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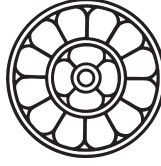
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE TALE OF NALA

[**The Tale of Nala [1]**. Circa 1916–20. There are very few clues by which this incomplete poem might be dated. Judging from the handwriting, it was composed towards the end of the second decade of the [last] century. It obviously is based on the story of Nala, as recounted in the Mahabharata and later texts, but does not seem to be a translation of any known Sanskrit work. The passages separated by a blank line were written separately and not joined together.

The Tale of Nala [2]. Circa 1916–20. Sri Aurobindo seems to have written this rhymed version of the opening of his proposed poem on Nala after the blank verse version. He retained several lines from the earlier version unchanged or practically unchanged. — Note in CWSA]

THE TALE OF NALA [1]

Nala, Nishadha's king, paced by a stream
Which ran, escaping from the solitudes
To flow through gardens in a pleasant land.
Murmuring it came of the green souls of hills
And of the towns and hamlets it had seen,
The brown-limbed peasants toiling in the sun,
And the tired bullocks in the thirsty fields.
In its bright talk and laughter it recalled
The moonlight and the lapping dangerous tongues,
The sunlight and the skimming wings of birds,
And gurgling jars, and bright bathed limbs of girls
At morning, and its noons and lonely eves.
This memory to the jasmine trees it sang
Which dropped their slow white petalled kisses down
Upon its haste of curling waves. Far off
A mountain rose, alone and purple vague,
Wide-watching from its large stone-lidded eye
The drowsy noontide earth; vastly outspread
Like Vindhya changed, against the height of heaven
It stood and on the deep-blue nearness leaned
Its shoulder in a mighty indolence.
Reclined for giant rest the Titan paused.
The birds were voiceless on the unruffled boughs;

The spotted lizard in a dull unease
Basked on his sentinel stone, a single kite
Circled above; white-headed over rust
Of brown and gold he stained the purple noon.
Solitary in the spaces of his mind
Among these sights and sounds King Nala paced
Oblivious of the joy of outward things.
Shrill and dissatisfied the wanderer's cry
Came to his ear; he saw with absent eyes
The rapid waters in their ripple run
Nor marked the ruddy sprouting of the leaves,
Nor heard the dove's rare cooing in the trees.
His thoughts were with a face his dreams had seen
Diviner than the jasmine's moon-flaked glow;
He listened to a name his dreams had learned
Sweeter than passion of the crooning bird.
Its delicate syllables yearning through his mind
Repeated longingly the soft-wreathed call,
As if some far-off bright forgotten queen
From whom his heart had wandered through the world,
Were summoning back to her her truant thrall,
Luring him with the music of her name.
But soon some look on him he seemed to feel.
The summit self-uplifted to the sky
Mounting the air in act to climb and join
Heaven's sapphire longing with earth's green unease
Drew his far gaze, which conned as for a thought
The undecipherable charactery
Of rocks and mingled woods; but all was lost
In too much light. Dull glared the giant stones;
The woods, fallen sleepy on their mountain couch,
Had nestled in their coverlet of haze.
Like dim-seen shapes of virgins stoled in blue
In huddled grace sleeping close-limbed they lay.
Then from some covert bosom's shrouded riches
A revelation came; for like a gleam
Of beauty from a purple-guarded breast
One lovely glint of passionate whiteness broke.
Fluttering awhile towards him soon it fled
Seeking his vision; and its glowing race
Splintered the sapphire with its silvery hue,

