhaps come nearest to what we mean when we speak of the love of God.

That is man's love of God, but there is also something else; there is the love God bears for man in the individual believer. Now this is not an indulgent, instinctive, and sacrificing love like the love of a woman for her baby. It is the love of the captain for his men; God must love his followers as a great captain loves his men, who are so foolish, so helpless in themselves, so confiding, and yet whose faith alone makes him possible. It is an austere love. The spirit of God will not hesitate to send us to torment and bodily death. . . .

And God waits for us, for all of us who have the quality to reach him. He has need of us as we of him. He desires us and desires to make himself known to us. When at last the individual breaks through the limiting darknesses to him, the irradiation of that moment, the smile and soul clasp, is in God as well as in man. He has won us from his enemy. We come staggering through into the golden light of his kingdom, to fight for his kingdom henceforth, until at last we are altogether taken up into his being.

* * *

The conception of a young and energetic God, an Invisible Prince growing in strength and wisdom, who calls men and women to his service and who gives salvation from self and mortality only through self-abandonment to his service, necessarily involves a demand for a complete revision and fresh orientation of the life of the convert.

God faces the blackness of the Unknown and the blind joys and confusions and cruelties of Life, as one who leads mankind through a dark jungle to a great conquest. He brings mankind not rest but a sword. It is plain that he can admit no divided control of the world he claims. He concedes nothing to Caesar. In our philosophy there are no human things that are God's and others that are Caesar's.

Those of the new thought cannot render unto God the things that are God's, and to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Whatever claim Caesar may make to rule men's lives and direct their destinies outside the will of God, is a usurpation. No king nor Caesar has any right to tax or to service or to tolerance, except he claim as one who holds for and under God. And he must make good his claim. The steps of the altar of the God of Youth are no safe place for the sacrilegious figure of a king. Who claims "divine right" plays with the lightning.

The new conceptions do not tolerate either kings or aristocracies or democracies. Its implicit command to all its adherents is to make plain the way to the world theocracy. Its rule of life is the discovery and service of the will of God, which dwells in the hearts of men, and the performance of that will, not only in the private life of the believer but in the acts and order of the state and nation of which he is a part. I give myself to God not only because I am so and so but because I am mankind. I become in a measure responsible for every evil in the world of men. I become a knight in God's service. I become my brother's keeper. I become a responsible minister of my King. I take sides against injustice, disorder, and against all those temporal kings, emperors, princes, landlords, and owners, who set themselves up against God's rule and worship. Kings, owners, and all who claim rule and decisions in the world's affairs, must either show themselves clearly the fellow-servants of the believer or become the objects of his steadfast antagonism.

* * *

The kingdom of God on earth is not a metaphor, not a mere spiritual state, not a dream, not an uncertain project; it is the thing before us, it is the close and inevitable destiny of mankind.

* * *

The tendency of modern religion goes far beyond the alleged communism of the early Christians, and far beyond the tithes of the scribes and Pharisees. God takes all. He takes you, blood and bones and house and acres, he takes skill and influence and expectations. For all the rest of your life you are nothing but God's agent. If you are not prepared for so complete a surrender, then you are infinitely remote from God. You must go your way. Here you are merely a curious interloper. Perhaps you have been desiring God as an experience, or coveting him as a possession. You have not begun to understand. This that we are discussing in this book is as yet nothing for you.

* * *

Lovers may love God in one another; I do not deny it. That is no reason why the imitation and outward form of this great happiness should be made an obligation upon all men and women who are attracted by one another, nor why it should be woven into the essentials of religion. For women much more than for men is this confusion dangerous, lest a personal love should shape and dominate their lives instead of God. "He for God only; she for God in him", phrases the idea of Milton and of ancient Islam; it is the formula of sexual infatuation, a formula quite easily inverted, as the end of Goethe's Faust ("The woman soul leadeth us upward and on") may witness. The whole drift of modern religious feeling is against this exaggeration of sexual feeling, these moods of sexual slavishness, in spiritual things. Between the healthy love of ordinary mortal lovers in love and the love of God, there is an essential contrast and opposition in this, that preference, exclusiveness, and jealousy seem to be in the very nature of the former and are absolutely incompatible with the latter. The former is the intensest realisation of which our individualities are capable; the latter is the way of escape from the limitations of individuality. It may be true that a few men and more women do achieve the completest unselfishness and self-abandonment in earthly love. So the poets and romancers tell us. If so, it is that by an imaginative perversion they have given to some attractive person a worship that should be reserved for God and a devotion that is normally evoked only by little children in their mother's heart. It is not the way between most of the men and women one meets in this world.

But between God and the believer there is no other way, there is nothing else, but self-surrender and the ending of self.

