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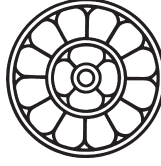
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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

Vol. LXIX

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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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RENEWAL

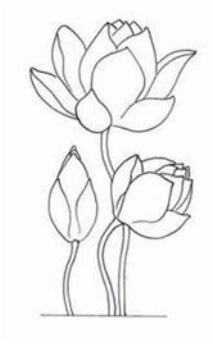
When the heart tires and the throb stills recalling
Things that were once and again can be never,
When the bow falls and the drawn string is broken,
Hands that were clasped, yet for ever are parted,

When the soul passes to new births and bodies,
Lands never seen and meetings with new faces,
Is the bow raised and the fall'n arrow fitted,
Acts that were vain rewedded to the Fate-curve?

To the lives sundered can Time bring rejoining,
Love that was slain be reborn with the body?
In the mind null, from the heart's chords rejected,
Lost to the sense, but the spirit remembers!

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 580)



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 Two Inner Voices and Indications

The Nature of Voices

There are many voices, and all are not divine; this may be only a voice of desire. All that keeps one faithful to the Truth and insists on peace, purity, devotion, sincerity, a spiritual change of the nature can be listened to with profit; the rest must be observed with discrimination and not followed blindly. Keep the fire of aspiration burning, but avoid all impatient haste.

*

Anybody can get “voices” — there are first the movements of one’s nature that take upon themselves a voice — then there are all sorts of beings who either for a joke or for a serious purpose invade with their voices.

*

These voices are sometimes one’s own mental formations, sometimes suggestions from outside. Good or bad depends on what they say and on the quarter from which they come.

*

This kind of manifestation [*hearing voices*] comes very often at a certain stage of the practice of Yoga. My experience is that it does not come from the highest source and cannot be relied upon and it is better to wait until one is able to enter a higher consciousness and a greater truth than any that these communications represent.

Sometimes they come from beings of an intermediate plane who want to use the sadhak for some work or purpose. Many sadhaks accept and some, though by no means all, succeed in doing something, but it is often at the cost of the greater aims of Yoga. In other cases they come from beings who are hostile to the sadhana and wish to bring it to nothing by exciting ambition, the illusion of a great work or some other form of ego. Each sadhak must decide for himself (unless he has a guru to guide him) whether to treat it as a temptation or a mission.

*

It is possible to have a guiding Voice, but it is also easy to make a mistake in this matter. For the mind imitates the guiding voice and, if there are demands and desires in the vital, these also put themselves in the same form and are mistaken for a guiding voice. Make yourself pure of demand and desire, full only of psychic aspiration, surrendered, and in time a real guidance from within will come.

*

An inner voice is a voice only — it may give the direction, but not the force. A voice speaks, it does not act. There is a great difference between reading a book [*for guidance*] and receiving the inner direction.

The Danger of Following Inner Voices

No, these indications of time and these voices were not commands from the Mother. I have indicated to you the truth of this matter; you must follow the rules laid down by the Mother for the physical life; if any change has to be made, either she herself will let you know or you have to get sanction for it from her. No voice heard within can prevail against her word and no intimation that comes through your mind can be accepted as binding unless it is confirmed by her.

You have made a confusion which is often made at the beginning of this kind of experience. It is no doubt the Mother's Force that was working within you or upon you, and some of the experiences, such as that of feeling the Mother in your heart, were perfectly genuine. But when the pressure of the Force works upon the consciousness, then in the plane on which it happens to be working, a great activity of different forces is set in play, e.g. if it is the mind, various mental forces, if it is the vital, various vital forces. It is not safe to take all these for true things, to be accepted without question and followed as commands of the Mother. You received a pressure of a force so strong that it made your head shake for a long time; if the head shook like that, it is a sign that the mind or at least the mental physical was not able yet to

receive all the force and assimilate it; if it had done so, there would have been no movement of the head, all would have been perfectly at ease, calm and still. But your mind started working, interpreting, beginning to put its own meaning on this particular phenomenon and again on others, trying to make a system by which to regulate your conduct and to give it authority, put it as the command of the Mother. The action of the Force was a fact, the interpretation you put on its details of coming and going was a mental formation and had no very positive value.

If you look at it carefully — as I have looked at the details reported by you — you will see that these suggestions were of a very shifting and changeful character, now one thing, now the other; only your mind adapted itself to the changes, adjusted its interpretation to suit them and tried to keep the consistency of a system. But in fact all was irregular and chaotic and it tended to make your action and conduct irregular and chaotic. True intuition would not do that; it would at least tend to balance, harmony, order.

You speak of intuition as regards the indication of time. There is an intuition of Time which is not of the mind and when it plays is always accurate to the very minute and if need be to the very second; but this was not that Intuition, — for it was not always accurate; it came right perhaps several times, then it began to be deceptive, it made you late for Pranam; it began to push towards lateness for the noon meal, make you clash with the convenience of the dining-room workers. It pushed you to be late for the evening and abandoned you altogether, so that in the end you had no evening meal. But your mind had got attached to its own formations and tried to justify, to put a meaning on these chaotic caprices, to explain them by the (very changeful) will of the Mother. All this is well-known to those experienced in Yoga, and it means that these things were not intuitions, but constructions of the mind, mental formations. If there was an intuition at all, it was movements of the intuitive mind, but what the intuitive mind gives to us is the intuition of possibilities, some of which realise themselves, some do not or do it partly only, others miss altogether. Behind these mental constructions are Forces that want to realise themselves and try to use men as their instruments for realisation. These Forces need not be hostile, but they play for their own hand, they want to rule, use, justify themselves, create their own results. If they can do it by getting the Mother's sanction or passing themselves off as commands of the Mother, they are ready to do so; if they cannot get the embodied Mother's sanction, they are ready to represent themselves as sanctions of the Mother in her subtle unseen universal Form or Presence. Some they persuade to make not only a distinction but an opposition between their inner Mother who always tells them what they want to hear and the embodied Mother who, they find, is not so complaisant, checks them, corrects their fancies and their errors. At this stage there is the danger of a more serious invasion of Falsehood, of a hostile vital Force coming in, taking advantage of the mind's errors, which either tries to take the place of the Mother using her name or else creates revolt against her. A persuasion not to come

to Pranam, not to keep her acquainted with your experiences and submit to correction, not to accord the life with her expressed will is a danger-signal at this stage, — for it means that the intruding Force wants space to work free from all control — and that was why I felt compelled to call your attention to the peril of a hostile Maya.

As for voices, there are many voices; each Force, each movement of the mental, vital, physical plane may equip itself with a voice. Your voices were not even at one with each other; one said one thing, when it did not work out another said something inconsistent with it; but you were attached to your mental formation and still tried to follow.

All this happens because the mind and vital in these exaltations of the stress of the sadhana become very active. That is why it is necessary, first, to found your sadhana on a great calm, a great equality, not eagerly rushing after experiences or their fruit, but looking at them, observing, calling always for more and more Light, trying to be more and more wide, open, quietly and discerningly receptive. If the psychic being is always at the front, then these difficulties are greatly lessened, because there is here a light which the mind and vital have not, a spontaneous and natural psychic perception of the divine and the undivine, the true and the false, the imitation and the genuine guidance. It is also the reason why I insist on your referring your experiences to us, because, apart from anything else, we have the knowledge and experience of these things and can immediately put a check on any tendency to error.

Keep yourself open to the Mother's Force, but do not trust all forces. As you go on, if you keep straight, you will come to a time when the psychic becomes more predominantly active and the Light from above prevails more purely and strongly so that the chance of mental constructions and vital formations mixing with the true experience diminishes. As I have told you, these are not yet and cannot be the supramental Forces; it is a work of preparation which is only making things ready for a future Yoga-siddhi.

*

How can the people in this Asram judge whether a man has progressed in Yoga or not? They judge from outward appearances — if a sadhak secludes himself, sits much in meditation, gets voices and experiences, etc. etc. they think he is a great sadhak! X was always a very poor Adhar. He had a few experiences of an elementary kind — confused and uncertain, but at every step he was getting into trouble and going off on a side path and we had to pull him up. At last he began to get voices and inspirations which he declared to be ours — I wrote to him many letters of serious warning and explanation but he refused to listen, was too much attached to his false voices and inspirations and, to avoid rebuke and correction, ceased to

write or inform us. So he went wholly wrong and finally became hostile. You can tell this by my authority to anybody who is puzzled like yourself about this matter.

*

Higher experiences hurt nobody — the question is what is meant by higher? X for instance thought his experiences to be the highest Truth itself — I told him they were all imaginations but only with the result that he became furious with me. There are imitation higher experiences when the mind or vital catches hold of an idea or suggestion and turns it into a feeling, and while there is a rush of forces, a feeling of exultation and power etc. All sorts of “inspirations” come, visions, perhaps “voices”. There is nothing more dangerous than these voices — when I hear from somebody that he has a “voice”, I always feel uneasy, though there can be genuine and helpful voices, and feel inclined to say, “No voices please, — silence, silence and a clear discriminating brain.” I have hinted about this region of imitation experiences, false inspirations, false voices into which hundreds of Yogis enter and some never get out of it in my letter about the intermediate zone. If a man has a strong clear head and a certain kind of spiritual scepticism, he can go through and does — but people without discrimination like X or Y get lost. Especially ego enters in and makes them so attached to their splendid (?) condition that they absolutely refuse to come out. Now a retirement into seclusion gives free scope for this kind of action, as it makes one live entirely in one’s own subjective being without any control except what one’s own native discernment can bring in — and if that is not strong? Ego is of course the strong support of these subjective falsehoods, but there are other supports also. Work and mixing with others — with the contact of the objective that that brings — is not an absolute defence against these things, but it is a defence and serves as a check and as a kind of corrective balance. I notice that those who enter into this region of the intermediate zone usually make for retirement and seclusion and insist on it. These are the reasons why I prefer usually that sadhaks should not take to an absolute retirement, but keep a certain poise between silence and action, the inner and the outer together.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Letters on Yoga — III, CWSA, Vol. 30, pp. 308-13)

INDIAN POLITY

1

I have spoken hitherto of the greatness of Indian civilisation in the things most important to human culture, those activities that raise man to his noblest potentialities as a mental, a spiritual, religious, intellectual, ethical, aesthetic being, and in all these matters the cavillings of the critics break down before the height and largeness and profundity revealed when we look at the whole and all its parts in the light of a true understanding of the spirit and intention and a close discerning regard on the actual achievement of the culture. There is revealed not only a great civilisation, but one of the half dozen greatest of which we have a still existing record. But there are many who would admit the greatness of the achievement of India in the things of the mind and the spirit, but would still point out that she has failed in life, her culture has not resulted in a strong, successful or progressive organisation of life such as Europe shows to us, and that in the end at least the highest part of her mind turned away from life to asceticism and an inactive and world-shunning pursuit by the individual of his personal spiritual salvation. Or at most she has come only to a certain point and then there has been an arrest and decadence.

This charge weighs with an especial heaviness in the balance today because the modern man, even the modern cultured man, is or tends to be to a degree quite unprecedented *politikon zōon*, a political, economic and social being valuing above all things the efficiency of the outward existence and the things of the mind and spirit mainly, when not exclusively, for their aid to humanity's vital and mechanical progress: he has not that regard of the ancients which looked up towards the highest heights and regarded an achievement in the things of the mind and the spirit with an unquestioning admiration or a deep veneration for its own sake as the greatest possible contribution to human culture and progress. And although this modern tendency is exaggerated and ugly and degrading in its exaggeration, inimical to humanity's spiritual evolution, it has this much of truth behind it that while the first value of a culture is its power to raise and enlarge the internal man, the mind, the soul, the spirit, its soundness is not complete unless it has shaped also his external existence and made of it a rhythm of advance towards high and great ideals. This is the true sense of progress and there must be as part of it a sound political, economic and social life, a power and efficiency enabling a people to survive, to grow and to move securely towards a collective perfection, and a vital elasticity and responsiveness that will give room for a constant advance in the outward expression of the mind and the spirit. If a culture does not serve these ends, then there is evidently a defect somewhere either in its essential conceptions or its wholeness or in its application

that will seriously detract from its claims to a complete and integral value.

The ideals that governed the spirit and body of Indian society were of the highest kind, its social order secured an inexpugnable basic stability, the strong life force that worked in it was creative of an extraordinary energy, richness and interest, and the life organised remarkable in its opulence, variety in unity, beauty, productiveness, movement. All the records of Indian history, art and literature bear evidence to a cultural life of this character and even in decline and dissolution there survives some stamp of it to remind however faintly and distantly of the past greatness. To what then does the charge brought against Indian culture as an agent of the life power amount and what is its justification? In its exaggerated form it is founded upon the characteristics of the decline and dissolution, the features of the decadence read backward into the time of greatness, and it amounts to this that India has always shown an incompetence for any free or sound political organisation and has been constantly a divided and for the most part of her long history a subject nation, that her economic system whatever its bygone merits, if it had any, remained an inelastic and static order that led in modern conditions to poverty and failure and her society an unprogressive hierarchy, caste-ridden, full of semi-barbaric abuses, only fit to be thrown on the scrap-heap among the broken rubbish of the past and replaced by the freedom, soundness and perfection or at least the progressive perfectibility of the European social order. It is necessary to reestablish the real facts and their meaning and afterwards it will be time to pass judgment on the political, the economic and the social aspects of Indian culture.

The legend of Indian political incompetence has arisen from a false view of the historical development and an insufficient knowledge of the ancient past of the country. It has long been currently supposed that she passed at once from the freer type of the primitive Aryan or Vedic social and political organisation to a system socially marked by the despotism of the Brahmin theocracy and politically by an absolute monarchy of the oriental, by which is meant the Western Asiatic, type and has remained fixed in these two things for ever after. That summary reading of Indian history has been destroyed by a more careful and enlightened scholarship and the facts are of a quite different nature. It is true that India never evolved either the scrambling and burdensome industrialism or the parliamentary organisation of freedom and self-styled democracy characteristic of the bourgeois or Vaishya period of the cycle of European progress. But the time is passing when the uncritical praise of these things as the ideal state and the last word of social and political progress was fashionable, their defects are now visible and the greatness of an oriental civilisation need not be judged by the standard of these Western developments. Indian scholars have attempted to read the modern ideas and types of democracy and even a parliamentary system into the past of India, but this seems to me an ill-judged endeavour. There was a strong democratic element, if we must use the Western terms, in Indian polity and even institutions that present a certain analogy

to the parliamentary form, but in reality these features were of India's own kind and not at all the same thing as modern parliaments and modern democracy. And so considered they are a much more remarkable evidence of the political capacity of the Indian people in their living adaptation to the ensemble of the social mind and body of the nation than when we judge them by the very different standard of Western society and the peculiar needs of its cultural cycle.

The Indian system began with a variation of the type generally associated with the early history of the Aryan peoples; but certain features have a more general character and belong to a still earlier stage in the social development of the human race. It was a clan or tribal system, Kula, founded upon the equality of all the freemen of the clan or race; this was not at first firmly founded upon the territorial basis, the migratory tendency was still in evidence or recurred under pressure and the land was known by the name of the people who occupied it, the Kuru country or simply the Kurus, the Malava country or the Malavas. After the fixed settlement within determined boundaries the system of the clan or tribe continued, but found a basic unit or constituent atom in the settled village community. The meeting of the people, *viśah*, assembling for communal deliberation, for sacrifice and worship or as the host for war, remained for a long time the power-sign of the mass body and the agent of the active common life with the king as the head and representative, but long depending even after his position became hereditary on the assent of the people for his formal election or confirmation. The religious institution of the sacrifice developed in time a class of priests and inspired singers, men trained in the ritual or in possession of the mystic knowledge which lay behind the symbols of the sacrifice, the seed of the great Brahminic institution. These were not at first hereditary, but exercised other professions and belonged in their ordinary life to the general body of the people. This free and simple natural constitution of the society seems to have been general at first throughout Aryan India.

The later development out of this primitive form followed up to a certain point the ordinary line of evolution as we see it in other communities, but at the same time threw up certain very striking peculiarities that owing to the unique mentality of the race fixed themselves, became prominent characteristics and gave a different stamp to the political, economic and social factors of Indian civilisation. The hereditary principle emerged at an early stage and increased constantly its power and hold on the society until it became everywhere the basis of the whole organisation of its activities. A hereditary kingship was established, a powerful princely and warrior class appeared, the rest of the people were marked off as the caste of traders, artisans and agriculturalists and a subject or menial caste was added, perhaps sometimes as the result of conquest but more probably or more commonly from economic necessity, of servants and labourers. The predominance from early times of the religious and spiritual tendency in the mind of the Indian people brought about at the top of the social system the growth of the Brahmin order, priests, scholars,

legists, repositories of the sacred lore of the Vedas, a development paralleled elsewhere but here given an unequalled permanence and definiteness and supreme importance. In other countries with a less complex mentality this predominance might have resulted in a theocracy: but the Brahmins in spite of their ever-increasing and finally predominant authority did not and could not usurp in India the political power. As sacrosanct priests and legists and spiritual preceptors of the monarch and the people they exercised a very considerable influence, but the real or active political power remained with the king, the Kshatriya aristocracy and the commons.