And now a flame-bright flock of swans was seen
Flying like one and breasting with its shock
Of faery speed the vastness of the noon.
Not only with an argent flashing ran
The brilliant cohort on its skiey path,
But shaking from wild wings a hail of gold.
Heaven's lustrous tunic of transparent air
Regretted the bright ornament as they passed.
They flew not like the snowy cranes, like wreaths
Of flowers driven in the rain-wind's breath,
When thunder calls them northward, but came fast
Ranked in magnificent and lovely lines,
Cleaving the air with splendour, while the pride
And rushing glory of their bosoms and wings
Assailed his eyes with silver and with flame.
Over the Nishadhan gardens flying round
They came down whirring softly, then filled awhile
With gentle clamour from their liquid throats
The region, and disturbed with dipping plumes
The turquoise slumber of the motionless lake
Lulled to unrippling rest by windless noon.
A hundred wonderful shapes in mystic crowd
Covered the water like a living robe.
Next on the stream they spread their glorious breasts.
Each close-ranked by her sweet companion's side,
Floating they came and preened above the flood
Their long and stately necks like curving flowers.
The water petted with enamoured waves
Their bosoms and the slow air swooned along
Their wings; their motion set a wordless chant
To flow against the chidings of the stream.
And hard to speak their beauty, what silver mass
On mass, what flakes and peacock-eyes of gold,
What passion of crimson flecked each pure white breast.
It seemed to his charmed sense that in this form
The loveliness of a diviner world
Had come to him winged. Their beauty to tender greed
Moved him of all that living silver and gold.

“For now thy heaven-born pride must learn to range
My gardens of the earth and haunt my streams,

And to my call consent. If thou resist
I will imprison thee in a golden cage
And bind thy beauty with a silver chain.”
A laughter beautiful arose from her,
Thrilling her throat with bubbling ecstasies,
Sweet, satisfied because he praised her grace.
And with mysterious mild deep-glowing eyes
In long and softly-wreathing syllables
The wonder spoke. “Release me, for no birds
Are we, O mortal, but the moon-bosomed nymphs
Who to the trance-heard music of the gods
Sway in the mystic dances of the sky,
Apsaras, daughters of the tumbling seas.
Shaped by thy fancy is my white-winged form.”
But Nala to his bright prisoner swan replied:
“And more thou doomst thyself by all thy words,
Bird of desire or goddess luminous-limbed,
To satisfy my pride and my delight,
My divine captive and white-bosomed slave
Who stoopst to me from unattainable heavens.
Thou shalt possess my streams, O white-winged swan,
And dance, O Apsara, singing in my halls.
Between the illumined pillars thou shalt glide
When flute and breathing lyre and timbrel call,
Adorning with thy golden rhythmic limbs
The crystalline mosaic of my floors.
What I have seized by force, by force I keep.”
Her eyes now smiled on him; submissively
She laid in all its tender curving grace
The long white wonder of her neck upraised
In suppliant wreaths against his bosom and pressed
Flatteringly her silver head upon his cheek
And with her soft alluring voice replied:
“Because thou art bright and beautiful and bold
So have I come to thee and thou hast seized
Whom if thou hadst set free, thy joy were lost.
So to thy mind from some celestial space
A name and face have come, yet are on earth,
Which if thou hadst not held with yearning’s stays,
Thy mortal life would have been given in vain.
Forced by thy musing in the sapphire noon

Out of the mountain's breast to thee I flew
Unknowing, a heavenly envoy to her heart
That was thy own by glad necessity
Before its beatings in her breast began.
All are the links of one miraculous chain."

THE TALE OF NALA [2]

Nala, Nishadha's king, paced by a stream
That sings to jasmine-bushes where they dream
Dropping their petal kisses on the flood.
A mountain purple-vague
Wide-watching, half-reclined against the sky,
The drowsy earth with its stone-lidded eye,
Pressing upon the nearness blue and dense
Its shoulder in a mighty indolence.
The birds were silent on the unruffled trees;
The spotted lizard in a dull-eyed ease
Basked on his sentinel-stone; a lonely kite
Circled above, half rusty-gold, half-white.
Shrill and dissatisfied the wanderer's sky
To an unlistening ear sailed shadowy-high.
He saw with absent eyes the ripple-run
Of waters curling in the noonday sun.
His thoughts were with a face his dreams had seen,
And like a floating charm it came between
His vision and the jasmines' virgin glow,
Warmer than clusterings of their moon-flaked snow.
He listened to a name his dreams had heard
Sweeter than passion of a crooning bird.
In long and softly-wreathing sounds were twined
The delicate syllables yearning through his mind;
His beating heart was to their charm compelled.
But now he raised his eyelids and beheld
Possess the air in act to climb and seize
Heaven's sapphire longing for earth's green unease,
The summit self-uplifted to the sky
With undecipherable character
Of woods half-outlined in a passionate haze.
Bright violently as if to force his gaze