* * *

It is the amazing and distressful discovery of every believer so soon as the first exaltation of belief is past, that one does not remain always in touch with God. At first it seems incredible that one should ever have any motive again that is not also God's motive. Then one finds oneself caught unawares by a base impulse. We discover that discontinuousness of our apparently homogeneous selves, the unincorporated and warring elements that seemed at first altogether absent from the synthesis of conversion. We are tripped up by forgetfulness, by distraction, by old habits, by tricks of appearance. There come dull patches of existence; those mysterious obliterations of one's finer sense that are due at times to the little minor poisons one eats or drinks, to phases of fatigue, ill-health and bodily disorder, or one is betrayed by some unanticipated storm of emotion, brewed deep in the animal being and released by any trifling accident, such as personal jealousy or lust, or one is relaxed by contentment into vanity. All these rebel forces of our ill-coordinated selves, all these "disharmonies", of the inner being, snatch us away from our devotion to God's service, carry us off to follies, offences, unkindness, waste, and leave us

compromised, involved, and regretful, perplexed by a hundred difficulties we have put in our own way back to God.

* * *

There is nothing one can suffer, no situation so unfortunate, that it can shut off one who has the thought of God, from God. If you but lift up your head for a moment out of a stormy chaos of madness and cry to him, God is there, God will not fail you. A convicted criminal, frankly penitent, and neither obdurate nor abject, whatever the evil of his yesterdays, may still die well and bravely on the gallows to the glory of God. He may step straight from that death into the immortal being of God.

* * *

As yet those who may be counted as belonging definitely to the new religion are few and scattered and unconfessed, their realisations are still uncertain and incomplete. But that is no augury for the continuance of this state of affairs even for the next few decades. There are many signs that the revival is coming very swiftly, it may be coming as swiftly as the morning comes after a tropical night. It may seem at present as though nothing very much were happening, except for the fact that the old familiar constellations of theology have become a little pallid and lost something of their multitude of points. But nothing fades of itself. The deep stillness of the late night is broken by a stirring, and the morning star of creedless faith, the last and brightest of the stars, the star that owes its light to the coming sun is in the sky.

There is a stirring and a movement. There is a stir, like the stir before a breeze. Men are beginning to speak of religion without the bluster of the Christian formulae; they have begun to speak of God without any reference to Omnipresence, Omniscience, Omnipotence. The Deists and Theists of an older generation, be it noted, never did that. Their "Supreme Being" repudiated nothing. He was merely the whittled stump of the Trinity. It is in the last few decades that the western mind has slipped loose from this absolutist conception of God that has dominated the intelligence of Christendom at least, for many centuries. Almost unconsciously the new thought is taking a course that will lead it far away from the moorings of Omnipotence. It is like a ship that has slipped its anchors and drifts, still sleeping, under the pale and vanishing stars, out to the open sea. . . .

* * *

Allusion has already been made to the sympathetic devotional poetry of Rabindranath Tagore; he stands for a movement in Brahminism parallel with and assimilable to the worship of the true God of mankind.

It is too often supposed that the religious tendency of the East is entirely towards other-worldness, to a treatment of this life as an evil entanglement and of death as a release and a blessing. It is too easily assumed that Eastern teaching is wholly concerned with renunciation, not merely of self but of being, with the escape from all effort of any sort into an exalted vacuity. This is indeed neither the spirit of China nor of Islam nor of the every-day life of any people in the world. It is not the spirit of the Sikh nor of these newer developments of Hindu thought. It has never been the spirit of Japan. To-day less than ever does Asia seem disposed to give up life and the effort of life. Just as readily as Europeans, do the Asiatics reach out their arms to that fuller life we can live, that greater intensity of existence, to which we can attain by escaping from ourselves. All mankind is seeking God. There is not a nation nor a city in the globe where men are not being urged at this moment by the spirit of God in them towards the discovery of God. This is not an age of despair but an age of hope in Asia as in all the world besides.

* * *

All the world over there is this stirring in the dry bones of the old beliefs. There is scarcely a religion that has not its Bahaism, its Modernists, its Brahmo Somaj, its "religion without theology", its attempts to escape from old forms and hampering associations to that living and world-wide spiritual reality upon which the human mind almost instinctively insists. . . .

It is the same God we all seek; he becomes more and more plainly the same God.

* * *

Yet still this leaves many dissatisfied. They want to shout out about God. They want to share this great thing with all mankind.

Why should they not shout and share?

Let them express all that they desire to express in their own fashion by themselves or grouped with their friends as they will. Let them shout chorally if they are so disposed. Let them work in a gang if so they can work the better. But let them guard themselves against the idea that they can have God particularly or exclusively with them in any such undertaking. Or that so they can express God rather than themselves.

That I think states the attitude of the modern spirit towards the idea of a church. Mankind passes for ever out of the idolatry of altars, away from the obscene rites of circumcision and symbolical cannibalism, beyond the sway of the ceremonial priest. But if the modern spirit holds that religion cannot be organised or any intermediary thrust between God and man, that does not preclude infinite possibilities of organisa-

tion and collective action UNDER God and within the compass of religion. There is no reason why religious men should not band themselves the better to attain specific ends. To borrow a term from British politics, there is no objection to AD HOC organisations. The objection lies not against subsidiary organisations for service but against organisations that may claim to be comprehensive.