A peculiar figure for some time was the Rishi, the man of a higher spiritual experience and knowledge, born in any of the classes, but exercising an authority by his spiritual personality over all, revered and consulted by the king of whom he was sometimes the religious preceptor and in the then fluid state of social evolution able alone to exercise an important role in evolving new basic ideas and effecting direct and immediate changes of the socio-religious ideas and customs of the people. It was a marked feature of the Indian mind that it sought to attach a spiritual meaning and a religious sanction to all, even to the most external social and political circumstances of its life, imposing on all classes and functions an ideal, not except incidentally of rights and powers, but of duties, a rule of their action and an ideal way and temperament, character, spirit in the action, a dharma with a spiritual significance. It was the work of the Rishi to put this stamp enduringly on the national mind, to prolong and perpetuate it, to discover and interpret the ideal law and its practical meaning, to cast the life of the people into the well-shaped ideals and significant forms of a civilisation founded on the spiritual and religious sense. And in later ages we find the Brahminic schools of legists attributing their codes, though in themselves only formulations of existing rule and custom, to the ancient Rishis. Whatever the developments of the Indian socio-political body in later days, this original character still exercised its influence, even when all tended at last to become traditionalised and conventionalised instead of moving forward constantly in the steps of a free and living practice.

The political evolution of this early system varied in different parts of India. The ordinary development, as in most other countries, was in the direction of an increasing emphasis on the control of the king as the centre, head and unifying factor of a more and more complex system of rule and administration and this prevailed eventually and became the universal type. But for a long time it was combated and held in check by a contrary tendency that resulted in the appearance and the strong and enduring vitality of city or regional or confederated republics. The king became either a hereditary or elected executive head of the republic or an archon administering for a brief and fixed period or else he altogether disappeared from the polity of the state. This turn must have come about in many cases by a natural evolution of the power of the assemblies, but in others it seems to have been secured by some kind of revolution and there appear to have been vicissitudes,

alternations between periods of monarchical and periods of republican government. Among a certain number of the Indian peoples the republican form finally asserted its hold and proved itself capable of a strong and settled organisation and a long duration lasting over many centuries. In some cases they were governed by a democratic assembly, in more by an oligarchical senate. It is unfortunate that we know little of the details of the constitution and nothing of the inner history of these Indian republics, but the evidence is clear of the high reputation they enjoyed throughout India for the excellence of their civil and the formidable efficiency of their military organisation. There is an interesting dictum of Buddha that so long as the republican institutions were maintained in their purity and vigour, a small state of this kind would remain invincible even by the arms of the powerful and ambitious Magadhan monarchy, and this opinion is amply confirmed by the political writers who consider the alliance of the republics the most solid and valuable political and military support a king could have and advise their reduction not so much by the force of arms, as that would have a very precarious chance of success, but by Machiavellian means, — similar to those actually employed in Greece by Philip of Macedon, — aimed at undermining their internal unity and the efficiency of their constitution.

These republican states were already long established and in vigorous functioning in the sixth century before Christ, contemporary therefore with the brilliant but ephemeral and troubled Greek city commonwealths, but this form of political liberty in India long outlasted the period of Greek republican freedom. The ancient Indian mind, not less fertile in political invention, must be considered superior to that of the mercurial and restless Mediterranean people in the capacity for a firm organisation and settled constitutional order. Some of these states appear to have enjoyed a longer and a more settled history of vigorous freedom than republican Rome, for they persisted even against the mighty empire of Chandragupta and Asoka and were still in existence in the early centuries of the Christian era. But none of them developed the aggressive spirit and the conquering and widely organising capacity of the Roman republic; they were content to preserve their own free inner life and their independence. India especially after the invasion of Alexander felt the need of a movement of unification and the republics were factors of division: strong for themselves, they could do nothing for the organisation of the peninsula, too vast indeed for any system of confederation of small states to be possible — and indeed in the ancient world that endeavour nowhere succeeded, always it broke down in the effort of expansion beyond certain narrow limits and could not endure against the movement towards a more centralised government. In India as elsewhere it was the monarchical state that grew and finally held the field replacing all other forms of political organisation. The republican organisation disappeared from her history and is known to us only by the evidence of coins, scattered references and the testimony of Greek observers and of the contemporary political writers and theorists

who supported and helped to confirm and develop the monarchical state throughout India.

But Indian monarchy previous to the Mahomedan invasion was not, in spite of a certain sanctity and great authority conceded to the regal position and the personality of the king as the representative of the divine Power and the guardian of the Dharma, in any way a personal despotism or an absolutist autocracy: it had no resemblance to the ancient Persian monarchy or the monarchies of western and central Asia or the Roman imperial government or later European autocracies: it was of an altogether different type from the system of the Pathan or the Mogul emperors. The Indian king exercised supreme administrative and judicial power, was in possession of all the military forces of the kingdom and with his Council alone responsible for peace and war and he had too a general supervision and control over the good order and welfare of the life of the community, but his power was not personal and it was besides hedged in by safeguards against abuse and encroachment and limited by the liberties and powers of other public authorities and interests who were, so to speak, lesser co-partners with him in the exercise of sovereignty and administrative legislation and control. He was in fact a limited or constitutional monarch, although the machinery by which the constitution was maintained and the limitation effected differed from the kind familiar in European history; and even the continuance of his rule was far more dependent than that of mediaeval European kings on the continued will and assent of the people.

A greater sovereign than the king was the Dharma, the religious, ethical, social, political, juridic and customary law organically governing the life of the people. This impersonal authority was considered sacred and eternal in its spirit and the totality of its body, always characteristically the same, the changes organically and spontaneously brought about in its actual form by the evolution of the society being constantly incorporated in it, regional, family and other customs forming a sort of attendant and subordinate body capable of change only from within, — and with the Dharma no secular authority had any right of autocratic interference. The Brahmins themselves were recorders and exponents of the Dharma, not its creators nor authorised to make at will any changes, although it is evident that by an authoritative expression of opinion they could and did favour or oppose this or that tendency to change of principle or detail. The king was only the guardian, executor and servant of the Dharma, charged to see to its observance and to prevent offences, serious irregularities and breaches. He himself was bound the first to obey it and observe the rigorous rule it laid on his personal life and action and on the province, powers and duties of his regal authority and office.

This subjection of the sovereign power to the Dharma was not an ideal theory inoperative in practice; for the rule of the socio-religious law actively conditioned the whole life of the people and was therefore a living reality, and it had in the political field very large practical consequences. It meant first that the king had not

the power of direct legislation and was limited to the issue of administrative decrees that had to be in consonance with the religious, social, political, economic constitution of the community, — and even here there were other powers than that of the king who shared with him the right of promulgating and seeing to the execution of administrative decrees independently issued, — neither could he disregard in the general tenor and character and the effective result of his administration the express or tacit will of the people.

The religious liberties of the commons were assured and could not normally be infringed by any secular authority; each religious community, each new or long-standing religion could shape its own way of life and institutions and had its own authorities or governing bodies exercising in their proper field an entire independence. There was no exclusive State religion and the monarch was not the religious head of the people. Asoka in this respect seems to have attempted an extension of the royal control or influence and similar velleities were occasionally shown on a minor scale by other powerful sovereigns. But Asoka's so-called edicts of this kind had a recommendatory rather than an imperative character, and the sovereign who wished to bring about a change in religious belief or institutions had always, in accordance with the Indian principle of communal freedom and the obligation of a respect for and a previous consultation of the wishes of those concerned, to secure the assent of the recognised authorities or to refer the matter to a consultative assembly for deliberation, as was done in the famous Buddhist councils, or to arrange a discussion between the exponents of the different religions and abide by the issue. The monarch might personally favour a particular sect or creed and his active preference might evidently have a considerable propagandist influence, but at the same time he was bound to respect and support in his public office all the recognised religions of the people with a certain measure of impartiality, a rule that explains the support extended by Buddhist and Brahmin emperors to both the rival religions. At times there were, mainly in the south, instances of petty or violent State persecutions, but these outbreaks were a violation of the Dharma due to momentary passion at a time of acute religious ferment and were always local and of a brief duration. Normally there was no place in the Indian political system for religious oppression and intolerance and a settled State policy of that kind was unthinkable.

The social life of the people was similarly free from autocratic interference. Instances of royal legislation in this province are rare and here too, when it occurred, there had to be a consultation of the will of those concerned, as in the rearrangement or the reconstitution of the caste system by the Sena kings in Bengal after its disorganisation during a long period of Buddhist predominance. Change in the society was brought about not artificially from above but automatically from within and principally by the freedom allowed to families or particular communities to develop or alter automatically their own rule of life, *ācāra*. In the sphere of administration the power of the king was similarly hedged in by the standing

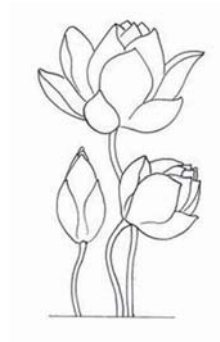
constitution of the Dharma. His right of taxation was limited in the most important sources of revenue to a fixed percentage as a maximum and in other directions often by the right of the bodies representing the various elements of the community to a voice in the matter and always by the general rule that his right to govern was subject to the satisfaction and good-will of the people. This as we shall see, was not merely a pious wish or opinion of the Brahmin custodians of the Dharma. The king was in person the supreme court and the highest control in the execution of the civil and criminal law, but here too his role was that of the executor: he was bound to administer the law faithfully as it stood through his judges or with the aid of the Brahmin legists learned in these matters. He had the complete and unfettered control in his Council only of foreign policy, military administration and war and peace and of a great number of directive activities. He was free to make efficient arrangements for all that part of the administration that served to secure and promote the welfare of the community, good order, public morals, and all such matters as could best be supervised or regulated by the sovereign authority. He had a right of patronage and punishment consistent with the law and was expected to exercise it with a strict regard to an effect of general beneficence and promotion of the public welfare.

There could therefore be ordinarily little or no room in the ancient Indian system for autocratic freak or monarchical violence and oppression, much less for the savage cruelty and tyranny of so common an occurrence in the history of some other countries. Nevertheless such happenings were possible by the sovereign's disregard of the Dharma or by a misuse of his power of administrative decree; instances occurred of the kind, — though the worst recorded is that of a tyrant belonging to a foreign dynasty; in other cases any prolonged outbreak of autocratic caprice, violence or injustice seems to have led before long to an effective protest or revolt on the part of the people. The legists provided for the possibility of oppression. In spite of the sanctity and prestige attaching to the sovereign it was laid down that obedience ceased to be binding if the king ceased to be faithful executor of the Dharma. Incompetence and violation of the obligation to rule to the satisfaction of the people were in theory and effect sufficient causes for his removal. *Manu* even lays it down that an unjust and oppressive king should be killed by his own subjects like a mad dog, and this justification by the highest authority of the right or even the duty of insurrection and regicide in extreme cases is sufficient to show that absolutism or the unconditional divine right of kings was no part of the intention of the Indian political system. As a matter of fact the right was actually exercised as we find both from history and literature. Another more peaceful and more commonly exercised remedy was a threat of secession or exodus which in most cases was sufficient to bring the delinquent ruler to reason. It is interesting to find the threat of secession employed against an unpopular monarch in the south as late as the seventeenth century, as well as a declaration by a popular assembly denouncing any assistance given to the king as an act of treason. A more common remedy was deposition by

the council of ministers or by the public assemblies. The kingship thus constituted proved to be in effect moderate, efficient and beneficent, served well the purposes assigned to it and secured an abiding hold on the affections of the people. The monarchical institution was however only one, an approved and very important, but not, as we see from the existence of the ancient republics, an indispensable element of the Indian socio-political system, and we shall understand nothing of the real principle of the system and its working if we stop short with a view of the regal façade and fail to see what lay behind it. It is there that we shall find the clue to the essential character of the whole construction.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(The Renaissance in India and Other Essays on Indian Culture,
CWSA, Vol. 20, pp. 384-95)*



‘THOU ART THE SOLE REALITY, O LORD . . .’

May 18, 1914

Thou art the sole Reality, O Lord, Thou art Omnipotence and Eternity. And he who is united with Thee in the depths of his being becomes Thy Reality in its eternal and immutable omnipotence. But for others the command is, even while remaining in contact with Thee, to turn their eyes and activity towards the earth; such is the mission Thou hast given them. Here begins the difficulty, for everything depends upon the perfection of the various states of their being and, even after attaining the sublime identification, they must still work at perfecting the instrument which will manifest Thy divine Will. This is where the task becomes arduous. Everything seems to me mediocre, insufficient, neutral, almost inert in the present instrument which Thou makest me call “myself”; and the more I am united with Thee, the more do I realise the mediocrity of its faculties and its manifestation. Everything in it seems to me an incorrigible approximation. And if that cannot disturb me in any way, it is because the true self is lying at Thy feet or nestling in Thy heart or conscious with Thy eternal and immutable Consciousness, and looks at the whole manifestation with a smile of patient and understanding benevolence.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 146)



A CONVERSATION WITH A DISCIPLE

. . . But you understand, if you walk a path like this one, it may last a hundred years!
And more.

There you have to learn everything, you know nothing.

I don't know, but the feeling keeps coming to me very strongly that it doesn't depend on a whole detailed work on this point, that point, that point . . .

No, no.

. . . and that in fact, one day, suddenly something will take place.

Yes, that's right. Hints of this sort come and tell you, "Things will be that way, and that will be that", and then it goes away. And when things are that way, they'll just be that way. Yes, you're right. You are right, that's correct.

How many times, you know, it comes, it swells up like a tide, like a rising wave, that aspiration of all, all the material being, of all the cells, towards the Supreme: "All depends on You — all depends on You." A sense of total helplessness and total incapacity, which in a second can be transformed through an Intervention into a total Wisdom.

And it's the cells that feel this — the thought has said . . . it says all sorts of things, the earth is full of (when you see it in its totality, it's really interesting!), the earth is full of all the human imaginings (which have been turned into "statements of facts"), even the most fantastic, the most contradictory, the most unexpected — it's full of all that, it lives on that, it swarms with that — and the result is that the material world is convinced that all by itself, it can do nothing! Nothing. Nothing, nothing but that: that inextricable and apparently senseless jumble, which is nothing, which is an unbridled imagination in comparison with what can be.

And then, this faith (it's a faith in Matter) that in a flash (a "flash" . . . we don't know, of course, it isn't a question of "time" as we understand it materially), a trigger — and everything can be changed. Changed into the harmonious Rhythm of a Will expressing itself; and a Will which is a Vision: a Vision expressing itself, that's really it; the harmonious Rhythm of a Vision expressing itself.

And all that we can think about it, imagine about it, deduce from it, all of that is nothing, nothing — it's nothing, it doesn't lead you *there*. What leads you *there* is the certitude, the inner faith that when the supreme . . . (supreme what? We can say Truth, Love, Wisdom, Knowledge, all of that is nothing, it's words — the "Something"), when That expresses itself, all will be well.

And all that incoherence — false incoherence — will disappear.

(*silence*)

What's odd, too, is that this conviction, this certitude is necessarily expressed in altogether different actions according to the person: it's the *same thing* taking on different colorations in the aspiration of different consciousnesses.

For instance, I saw recently a sort of exhibition or procession of all the possible theories of humanity explaining the creation (the world, life, existence). All those conceptions came before me one after another, from the seemingly most primitive and most ignorant to the most scientific — and they were all (*smiling*) on the same plane of incomprehension . . . but *all* had the same *right* to express the true aspiration that was behind. And it was miraculous! Even the faith of the savage, even the most primitive religions and most ignorant convictions had behind them the same right to express that aspiration. It was wonderful. And then the sense of the “superiority of intelligence” fell away completely, instantly.

It is the same thing for those oppositions, those contradictions that are called “violent and vulgar” between the intellectual (and especially scientific) progress of the human species and, by contrast, the apparently foolish stupidity of those who react against conventions; well, that feeling of inferiority or superiority that you find among so-called reasonable beings, all of that disappeared instantly in a perception of *the whole*, in which *everything* — everything — was the result of the same Pressure (*downward gesture*) towards progress. It's like a pressure exerted on Matter (*same gesture*) to draw the response out of it. And whatever form that response may take, it's part of the general Action.

I told you last time what had happened: that sense of liberation; yes, a liberation from suffocation, and a kind of opening and well-being — that has become established. And the understanding (like the understanding of a detached witness) that everything, all those difficulties that come and pile up are absolutely indispensable so that nothing is forgotten in the march forward — so that *everything* goes together; and that it's only the vision of the details that blots out the vision of the whole.

Voilà.

It will be like the chick popping out of the egg all at once: as long as it's inside, to the superficial vision there's no chick; and all at once, pop! out it comes.

Let's hope so!

* * *

[*As the disciple prepares to leave, Mother inquires about his health:*]

. . . Now, the last stage is that the body should forget it has been ill; that's very important.

Very difficult.

It's very important.