Broke from the blue-stoled secrecy of the hill
Such radiance as when softly visible
Breaks stealing from a purple-covered breast
A lovely glint of whiteness. Now, increased,
Like a snow-feathered arrow-head it flew
Splintering the sapphire with its silvery hue.
But before long there gleamed a flame-bright flock
Flying like one and breasting with its shock
Of faery speed the widenesses of noon.
So rapidly the wonder travelled, soon
He saw distinct the feathers proud and fine
Not only with a splendour argentine,
But shaken from the wings was shed a hail
Of gold that left the sunbeam's glory pale.
They flew not like the snowy cranes, a wreath
Of flowers driven in the rainwind's breath,
But ranked in lovely lines magnificent came
Filling the eyes with silver and with flame.
They over Nala's garden flying round
Whirring descended with a far-heard sound,
A gentle thunder falling sweetly slack
As line by line they filled the slumbering lake.
A hundred wonderful shapes in mystic crowd
Covered the water like a living cloud.
Next on the stream they spread their glorious bosoms
And preening over the waves like curving blossoms
Their long and delicate necks came floating on.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, pp. 521-26)

FROM 'NOTES ON THE MAHABHARATA'

(Reference to *Naladamayanti*)

. . . Strength and a fine austerity are then the two tests which give us safe guidance through the morass of the Mahabharata; where these two exist together, we may reasonably presume some touch of Vyasa; where they do not exist or do not conjoin, we feel at once the redactor or the interpolator. I have spoken of another poet whose more turbid & vehement style breaks continually into the pure gold of Vyasa's work. The whole temperament of this redacting poet, for he is something more than an interpolator, has its roots in Valmekie; but like most poets of a secondary and fallible genius, he exaggerates while adopting the more audacious and therefore the more perilous tendencies of his master. The love of the wonderful touched with the grotesque, the taste for the amorphous, a marked element in Valmekie's complex temperament, is with his follower something like a malady. He grows impatient with the apparent tameness of Vyasa's inexorable self-restraint, and restlessly throws in here couplets, there whole paragraphs of a more flamboyant vigour. Occasionally this is done with real ability & success, but as a rule they are true purple patches, daubs of paint on the stainless dignity of marble. For his rage for the wonderful is not always accompanied by the prodigious sweep of imagination which in Valmekie successfully grasps and compels the most reluctant materials. The result is that puerilities and gross breaches of taste fall easily & hardily from his pen. Not one of these could we possibly imagine as consistent with the severe, self-possessed intellect of Vyasa. Fineness, justness, discrimination & propriety of taste are the very soul of the man.

Nowhere is his restrained & quiet art more visible than when he handles the miraculous. But since the Mahabharata is so honeycombed with the work of inept wondermongers, we are driven for an undisturbed appreciation of it to works which are no parts of the original Mahabharata and are yet by the same hand, the Nala & the Savitrie. These poems have all the peculiar qualities which we have decided to be very Vyasa, the style, the diction, the personality are identical and refer us back to him as clearly as the sunlight refers us back to the sun; and yet they have something which the Mahabharata has not. Here we have the very morning of Vyasa's genius, when he was young and ardent; perhaps still under the immediate influence of Valmekie (one of the most pathetic touches in the Nala is borrowed straight out of the Ramayana); at any rate able without ceasing to be finely restrained to give some rein to his fancy. The Nala therefore has the delicate & unusual romantic grace of a young & severe classic who has permitted himself to go-a-maying in the fields of romance. There is a remote charm of restraint in the midst of abandon, of vigilance