For example there is no reason why one should not — and in many cases there are good reasons why one should — organise or join associations for the criticism of religious ideas, an employment that may pass very readily into propaganda.

Many people feel the need of prayer to resist the evil in themselves and to keep them in mind of divine emotion. And many want not merely prayer but formal prayer and the support of others, praying in unison. The writer does not understand this desire or need for collective prayer very well, but there are people who appear to do so and there is no reason why they should not assemble for that purpose. And there is no doubt that divine poetry, divine maxims, religious thought finely expressed, may be heard, rehearsed, collected, published, and distributed by associations. The desire for expression implies a sort of assembly, a hearer at least as well as a speaker. And expression has many forms. People with a strong artistic impulse will necessarily want to express themselves by art when religion touches them, and many arts, architecture and the drama for example, are collective undertakings. I do not see why there should not be, under God, associations for building cathedrals and suchlike great still places urgent with beauty, into which men and women may go to rest from the clamour of the day's confusions; I do not see why men should not make great shrines and pictures expressing their sense of divine things, and why they should not combine in such enterprises rather than work to fill heterogeneous and chaotic art galleries. A wave of religious revival and religious clarification, such as I foresee, will most certainly bring with it a great revival of art, religious art, music, songs, and writings of all sorts, drama, the making of shrines, praying places, temples and retreats, the creation of pictures and sculptures. It is not necessary to have priestcraft and an organised church for such ends. Such enrichments of feeling and thought are part of the service of God.

And again, under God, there may be associations and fraternities for research in pure science; associations for the teaching and simplification of languages; associations for promoting and watching education; associations for the discussion of political problems and the determination of right policies. In all these ways men may multiply their use by union. Only when associations seek to control things of belief, to dictate formulae, restrict religious activities or the freedom of religious thought and teaching, when they tend to subdivide those who believe and to set up jealousies or exclusions, do they become antagonistic to the spirit of modern religion.

Because religion cannot be organised, because God is everywhere and immediately accessible to every human being, it does not follow that religion cannot organise every other human affair. It is indeed essential to the idea that God is the Invisible King of this round world and all mankind, that we should see in every government, great and small, from the council of the world-state that is presently coming, down to the village assembly, the instrument of God's practical control. Religion which is free, speaking freely through whom it will, subject to a perpetual unlimited criticism, will be the life and driving power of the whole organised world. So that if you prefer not to say that there will be no church, if you choose rather to declare that the world-state is God's church, you may have it so if you will. Provided that you leave conscience and speech and writing and teaching about divine things absolutely free, and that you try to set no nets about God.

The world is God's and he takes it. But he himself remains freedom, and we find our freedom in him.

* * *

So I end this compact statement of the renascent religion which I believe to be crystallising out of the intellectual, social, and spiritual confusions of this time. It is an account rendered. It is a statement and record; not a theory. There is nothing in all this that has been invented or constructed by the writer; I have been but scribe to the spirit of my generation; I have at most assembled and put together things and thoughts that I have come upon, have transferred the statements of "science" into religious terminology, rejected obsolescent definitions, and re-coordinated propositions that had drifted into opposition. Thus, I see, ideas are developing, and thus have I written them down. It is a secondary matter that I am convinced that this trend of intelligent opinion is a discovery of truth. The reader is told of my own belief merely to avoid an affectation of impartiality and aloofness.

The theology here set forth is ancient; one can trace it appearing and disappearing and recurring in the mutilated records of many different schools of speculation; the conception of God as finite is one that has been discussed very illuminatingly in recent years in the work of one I am happy to write of as my friend and master, that very great American, the late William James. It was an idea that became increasingly important to him towards the end of his life. And it is the most releasing idea in the system.

Only in the most general terms can I trace the other origins of these present views. I do not think modern religion owes much to what is called Deism or Theism. The rather abstract and futile Deism of the eighteenth century, of "votre Etre suprême" who bored the friends of Robespierre, was a sterile thing, it has little relation to these more modern developments, it conceived of God as an infinite Being of no particular character whereas God is a finite being of a very especial character. On

the other hand men and women who have set themselves, with unavoidable theological preconceptions, it is true, to speculate upon the actual teachings and quality of Christ, have produced interpretations that have interwoven insensibly with thoughts more apparently new. There is a curious modernity about very many of Christ's recorded sayings. Revived religion has also, no doubt, been the receiver of many religious bankruptcies, of Positivism for example, which failed through its bleak abstraction and an unspiritual texture. Religion, thus restated, must, I think, presently incorporate great sections of thought that are still attached to formal Christianity. The time is at hand when many of the organised Christian churches will be forced to define their positions, either in terms that will identify them with this renaissance, or that will lead to the release of their more liberal adherents. Its probable obligations to Eastern thought are less readily estimated by a European writer.

Modern religion has no revelation and no founder; it is the privilege and possession of no coterie of disciples or exponents; it is appearing simultaneously round and about the world exactly as a crystallising substance appears here and there in a super-saturated solution. It is a process of truth, guided by the divinity in men. It needs no other guidance, and no protection. It needs nothing but freedom, free speech, and honest statement. Out of the most mixed and impure solutions a growing crystal is infallibly able to select its substance. The diamond arises bright, definite, and pure out of a dark matrix of structureless confusion.