I am constantly struggling against pernicious suggestions. This physical mind gives me a lot of trouble — a lot of trouble. It has terrible apprehensions and fears.

Oh, absolutely.

You understand, it has received so many blows . . .

Exactly!

. . . that it lives in an anxiety which ruins everything.

Yes, yes.

What can you do?!

Persist.

I saw it in my own case. It was interesting enough, because from my earliest childhood, I was in contact with the higher consciousness (*gesture above the head*) and in a real stupefaction at the state of the earth and people — when I was very little. I was in a stunned amazement all the time. And the blows I received! . . . Constantly. Each thing came to me as a stab or a punch or a hammer blow, and I would say to myself, “What? How is this possible?” You know, all the baseness, all the lies, all the hypocrisy, all that is crooked, all that distorts and undoes the flow of the Force. And I would see it in my parents, in circumstances, in friends, in everything — a stupefaction. It wasn't translated intellectually: it was translated by that stupefaction. And when I was very little, the Force was already there (*gesture above the head*); I have a clear memory from the age of five: I only had to sit down for a moment to feel it, that Force which would come. And I went through the whole of life, up to the age of twenty or twenty-one (when I began to encounter Knowledge and someone who explained to me what it all was) like that, in that stupefaction: “What — is this life? What — is this what people are? What . . . ?” And I was as though beaten black and blue, *mon petit*!

Then, from the age of twenty or twenty-five, that habit of pessimism began. It

took all that time, all those blows, for it to come.

But with regard to health, whenever I had an illness (for me it was never an “illness”, it was still part of the blows), I had a trust, a complete assurance that it had no reality. And very young (very young, maybe around the age of thirteen or fourteen), every time a blow came, I would tell my body, “But what’s the use of being ill since you’ll just have to get well!” And that stayed until I was over thirty: what’s the use of being ill since you have to get well? And it faded away only little by little, with that growing pessimism.

Now I have to undo all that work.

But with you, it’s the same thing, because you were already conscious when you were small (without being conscious of it), and when all those terrible things happened to you, there was something that remained conscious, but those things “cultivated” the pessimism — that pessimism of the physical mind. And now you have to undo all that work. And what a work it is, phew! . . .

You understand, it was *impossible*, impossible for me to believe in (“believe” — even understand) all those movements of betrayal, of jealousy, all the movements of negation of the Divine in human beings and things — it was impossible, I didn’t understand! But it came from every side, striking and striking and striking. . . . So all that had to be undone.

And with you, it was the same thing — I know it very well. I know it very well. And for you it took brutal forms.

But we only have to hold out, that’s all.

We must erase the imprint little by little. And in fact, the only way to erase the imprint is to make contact with the Truth. There is no other way — all reasoning, all intelligence, all understanding, all that is totally useless with this physical mind. The only thing is to make contact. That’s just what the cells value: the possibility of making contact.

Making contact.

On the material level, japa is very good for that. When your head is tired and you are a little weary of forever contradicting that pessimism, you just have to repeat your japa, and automatically you make contact. To make contact. That’s something the cells value a lot. A lot. It’s a very good way, because it’s a way that isn’t mental, it’s a mechanical way, it’s a question of vibration.

There, *mon petit*, we must endure.

October 10, 1964

THE MOTHER

“ABSOLUTE” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

Now I pick up the overhead theme at its culmination, the supreme plane whose forefront is the Supermind and which bears behind the Supermind the Ananda or Delight-plenitude, the Chit-Tapas or fullness of Consciousness-Force, the Sat or status of immeasurable Existence — yes, I take the supreme manifesting plane and regard it as still less than the very being of the Absolute, the utter unfathomable all-sufficient Divine. But have I poetically succeeded? Are not my lines somewhat stiff in expression and rhythm?

ABSOLUTE

Lustre whose vanishing point we call the sun —
Joy whose one drop drowns seas of all desire —
Life rendering time's heart a hollow hush —
Potence of poise unplumbed by infinite space!

Not unto you I strain, O miracled boons,
But that most inward marvel, the sheer Self
Who bears your beauty; and, devoid of you,
~~unknown darkness still would crown my love!~~
His dark unknown would yet fulfil my love!

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

No, they are not stiff: the expression is successful and the rhythm harmonious. The first three lines are magnificent.

1 November 1935

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

THE INSPIRATION AND ART OF JOHN A. CHADWICK

The most famous work of the prominent philosophical writer, C. D. Broad, *Mind and Its Place in Nature*, is inscribed to J. A. Chadwick. Although this inscription is enough to hint to us the esteem in which, even as a young man, that student of philosophy and Mathematical Logic was held, we can never guess from it that he deserves an essay which might well be entitled *Chadwick and His Place in the World*. For it is not as a philosopher or mathematical logician that he has become significant, nor was it at Cambridge that he did so. Only after leaving Trinity College to sail to India and after throwing up a professorship at an educational institution at Lucknow he suddenly flowered into a poet of exceptional quality. What brought about the flowering was his stay in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram of Yoga at Pondicherry. There, after a short spell, he made one of a group of poets writing in English whom, during the 1930s, Sri Aurobindo carried with a most acute and intimate care, both analytic and constructive, towards the Ideal of a perfect mystical and spiritual expression.

As we might expect of a mind trained to careful intellectuality, Chadwick — or Arjava, as he came to be known from the name Arjavananda (meaning “Joy of straightforwardness”) given him by Sri Aurobindo — did not achieve closeness to the Ideal through a lavish spontaneity whose very breath is song. A deliberate self-critical compact perfection belonged to him. Instead of taking the Kingdom of Heaven by a stormy frontal assault, he laid slow siege to it and won its treasures by patient compulsion — a victory no less complete though differing in plan and technique.

Here too is a superb energy of imagination expended not so much in a royal diffusion as in concentrated exquisiteness or magnificence. We feel, to quote the poet's own words from a sonnet, “a chaos-ending chisel-smite” in each work — a faultless statue emerges in which every line and curve has been traced by an inspired precision. Naturally the result is less prolific — a volume¹ of merely 327 short poems with 2 playlets in verse, published soon after their author's untimely death in 1939 — but a greater stress is brought to bear upon the understanding, a stress which produces a peculiar intensity of rapture packed with haloed mysteries, so to speak — unfamiliar twilights, symbolic enchantments, hieratic seclusions — and yet no narrowness in the ultimate revelation made: the sole difficulty lies in turning the key which throws the esoteric doors wide open into expanse on shining expanse of heights and depths.

It is an art which may be a little baffling at first, but for those who can absorb its strange atmosphere there awaits a reward often of a beauty which takes one's

breath away by its magic spells or by its grave amplitudes of spirituality. The style is highly original with unexpected turns that are vividly forceful and a power of pregnant construction armed with a genius for rhythmical innovation is everywhere manifest — as in that finely as well as incisively imaged poem called *Communication*:

Ebbing and waning of joy, the day estranged
Here, petalled evening droops;
Below sky-rim the petals have drifted — all is changed

To a dim listless stalk where Twilight stoops
Horizonward; and then
The black scorpion, Night, lifts claws of loneliness and loops

The zenith and all the sky
(Its venomèd blackness is in the life-blood of men).
. . . O then, love-armèd cry,

Bring with compulsive dream the moon's foreglow
Over the difficult edge
Of being, that eastward-straining hopes may know

Lit pearl of untarrying pledge, —
Counsel, and laughter, and undissembling eyes.
Time-tameless thought shall dredge

Wide welcome for the glimpsed sail of moonrise,
The ship of understanding and conjoined wills,
The keel of trust from far-off friendly skies.

Remarkable as this poem is, with its subtle variations of tempo and appositely manipulated expressive drive which promise a capacity for effective blank verse if ever the poet were to be inspired in that direction, Chadwick's most majestic work seems to be those flights where bursts upon the gaze an imaginative colour widening every moment into some "objective correlative" of high philosophy charged with the profoundest spiritual illumination. A striking instance is *Moksha*:

As one who saunters on the seabanks in a wilderness of day
Is dazzled by the sunshot marge and rippling counterchange
Of wavebeams and an eagerhood of quivering wings that range —
Grey on the sky's rim, — white on the foam-pathway, —

Each man is wildered myriadly by oversight and surface tone
 Engirdling soul with clamour, by this fragmentary mood,
 This patter of Time's marring steps across the solitude
 Of Truth's abidingness, Self-Blissful and Alone.

But when eastward-streaming shadows bring the hush of eventide
 The wave-lapped sun can wield again his glory of hencegoing
 And furnish by his lowlihead vast dreams of heaven-knowing —
 A golden wave-way to the One where Beauty's archetypes abide.

One can see how deftly the fourteener can be modulated by a hand conscious of the possibility it offers of many internal tones — swirl and stream and surge playing significant roles within the cumulative dignity of the whole movement. The two alexandrines in the above quotation are very suggestive also — the fourth line with its truncated first foot and its inverted accent in the fourth produces by the resultant emphasis on “grey” and “white” just the changeful bewildering effect which is sought to be conveyed by the sense of the stanza; while the eighth line, marking a contrast to the three longer ones preceding it, is eloquent of the self-compactness and isolation attributed therein to Truth. In a similar way the comparative lengthening out of the finale seems to indicate the triumphant roll of the meaning like a lustrous billow towards some immutable mystery beyond the mind's horizon. All the three stanzas are consummately inspired art, and no greater praise is possible than that the middle — particularly in its second half — might well be one of the supreme moments of the Upanishads, a *Mantra*.

The large and lofty utterance met with in the major Upanishads, carrying with it an echo of some rhythm infinitely vibrating out of a stupendous Unknowable, is indeed a *rara avis* in the atmosphere of the English language. Hardly any recent poet of the British Isles writing with a marked mystical *penchant* shows even a glimmer of it. AE has filled his verse with a wonderful simplicity of soul-vision; Yeats of the earlier phase brings a poignancy dipped in secret wells of faery colour and, when the later masterful will is at play, there is the “gold mosaic” of “God's holy fire” and the cry to be gathered into “the artifice of eternity”; Kathleen Raine now and then gives her song a crystalline touch of inward meditation in which yet the pulse both of the elements and of the human heart finds a richer rhythm. Among the less known poets there are James Cousins and Joyce Chadwick, gravely or delicately articulate in their intimacy with Light. But the best work of all these, whatever its aesthetic perfection, falls short of the eagle-height of spiritual quality. Not the substance by itself confers that pure zenith; what is necessary is a profound intonation vitally one with substance and language, and John Chadwick at his finest reflects something of this triple intensity because his English mind has more consistently steeped itself in Yoga and caught a breath from what we may call the

luminous spaces of Sri Aurobindo's inner life.

If we wish to find among English-writing poets a match to that pair of lines ending with the full yet far-away gong of the word "alone" we shall have to pick out from Wordsworth his noblest music. Curiously enough the verses that equal them are just the two that also end with the same word's long rounded *o* and bell-like consonance — the lines on Newton's face in the bust at Cambridge:

The marble index of a mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.

And here it may be significant to mention that the terminal "alone" is not confined to Wordsworth's and Chadwick's Upanishadic pictures. It seems to have some innate affinity with the peak utterance of the Spirit, for it crowns too one of Sri Aurobindo's own poetic masterpieces, a passage visioning the very state hinted by Chadwick:

Across a void retreating sky he glimpsed
Through a last glimmer and drift of vanishing stars
The superconscient realms of motionless peace
Where judgment ceases and the word is mute
And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone.²

To continue with Chadwick: he is not only a spiritual poet but an occult one. And in his occult sensibility too he strikes a new note. His Unicorn —

Unicorn uncreated,
Time may grow tired, not you!
For changes of rhythm are dated
By the clang of your topaz shoe —

and his Phoenix —

Tranquil the phoenix poise of golden-crested
Fleece-white and sorrowless
Head of the undefeated vision who had nested
Where on Time's moments looms the Everlivingness —

are neither of them merely traditional figures; they are a fresh contribution to symbolic sight. The white Unicorn with its single pointed projection on the head seems to be a symbol of purity and of faithfulness to a spiritual purpose, while the golden yellow of the topaz is emblematic of some spiritual principle behind manifested life in the recurrences as well as the variations of Time's movement. The Phoenix appears to

stand for a power of some solar altitude of divine Truth, a power missioned to renew in the heart of Time the flame of aspiration towards the unquenchable and imperturbable luminosity above that has to be caught and intimately felt in Time's flux. But the achievement of Chadwick's symbolic poetry is the living body the spiritual-occult significances acquire in a verse where vision, word and rhythm are organically knit together. It is this that constitutes the revelatory originality of his symbolism.

Symbolic sight again, blending now the outer scene with an inner occult-spiritual lucidity of shape and significance, casts its spell on us in that short piece called *Unveering Light*:

Across unmoving lake
A mirror-theme
Of swans with white wings take
Their endless dream.

Poise-perfect is the set
Of lunar-bright
Pinions of trance where silence met
Unveering light.

The swan is an old symbol of the human soul as a representative of the immaculate Eternal. But here it is given a specially revelatory attitude. The compound adjective "lunar-bright" immediately refers our imagination from the embodied soul to some Beyond of sheer Bliss. And the relationship indicated between the bird and the lake suggests a unison between the soul and environing nature. Here is a double reception of the transcendent beauty and purity — the soul realising its divine origin not only by an in-look towards the heavenly height but also by an out-look upon the natural elements amongst which it lives with the ideal of progressively manifesting the supreme light in the changeful character of earth's limited existence. That existence is here glimpsed in a transformed moment of tranquillity and made one in substance as it were with the soul's vision of its own enraptured being — and the whole double identity is caught by the poet's eye in a tranced inner dimension where the perfection that is to be accomplished in Time waits full-formed in an immutable *Nunc Stans*, an ever-standing Now of Eternity.

In the pure occult also, as distinguished from the spiritual or the spiritual-occult — the pure occult of the mid-worlds behind us where a whole vast life of subjective-objective motifs, beautiful or bewildering, fantastic or formidable, proceeds on its way, pulling various strings of our own psychology — there too Chadwick captures a new note. Sri Aurobindo has contrasted Walter de la Mare's *Listeners* with Chadwick's *Totalitarian*, not as a disclosure of the spiritual with that of the

occult but rather as the occult's superficial glimpse with its profound sight. De la Mare's is a poem of fanciful hauntedness, enveloping earthly objects with a faint ghostly atmosphere — Chadwick's carries a direct focussing of realities clean beyond earth, a vivid vision powerfully evocative of the sheer occult. Not only do the actions described have entirely different gestures: the very sceneries differ though apparently similar. Take de la Mare's

. . . the faint moonbeams on the dark stair
That goes down to the empty hall

and

. . . the dark turf 'neath the starred and leafy sky.

Delicately imitative, this, of an occult landscape, but how stark and realistic a projection of some "terrible elsewhere" are Chadwick's

. . . the empty eerie courtyard
With no name

or

. . . a crescent moon swung wanly
White as curd.

And, as the poems proceed, de la Mare goes on increasing his exquisite ghostliness with strange movements whose meaning is elusive, while Chadwick presses home to a weirdly dynamic symbol of a soul-attitude struck by the human in accord with some drama of hell's tyranny and murderous monotony. Here is de la Mare's ending:

Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward
When the plunging hoofs were gone —

and this is the way Chadwick recounts how his "traveller", feeling frantic after having flashed his single sword-blade in a night where none resisted,

Hurled his weapon through the gloaming,
 Took no aim;
 Saw his likenesses around him
 Do the same:
 Viewed a thousand swordless figures
 Like his own —
 Then first knew in that cold starlight
 Hell, alone.

De la Mare's poetry is undeniably fine in a daintily phantasmal vein, but it is ever so far from Chadwick's dreadful revelation of an occult depth reaching its climax with the gripping resonance once more of that predicative epithet about whose poetic suggestiveness we have already remarked.

Perhaps something of this kind of dreadful revelation dealing with the soul's own recesses is to be found in a few verses of that eccentric little genius Emily Dickinson, where she emphasises the individual's solitary confrontation of himself in some spectral profundity of consciousness. She lacks Chadwick's direct occult sight and consummate symbolic art, but she has an occult feel by means of an inward-straining thought and a terse elliptic style adding to the psychological eeriness:

One need not be a chamber to be haunted,
 One need not be a house;
 The brain has corridors surpassing
 Material place.

Far safer of a midnight meeting
 External ghost,
 Than an interior confronting
 That whiter host.

Far safer through an Abbey gallop,
 The stones achase,
 Than, moonless, one's own self encounter
 In lonesome place . . .

Even when a scene of external earth-nature is clearly recognisable, Chadwick always throws a visionary hue upon it, calling up immediately a soul-reality: as in that atmospheric snatch, half Yeatsian half de la Maresque —

Drowsy pinions whitely winging
 Smoulder dimly past the strand —

or in those lines that end with a most sensitive vibration from the depths of the Godward-turned psyche —

. . . the eve
Has limned a trance upon the air,
A swirl of sunset on the stream,
An ecstasy of quivering bells that seem
Born from the heart of prayer.