in the play of fancy which is passing sweet & strange. The Savitrie is a maturer & nobler work, perfect & restrained in detail, but it has still some glow of the same youth and grace over it. This then is the rare charm of these two poems that we find there the soul of the pale & marble Rishi, the austere philosopher, the great statesman, the strong and stern poet of war & empire, when it was yet in its radiant morning, far from the turmoil of courts & cities & the roar of the battlefield and had not yet scaled the mountaintops of thoughts. Young, a Brahmachari & a student, Vyasa dwelt with the green silences of earth, felt the fascination & loneliness of the forests of which his earlier poetry is full, walked by many a clear & lucid river white with the thronging waterfowl, perhaps Payoshni, that ocean-seeking stream, or heard the thunder of multitudinous crickets in some lone tremendous forest; with Valmekie's mighty stanzas in his mind, saw giant-haunted glooms, dells where faeries gathered, brakes where some Python from the underworld came out to bask or listened to the voices of Kinnaries on the mountaintops. In such surroundings wonders might seem natural and deities as in Arcadia might peep from under every tree. Nala's messengers to Damayanti are a troop of golden winged swans that speak with a human voice; he is intercepted on his way by gods who make him their envoy to a mortal maiden; he receives from them gifts more than human; fire and water come to him at his bidding and flowers bloom in his hands; in his downfall the dice become birds which fly away with his remaining garment; when he wishes to cut in half the robe of Damayanti, a sword comes ready to his hand in the desolate cabin; he meets the Serpent-King in the ring of fire and is turned by him into the deformed charioteer, Vahuka; the tiger in the forest turns away from Damayanti without injuring her and the lustful hunter falls consumed by the power of offended chastity. The destruction of the caravan by wild elephants, the mighty driving of Nala, the counting of the leaves of the [], the cleaving of the Vibhitaka tree; every incident almost is full of that sense of beauty & wonder which were awakened in Vyasa by his early surroundings. We ask whether this beautiful fairy-tale is the work of that stern and high poet with whom the actualities of life were everything and the flights of fancy counted for so little. Yet if we look carefully, we shall see in the Nala abundant proof of the severe touch of Vyasa, just as in his share of the Mahabharata fleeting touches of wonder & strangeness, gone as soon as glimpsed, evidence a love of the ultranatural, severely bitted and reined in. Especially do we see the poet of the Mahabharata in the artistic vigilance which limits each supernatural incident to a few light strokes, to the exact place and no other where it is wanted & the exact amount and no more that is necessary. (It is this sparing economy of touch almost unequalled in its beauty of just rejection, which makes the poem an epic instead of a fairy tale in verse.) There is for instance the incident of the swans; we all know to what prolixities of pathos & bathos vernacular poets like the Gujarati Premanund have enlarged this feature of the story. But Vyasa introduced it to give a certain touch of beauty & strangeness and that touch once imparted the swans disappear

from the scene; for his fine taste felt that to prolong the incident by one touch more would have been to lower the poem and run the risk of raising a smile. Similarly in the Savitrie what a tremendous figure a romantic poet would have made of Death, what a passionate struggle between the human being and the master of tears and partings! But Vyasa would have none of this; he had one object, to paint the power of a woman's silent love and he rejected everything which went beyond this or which would have been merely decorative. We cannot regret his choice. There have been plenty of poets who could have given us imaginative and passionate pictures of Love struggling with Death, but there has been only one who could give us a Savitrie.