This metaphor of crystallisation is perhaps the best symbol of the advent and growth of the new understanding. It has no church, no authorities, no teachers, no orthodoxy. It does not even thrust and struggle among the other things; simply it grows clear. There will be no putting an end to it. It arrives inevitably, and it will continue to separate itself out from confusing ideas. It becomes, as it were the Koh-i-noor; it is a Mountain of Light, growing and increasing. It is an all-pervading lucidity, a brightness and clearness. It has no head to smite, no body you can destroy; it overleaps all barriers; it breaks out in despite of every enclosure. It will compel all things to orient themselves to it.

It comes as the dawn comes, through whatever clouds and mists may be here or whatever smoke and curtains may be there. It comes as the day comes to the ships that put to sea.

It is the Kingdom of God at hand.

May, 1917

H. G. WELLS

(Sourced from Project Gutenberg)

THE MOTHER IN THE PLAYGROUND

(Continued from the issue of April 2016)

THE MOTHER IN THE TENNIS GROUND

THE GAME OF TENNIS

In February 1948, the place that became the Tennis Ground was acquired by the Mother from the Government of Pondicherry on a long-term rent agreement. The now beautiful ground, was then a hillock of earth where the Pondicherry Municipality dumped garbage. To Manoranjan-da goes the credit for changing this stinking area and for building in its place a beautiful play-field including two clay courts for tennis. Manoranjan Ganguli was an inmate of the Ashram who executed all the construction and maintenance work of the Department of Physical Education. He took up this job, supervised the operation and as was his wont, made the workplace his home. He would be present there not only during the day but all through the nights too at times, sitting on a stool supervising the work till it was completed. The Tennis Ground was inaugurated on his birthday.

Nirod-da writes:

One day, we heard that the entire wasteland along the north-eastern seaside was taken on a long lease from the Government and a part of it would be made into tennis courts and the rest into a playground. One cannot imagine now what this place was like before. It was one of the filthiest spots of Pondicherry, full of thistles and wild undergrowth: an open place for committing nuisance as well as a pasture for pigs! The stink and the loathsome sight made the place a Stygian sore and a black spot on the colonial Government. The Mother changed at one stroke this savage wasteland into a Heavenly playground. . . . The sea-front was clothed in a vision of beauty and delight. If for nothing else, for this transformation at least, Pondicherry should be eternally grateful to the Mother. But who remembers the past? Gratitude is a rare human virtue. (*Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, 1st edition, pp. 84-85)

Gangaram writes:

I came to the Ashram on 9th August 1948. I wanted to join the Ashram. I wrote to the Mother and She accepted me. The Mother gave me work with Kameshwar Rao who was in charge of a central office (Bureau Centrale) for attending to

the visitors and also some other activities. . . . Some time in 1948, I found that there were grounds for Physical Education activities: a Playground, a Volley Ball Ground and a Tennis Ground (beside the sea). When I went to the Tennis Ground for the first time, I saw a big ground and heard that this area had been a public dumping ground. It was taken by the Ashram on a long lease. Manoranjan-da was in charge of this place. He had developed the new ground within a short time, levelling the area to the present height. He employed a large number of workers and himself worked day and night. There was a split bamboo fence all around. A concrete tennis court was under construction on the eastern side. Another one situated towards the road was of clay. There were two big gates with ramps for the Mother's car to enter and exit. I saw that the caretakers' rooms, a basketball court, the boxing and wrestling areas were also completed. The bathrooms (for the use of sea bathers) and the store rooms were ready for use.

The four walls around the tennis courts were made of hollow bricks. During the hours when the courts were used for tennis, dark blue curtains would be hung on the northern and the southern walls. On the eastern side beyond the wall was an area for wall-practice. On the eastern side, beside the sea beach, a long narrow strip of land ran all along the length of the Tennis Ground. Sometimes, after the game of tennis, the Mother and Pranab-da would take a brisk walk on this strip of land. This strip of land was raised to the level of the main ground as a precaution so that the sea may not directly hit the ground during cyclonic weather. Heavy rain and cyclone were a regular feature during the months of November-December.

Before we proceed further we need to mention Udar's important role in our Department of Physical Education. Lawrence Pinto, a young aeronautical engineer living in Pondicherry, with his wife Mona Pinto had the darshan of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in 1938. Udar was the name given to him by Sri Aurobindo. Both were soon accepted as members of the Ashram by the Mother. During the early years of the growth of the Department of Physical Education Udar played an important role as administrator and organiser. He joined the department in 1948 at about the time when the Tennis Ground was acquired. Both Pranab-da and Udar were guided by the Mother. Pranab-da had told us that he used to give his idea of the future development and both he and Udar used to work it out and give it a practical form. Udar organised the work of the office, arranged the important papers, filed them and thus all the records needed were for the first time kept in an efficient manner. He helped Pranab-da to plan the whole year's programme, and also for the different competition seasons. In the Ashram workshop 'Harpagon' he manufactured equipment for weight-training exercises as also the first Parallel Bars, Uneven Bars, and Beam for gymnastics. In the Sportsground the green field and the laying of the cinder track around it was supervised by him. Udar with Vishwanath-da the Ashram

engineer and Louis Allen, a recently arrived architect from South Africa, also designed the swimming pool. We owe a lot to him for his important contributions in the formative years of our organisation.