But Chadwick is not only depth-suggestive; he has many moments that burst upon us with amplitude and power. Instead of a sensitive psychic vibration, indirect in its description of the physical stars twinkling as though tinkling, he can look straight at the constellated firmament and give us an in-feeling of it in a line where the entirely monosyllabic pentameter with its various dispositions of similar or dissimilar vowels and consonants and with its meaningful massings of stress makes a most effective conjuration:

You stars that span with strength long leagues of space.

Or else, with less direct power but equally direct communication of a vast experience-value, we have the same starry phenomenon:

To gaze and gaze upon the fire-strewn sky
Until the hush of heaven loom within.

Here there is a breath of what Sri Aurobindo has called “overhead” rhythm. This rhythm, winging down as if from some boundlessness above the brain-clamped mind, tends in Chadwick to touch at times the very summit. And the Upanishadic magnificence of a poetic gesture like the following apostrophe to the transcendent divine Force which he visions as drawing the quintessence of a triple Absolute of Being, Consciousness, Delight, and reigning from on high over the mental plane like a Sun-kingdom of Knowledge, is, like those verses about Truth’s solitude that is perfectly withdrawn from the mind’s “fragmentary mood”, the most memorable of Chadwick’s poetic victories:

Unsullied wisdom of gold which was thrice refined,
Shine in the clear space of holy noon
On all the upland hollows of the mind:
May every shadow-harboured thought be strewn
With solar vastness and compelled
To feel all fear and all self-limits quelled.

Of course, the fact that a poet seizes or at least neighbours the *Mantra* does not mean that he is so filled with a supreme spirituality that he can never drop to a lower level of utterance. Neither must we expect all his speech on that level to be one tissue of originality. In Chadwick we may trace, except when he is at his best, certain general influences from poets preceding or contemporary. The Nature-poems, startlingly fresh though they are as a whole, share in details the vocabulary of Edmund Blunden's inspired pastoralism enamoured of the English countryside. The magic vision within many verses casts our mind back to Yeats's Celticism and here and there is a drift of dreamy fancifulness not very far removed from de la Mare. Even on some occasions the colouring shows a touch of the minutely marking as well as luxurious painter eye of the young Tennyson, and not infrequently the phrasing bears an aspect of traditional poeticism from Spenser down to William Watson, which especially the rebellious modernist ear may dub wearying. In a semi-modernist manner we get at a few moments an affinity to Gerard Manley Hopkins. But if we look deeper and hear more intently we realise that in the echo-semblances themselves a novel genius runs to create a general pattern of mind which is sheer Chadwick and that an artistic flair lends by vigorous compactness or airy suggestiveness originality even of language to the *ensemble* and makes almost every stanza if not every line sparkle in at least one place with pure dew on whatever petals may have grown from the past or have reflected contemporary burgeonings. This should restrain the critic from pronouncing anything to be stale or even merely traditional.

Further, we must remember that Chadwick is not confined to old forms of verse. He is perfectly aware of recent tendencies and can exploit the possibilities of new forms without losing the true poetic quality. Thus he has several experiments in free verse, each an artistic success, and at times he not only works out the substance revelatorily in faultless language and rhythm but also brings superb depth and energy:

A green-grey twilight hush in the ageless forest,
 After the immense canopy of boughs
 Has strained all glare and vivid colours from the sunlight.
 Plinths of tree and stems of giant creeper rise up from the floor of dimness
 To the full height of these grey spaces
 In a cathedral calm.
 A plashy thud of some hard-rinded fruit
 Ripples momentarily the tapestries of hush.
 The greyness and the quiet are over all, a many-fathomed covering of ocean
 mystery.

The turbulence of harsh atomic being,
 Those hard and garish colours of the upper day
 Are no more;
 And only a faint dissolving line, a bubble's membrane holds
 Frontiers of existence and not-being.

We may apply to this the remarks made by Sri Aurobindo about another splendid performance in free verse: "Its rhythmic achievement solves entirely the problem of free verse. The object of free verse is to find a rhythm in which one can dispense with rhyme and the limitations of a fixed metre and yet have a poetic rhythm, not either a flat or an elevated prose rhythm cut up into lengths. I think this poem shows how it can be done. There is a true poetic rhythm, even a metrical beat, but without any fixity, pliant and varying with the curve or sweep of the thought and carrying admirably its perfect poetic expression." We may also note here, in passing, the phrases: "a plashy thud" and "a bubble's membrane". They do not sound quite poetic in the old style of verse-writing. But they are entirely in place not merely in free verse but also in the type of work turned out by Chadwick in all forms, and they constantly mix a sort of modernism with his usual avoidance of the modernist degradation of poetry. They are intrinsic to his aim, as Sri Aurobindo pointed out at the very commencement of Chadwick's poetic career when an objection was raised by a reader to the use of the phrase: "bobbing globelets". Sri Aurobindo wrote: "I entirely dispute the legitimacy of the comment. It is based on a conventional objection to undignified and therefore presumably unpoetic words and images — an objection which has value only when the effect is uncouth or trivial, but cannot be accepted otherwise as a valid rule. Obviously, it might be difficult to bring in 'bobbing' in an epic or other 'high' style, although I suppose Milton could have managed it and one remembers the famous controversy about Hugo's *'mouchoir'*. But in poetry of a mystic (occult or spiritual) kind this does not count. The aim is to bring up a vivid suggestion of the thing seen and some significance of the form, movement etc. through which one can get at the life behind and its meaning; the adjective here serves its purpose very well as a touch in the picture and no other could have been as true and living or given as well the precise movement needed."

Modern-sounding or traditional-seeming, Chadwick's artistic technique is nearly always flawless, and it is original by more than a living sense of word-value and rhythm-value reinforcing thought and vision: there is the originality of the thought and the vision themselves. And this originality is of a rare order by being mysticism which is not merely intellectual or emotional but comes of a genuine intuitive hold on hidden domains. Even when the symbols chosen are old ones, verging on the well-worn, he can transmute everything into a masterpiece. Who has not heard of the shell that brings from its whorl the long boom of breakers? And has not Swinburne familiarised us to easy enthusiasms like "the sea, my mother", and "my mother the sea"? But take now Chadwick's:

Out of an infinite ocean
 Time arose;
 By his shore with a thunderous motion
 That Splendour flows.

Here is one shell of its bringing,
 Cast on the beach;
 Hold it and hark to the singing, —
 Eternity speech.

Flotsam and jetsam of Oneness
 Unbaffled and free,
 Spurring Time to remember his sonhood,
 His mother — the Sea.

With masterful ease the whole depth of the poetic significance of sea-born land and stray sea-cast shell is plumbed and a power of mystical sight creates a little marvel of profound word and rhythm out of what may seem almost nursery-rhyme properties. In view of this power, whether exercised with striking novelty or within a known symbology, Chadwick's art in even its most traditional appearance must be distinguished as a new element at play in poetic literature, a pioneering triumph of one kind in what Sri Aurobindo has designated as "Future Poetry". And this triumph which springs from a heart of spiritual feeling attuned to an inmost Presence never so permanent and piercing in any English poet and approached in intensity by perhaps none else than Shelley and AE, is not a matter of a few isolated poems. In piece after piece that Presence makes Chadwick an expert discloser of mystical songscapes. We should hardly exaggerate in saying that it leads his poetry to overtop in sustained quality the production of all his English contemporaries and to hold a promise of greatness rendering his premature death a tragedy whose true significance can be adequately uttered only by a fineness of word comparable to his own, whether the fineness quickens the imagination by a sober felicity as in

Boles of strength with that whisper of blessing,

or by a rhapsodical beauty as in

Lustrously pale like the starlight when the air has been washed by the rain,

or with a happy audacity as in

Gleam and bend cloud-centaurs from afar
 Moon-bow that is aiming, silver-taut,
 Arrows made of silence at a star,

or with a vividly strange suggestiveness —

Only a moon-pale ledge of rock,
 Lapped by that sullen waste
 Of Limbo-drift where a shadowy flock
 Of dream-birds spaced
 In the unquiet wideness of their loneliness
 Are as that sky-line aimlessly empty of good —

or with an exceedingly exquisite “moon-prompted” aspiration —

Power and immaculate Glory
 Whom outward eyes may greet —
 In this hour might the inward quicken,
 Cloudlessly meet
 Mother and Beauty Divine —

or with an august intuitiveness coupled with an inmost poignancy, setting Shiva before us —

Aimless yet knowing each goal, —
 As unfettered Space
 Moves not at all,
 But centres in each place
 One instant effortless control;
 Or as the pity finds Thy face
 When on Thy shrine the tears and bel-leaves fall,

or with a profound ingenuity of “counterchanged” sense-perceptions spiritualised —

Timid clamour-pomps we see
 Whose mingled sound
 Leave naked yet the limbs of earthly faring:
 While all around
 The undraped silences go Selfward, wearing
 Form’s ecstasy —

or with a powerful insight symbolising the seer-trance by a “rock-hewn cavern” open to unrealised spiritual possibilities —

So sleep the strong and keep their guarded peace,
 Whilst gracious dreams from aisles of future Time
 Lean past the bars of Being, whisper their secret word,
 Yearn to be made rock . . . Inlapse Sublime —

or with a fusion of almost all the varieties exemplified above of poetic imaged speech in a grand attitude of keenly felt self-dedication to the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo:

Precarious boat that brought me to this strand
 Shall feed flame-pinnacles from stem to stern,
 Till not one rib my backward glance can find —
 Down to the very keelson they shall burn.

Now to the unreal sea-line I would no more yearn;
 Fain to touch with feet an unimagined land. . . .
 The gates of false glamour have closed behind;
 There is no return.

AMAL KIRAN
 (K.D. SETHNA)

(From the article 'Two Neglected English Poets' in
Inspiration and Effort — Studies in Literary Attitude and Expression, pp. 143-60
 published by The Integral Life Foundation, USA, 1995)

Notes and References

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There only were Silence and the Absolute.
Sri Aurobindo

(*Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 34)

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of June 2016)

Chapter: LIII

The Inexplicable Behind the Emotional Upsurge

Sri Aurobindo sat amidst the other guests fresh from the prison — rarely speaking and his eyes fixed afar. He appeared to have withdrawn his attention from all that was going on around him and sat completely self-absorbed. Probably the capital punishment awarded to two of his compatriots cast a shadow on his face. Once in a while he exchanged a few words with *Dadababu*. What a tender voice! There wasn't the slightest trace of excitement in it.

Sudhiranjan Das, C. R. Das's kin.
(He refers to C. R. Das as *Dadababu*, Grandpa)¹

The banquet over, one by one the guests took leave of Sri Aurobindo and their host. Sri Aurobindo could not but have discussed with C. R. Das about appealing against the order of the Sessions Judge awarding different degrees of punishment for his fellow-accused, though sixteen of them had been acquitted.

Late in the afternoon Sri Aurobindo went over to 6, College Square, the house of his maternal uncle Krishna Kumar Mitra who had been deported to and detained at Agra. He was most affectionately received by his aunt Lilavati Devi and his cousins, Sukumar, Kumudini and Basanti. The depressed air of the family brightened up; streams of people called on him. Among them were Rabindranath Tagore, Jyotish Chandra Ghose, a distinguished Professor and scholar who led several agitations against the British administration and spent a total of twenty years in jail and also wrote a biography of Sri Aurobindo (published in 1926) during one of his incarcerations in Mandalay jail along with Subhash Chandra Bose; Jitendra Lal Bannerji, the renowned professor of English (extracts from whose article on Sri Aurobindo in the *Modern Review* were reproduced in the previous chapter), Gispati Kavyatirtha, renowned Sanskrit scholar and a leading nationalist and Bejoy Chandra Chatterji, Bar-at-Law and son-in-law of the great Moderate leader Sir Surendranath and who worked for the *Bande Mataram* for a period. Admirers often gathered on the road, satisfied even with a stolen glimpse of him. A newspaper reported:

Bengalis and Punjabis, old and young, rich and poor, even the lame and the cripple amongst the street beggars — whoever are coming to him he is receiving and answering questions of one and all, quite freely and with his usual simplicity of manners.²

Abinash Bhattacharya, who served Sri Aurobindo like his personal assistant, had been condemned to deportation for life. His younger brother, Upendra, who was present at the court when the judgment was delivered was heart-broken and feared that it would be hard for their mother to bear the shock. But surprisingly, the brave mother received the news with exemplary calm.

Upendra paid a visit to the College Square residence of Sri Aurobindo a day later. He saw two police constables standing at the entrance and he learnt that C.I.D. officials kept their vigil on the house round the clock. Upendra went upstairs. Informed by Sukumar Mitra of his visit, Sri Aurobindo at once came out to see the young man. In his smiling figure Upendra saw the *Jyotirmaya Purusha* — the Luminous One. All his anguish vanished in an instant. Sri Aurobindo enquired of him about his mother and asked him to assure her that Abinash would not be required to suffer deportation for more than seven years. Further, he told him that steps were being taken to appeal in the High Court against all the convictions. Writes Upendra concluding this chapter of his memoirs:

Many a time had I seen Sri Aurobindo earlier . . . but never before had I been lucky enough to talk to him. Today my long-standing aspiration was fulfilled; I stood blessed. The dim flicker of my life's lamp burnt bright with a new vigour. In ecstasy did I recite a line from the poet:

*Never say with sadness
That your birth was pointless
Or that the life was but a dream!*³

On the 25th of May 1909 three appeals were filed on behalf of three groups of convicts and they were all admitted. Arguments began on the 9th of August and the High Court remained occupied with the case for 47 days. As predicted by Sri Aurobindo, Barindra Kumar's and Ullaskar's capital punishment was reduced to transportation for life and Abinash Bhattacharya's life-imprisonment to seven years of incarceration in the Andamans. The same applied to the other close associate of Sri Aurobindo, Sudhir Kumar Sarkar.

The Chief Justice, Lawrence Hugh Jenkins, thanking the Defence lawyers "who spared no effort of industry" to bring to the Court's notice "everything that could be legitimately argued for their clients' advantage," said in conclusion:

I desire in particular to place on record my high appreciation of the manner in which the case was presented to this Court by their leading advocate, Mr. C. R. Das.⁴

Now we must turn to a sample survey of the reaction to Sri Aurobindo's acquittal, as reflected in the press.

As far as the reports and editorials from the newspapers in English, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Statesman* and *The Bengalee* are concerned, they are reproduced directly from their old volumes. But the other newspapers mentioned are not available in their original. Extracts from them are from the C.I.D. reports on the "Native Newspapers". The English rendering done by various officers of the then Government are hardly specimens of good translation. Sri Aurobindo's name has been differently spelt in different papers, we have changed them to 'Aurobindo' for consistency.

Wrote the *Amrita Bazar* editorially in its issue of 7 May 1909:

. . . We need hardly say that we are profoundly thankful to the Sessions Judge for acquitting Babu Aurobindo. The whole nation to a man firmly believed that he was absolutely innocent. And we are extremely gratified to find that Mr. Beachcroft's finding is in consonance with the opinion of the public in this respect. Indeed, the whole country wept for him in his undeserved misfortune. And they are very much relieved to find that their sincere and earnest prayer for his release has been heard by Heaven. We are thankful too to Mr. Beachcroft for acquitting several others. . . . The defence of Babu Aurobindo by Mr. C. R. Das was a masterpiece of its kind and will no doubt find a place in history.⁵

A part of the editorial in the British-owned newspaper, *The Statesman* of the same date read:

Among the acquitted the most conspicuous is Aurobindo Ghose. It has been obvious from the time when Mr. Norton elaborated his case against this prisoner that the evidence by which it was sought to connect him with the conspiracy was of fragmentary and circumstantial nature, [in] variance with his character and aims, and the Judge has no hesitation in accepting the view that the revolt against British rule which Aurobindo Ghose contemplated was in the form of passive resistance. He cannot, however be wholly absolved of the undesigned consequences of the mystical teaching which has been so grievously misinterpreted by his enthusiastic disciples.⁶

The Statesman of course was very cautious in commenting on Sri Aurobindo's acquittal. But its hinting in a subtle way that it was more due to the Prosecution's lack of efficiency in presenting evidence against Sri Aurobindo that the Judge had

“no hesitation” in accepting the view that Sri Aurobindo did not mean violence and the paper’s view that Sri Aurobindo could not have failed to realise that his “disciples” would misinterpret his “mystical teaching”, did not go well with the conscious intellectuals of the time.

The next day, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* came out with another editorial with the title, ‘Acquittal of Aurobindo’:

Why is Howard the Philanthropist worshipped as a demi-god by the whole world? Because not only did he shed hot tears of anguish for the hard lot of the criminals — the out-castes of the society rotting in the dungeons, but himself died a terrible death in getting their sufferings mitigated. If England ought to be proud of any of her worthy sons, it is he. And yet those who conduct the *Statesman* newspaper come from the same race which gave birth to a Howard! Hence it is that Addison in his “Cato” says that “Good and bad are the products of every clime and every age.” The acquittal of Babu Aurobindo has not only lifted a mountain-load of anxiety and suspense from the mind of every Indian, but it has, we feel sure, pleased many an Englishman too.