In another respect also the Nala helps us materially to appreciate Vyasa's genius. His dealings with nature are a strong test of a poet's quality; but in the Mahabharata proper, of all epics the most pitilessly denuded of unnecessary ornament, natural description is rare. We must therefore again turn for aid to the poems which preceded his hard and lofty maturity. Vyasa's natural description as we find it there, corresponds to the nervous, masculine and hardstrung make of his intellect. His treatment is always puissant and direct without any single pervasive atmosphere except in sunlit landscapes, but always effectual, realizing the scene strongly or boldly by a few simple but sufficient words. There are some poets who are the children of Nature, whose imagination is made of her dew, whose blood thrills to her with the perfect impulse of spiritual kinship; Wordsworth is of these and Valmeki. Their voices in speaking of her unconsciously become rich and liquid and their words are touched with a subtle significance of thought or emotion. There are others who hold her with a strong sensuous grasp by virtue of a ripe, sometimes an overripe delight in beauty; such are Shakespeare, Keats, Kalidasa. Others again approach her with a fine or clear intellectual sense of her charm as do some of the old classical poets. Hardly in the rank of poets are those who like Dryden & Pope use her, if at all, only to provide them with a smooth or well-turned literary expression. Vyasa belongs to none of these, and yet often touches the first three at particular points without definitely coinciding with any. He takes the kingdom of Nature by violence. Approaching her from outside his masculine genius forces its way to her secret, insists and will take no denial. Accordingly he is impressed at first contact by the harmony in the midst of variety of her external features, absorbs these into a strong and retentive imagination, meditates on them and so reads his way to the closer impression, the inner sense behind that which is external, the personal temperament of a landscape. In his record of what he has seen, this impression more often than not comes first as that which abides & prevails; sometimes it is all he cares to record; but his tendency towards perfect faithfulness to the vision within leads him, when the scene is still fresh to his eye, to record the data through which the impression was reached. We have all experienced the way in which our observation of a scene, conscious or unconscious, forms itself out of various separate & often uncoordinated impressions,

which if we write a description at the time or soon after and are faithful to ourselves, find their way into the picture even at the expense of symmetry; but if we allow a long time to elapse before we recall the scene, there returns to us only a single self-consistent impression which without accurately rendering it, retains its essence and its atmosphere. Something of this sort occurs in our poet; for Vyasa is always faithful to himself. When he records the data of his impression, he does it with force and clearness, frequently with a luminous atmosphere around the object, especially with a delight in the naked beauty of the single clear word which at once communicates itself to the hearer. First come the strong and magical epithets or the brief and puissant touches by which the soul of the landscape is made visible and palpable, then the enumeration sometimes only stately, at others bathed in a clear loveliness. The fine opening of the twelfth surga of the Nala is a signal example of this method. At the threshold we have the great & sombre line वनं प्रतिभयं शून्यं झिल्लिकागणनादितं ।

A void tremendous forest thundering
With crickets

striking the keynote of gloom & loneliness, then the cold stately enumeration of the forest's animal & vegetable peoples, then again the strong and revealing epithet in his "echoing woodlands sound-pervaded"; then follows "river & lake and pool and many beasts and many birds" and once more the touch of wonder & weirdness

She many alarming shapes
of fiend and snake and giant. . . .
. beheld;

making magical the bare following lines and especially the nearest, पल्वलानि तडागानि गिरिकूटानि सर्वशः "and pools & tarns & summits everywhere", with its poetical delight in the bare beauty of words. It is instructive to compare with this passage the wonderful silhouette of night in Valmekie's Book of the Child

निष्पन्दास्तरवः सर्वे निलीना मृगपक्षिणः ।
नैशेन तमसा व्याप्ता दिशश्च रघुनन्दन ।।
शनैर्विसृज्यते सन्ध्या नभो नेत्रैरिव आवृतम् ।
नक्षत्रतारागहनं ज्योतिर्भिरवभासते ।।
उत्तिष्ठते च शीतांशुः शशी लोकतमोनुदः ।
ह्लादयन्प्राणिनां लोके मनांसि प्रभया स्वया ।।
नैशानि सर्वभूतानि विचरन्ति ततस्ततः ।
यक्षराक्षससङ्घाश्च रौद्राश्च पिशिताशनाः ।।

“Motionless are all trees and shrouded the beasts & birds and the quarters filled, O joy of Raghu, with the glooms of night; slowly the sky parts with evening and grows full of eyes; dense with stars & constellations it glitters with points of light; and now yonder with cold beams rising up the moon thrusts away the shadows from the world gladdening the hearts of living things on earth with its luminousness. All creatures of the night are walking to and fro and spirit bands and troops of giants and the carrion-feeding jackals begin to roam.”