The Mother playing tennis

The Mother had played tennis when she was in France. Sujata Nahar quotes the Mother saying:

“I remember learning to play tennis when I was eight. It was a passion. But I never wanted to play with my little playfellows, for I learned nothing (generally I beat them). I always went to the best players. They sometimes looked surprised. But ended up playing with me. I never won, but I learned a lot.” (*Mother’s Chronicles*, Book One, p. 80)

Prior to the opening of the Tennis Ground, when it was in the process of being constructed, a few young men started playing tennis on a make-shift arrangement in the Playground. At first, they tied a rope across the Playground. They got their own racquets and balls and used this rope to serve the purpose of the net. Sometime later, an old net, perhaps a net used for volleyball, was tied in the centre of the Playground. The net was not even straight! The Mother also played a few times with them.

The Mother played with Amiyo, Kanak, Chandrakant, Chandubhai and perhaps also with a few others. Pushpa remembers:

The first three or four days she played in sari. After some days, she came to the Playground in *punjabi* dress with a *chunni* draped over her shoulders. For a few days, she tried wearing the *chunni* in different ways so that she could feel free to move and play. But none of the ways suited her purpose. So finally, she stopped using the *chunni*. Decades before the present mode of wearing *punjabi* dress without a *chunni* came into vogue, the Mother had started wearing the dress in this manner.

A great trend-setter!

Is not the image still vivid in our minds? Her entry to the Playground that day? The girls were playing *kabaddi* on the eastern side of the ground. The main gate opened and we stopped our game for a moment and looked in that direction. Lo and behold! The Mother enters wearing *salwar-kameez* and also a kitty cap covering her head! How surprised and charmed we were! She looked so smart and beautiful! Henceforth, she would come out in the evenings dressed in this way.

With the completion of the tennis courts, the Mother opened the Tennis Ground,

playing there the first game of tennis on May 12, 1948, which was Manoranjan-da's birthday! The clay courts were cleaned and made ready for her game every day. Within a short time the court on the eastern side was changed into a concrete one and the Mother started playing on this court. Some time later, the second court was also changed into a hard court.

Pushpa remembers:

Soon after our tennis courts were ready, the Mother started playing there with the boys. Most of the white group girls, after their group activities, used to go to the western side of the Playground under the *neem* tree of the Dortoir. They would be practising simple acrobatic movements such as arches, handstand, cartwheel etc. One day, the Mother came to us and said that we, the girls, would also start playing tennis. We accompanied her to the central class-room on the first floor of the old school building. The Mother took her seat at the teacher's table while we sat on the benches. The Mother said that play would be in the morning hours twice or thrice each week. The girls could choose their convenient day. Thus, she wrote down our names and the days for each one. I too had given my name, but I was extremely hesitant and nervous about it. So, when we came down to the Playground I told the Mother that I would like to cross out my name. She looked at me not at all happy. So I did not cancel my name and started playing tennis. Now I feel extremely happy that I did not cancel my name and am very grateful to her for giving me *that* inexpressible look. In fact I enjoyed playing tennis immensely and found it to be the best of all games.

The Mother played tennis every day, from about 4.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

When the courts were ready, there followed a change in our programme. Nirod-da writes:

Henceforth Sri Aurobindo's noon meal was served earlier so that the Mother could go out by 5.00 p.m. She would come to Sri Aurobindo's room dressed in her specially designed tennis costume. She played for about an hour with a number of young people by turns, even took part in tournaments. From there, she came to the Playground and returned to the Ashram, after another round of crowded activities, at about 8.00 or 9.00 p.m.

(Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo, 1st edition, p. 86)

Pavitra-da would drive her car and stop right in front of the door to the courts. On entering the tennis court area, she would walk down to the northern side of the court. A small group consisting of her attendant, Vasudha-ben and a few others, such as Priti Das Gupta, Sutapa, Amiyo Ganguli, Kalyan-da and Udar would walk

behind her and take their seats on the northern side of the court. Kalyan-da was already an accomplished tennis player, known for his impeccable style. The Mother chose him quite often to play with her. One day, the Mother remarked: "Do you know why I choose him so frequently? Whenever he sends me the ball, it is as if he is doing *pranam* to me."

Sunil-da, Sutapa, Sujata or Amiyo-da would be there picking up the ball as ball-boys. Thus they enjoyed being in her presence and had the joy of serving her. Though Pranab-da had never played the game, the Mother asked him to play on her side as her partner. Thus, he always played in that position as long as the Mother played tennis. A few men, young and not so young, as also a few young girls, all players of tennis, would be present there. Some elderly Ashramites and devotees would be there at that time to watch the Mother play. Those of us doing the regular 'group' activities could not be there every day. But without disrupting our 'group' activities, we would also try to be there as often as possible. The Mother would call some of the players to play with her and played five games with each pair.