The remarks of the trying judge himself very plainly indicate that he could not help entertaining a regard for this gifted man and was apparently very much relieved when he could see his way to find him not guilty. But the *Chowringhee* paper is disconsolate! Instead of finding it in its heart to express a word of sympathy for the untold sufferings which Babu Aurobindo, an innocent man, has undergone, it disembowelled the following unjustifiable insinuation in regard to him.

“He (Babu Aurobindo) cannot be wholly absolved of the undesigned consequences of the mystical teaching which has been so grievously misinterpreted by his enthusiastic disciples.”

Now, it is an absolute lie that there was any dangerous mysticism in his teachings. And a still bigger lie that those who took to bombing were his disciples, as suggested by this Anglo-Indian oracle. What we say is practically the finding of the Judge. Had it really been otherwise, namely that Aurobindo Babu had preached anarchical ideal in veiled language, and that his disciples were influenced by them, it would never have escaped the lynx-eyed Judge, who was certainly strong-minded enough to hang the whole lot of them if he thought there was ground for it. Such writings as the *Statesman* indulges in are fraught with great mischief in as much as they appeal to the worst passions of a certain class of Europeans in this country. Such a thing ought to be avoided by every sensible person at a juncture like this. And this *Statesman* was once the liberal-minded Anglo-Indian paper in India and its founder, Mr. Robert Knight, held

in the highest esteem by the people of this country, for his upright principles and catholic sentiments!

Another Englishman, we mean Mr. Norton, who also had the reputation of being liberal in his sentiments took a direct and very prominent part in the Alipore trial. All his liberality, however, towards the people of this country oozed out as the Government entrusted him with the conduct of this historic case. We find it reported that, though suffering from gout, Mr. Norton came limping to the court of the Alipore Sessions Judge on the 6th instant to hear Mr. Beachcroft pronounce his judgment. We wonder what were his feelings when the Judge, in dealing with the case of Babu Aurobindo began thus: *I now come to the case of Aurobindo Ghose, the most important accused in the case. He is the accused, whom more than any other the prosecution are anxious to have convicted and but for his presence in the docks there is no doubt that the case would have been finished long ago.*

Thus we are told, first, that if the prosecution were anxious to have any of the accused convicted, it was Aurobindo. And it was Mr. Norton who was the life and the soul of the prosecution. The mere suggestion will be disparaging to a counsel of his reputation that in this matter he was only a tool in the hands of the Police. Then, the Government of Sir Andrew Fraser specially selected him to conduct the case, ignoring even Mr. S. P. Sinha, apparently because the latter was Bengalee, though he was then holding the office of Advocate General of Bengal. Mr. Norton was thus the guide, philosopher and friend of those who initiated the prosecution. That being so, how was it that he seemed to be so bent upon securing the conviction of an accused, specially when it is inconceivable that a great lawyer like him could fail to see at once that there was absolutely no evidence to connect him with the conspiracy?

And then, as Public Prosecutor, what was the real position of Mr. Norton? It was that of a semi-judge. Like the presiding Judge, it was a part of his sacred duty to keep his mind free from all prejudices, one way or the other, and see that absolute justice was done in regard to both accused and accuser. The Police might be anxious for the conviction of the accused sent up by them; but surely, a Crown Prosecutor should be above such unworthy feeling. Not only should he be strictly fair in his dealings with the accused, but, he should even point out errors if any were committed by the defence. But we all know, as the Judge remarks, that the Prosecution, that is, Mr. Norton, was most anxious to get Aurobindo Babu convicted and he did him and many other accused great injustice by browbeating their counsel and opposing their bail applications.

The attitude of Mr. Norton with regard to the bail matter was most extraordinary. He had absolutely no justification for strenuously opposing the bail applications of at least those of the accused against whom not an iota of evidence had been produced. Nay, of his own motion he should have suggested

to the court the advisability of releasing such men on bail. This, we understand, is usually done in riot cases when a number of innocent men are indiscriminately hauled up along with the guilty. Against Babu Aurobindo, not only was there not a scrap of incriminating evidence, but, any amount of security was available on his behalf if necessary. Yet, he too, had to rot in jail for nearly a whole year! And need the reader be reminded of the horrors of the life of an Indian under-trial prisoner?

In the next place we are told by the Judge that “But for his (Aurobindo Babu’s) presence in the dock, there is no doubt this case would have been finished long ago.”

So, it is obvious, but for the anxiety of the Prosecution to get him (an innocent man) convicted, the trial would have come to an end in a far shorter time. This is, we repeat, not our opinion, but the finding of the Judge. And the Judge further says that the evidence collected from all parts of the country to bring the charge home to Aurobindo Babu, was not only worthless, but a good portion of it was favourable to the accused! For instance, referring to the alleged incriminating speeches of Aurobindo Babu delivered in Bombay and elsewhere, the Judge observes: —

The whole of this evidence might very well have been omitted as it proved nothing beyond the fact that he was received with acclamation wherever he went, a fact which the defence has never attempted to deny. So far as the speeches go, they help the defence more than the prosecution.

So, under the wise guidance of Mr. Norton, not only was the trial prolonged to an almost interminable period, at the cost of the Government, but public money was also expended for procuring such evidence as benefitted the defence more than the prosecution! Can anything be more nice? However, the Alipore Case has one redeeming feature. It has proved a great windfall to Mr. Norton and some other lawyers and officers. . . .⁷

The *Basumati*, the most popular Bengali newspaper of the day, articulated in the following words the emotion of love, affection and reverence in which Sri Aurobindo was held by the people in general. The title of the editorial in Bengali was probably *Swagatam, hey Devopama Aurobindo* since it is translated by some official from Bengali as *Come, O God-like Aurobindo*:

Aurobindo! witnessing the acute scarcity of food in the home of your Mother, in the households of your brothers and sisters, you partook smilingly of despicable prison fare. Seeing a want of befitting clothing on the person of your Mother, your native country, you looked on your tattered prison garb as

adorning your person. Finding that your loved Mother had no right to speak out, you took a vow of silence. Who else has served the Mother, heart and soul, like you? Aurobindo, come! O son of the Mother country more loved than life itself, come, come, O ideal servant of the Mother, let us render service to you today on behalf of the Mother. Come then, O devoted son, who has eaten awful prison fare, let us with our own hands lift up to thy mouth today the best food of the Mother. Come, then, O most wise ascetic dressed in tattered prison garb, let us fulfil our status as brothers by putting on thy golden person the beautiful dress made by the Mother. Come, then, O you, who has glorified the fetters of the prison, the great hero who has taken the Swadeshi vow, placing the crown of effulgent glories on that head of yours which has been touched by the dust of the Mother's feet, we call down on it the blessings of thirty-three crores of gods. Come, then, O silent ascetic, in this auspicious welcome to you, let us, sounding crores of conch-shells and singing songs of your glory through crores of throats, make the quarters reverberate! Come then, O Aurobindo, the inaugurator of the new ideal of patriotism, come, O saintly Aurobindo, who has seen the Truth! Come, O you Aurobindo, who is like a God. Come, O Aurobindo, who belongs to India. Come, come, let crores of brothers and sisters in union welcome you home today!¹⁸

From several newspapers of the day echoing similar sentiments, we choose the *Bangabandhu* of 18 May 1909 because it shows the amazing sense of veneration with which Sri Aurobindo was viewed even before he delivered his famous speech at Uttarpara in which he revealed some of his spiritual experiences for the first time. 'What Have We Learnt?' was the title of the Editorial.

At last the Bomb Case has come to an end! The curtain that went up a year ago drops now! Eyes of the curious people had been so long fixed, to the exclusion of everything else, on every change of scene on the stage. Where this mystery, full of complexities, would end, nobody could be sure of, in view of the unnecessary preparations and fuss made. How many actors did we not see dancing and bouncing to no purpose on the stage! What strenuous zeal did we not see displayed to give out as truth what was wholly untrue and baseless! Such attempts to obscure the truth, such arrogance, appear to advantage only in these days of modern civilisation. To fasten an unselfish and immensely great man in chains and cast him into the darkness of the prison, for the sake of gaining one's petty selfish purposes, appears to advantage only in a subject country.

A change of scene brings before our gaze that Mahayogi lost in meditation. When the sound of the foot-fall of that great man was heard at the solitary prison entrance, the prayers of the entire population of the country were, as it

were, present there in an incorporeal shape to welcome him.

The iron chains of prison could bring no disgrace on him: those iron chains have been converted into gold by having paid worship at the feet of this god-like guest, the people of the country, if they got even so little a part of it, will treasure it as a jewel for the head!

Scene after scene has changed. And we have learnt an immense truth: there is no difference of great and small among a subject people. To carry within prison-walls, away from the view of the nation and to guard there as a common thief or dacoit the blameless great man to whose super-human self-renunciation the whole of India has paid obeisance, whom young Bengal worships as a sage who sees the truth, by sitting at whose feet the present-day civilisation can attain real humanity, is to the credit of only the laws of the civilised British raj. O you English rulers! You may gain satisfaction at making him, whom all Bengal is eager to offer worship, eat impure food. But will the measure of the affection of the Indians for your system of government be gradually augmented thereby? O you Officials! If you sought to punish with hardships regarding diet this great man who is above the fear of death, who is eager and active to realise the Divinity fully in his life, whose refuge is truth, who has spurned worldly ease and pleasures and comforts like a great ascetic, then we must thank you for your immense folly a hundred times. Solitary confinement only facilitated his endeavours towards attainment of the Divine; it did not succeed in causing him suffering.

O civilised Englishmen! You are accustomed very much to boast that you do not punish the innocent in your courts of justice; that out of the fountain of your laws only jets of justice and peace rush forth. But why then do you not without delay tear to pieces the law — the prison-law which has such terrible and harsh provisions — the law every letter of which is soiled with the stain of reproach — the *hajut* law — which contains provisions for the infliction of dire punishment even before one's guilt is proved?

Alas, O Rulers! You have established a Government which is capable only of making the governed weep; you have not tried the experiment of establishing a kingdom of love even once. Where is there room in their hearts, full of hundred wounds as they are, for the anguish-stricken people, to find a place for you? For the inhuman sufferings you have inflicted, through the clutches of your prison-law, on the man who is without any blemish, who is like a new-born infant, — that great man himself may pardon you, but they remain imbedded in the hearts of the entire population of the country like a sharp thorn. O Englishmen, you are not the final judges — do not forget this in your arrogance. There is an impartial judge, who holds his scales of justice regardless of extraneous conditions.⁹

Emotional upsurge? Maybe. But this author, going through volumes of police records and newspaper articles of the time has not come across another leader who had stirred such an upsurge — not only on an emotional plane but also on an intellectually objective plane (see the extracts from the *Modern Review* reproduced in the previous number) in as brief a time as two and half years, the period Sri Aurobindo was active in politics before his arrest. Far from ever trying to steal the limelight, he preferred to remain always in the background. When he was required to speak, he spoke in a voice that was mellow and in an accent that, in order to be followed properly, must have demanded complete attention of even those in his audience who understood English well.

It seems, during the year Sri Aurobindo spent in jail the meagre snapshots of his memory were sinking deeper and deeper into the consciousness of the people, giving them hints of some unrevealed aspects of his being. No wonder that traditional scholars of history would find it baffling and choose the safe way to steer clear of the phenomenon.

(To be continued)

MANOJ DAS

References and Notes

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9. The hint is against Barrister Norton for whom the proceedings were prolonged. He was drawing heavy fees from the State Exchequer and hence the prolongation of the trial was to his benefit. The judgment, however, implied that Mr. Norton's sole motive in presenting so many witnesses and examining them at tiring length was somehow to secure conviction for Sri Aurobindo. It appears to this author that Mr. Norton was intelligent and experienced enough to understand that the evidence against Sri Aurobindo, once Naren Gossain's statements became inadmissible, had been reduced to a pack of guess-work; but he was trying to compensate for the weakness of the evidence, assuming an aggressive and artificially assertive mode — just to keep his employers in good humour.

SONGS FROM THE SOUL

(Continued from the issue of June 2016)

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

DIVINE JOY (ANANDA)

People think that there is a special merit in suffering and that all enjoyment is a sort of sin; so they turn away from the joys of life and deliberately inflict misery and suffering upon themselves.

That is not our path. To us all suffering is due to ignorance and is a sign of imperfection. It is the Divine in us who tastes our joys, and it is on the Divine in us that we inflict all our sufferings. To seek then the true joys in life and avoid all sufferings is the secret of our *sadhana*. It is thus that we grow in love to the Divine Beloved seated within us and become one with the divine nature.

We want to make our work not dry and joyless, but full of delight and enthusiasm; we seek no egoistic satisfaction but the great joy that comes from the conscious service of the Divine. Our search for truth and knowledge is not a laborious effort of the reasoning mind, but a joyful expression of the divine light in and through us. We do not hanker after the sensuous pleasures of the body, but seek to make ourselves absolutely clean and pure, free from all nervous reactions, so that pure *ananda* may descend from above and seize even the material cells of our body.

Our *sadhana* is to offer the highest *ananda* to the Divine Lover who dwells within us and everywhere in the universe, and this is possible only by identifying ourselves completely with Thee, Mother Divine, through sincere love and devotion.

*

Every movement in Thee, Mother, is an expression of supreme Beauty; those only miss it who are blinded by their selfish ignorance and are confused by the clamour of the senses.

Through all things and events in the world Thou art eternally manifesting the Truth; the world is moving from light to light, from power to power, from joy to joy; in and through Thy play in the universe, the all-pervading Divine Being eternally enjoys His self-expression.

People miss the beauty and the joy in the universe, because they cut themselves off from the perennial flow by their ignorant egoism.

DIVINE JOY

Nothing is of interest to them that does not serve their selfish purpose; nothing brings joy to them unless it comes in the crude form of limited sense-enjoyment; they become miserable when the Divine *Shakti* seems to ignore their egoistic demands. Impelled by the vain desire to possess things for the sake of the ego, they put themselves into eternal conflict with the forces of the world.

Save me from this narrow selfish standpoint. Mother, let me identify myself with Thy movement of Truth, let me realise the infinite consciousness so that I may share with the Divine Purusha the infinite joy of Thy world-play.

PURITY

Thy love is rendering my life into a paradise. Mother; Thy grace is wonderfully protecting me from all sides. I feel so secure and happy! There must no longer be any opening in me to the hostile forces. The slightest impurity or untruth greatly hampers Thy work in me; I must now keep myself absolutely clean and pure.

And that most hard and difficult task, Thou hast made so easy for us! Thou hast taught us the great secret of fighting with all imperfections; it is to aspire ceaselessly and sincerely. If we want to know anything, we have only to aspire and we shall get the light. If we want to do anything, we have only to aspire and we shall get the necessary strength. Whatever be the position into which we may be put, however difficult or dangerous, we have only to aspire, and Thy grace will surely raise us up. Thou hast made the path so clear to us, Mother, we have only to will and persevere, and we shall steadily march forward.

But the great obstacle is the slackness of our will, the fundamental inertia of our lower nature. We become so easily satisfied! We only look to the positions where the light has fallen and carelessly neglect to take notice of the obscure corners in us; hence we are always liable to hostile attacks. We must not wait for these blows to wake us up, but must ceaselessly aspire to be awake and alert. Thou hast created all the conditions favourable for our transformation. Mother; we have only to take advantage of them and we shall surely attain the goal.

It is strange how Nature, frustrated in her direct attempts, comes in all sorts of clever disguises to win back our allegiance. Unless we can make ourselves absolutely clean and pure and ever keep a diligent watch on ourselves, we can never be safe from the machinations of the lower nature; but that is so hard and difficult in practice!

But there is one effective way of remaining safe, if only we can sincerely stick to it, and that is always to live in close touch and intimate union with Thee, Mother; to listen to no voice, however seemingly wise and benevolent, unless it be Thy direct voice within us; to seek no joy or pleasure unless it comes directly from love and devotion to Thee; to engage in no work or effort unless it be for Thy service in accordance with Thy direct will and sanction. Thou hast given us all facilities for such an intimate union with Thee, and if we cannot avail ourselves of them, that is all our own fault, our own weakness.

How many times I take the earnest resolve not to live apart from Thee even for a single moment, yet how many times I am carried away by the seductive impulses of my lower nature! But all my hope lies in Thee, Mother. Thou knowest all my defects, all my weaknesses; Thou knowest, in the heart of my heart I seek none else but Thyself; in Thy grace and mercy thou wilt protect me from my own weakness, and lead me to the ultimate victory, when I shall rise finally above all the hostile forces in the world.

SINCERITY

Afflicted by the sorrows of the world we earnestly pray for the Divine; but when the Divine comes to us we hesitate to accept it — such is the falsehood and contradiction in our earthly nature!

The central being in us aspires to the divine life, but the different parts passionately cling to the earthly life, and obstinately refuse to give up the old ways and the old habits. We seek to open us to Thee, Mother, but our mind brings in all sorts of rambling thoughts which veil Thy presence from us. We seek immortal joy, yet our senses persistently pull us towards the poor, mixed, limited pleasures of the earth. We pray for heavenly light, but when it comes to us we fail to recognise or accept it. Thus, our life becomes a curious mixture of truth and falsehood, of light and darkness, of joy and sorrow.