Here every detail is carefully selected to produce a certain effect, the charm and weirdness of falling night in the forest; not a word is wasted, every epithet, every verb, every image is sought out and chosen so as to aid this effect, while the vowellation is subtly managed and assonance and the composition of sounds skilfully & unobtrusively woven so as to create a delicate, wary & listening movement as of one walking in the forests by moonlight and afraid that the leaves may speak under his footing or his breath grow loud enough to be heard by himself or by beings whose presence he does not see but fears. Of such delicately imaginative art as this Vyasa was not capable; he could not sufficiently turn his strength into sweetness. Neither had he that rare, salient and effective architecture of style which makes Kalidasa's “night on the verge of dawn with her faint gleaming moon and a few just-decipherable stars”

तनुप्रकाशेन विचेयतारका प्रभातकल्पा शशिनेव शर्वरी ।

Vyasa's art, as I have said, is singularly disinterested निष्काम; he does not write with a view to sublimity or with a view to beauty, but because he has certain ideas to impart, certain events to describe, certain characters to portray. He has an image of these in his mind and his business is to find an expression for it which will be scrupulously just to his conception. This is by no means so facile a task as the uninitiated might imagine; it is in fact considerably more difficult than to bathe the style in colour and grace and literary elegance, for it demands vigilant concentration, firm intellectual truthfulness and unsparing rejection, the three virtues most difficult to the gadding, inventive and self-indulgent spirit of man. The art of Vyasa is therefore a great, strenuous and difficult art; but it unfitted him, as a similar spirit, unfitted the Greeks, to voice fully the outward beauty of Nature. For to delight infinitely in Nature one must be strongly possessed with the sense of colour and romantic beauty, and allow the fancy equal rights with the intellect.

For all his occasional strokes of fine Nature description he was not therefore quite at home with her. Conscious of his weakness Vyasa as he emancipated himself from Valmekie's influence, ceased to attempt a kind for which his genius was not the best fitted. He is far more in his element in the expression of the feelings, of the joy and sorrow that makes this life of men; his description of emotion far excels his

description of things. When he says of Damayanti

विललाप सुदुःखिता ।
भर्तृशोकपरीताङ्गी शिलातलमथाश्रिता ॥

In grief she wailed,
Erect upon a cliff, her body aching
With sorrow for her husband,

the clear figure of the abandoned woman lamenting on the cliff seizes indeed the imagination, but has a lesser inspiration than the single puissant & convincing epithet भर्तृशोकपरीताङ्गी, her whole body affected with grief for her husband. Damayanti's longer laments are also of the finest sweetness & strength; there is a rushing flow of stately and sorrowful verse, the wailing of a regal grief; then as some more exquisite pain, some more piercing gust of passion traverses the heart of the mourner, golden felicities of sorrow leap out on the imagination like lightning in their swift clear greatness.

हा वीर ननु नामाहमिष्टा किल तवानघ ।
अस्यामटव्यां घोरायां किं मां न प्रतिभाषसे ॥

Still more strong, simple and perfect is the grief of Damayanti when she wakes to find herself alone in that desolate cabin. The restraint of phrase is perfect, the verse is clear, equable and unadorned, yet hardly has Valmekie himself written a truer utterance of emotion than this

हा नाथ हा महाराज हा स्वामिन्किं जहासि माम् ।
हा हतास्मि विनष्टास्मि भीतास्मि विजने वने ॥
ननु नाम महाराज धर्मज्ञः सत्यवागसि ।
कथमुक्त्वा तथा सत्यं सुप्तामुत्सृज्य मां गतः ॥ . . .
पर्याप्तः परिहासोऽयमेतावान्पुरुषर्षभ ।
भीताहमतिदुर्धर्ष दर्शयात्मानमीश्वर ॥
दृश्यसे दृश्यसे राजन्नेष दृष्टोऽसि नैषध ।
आवार्य गुल्मैरात्मानं किं मां न प्रतिभाषसे ॥
नृशंस बत राजेन्द्र यन्मामेवङ्गतामिह ।
विलपन्तीं समागम्य नाश्वासयसि पार्थिव ॥
न शोचाम्यहमात्मानं न चान्यदपि किञ्चन ।
कथं नु भवितास्येक इति त्वां नृप रोदिमि ।
कथं नु राजंस्तृषितः क्षुधितः श्रमकर्षितः ।
सायाह्ने वृक्षमूलेषु मामपश्यन्भविष्यसि ॥