The Mother played on the right side of the court while Pranab-da would be on the left side. Pranab-da had mostly to stand still as every one tried to send the ball to the Mother while playing with her. She used to stand a little inside the court.

Sujata Nahar writes:

She played tennis even in 1958, when she was eighty. Of course, her feet by then had lost some of their fleetness, but her eyes were as keen as ever and her hand had lost none of its accuracy. What a control she had! She could place the ball exactly where she wanted. Having played with her, and being at the receiving end, I can tell you how much we had to run!

(*Mother's Chronicles*, Book One, p. 80)

Nirod-da writes:

She played very well for her age and her claim that she had become a champion in her youth was amply borne out by her steady, sharp forehand strokes which were above all a marvel of precision. Naturally, she could not run a great deal, but her agility was remarkable.

(*Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, 1st edition, pp. 86-87)

Sometimes she would ask us girls, novices in the game, to play with her. We would be inwardly concentrated, preparing ourselves for this great chance to play with her. She would choose a partner for us, from the young men waiting to get their turn to play with her. We made every effort to place the ball in such a way that it would fall more or less on her right side and within her reach. Our coach, Chandubhai, while training us, would insist that we tried to place the ball at the right place for the Mother to play.

Well-known players play tennis here

In 1951, Dilip Bose, ranked India's No. 1 in tennis, visited the Ashram. He stayed for a very short while, so he could not play with the Mother. However we had a chance to watch him play with our players. We watched very closely the movements of each of his strokes — forehand, backhand or volleys. I think this had an impact on our game as well and we improved a great deal.

Ramakant Navelkar writes:

During the year 1952, it was proposed to the Mother by Jayantilal Parekh that the Ashram could invite some good players from Madras so that our players could see their game and improve. The Mother accepted the proposal and Jayantilal invited India's number one player then — Ramanathan Krishnan and his father T. K. Krishnan who was coaching his son. Some other players also came to the Ashram. The Mother was then 74 years old while Ramanathan Krishnan was only 15 years old. (*Sport Spirit*)

I remember even now this incident. Young Ramanathan Krishnan had taken his position at mid-court, receiving all the balls from the Mother and volleying them back, placing them effortlessly, gently, just at the right place for her to reach easily. I was wonderstruck at his control of the ball! After the game, the Mother walked out of the court and started moving towards Krishnan. He too walked towards the Mother. Both of them were near the middle of the court near the umpire's chair where the Mother presented him a with new tennis racquet. Later that year, he won the Wimbledon (Junior) championship.

Sujata Nahar writes:

Krishnan himself still remembers it very vividly. As he wrote on August 20, 1984, in reply to a query: "Yes. I did have the privilege of playing tennis with the Mother in the Pondicherry Ashram tennis court. It was during the last week of April, 1952 (I do not remember the date but am sure of the week, month and year). It happened just prior to my departure for the Wimbledon Junior championship for the first time. I went to take Her blessing. . . . The Mother was regular with her tennis on the green cement courts facing the sea. I received a 'Dunlop' (Maxply) racquet from Her. I was 15 years old at that time and the whole thing was an education as well as inspiration to me."

Sujata Nahar continues:

A few years later, the Dane, Torben Ulrich also gave a fine display of tennis on the same green cement court. He was the reigning champion of Denmark.

Both he and Krishan represented their respective countries at the Davis Cup matches. Both were seeded players at Wimbledon. But coming in February 1959 as he did, Ulrich did not have Krishnan's luck; because the Mother only watched him play. Because just a month or two earlier she had stopped playing tennis." (*Mother's Chronicles*, Book One, pp. 80-82)

As per our daily physical education programme, we played tennis two mornings a week — Sundays and Wednesdays. Most of us were very enthusiastic players. A few years later we started playing three mornings a week.

Pushpa shares with us some interesting incidents about her tennis.

The first year when the Mother chose our mixed-doubles partners She chose Jayantibhai (Pushpa's brother) as my partner. The next day, Udhar told me that "while choosing She had said: 'Pushpa is very timid' so She chose Jayantibhai for you." Next year also She chose him as my partner.

One year Amiyo-da and I were chosen as partners. The day after our play with her Udhar told me that the Mother had said: "Pushpa plays well."

The year when Chandubhai was my partner, we became champion in tennis mixed-doubles. The Mother gave us the prize which consisted of a silver cup and we were blessed with an unforgettable beautiful and sweet smile.

Later, one year after the distribution of prizes to all the deserving participants of all the games, my name was called out. I was surprised and doubtful whether I had really heard my name. Then all my friends present in the prize distribution ceremony, urged me: "Go, go, you are called." And I went to her and stood before her, most surprised and She pouring on me such a lovely smile, gave me a new tennis racquet.