We would have the divine life, but recoil from fulfilling the conditions. We want the truth but would not reject the untruth in us. We would reach heaven but at the same time live on earth. It is no wonder that, in spite of all our attempts to rise, we remain where we are.

It is Thy grace alone, Mother, that can lift us from these self-contradictions, and establish us in the real truth of our being.

Nothing in the world can cause us any disturbance, unless we ourselves allow us to be disturbed. We forget our true self, we identify ourselves with the lower movements of nature, and so we ceaselessly suffer from disturbances.

Truth as well as falsehood are continually coming to us; we are afraid that we may accept the falsehood and reject the truth; we are afraid that in our ignorance, Mother, we may do anything against Thy divine will; we are sorely disturbed if any wrong or false movement takes place in us. By this fear and this disturbance we invite more mischief and sorrow.

We must have courage, we must remember that as long as we have sincerity, Thy grace will never recede from us. Thou knowest our strength as well as our weakness. We ourselves may misunderstand or misinterpret us, but Thou readest our heart like an open book. We can rest absolutely contented with the sincerity of our surrender; Thy grace will deliver us from all error, from all falsehood.

Whatever change or movement may take place in our nature, we have to observe it calmly, seated in our immutable self, and continually offer the whole play of our nature to Thee, Mother, to be transformed. The more pure and intense our devotion to Thee, Mother, the more joyful and triumphant becomes the whole process of our transformation.

(To be continued)

ANILBARAN

(Songs from the Soul, Amiya Library, Calcutta, 1946, pp. 91-99)

Sincerity! Sincerity! How sweet is the purity of thy presence!

The Mother

(Words of the Mother – II, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 66)

REMINISCENCES

(Based upon a talk by Madanlal Himatsingka in 2002 at
Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry.
It is being reproduced on the occasion of his birth centenary.)

Aum Ānandamayī Caitanyamayī Satyamayī Parame

I was very fond of touring places. In the year '51-'52 my friends said to me, "You roam about everywhere, why don't you come to Pondicherry? Come and see how many new things are happening there." To which I replied, "Yes, I'll come." In those days I knew nothing about the Mother and unfortunately, I never had the good fortune of having Darshans of Sri Aurobindo. I had merely read some things written by him.

Around the same time an unforeseen event took place in my life. My only son of 17-18 years went to the International Scout Jamboree after the completion of World War II, and after returning from there died of liver disease. It was but natural that his death at such a young age was a deep blow to me and especially to Karuna, my wife. He was our only issue. It was not as difficult for me because even at that time I felt that some Divine power was with me which was doing everything and protecting me.

After our son's death we went to Dhanbad for sometime where my wife's mother had a guest house of her own. From there, to meet some people we also went to the Himalayas. For five months we toured, but my wife's unbearable pain and sorrow did not reduce. She was still stunned from the blow. I thought why not take her to England and Europe for a vacation! Perhaps seeing a new place, new faces, may improve her mental condition. Today in Europe on every corner you will find some Indian or the other; but in the days after World War II, Europe had very few Indians.

In those days I had a great interest in systems of education. I was a progressive thinker and wanted to do something in the field of education. Some of my friends wanted to open an ideal public school in Bihar. So, I thought that I shall meet the educationists of Holland, Germany, Norway, Italy etc. and would study and examine their kindergarten, secondary and higher education systems. The British government was trying to reform the public school education system. It constituted a committee, one of the members of which was Mr. Foote, who before he retired had been the Principal of the well-known Doon School of India. I went to see many big and small educational institutions in England but not even one among them could satisfy me.

The thing that I was searching for, I could not get there. However I liked their many instruments in the field of science and new audio-visual experiments.

But my wife's condition remained as before. There had been no improvement in that. Meeting all kinds of people was not a solution to her problem. So, we came back. Navajata bhai-ji used to come to meet us sometimes. He met me in Lakshmi House. This was my mother-in-law's home. It was here that my son had left his body. We met Navajata-ji twice there. He said, "This time you come to Ashram and see what is being done there." I accepted and in 1953 without knowing anything about the Mother and spirituality, both of us came here. In those days the Ashram had very few guest houses of its own. In Pondicherry, apart from the Mother and the Governor there was possibly one third person who owned a car. But Millie Pinto was present at the station in her Jeep. She used to do the work of bringing guests of the Ashram to and from the station. She welcomed us and took us to a guest house which was looked after by Manoranjan Ganguli. Non-vegetarian food was served there which did not suit our nature. The very next day we got permission to stay in Golconde. Aha! This was the place conducive to our minds, where later I stayed many more times. Golconde was a pleasant surprise and to live in that house was an education in itself. For seven days we stayed there. Charupada, Mota Kaka who was the person-in-charge of the Reception Service, and a few other sadhaks used to come to meet us and narrate to us stories about the old days. Mota Kaka's wife Bina-didi used to prepare *kachauris* and sweets for us. How sociable, full of friendly feelings and caring for guests were these people. This in itself was a sweet experience. Charupada used to tell everything to the Mother. This was the rule in those days, everyone — where he stayed, what he was doing etc. — his every act was known to the Mother. Everyday it used to be told to the Mother what I was going to do that day.

I was overwhelmed by the education system here. It was this that I was searching for. It was this for which I had wandered from country to country, city to city of Europe, this very thing was being implemented in my own country. I also met Pavitra-da (the first Director of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education). Those days he was preparing some lectures on the Ashram's Integral Education System. I spoke to him about the audio-visual method that I had seen in Europe, which was a new thing at that time. Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education's Physical Education Department was what impressed me most and since then, in a way I became an admirer of that department and am now also.

It was time for us to return and there was no change in the sorrowful condition of my wife. She was not interested in the philosophical and spiritual aspects of the Ashram. She was a sweet and loving woman. Just like her name she personified compassion. But, how to remove the dreadful loneliness of her heart? How to get release from that deep pain?

It was our last day in the Ashram. We got permission to go to Sri Aurobindo's

room and meditate there. In those days the Mother used to take French classes in the Playground. After the class, she used to meet the people who had come from outside. For us too a meeting with her had been arranged. This was the last day of our stay in the Ashram but for me it became my life's first and last day; my entire spiritual future began on that very day. To go to Sri Aurobindo's room was a divine experience in itself. I do not know, by what force inspired, I wrote something on a paper and left that paper there. I addressed that letter to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and wrote a few lines expressing my aspiration that I want to achieve the Divine in this life.

In the evening when we went to the Playground the march past had begun. After the march past the Mother used to go to her room. We both went to her room. Before I could say anything, the Mother asked, "Have you received the reply to your letter?"

"No."

"No! Nolini has been given the reply to your letter."

I was astonished. At the outset, I did not know Nolini. This was the first time I had heard this name. (Late Nolini Kanta Gupta was an early disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Secretary of the Ashram.)

The second surprise was that I had written the letter at 11 a.m. or 12 and the reply came so quickly, how full of joy was this experience!

Mother said, "I had written the reply then itself. They must be looking for you and enquiring where is Madanlal staying."

After that both of us, my wife and I sat on the floor in front of her and without giving the Mother an opportunity to speak, I began to talk. I started my lecture as if I knew better than the Mother! I was very impressed by the notion of education and its ideal here.

"How wonderful is the education system here. We saw the laboratory, we saw this, we saw that."

I lost so many minutes of that invaluable time talking in this way.

After around ten minutes, my wife became restless. She tugged at my dress and said, "What are you doing?"

I was taken aback. Had I made some mistake?

Now my wife took out some photos of our son and gave them to me. In her heart there was just one flame burning.

I came to my senses and gave one photo to the Mother.

As soon as the Mother got the photo she said to my wife, "Come, come here, sit here. The child is here only. He is very happy. He wants to play with you."

But my wife kept on crying. Mother consoled her as if she was a girl. "My dear child, don't cry, don't cry. Look, the child is here and seeing you sad he is also feeling sad. If you continue to cry like this he will go away. He would not like to stay here. He will not stay here." Mother kept on telling her, consoling her in this

way and this continued for 3-4 minutes. She showered love on my wife even more than some physical mother. I could not believe it. Is such love possible?

After the interview, Mother came out of the room and started inspecting the drill. We also sat on chairs because our train's departure was at 9 p.m. and Millie Pinto was to take us. After watching the exercises and drill for a few minutes my wife came near and expressed surprise, "What has happened to me? I feel as if all the pain of my mind is erased. My mind and heart have become peaceful, white and pain-free like the sky. There is nothing there now. I have become free from my worry and burden. What an extraordinary experience is this."

The readers can imagine my wonder. My heart was flooded with happiness and gratitude. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's divine grace — in the very first meeting — without our asking, gave this boon. It was only by their divine grace that this became possible. On the other hand, if we go to sadhus and saints they say, "Make this offering, do this Japa, observe this fast." Even after doing all the rituals told by them, no results come.

After returning to Kolkata, I got, in connection with that aspiration of mine, about which I had written in Sri Aurobindo's room, the Mother's answer. Now I said to my wife, "We are just two people. I am not very much interested in business too. Come, let us go and live in Ashram. How ever many days you like you stay there."

Now the Mother's force started working with intensity and we, not after one or two years, but after only a few months came to the Ashram and have been here since then.

2

After coming to Ashram we immediately became involved with the daily activities. My wife started working with Dr. Nripendra in the Ashram Dispensary. All my life I have been involved with financial activities. My contacts are with those involved with finance. So, just after coming to the Ashram I became a member of the group which looked after the financial organisation of the Ashram. Perhaps most of you don't know that since 1954 when I first came, till 1972-1973, not even one year has passed when the Ashram didn't face economic difficulties. The Ashram was always short of money. The daily expenses were met with difficulty. Every 2-3 months we had to reduce the consumption of something or the other. Sometimes the quantity of milk had to be reduced, sometimes bananas had to be reduced or some other item had to be reduced. This fact was well known in the Ashram. Now in this field arrived two people. One was Ganesha, Lord Ganesha and the second was Pandit-ji of Rameshwaram. This person, Pandit-ji was brought here by Satprem. In the *Agenda* there are many things in various places said by the Mother regarding Pandit-ji. In the *Agenda* he has been referred to as "X" or the Tantric Guru. Wherever

Ganesha has been mentioned, usually it has been in connection with money, how Ganesha has been getting money to run the Ashram, this is the main subject matter.

In those days, I, my wife Karuna and Vijay Poddar's mother, Vinata-ji were entrusted the work of looking after the creature comforts, food and other necessities of Pandit-ji. When he would go to the Mother, to tell him this, to take along that etc. — this alone occupied the whole day. He had become very close to Karuna. At this time two such events took place which changed my entire life.

One day I said to Pandit-ji, "Pandit-ji, Mother is facing economic difficulties. Why don't you give me some mantra about Ganesha by which we can get some wealth for the Mother and ease her difficulty." Although Pandit-ji knew that whatever mantra he gave, I would first show it to the Mother, still he gave me a mantra. Without even reading the mantra I took it to the Mother and told her everything about the mantra and also that my only aim was to get wealth for the Mother, otherwise I had no interest in the matter, and I did not even know whether it would be successful or not.

On 8th November 1962 the Mother had written to me a very sweet letter. I don't want to display my ego, so, I read the Mother's letter itself to you all:

Madanlal, my dear child, in answer to your question, I shall say that each one must invoke Ganesha according to his own feeling — the traditional way is not necessarily the best.

I will tell you my own experience about him.

In 1930 we were having regular meditations in the Prosperity hall on the significance of flowers. At one of these meditations, quite unexpectedly, Ganesha appeared suddenly to my inner view. He was of golden light and surrounded by a very luminous golden aura. His form was the usual one as in his images.

It was the first time I ever saw him and I expressed some surprise over his sudden apparition.

Then he told me,

"You see, I am a living being quite real and concrete — and to give you a concrete proof of my reality I shall send you henceforth all the money you will need."

And on this promise he disappeared.

He has kept his promise for years and the money was coming abundantly.

Then, in 1939, the Second World War started and everything got spoiled.

However, the true financial difficulties started only ten years later, in 1949. Since then it is a struggle. . . .

But if now you invoke Ganesha sincerely, he may resume his good offices through you. It can be tried.

With love and blessings — Mother.

In the *Agenda* in an interview with Satprem Mother has said much on this subject. In 1964 on 4th January the Mother said to Satprem,

I had X told about a rather interesting encounter of mine with Ganapati (quite a few years ago), and how he had promised to give me whatever I needed and actually gave it for quite a long time, certainly more than ten years, and generously so. Then everything changed in the Ashram. It was after the war, the children came and we spilled over; we became much more complex, much larger, and began to be in touch with foreign countries, particularly America. And I continued to be in contact with Ganapati; I can't say I used to do puja to Him (!), but every morning I would put a flower in front of his image. Then one morning I asked Him, "Why have you stopped doing what you had been doing for such a long time?" I listened and he clearly replied, "Your need has grown too large." I didn't quite understand, because he has at his disposal fortunes much larger than what I needed. . . .

Then I turned to Ganapati and asked him what does all that mean? And I clearly saw (it wasn't he who answered, it was Sri Aurobindo), I clearly saw that Ganapati has power only over those who have faith in him, which means it is limited to India, while I needed money from America, France, England, Africa . . . and that he had no power there, so he couldn't help. It became very clear, I was at peace, I understood: "Very well, he did his best, that's all." And it is true I keep receiving from India, though not sufficiently; especially as since Independence half of India has been ruined, and all those who used to give me a lot of money no longer do, because they no longer can — it isn't that they no longer want to but that they no longer can.

In the Ashram till 1962 every day was a struggle. If you read the Mother's letters written in 1965, 1966 you will find again and again the same theme, discussion of money-related difficulties. You can imagine the amount of money required to run this Ashram comprising hundreds of people.

The strange thing was that in these letters my wife Karuna's name was mentioned many a times. This was for me, my sadhana and the purpose for which I had come here, something very important. I was praying to the Mother to re-establish contact with Ganesha and ask him to solve the Ashram's economic difficulties. She asked me to make an effort in this matter and I continuously repeated that mantra, in Sri Aurobindo's chamber also, in front of the pictures of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo also. But I never repeated the mantra with full consciousness, with full faith and today I have even forgotten that mantra. This is because my consciousness was centred in the Mother. I tried to do that which the Mother willed. I used to try to see everything in such a way as to fulfil the creatrix Mother's will.

In connection with Ganesha, the Mother has written in another place that he

said to the Mother, “Mother, your need has increased very much. I don’t have within me the capacity to give so much.”

Mother asked, “What about your promise?”

“Mother, I am incapable of giving so much.”

Mother laughed and said, “Ah, how unfortunate.”

And this matter left her consciousness at that time. Later, when Satprem separated from Pandit-ji then the Mother gave Satprem also a mantra regarding Ganesha.

In the early years of the decade of 1960, after purchasing ‘Montbrun House’, contiguous with the Ganesha temple on the southern side, the Mother called me and said that she had decided to give some land for the use of the nearby Vinayaka temple without any price. I was asked to find out from the functionaries of the temple how much land they required so that I could transfer that much land in the temple’s name as an offering. The Mother also clarified that even if donating the land meant breaking the house and rebuilding it, this work had to be completed as soon as possible. The separating wall could be built at their expense or we could get it done. So, I immediately contacted the temple functionaries. They were very happy to hear this. Earlier they had tried to obtain land for circumambulation from the owner of the house but they were unsuccessful. They were very grateful to the Mother. Thus, Sri Aurobindo Memorial Fund Society offered 12 feet wide and 120 feet long land to Lord Ganesha. Now the devotees of Ganesha are very happy because they can now circumambulate their chosen deity fully. Till that time in the temple there was no space to circumambulate on the southern side.¹

Talking about me the Mother said to Satprem during the above-mentioned conversation:

... Madanlal was greatly interested in my story about Ganapati, and I saw that there was a connection between him and Ganapati, so I told him, “But turn to him and he will give you the right inspiration.” And since then Madanlal has been perfect, really; all that he can do he does to the utmost of his ability. So all this is very good.

Although till this day I could not understand what I did. It is truly a mystery to me. I have been able to understand only this that this was Mother’s Grace and her means to educate me. All these are aspects of events relating to Ganesha.

Now I will narrate an important event regarding my wife and Pandit-ji. My wife got cancer. The very name cancer is enough to cause fright. After the diagnosis when I met the Mother she said, “This is the decision of Karuna’s soul. The soul has

1. [A senior sadhak of the Ashram, late Parichand had told me that one night Ganesha himself came to the Mother and prayed to her to give space for circumambulation. — Shyam Kumari]

decided to leave the body, there is nothing else. But if she still wants to live then it will be good for the Divine's work."

I said to Mother, "Mother, I do not understand anything. You are saying that her soul has taken a decision and I accept that. I have full confidence that you will do whatever is possible. Now, I have nothing to say. You can do everything."

The Mother told me to do every possible treatment.