As it was the year of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Her Majesty's face was printed between the head and the handle of the racquet. Next day Udhar told me that the Mother wanted to give this racquet to one who had made the greatest progress in tennis that year.

Now I realise how much the Mother took care of details of every individual and also, I understand now, why She gave me that look of disapproval when I had asked her to cancel my name from the initial list of tennis players.

The above incidents make us aware of a totally different yardstick compared to the one by which we normally judge the excellence of a performance! Becoming a champion in a tournament is very commendable indeed; however, from the point of view of each player, it is equally important, if not more, to appreciate the progress he has made.

Quite a few young men, enthusiasts of the game, played tennis whenever they could. They would often play from 8.30 a.m. till about 12 noon and again started

their game from 2.30 p.m. till the evening hours. Robi Ganguli, one of the regular players present when the Mother played, told her once: “Mother, we spend so much of our time playing tennis”, and asked, “Mother, we are playing tennis but what *sadhana* are we doing?” The Mother’s answer was very revealing indeed: “When you play — that is your *sadhana* — it is not playfulness, it is your *sadhana*. Your body becomes conscious. It should be conscious till your fingertips.” Robi asked, “Mother, how much have I become conscious?” “Till your elbow” was the answer!

I remember that both Anjou and I at that time were working in the Ashram Press. On Sunday mornings, we would play tennis as long as we were allowed to use the courts. We would then cycle fast to our place of work as we were supposed to clean and wipe the furniture of our section every week and we would be invariably a little late. Ravindra-ji, himself an ideal worker, a very strict task-master, would also be present there keeping track of our work. During the tennis tournament season, we would leave our work according to the timings of our matches and so were not working full time. We came to know that Ravindra-ji had complained to the Mother regarding our undisciplined behaviour, and the Mother had answered simply, “Leave them alone!” I understand now the reason for her answer. These games and matches were making our physical being more conscious and that is also part of her work.

Chandrakant tells us:

Some people would ask the Mother how should one play with Her. The Mother’s reply was: “With each of my strokes I give you energy. Now it depends on how you respond to it.”

He also said that once he had about 114 rallies with the Mother. That was the longest one any player had in the game with her.

Ramakant recounts:

Debou also recollects another incident connected with tennis. The Mother and Pranab-da always played as partners and other pairs would play opposite them. All players would ensure that the balls they hit landed where the Mother could play them easily. Charupada (Debou’s uncle) would always partner Pavita (who later left the Ashram and went to Australia). They would invariably lose to the Mother and Pranab-da. One day, Pavita pleaded with her partner — Charupada — that they should defeat the Mother and Pranab-da at least once. The match started. Charupada and Pavita began returning the balls in areas where the Mother was not able to return them well. Charupada and Pavita won. The next day when Charupada went to see the Mother she told him, “Well, you have succeeded in defeating the Divine, but the devotees of the Mother never try to defeat Her.”

That was a great lesson for Charupada.

(Ramakant Navelkar, *Sport Spirit*, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 30)

Nirod-da writes:

In her vision tennis is the best game spiritually and physically. She used it not only for her physical fitness, but as in everything else, as a medium for her spiritual action on the players. It was this inner movement that interested her as much as the outer one. For, playing with the Divine meant an aspiration, opening, right attitude, reception of her force through the game, as through other means like physical and mental activity. Here, of course, the manner is more direct and more joyful. In other words, it was used more as a means of sadhana. . . . What She imparted to us by this means can be compared to the joy that we had in our talks with Sri Aurobindo, different in kind, of course.

(Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo, 1st edition, pp. 86-87)

Sometimes, when the Mother met me in the Playground later in the evenings she would tell me some things regarding tennis. She had said that she liked the game of tennis very much. She had told me that this game could be played consciously. She did her work while playing tennis. She had said, “In each of my strokes I put my consciousness.” It was a revelation for me. The playing was not merely an outward activity involving her physical, but she was working at the same time on occult levels as well.

On 19.10.1951, my father bought a new tennis racquet for me. I took it to the Mother and showed it to her. She asked me, “What do you want to do with it?”

“Play better” was my answer. She was happy. It seems someone else had told her that he wanted to win.

The Mother said: “Wanting to win a game tightens the consciousness for some people. I was told that if the wish to win is taken out then tennis cannot be played quite as well. But it is not true. I had experimented and now I play just to play well. You hit a hard and placing shot not so that the opponent cannot take it or that you should get a point, but because that was the best way of sending that particular ball. If the opponent can take it you should feel happy for the game becomes more interesting and also because he has played well. You can play just for the joy of the game and yet play your best. If it is played in this way, it can liberate the body from many vital and mental influences.”