Thus, every possible medical treatment started. Dr. Sanyal used to come every day and apprise the Mother of Karuna's condition. Slowly the disease spread in her entire body. This was an extremely painful condition. One day I wrote to the Mother, "Mother, whatever is possible you must be doing. Still my only prayer is that you relieve her of this bodily pain."

Now again the initial Grace was repeated. About 10 days before her demise Karuna said, "Look, all my pain is gone. It is as if someone has stolen my pain. Nothing is remaining of it now."

When I heard her words, unexpectedly, I could not believe them at all. But it was true. She was very happy. How did it happen?

Pandit-ji used to tell my wife, "You will live 10-12 years more. Nothing will happen to you. Karuna, you will be able to fight death."

But, contrary to this, Mother had said that Karuna's soul had decided to leave. Regarding this the Mother said to Satprem (on 29 May 1965),

... He (Pandit-ji) had told her (Karuna) "Oh, you will live another ten years."

The next month, she left. So I think it threw some cold water on him, because obviously people attach a great importance to those things. At any rate, he shouldn't have told her, because it interrupted all my work — all my work was to make her unite with her soul before she went, so that all that could be taken along in the spiritual life would be taken along. And I was working at it, but then when the other one told her she was going to live 10 years, naturally she wasn't in a hurry any more! I lost at least 10 days because of that. And she left the day after the contact was made — she found her soul, she became quiet, very quiet . . . and the next day she was gone.

What a wonderful Grace it was.

It was 5th December. It was the day of Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi, so, in Ashram's Playground meditation was going on. Karuna who was in her bed at home, suddenly got up. She vomited once and left her body as if nothing had happened.

Then I got Mother's letter saying, "Madanlal, my dear child, Sri Aurobindo has said to me that between such and such time she will come to me."

I thought, "She who can make the impossible possible, she who comes to aid as soon as called, she who can look after a person's past, present and future, where else can we get Divine as Guru? The Creatrix of the world, the Mother only could

have called my son's soul even after death, She alone could in the last days of my wife take cancer's unbearable pain. I prostrate myself at that Divine Mother's feet."

MADANLAL HIMATSINGKA

Editorial Note:

The version printed above is an English re-translation by Hemant Kapoor of Shyam Kumari's article published in the Hindi journal *Swarna Hans*. At the close, Shyam Kumari had appended this note:

In Auroville's, and especially Matrimandir construction's *Yajña* Madanlal-ji's contribution is indescribable. To be able to collect and publish this illustrious person's invaluable reminiscences about Ashram's economic condition, the construction of Matrimandir, development of Auroville, etc. in future is my prayer to the Mother.

Offering: the placing of your entire being, with all its movements true and false, good and bad, right and wrong, before the Divine for transformation.

The Mother

(*Words of the Mother – II*, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 99)

LET ME SPEAK TO YOU ALONE

Let me speak to You alone, Mother,
In the silence of this night.
Let my mind not veer to this or t'other
Lest Your peace take startled flight.
In the hush of gentle dawn
Let no word-thought interfere
With Your touch, O lovely Usha,
That perfumes our atmosphere.
In the heat of noonday's mounting pressure,
Like a lake of crystal water,
Guard the stillness of this treasure,
Lave the convolutions of the brain,
All the poisons from it drain.

When my converse starts with you
A pinioned angel stirs and frees a wing.
Then at last begins my heart softly to sing.
When I speak to You alone
I no longer need to think.
And when alone to You I turn, answers slip into my soul,
Rhymes and rhythms into ink.
When there is nothing more of mine
Your star within begins to shine.
So take away this tongue I beg
And make me deaf and dumb and blind
To all but You.
Only then will falsehood's discords finally unwind
To let the words upon my tongue,
Each thing and every one ring true.

MAGGI

THE TENNIS-GROUND SEA-WALL

Towards the end of 1952 or so there was a very severe cyclone which shattered the Pondicherry pier and the Tennis Ground too was in danger. The portion on which the Mother used to walk after her game of tennis was submerged. And the main ground was at risk of erosion. Manoranjan Ganguli was in charge of the ground then. The Mother asked him to do something to stop this erosion. He took up the work immediately. As I was working with him then, I was given the work of supervision, along with the chief mason-supervisor.

With the Mother's approval, a plan was prepared for the proposed wall. The work then started. The base or the foundation for that wall had to be done first; we started sinking rectangular wells of about 10 x 5 feet, along the length of the ground. These wells were sunk to a depth of about 8 to 10 feet below the sea-level, by specially-skilled well-sinkers. Simultaneously, masons were busy building the wells by portions and these were sunk by qualified persons. This work took a few months. More than sixty wells were sunk along the length of the ground. Once all the wells were sunk, they had to be filled with concrete. Because of the sub-soil water in the well, dry concrete had to be mixed and poured into the wells through a funnel. This was for the base. The sub-soil water had then to be pumped out from each well; some wells were more than half full. The next step was to fill these wells with mass-concrete. This, as can be well imagined, was a tremendous task, because on one side we were working as elaborated above, and on the other side, the sea too kept on rolling into our work and spoiling it at times.

After the pouring of the mass-concrete into all the wells, the base for the wall was ready in September 1953. Throughout this period the Mother was kept informed about the work and its progress. The Mother used to glance at the work daily when she came for tennis.

Sometime towards the end of 1953, Louis Allan, an architect settled in the Ashram. He too was given some responsibility in this work.

The portion of the concreted walls which projected further into the sea, especially on the Southern side, used to meet the sea's full fury and often the entire concreted wall collapsed.

On 26.9.53, when I went upstairs to see the Mother, I spoke to her about the action of the sea. It had broken two of the huge walls on the Southern side of the ground and we were trying everyday to rebuild these concrete walls. As this portion was projecting more towards the sea, that difficult job had to be done during the low tide, say within 5 to 6 hours. For three days we tried to rebuild the wall, and every time it was washed away. When she heard this, the Mother told me, "You see, there is a bad will on the side of the sea. It is creating mischief. You must work with

determination. You must give a blow and receive a blow; and again you give a blow and receive a blow. In this way you will get accustomed and become strong. And at the end, you will see that you have won. This is the secret of it. It is a fight.”

That same afternoon, during low-tide, with full confidence I got the shutterings fixed joining both walls together. And also we had the concrete filled up to the brim. It was almost dark when we finished the work. The next day, early in the morning, I went to see the result. Lo! it was standing like a rock and the sea could not do anything. It was a victory of the Mother. I was extremely happy. I took the flower signifying ‘VICTORY’ to the Mother and told her everything. She was very happy and smiled and blessed me.

I was really encouraged by this victory, and the work too started to progress at a faster pace.

Once all the walls were concreted, the next step was to insert T beams with the help of a compressor from Udar, so that we could fill with concrete the space between the solid walls.

Now with these walls as a base we laid 12-inch thick solid concrete throughout the length of the wall and levelled it to build the proper mass-concrete wall over it.

On 5.1.1954 the Mother came to the site and saw the progress of the sea-wall. We were then laying small granite boulders on the inner side (ground side) of the wall to prevent the sea making inroads into the ground.

On 10.1.54, it had rained, and the passage to the tennis courts was rather muddy. As we had some excess concrete mixture, I asked the Mother, if I could concrete that passage. She agreed and it was done.

On 9.2.54, when I went up to see Mother, I showed her the sketch of the shutterings of the main wall, the work that Udar was to do. She told Udar with force, “Whatever I say must be done, it must be done immediately. If it is not done by the end of this month, next month the sea may come back.” And she asked me to maintain good will.

In the Tennis Ground on 28.2.54, the Mother told me on a serious tone, “The gravel has not been cleaned properly; it must be cleaned well. If it is not cleaned the wall won’t stand. And whatever is spent will go away.” She said emphatically, “Whatever I say must be done.” The next day I told the Mother that if the gravel was to be cleaned thoroughly I would need to construct a tank with three partitions. Should I construct one? She immediately said, “Yes”. . . .

On 25.5.54 Louis Allan came in the morning and told me that the Mother would visit the site in the evening and that the holes for drainage should not be made in the wall. She would decide when she came. The Mother came and saw the wall in the evening and said, “It is very straight and nice.” Many suggestions came up regarding the ground. In my childish way, I told the Mother that if the sea were to recede about 400 metres, we would have a big playground, we would get to play many games . . . the Mother looked hard at me for some time and then smiled.

The next day, 26.5.54, the Mother told me, upstairs, that the wall had been built very nicely.

On the 29 May 1954, the concreting of the main wall was completed and work began on the parapet wall.

Next, small granite boulders and chips were placed on the inner side, all along the base, to a height of about 5 feet to prevent sea water from creeping underneath. Then, the whole area was filled with debris and sand up to the ground level. On the sea-side of the wall we put big and small granite boulders to break the force of the waves. For this work hundreds of lorry and bullock cart loads of granite boulders were needed. These granite stones were brought from as far as Ariyur, 22 km west of Pondicherry. With great enthusiasm, Dyuman-bhai helped to procure them.

On the 18th August 1954, there was no cement in stock. When I went up to the Mother for pranam, she asked me, “Suppose there is cement, how many days will it take to finish the work in the Tennis Ground including building the wall near the distillery, not counting the ground levelling?” I said, “Three weeks.”

Thus the work was finally completed towards the end of 1954: that is, erecting the wall, levelling the ground, and all the rest in this big project.

The method used was adopted by the town authorities when building the coastal sea-wall along the rest of the sea-front.

The Tennis-ground sea-wall is not only a protecting wall but a symbol of the Mother’s Grace, of the victory of good will.

GANGARAM M.

(Adapted from *SportSpirit*, December 1993)

The victory is to the most enduring.

The Mother

(Words of the Mother – II, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 165)



Sea-wall under construction

THE MOTHER IN THE PLAYGROUND

(Continued from the issue of June 2016)

THE MOHUN BAGAN FOOTBALL CLUB VISITS PONDICHERRY

We had an exceptional opportunity to witness a game of first class football in the year 1948, when Mohun Bagan Football Club paid a day's visit to Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. They played an Exhibition Match in the town with Pondicherry XI.

Nirmal Singh Nahar, a young inmate of the Ashram, knew the members of this club well. When he heard that Mohun Bagan would be participating in the Gold Cup at Madurai, he sought the Mother's permission to invite them on behalf of the Ashram to come to Pondicherry on their way back from Madurai, to play an Exhibition Match.

He writes:

I sought the permission through Nolini-da, who broached the subject with the Mother in the presence of Sri Aurobindo. As Sri Aurobindo heard it, he said that Mohun Bagan was the pride of India. In 1911, Mohun Bagan was the first Indian barefooted team to win the I.A.F. Shield, beating the booted British team. That incident created a great upheaval in the minds of Indians. It aroused a patriotic Nationalist feeling amongst the Indians all over the country. Seeing Sri Aurobindo's interest, the Mother gave the necessary permission. She did not consider Football a good game, thought it a rough physical game. Formal letters from the Ashram and the Government of French India Sports Department were also sent. They agreed to visit Pondicherry as the guest of the Ashram on their way back to Calcutta via Madras. They won the Gold Cup at Madurai and on their way back made a short break to visit the Ashram for a day. They travelled by train in the morning and stayed at 'Parc-à-Charbon' as arranged by the Mother. From the Railway Station, we all travelled in a lorry. In those days, the Ashram did not have many vehicles and only a few cars were there for the Mother's personal use and other official purposes. They had breakfast at our Ashram Dining Room and paid a visit to the Ashram to offer their pranams to the Mother. The Mother gave them special blessings packets. They met Nolini-da and my father, Prithwi Singh Nahar. My elder brother, Bir Singh Nahar and myself took them round the Ashram. They also had lunch at our Dining Room along with other sadhaks. It was a novel experience for them. Most of the players were personally known to us and their captain, Anil De

was Bir Singh's college mate at St. Xavier's College, Calcutta.

In the evening at the Military Ground Stadium, the exhibition football match took place. I was the referee. Before the commencement, the Governor of French Establishments in India, Mon. C. F. Baron was introduced to all the players, the referee and the linesmen by Lt. Bouhard, head of the Police and Sports. He was overall in charge of the exhibition match. The match was between Mohun Bagan and Pondicherry XI. I supervised the game in my *dhoti*. I wore the *dhoti* in Santiniketan style (*malkocha*), in keeping with our Nationalist sentiments, following the tradition of Pankaj Gupta's supervision. Pankaj Gupta was one of the top referees in India and Administrator of Football and Cricket at that time.

After the match was over, the Governor, Mon. C. F. Baron gave mementos to both teams and the Mother gave a souvenir to the Mohun Bagan team. They left the same night by train on their way to Calcutta via Madras.

Sri Aurobindo took much interest during their visit, according to Puraniji. Dr. Nirodbaran who witnessed the game gave a detailed report about it to Sri Aurobindo in the presence of the Mother. The Mother commented that Mohun Bagan played a very clean and scientific game, which she liked.

(From a typed article received from Suprabha Nahar.)

One of our young players, Arun Ganguly was selected as goalkeeper of Pondicherry XI. The match was played in the Military Ground (now known as Indira Gandhi Sports Stadium). The Mother went to see the game. There were permanent cement galleries for the spectators and the Mother's chair was placed on the first step of one of the galleries.

The participants of Physical Education Department as well as other inmates of the Ashram interested in the game were also present. We had never seen such a wonderful game of football before. After the game was over, the Calcutta team came in front of the Mother. She gave to each one a special blessing packet and presented to the captain of the team a beautifully carved brass tray (on a short stand) filled with fruits artistically arranged with leaves. After receiving the present, the captain said loudly, "Three Cheers for our Ma — Hip, Hip, Hurray," which was echoed by the lusty voices of his team-mates. We were taken aback in happy surprise. On hearing the unexpected cheering, "For our Ma"; Bharati-di, a French lady who was a teacher here made an interesting comment, "Only Bengalis could do this!"

During the course of the years, many of our players would often get badly hurt while playing football. That was the reason why the Mother was not in favour of this game. But, after witnessing this match, she told the captain of our football team that the game she had seen was beautiful, so perfect and of a high standard, a very good display of strength and fearlessness and she said, "It is an artistic game!"

Physical education gets its present form

The year 1949 is an important landmark in the history of our Department of Physical Education. The first number of the *Bulletin of Physical Education* was published that year in the month of February. It added a new dimension to our physical education. The seal of Sri Aurobindo's sanction came in the form of an article which begins:

I take the opportunity of the publication of this issue of the "*Bulletin d'Education Physique*" of the Ashram to give my blessings to the Journal and the Association — J.S.A.S.A.

In this way, our physical education organisation became a reality and continues to follow, with minor modifications, the main lines set up at that time.

When we look back at the activities of the years 1945-1947, it is as if the Mother's Force was constantly active in the background. We had only the Playground and the Volley Ball ground for our activities. All types of preparatory activities started taking shape and the group of young participants was happily carried along in its current: a few games were played, some races run on the beach road, and a few jumps performed by the boys' group.

After that, the Tennis Ground was taken on long lease. This addition of the Tennis Ground in the middle of 1948 opened new possibilities of greater expansion of our physical education activities. Within seven months, these activities seemed to burst out of a veil and, by the beginning of 1949, we were participating in most of the regular items in physical culture: gymnastics, games, asanas, athletics and combatives were included in the programme for the ladies and the men. Incredible indeed!

Our Yearly Programme

Our yearly programme of physical education was divided at that time into four quarters, namely:

The First Quarter commencing on the 4th of December ending on the 1st of March with the finals and prize distribution of all the game tournaments held during that quarter.

The Second Quarter would end on the 1st of May with the finals and prize distribution of Aquatic Sports. It was only in 1957 that our Swimming-pool was opened by the Mother. So, till then, this quarter was used for playing different types of games.

The Third Quarter would end on the 1st of September with the finals and prize distribution of the Athletics Competitions.

The Fourth Quarter was reserved for competitions in gymnastics items and would end on the 1st of December with the School Annual Day celebration consisting of cultural programmes followed by the gymnastics displays on the 2nd of December.

In this article we report of the activities from 1949 to 1960 only.

As introduction, we quote the message the Mother gave us in 1950 regarding tournaments:

January, February, March and April are for us the months of tournaments. Small and big, all participate with the same ardour, but, I must say, not in the spirit of the ordinary competitors. For we always strive, not to win, but to play the best we can and open thus the way to a new progress.

We are not aiming at success — our aim is perfection.

We are not seeking fame or reputation; we want to prepare ourselves for a Divine manifestation. That is why we can boldly say: It is better to be than to seem. We need not appear to be good if our sincerity is perfect. And by perfect sincerity we mean that all our thoughts, feelings, sensations and actions should express nothing but the central Truth of our being.

(Bulletin of Physical Education, April 1950)

The games played

Before we proceed further, we reproduce here the following notice put up on the Ashram Notice Board in 1955.

It has been remarked that the behaviour of some players on the playing fields, especially during the Tournament matches, is not all that it should be.

Members of the Ashram in particular should be an example to all others in good sportsmanlike behaviour.

For this purpose the attention of all players is drawn to the following extracts from the Code of Sportsmanship which was distributed to everybody some time back. . . .

Here is a beautiful advice by the Mother:

When you Disagree with your Playmates:

I suggest the same remedy as the one I was using in my childhood when disagreeing with my young playmates. I was at that time, as you are, very sensitive and I felt hurt when abused by them, especially by those whom I had shown only sympathy and kindness. I used to tell myself: “Why be sorry and feel miserable? If they are right in what they say, I have only to be glad for the

lesson and correct myself; if they are wrong, why should I worry about it — it is for them to be sorry for their mistake. In both cases the best and the most dignified thing I can do is to remain strong, quiet and unmoved.”

This lesson which I was giving myself and trying to follow when I was eight years old, still holds good in all similar cases.

(Felicity Eternal, p. 74)

We hope we have improved in our attitude now!

The games played in 1949 were 1) Football, 2) Volley-ball, 3) Basket Ball, 4) Hand Ball, 5) Cricket, 6) Tennis, 7) Table-tennis and 8) Minor Games.

The teams for some games were made by the Captains of the ‘groups’ and others by the organisers, but, the scheduling of all the matches were done by Udar. Each ‘group’ captain would receive a typed copy of the schedule signed by the Mother.

Here is a notice regarding the Tournaments.

Tournament Rule

Players must play when required to do so. If they refuse to play in any item without showing sufficient reason their names would be cancelled from that item, for the rest of the year.

This was followed by a short comment signed by the Mother:

Par conséquent réfléchissez avant de donner votre nom.

(Think well before you give your name.)

These notices give us an idea of the attitude that the participants were expected to have.

The Mother plays tennis singles

The Mother also played singles with the girls. The Mother would come back to the Playground after her usual game of tennis to leave Pranab-da there to attend to the ‘group’ activities. She then went back to the Tennis Ground again and played a game with one of us every day.

Amita remembers about her game with the Mother:

For two years, 1953-54 we played one set of singles with the Mother from about 5.45 p.m. till the end of the game. For us this was a special treat. In the process we became aware of some things which were very important to us

individually — the attitude during the game was what mattered most. “Tennis is a game of Consciousness,” she used to say. We were only beginners but we liked to try to play a good game with the Mother and she used to enjoy making us run by placing the balls at different spots — as passing shots or cross-court which you could not reach. This used to bring a smile on her face always.

The second year, when I played singles with her, she had a good game. She told me the next morning “*Tu as fais beaucoup de progrès*” (You have progressed a great deal).

Here are a few observations the Mother made regarding our game with her.

Regarding my (Chitra) game she had once said, “I have told you already, haven’t I? We had a conversation all the while we played.”

Her short comment on Kumud’s game was: “Oh! She played like an angel.”

One day, it was Minoo’s turn to play the singles game with the Mother. The Mother played exceptionally well that day. While playing with her, we used to try to place all our balls towards her forehand near the mid-court, where she would already be standing in position. But that particular day, Minoo seemed to be happily hitting her balls unmindful of where they were going! Her shots were going everywhere, all over the court. I remember I was quite confused and thought, “Why is Minoo playing like that?” But, at the same time, we were surprised to see the Mother moving swiftly up and down the court, almost everywhere, and returning all the balls! The Mother won the set. Later on, in the Playground, she told me: “Minoo is thinking that she has played well. But it is not that. You know, I had an experience today which I have never had in the game. The Consciousness from above was directing the body for what it should do and the body was obeying It.” It was the first time that it had happened, she said, and she was happy about it. I was wonderstruck. Such an experience could happen while engaged in a most worldly activity! And how casually she told me about it!

Mridula was the best player among the girls. During the game with her we found that the Mother was not playing well at all. She was unable to return the balls. We thought that Mridula’s strokes were hard and so the ball was too fast and the Mother was not able to play well. However, later on, when the Mother spoke to me regarding this game, she revealed to me a deeper aspect of our games with her. I can only say what I understood (or rather, did not understand) something about it. She said, it was not her strokes but some other force was being allowed to be in those strokes. (Something which should not have been there, I suppose!) That is why the Mother could not play. She added, “Didn’t you notice that I immediately called Sujata to play and I was playing well?” I was just nodding my head — “Yes, Mother, yes Mother.” Then she said, “You have understood nothing!” and I agreed fully. It has something to do with inner movements and that was beyond my comprehension.

Mixed doubles matches in Tennis were also introduced in 1950. It was a league tournament. We only entered our names. The teams were made by the Mother. The list of names of all the players were submitted to her and she made the teams. This she would do on the first floor of the main Ashram building. In 1954 she made the teams by lottery, picking up the names from two different containers. This was done in her room in the Playground.

The first year there were twenty-two teams.

Each mixed doubles team had an opportunity to play one set with the Mother and Pranab-da as her partner. The Mother started the game by serving the first ball. This was an exceptional experience for us. Apparently this game was played on the physical plane. We tried to remain as quiet, as gathered within as we could, remain open and receive all that she was giving us in the occult plane. Her work was never contained in one plane. It is impossible for us to try to express in words this unique experience! During the tennis tournaments, the Mother would write down the results of the matches played and these would be put up on the Ashram notice-board.

The participants were students or full-time workers in the departments of the Ashram. All the pairs had to give their free time, so that the matches could be posted without disrupting their regular work. Organising these matches must have been a colossal exercise!

Here, we give an example, of the notice put up on the board for the first Mixed Doubles match:

The Tennis Mixed Doubles Tournament will commence from Friday the 6th instant and will open with the match *DOUCE MÈRE* & Pranab versus The Monas (Mona Sarkar and Mona Pinto) at 5-15 p.m.

(Signed The Mother)

Nirod-da writes:

There used to be mixed doubles tennis matches among our Groups. The Mother took a great deal of interest in them. She herself would choose our partners and enquire about the results of the games. Some of us took her blessings before going to the court. One pair remained unbeaten in successive tournaments. When our turn came to play against them the Mother said, "Try to beat them." I don't know why she was keen on it.

I however could not fulfil her wish. I returned defeated and explained to her why I had failed. I said, "The male partner on the opposite side kept his companion standing like a dummy and he played all the game, while I allowed my partner to have a good share of it. Naturally then the opponent getting his chance began to send all the shots to my weak partner and I kept on standing like a witness Purusha. He was bent more on winning than enjoying the game."

Next year, however, my partner and I changed our roles, I was now the active Prakriti and she the witness Purusha and we gave the formidable pair a good thrashing. The news had already reached the Mother so that when I met her, she said smiling, “So you have killed the giant!”

(Memorable Contacts with the Mother, p. 65)

We have mentioned earlier that Mother had played with the girls’ group. But though we played doubles matches amongst ourselves we did not have a chance to play doubles matches with the Mother. However the men’s group played doubles matches too with her.

On the 1st of March, 1949, the prize distribution took place. Trophy cups were distributed to all the winners for individual events, and, only to the captains of the teams for team events. These cups were to be kept for one year and then returned to Dyuman-bhai before January 1950. Cards signed by the Mother were distributed to the winners and the runners-up. The winner’s card had a drawing which is an adaptation from a Greek bronze, a man with a leg on a bull holding it by its horns. This depiction is meant to express our will to use the physical strength for mastery over the black bull of passion. On the Runner-up card was the picture ‘le Penseur’ by Rodin signifying the necessity of reflection to perfect the means for a better result.

The games tournaments extend into the next quarter of aquatics

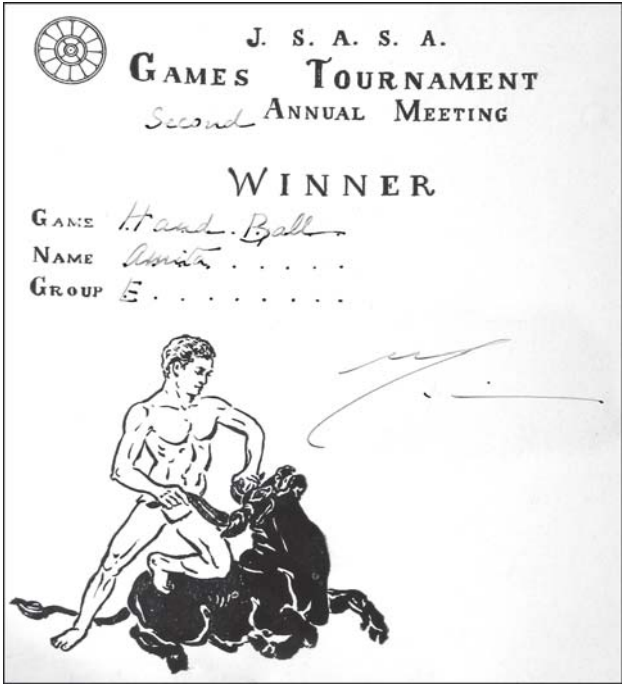
Till our swimming pool was constructed, the second quarter, which was fixed for Aquatics in the general programme, was used for sea bathing and swimming for those who were interested in the morning hours only. Though this was not considered as part of our regular physical education programme, yet there were many enthusiastic participants. As the Pondicherry seafront is not quite safe for swimmers, this morning activity was organised and life-guards and life-belts were arranged for the swimmers.

In 1949, this quarter was also used for some games tournaments — Table-tennis Doubles, Volley-ball Doubles, Circle Ball and Shooting the Basket.

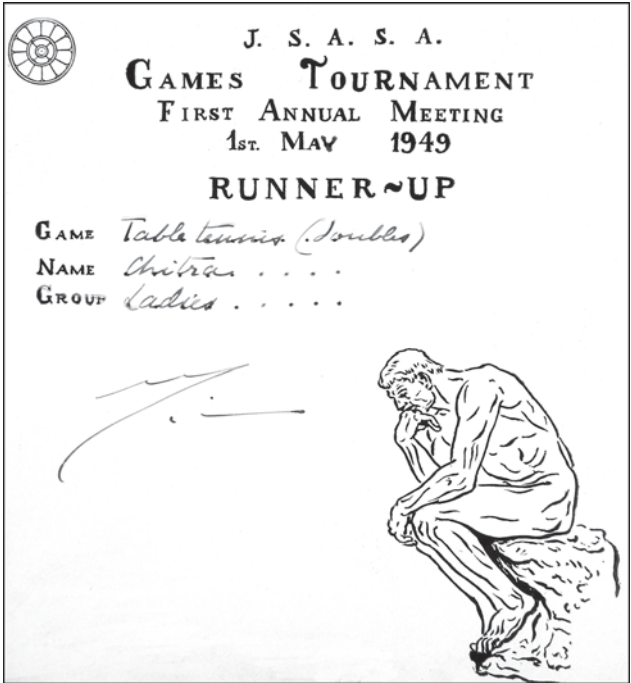
Though considered a minor game, Circle Ball, was played in mixed teams of men, girls and juniors with great enthusiasm.

(To be continued)

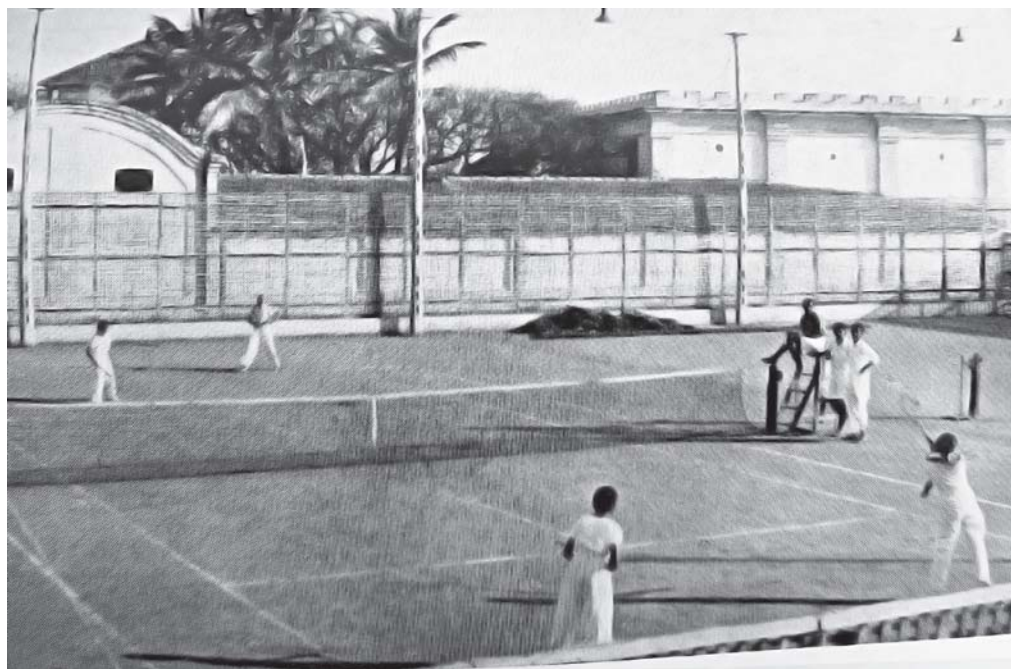
CHITRA SEN



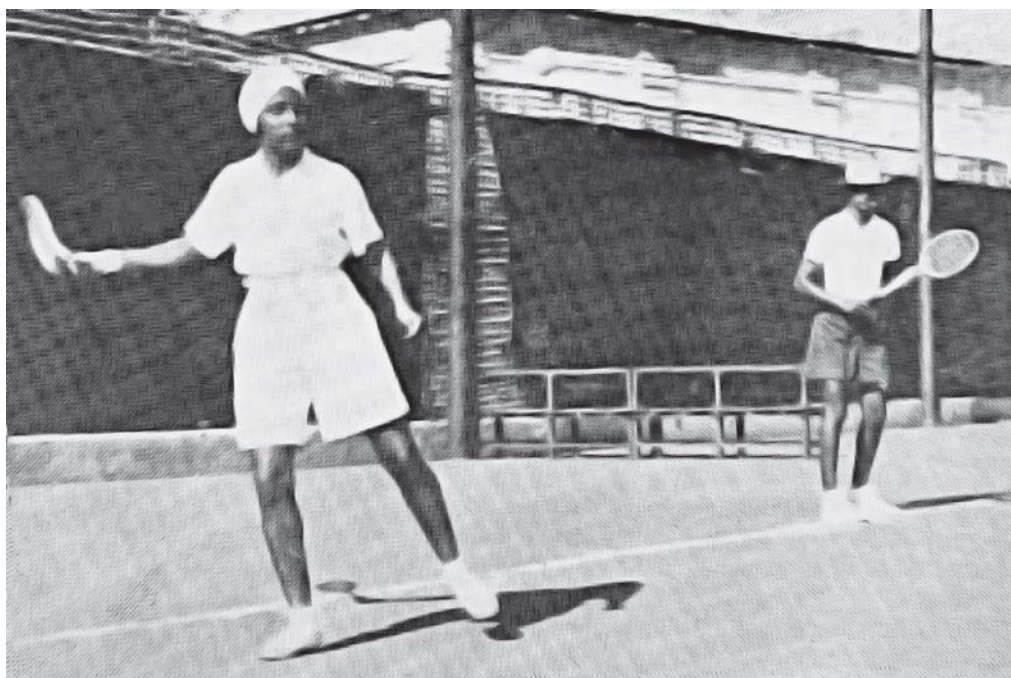
Prize card — winner



Prize card — runner-up



Ladies doubles



Mixed doubles



Girls playing handball in Tennis Ground, 1948



Girls playing basketball in Tennis Ground, 1949



Circleball in Tennis Ground



Children enjoying an early morning sea bath

BOOK NOTES

The English of Savitri — Book Three, The Book of the Divine Mother

The second volume of Shraddhavan's series of talks in her classes at Savitri Bhavan has been released.

As in the first volume, readers not too conversant with the intricacies of the English language will find here ample assistance in understanding and appreciating Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*.

The usefulness of the book goes beyond mere explication. It weaves in words and phrases from the poem to bring home the inter-relatedness of ideas, concepts and images, clarifies some allusions and provides a kind of narrative flow that takes the reader along, and more importantly, into the spirit of the epic.

Although the spine of the book declares this volume to be the second part, the reader should note that it does not take up where the first volume left off.

As the author explains in the prefatory note:

"Readers who have appreciated the sentence-by-sentence explanations of Book One of Sri Aurobindo's revelatory epic . . . published in Volume 1 of this series, may be surprised to find that this second volume does not continue in sequence with Book Two, The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds, but instead leaps to Book Three, The Book of the Divine Mother. This is because the author found the immense journey through all the planes of existence followed by King Aswapati in the fifteen cantos of Book Two too daunting to be taken up immediately.

The weekly study sessions at Savitri Bhavan covering Book Two stretched over almost two years. Recordings of these sessions were made, but so far only a very few have been transcribed, and on review it was found that the explanations given in the classes would require a great deal of editing and revision before they could be offered for publication. The sessions covering Book Three, however, had already been transcribed and edited and were ready for publication, so these texts are now being offered as Volume 2 of the series.

A brief summary of Book Two has been added at the beginning to provide some continuity."

The Mother's words to Norman Dowsett are quoted at the close of the author's introduction:

For the opening of the psychic, for the growth of consciousness and even for the improvement of English it is good to read one or two pages of Savitri each day.



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