In 1952, there were interclub matches in tennis with a leading local club, Cercle Sportif de Pondichéry, meant mostly for the French inhabitants. Our players won all the matches except two in the first encounter and in the return league did not even drop a single set. Robi Ganguli, one of our top players, narrated to Deepshikha in a recorded conversation the following incidents:

In those days, we used to go to play tournaments in the ‘Sporting Circle’ near the Pondicherry Assembly. The Mother used to be rather particular about the

prestige of the Ashram team. She used to ensure that we all played properly and well. Once, in a certain tournament I had to participate, I developed unfortunately an acute stomach-ache. So, I went to Dr. Satyabrata. After examining me he told me that I had developed problems with my appendix and that I just could not participate in the tournament, and that I also had to be perhaps operated upon. Thereafter two days later I went to the Mother and reported to her all that the doctor had told me about my condition. The Mother said, “Nonsense — where do you have the pain?” I showed her the abdominal area where it was paining. She then, touching upon that spot, concentrated for some time and told me, “Not only you will not need any operation at all, you will also go and play the match the day after tomorrow. The first day, play, understand. On the second day, play normally as you do.” It was a tennis match. Then, when I went back to Satya-da to report what the Mother had told me, he was quite perplexed — almost in disbelief. Even though he knew the import of the Mother’s words, he gave me a medicine to ensure that I had no pain when I played on the first day. Then I played the match — I won the match and till today, that pain has never recurred. You see, it is very very difficult to gauge the way She worked in us and for us.

In this matter Robi Ganguli had mentioned another very interesting point. The Mother had told him that the pain came into the body from outside. One could reject it, throw it out on any outside object, for example on the leg of the table. Robi said that after some time he had no pain and he could feel that his side-pillow was pulsating with the pain that was in his body!

We add another incident which may not be out of place here. Once I had twisted my ankle rather badly. After an X-ray, the doctor reported to the Mother that the ligaments were badly frayed, that they may give way causing further damage. Medically it was advisable to immobilise the joint for some time by putting a hard plaster bandage. I had tied an elastic bandage around my ankle to give it some support. That evening when I met the Mother in the Playground she told me that sometime back while coming out of the interview room her foot had knocked against the high threshold of the room. She knew that the toe was damaged — there was a sound, it was broken. She concentrated for a moment, and began walking normally. No one even knew of this. She asked me to remove the bandage around my ankle and walk normally, to place an equal weight on both feet. “Of course you can’t jump. But walk *absolutely normally*.” After this conversation I went out of the room and sat on the threshold of the next door, watching our group members doing their activities. All of a sudden I realised that she was walking towards me. I quickly stood up. “Not that way!” she said, seeing me almost jumping up, and remarked, “The bandage is still there!” Well, I quickly unwrapped it. My foot was really swollen. Even the sole of the foot was swollen and I had difficulty in placing it on the floor.

But I moved about slowly without the bandage, consciously placing my weight on both the feet. I got quite a scolding and advice from some well-wishers. However, I kept quiet and followed the Mother's advice. After some time, my walking was almost normal though a swelling, the size of a small ball protruded on the outer side of the ankle. Our athletics competition was to start soon and when I showed Mother my ankle, asking her if I should participate in the competition or not, she asked me: "Are you afraid?"

"No, Mother."

"Then, do everything." And at the end of the competition season my ankle was just normal.

These two examples demonstrate to some extent the Mother's way of handling our physical difficulties. Not to be afraid, to have faith in the body that it will be all right, to open the physical to Her Force, and naturally Her healing power did the wonder.

In 1953, there was again an interclub tennis meet between our teams and two other local clubs. It was arranged in the form of a tournament, both in singles and doubles. The challenge was much more keen than before, but nevertheless we won both the events. In the singles, two of our players reached the finals.

In 1955, the Ashram players, both ladies and men, were invited again by the Cercle Sportif de Pondichéry to play tennis matches against them. As I was one of the good players, I thought that I would be chosen to play against them. Some of the tennis players, both ladies and men, were informed about the meet and started their practice. However, I was left out and was rather disappointed — and in my thoughts I blamed the organisers. I presumed that it was due to human partiality. When I went to the Mother in the Meditation Hall during the blessings, she told me: "Your name was in the list of players, but I have taken it out. That atmosphere (matches in an outside club) is not for you!" I felt much relieved — so it was the Mother who had removed my name from the list. We are so ignorant. How can we understand her ways and her dealings with people?

I find now in the old file of the Department the notice for this event signed by the Mother. It was held from the 11th to the 18th of December in 1955. Matches were held for ladies and men, in singles and doubles; there were also two teams for mixed doubles. My name was in one of these teams and it had been struck out!

Another game played by the Mother

It will not be out of place here to add one more similar activity of the Mother. After her game of tennis the Mother used to come to the Playground. She had played badminton a few times, with some of the ladies who used to be with her. Violette was the only one who had played this game in her college days and her game was appreciated by the Mother.

They played in a small area on the northern side of the Playground, where no other activity was going on.

Nirod-da writes,

Once after my attendance on Sri Aurobindo, I went as usual to the Tennis Ground to see the Mother playing. She was not there. I was told that she had gone to the Playground. I moved in that direction and reaching there, I saw that she was playing badminton. As soon as she saw me, she said, "Come, come! We shall have a game." I replied, "Mother, I have not played the game since I left school." She added, "It doesn't matter! We are all new hands."

(Mother — Sweetness and Light, p. 81)

(To be continued)

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