“Ah my lord! Ah my king! Ah my husband! why hast thou forsaken me? Alas, I am slain, I am undone; I am afraid in the lonely forest. Surely, O King, thou wert good & truthful; how then having sworn to me so, hast thou abandoned me in my sleep & fled? Long enough hast thou carried this jest of thine, O lion of men; I am frightened, O unconquerable; show thyself, my lord & prince. I see thee! I see thee! Thou art seen, lord of the Nishadhas, covering thyself there with the bushes; why dost thou not speak to me? Cruel king! that thou dost not come to me thus terrified here & wailing and comfort me! It is not for myself I grieve nor for aught else; it is for thee I weep thinking what will become of thee left all alone. How wilt thou fare under some tree at evening hungry & thirsty & weary not beholding me, O my King?”

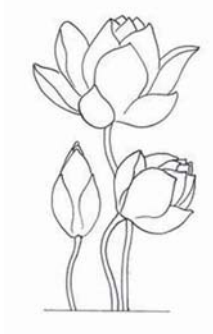
The whole of this passage with its first pang of terror & the exquisite anticlimax “I am slain, I am undone, I am afraid in the desert wood” passing quickly into sorrowful reproach, the despairing & pathetic attempt to delude herself by thinking the whole a practical jest, and the final outburst of that deep maternal love which is a part of every true woman’s passion, is great in its truth & simplicity. Steep and unadorned is Vyasa’s style, but at times it has far more power to move & to reach the heart than more elaborate & ambitious poetry.

As Vyasa progressed in years, his personality developed towards intellectualism and his manner of expressing emotion became sensibly modified. In the Savitrie he first reveals his power of imparting to the reader a sense of poignant but silent feeling, feeling in the air, unexpressed or rather expressed in action, sometimes even in very silence; this power is a notable element in some of the great scenes of the Mahabharata; the silence of the Pandavas during the mishandling of Draupadie, the mighty silence of Krishna while the assembly of kings rage and roar around him and Shishupal again & again hurls forth on him his fury & contempt and the hearts of all men are troubled, the stern self-restraint of his brothers when Yudhisthere is smitten by Virata; are instances of the power I mean. In the Mahabharata proper we find few expressions of pure feeling, none at least which have the triumphant power of Damayanti’s laments in the Nala. Vyasa had by this time taken his bent; his heart and imagination had become filled with the pomp of thought and genius and the greatness of all things mighty and bold and regal; when therefore his characters feel powerful emotion, they are impelled to express it in the dialect of thought. We see the heart in their utterances but it is not the heart in its nakedness, it is not the heart of the common man; or rather it is the universal heart of man but robed in the intellectual purple. The note of Sanscrit poetry is always aristocratic; it has no answer to the democratic feeling or to the modern sentimental cult of the average man, but deals with exalted, large and aspiring natures, whose pride it is that they do not act like common men (प्राकृतो जनः). They are the great spirits, the महाजनाः, in whose footsteps the world follows. Whatever sentimental objections may be urged against this high and arrogating spirit, it cannot be doubted that a literature pervaded with the soul of

hero worship and noblesse oblige and full of great examples is eminently fitted to elevate and strengthen a nation and prepare it for a great part in history. It was as Sanscrit literature ceased to be universally read and understood, as it became more & more confined to the Brahmins that the spirit of our nation began to decline. And it is because the echoes of that literature still lasted that the nation even in its downfall has played not altogether an ignoble part, that it has never quite consented as so many formerly great nations have done to the degradation Fate seemed determined to impose on it, that it has always struggled to assert itself, to live, to be something in the world of thought and action. And with this high tendency of the literature there is no poet who is so deeply imbued as Vyasa.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Early Cultural Writings*, CWSA, Vol. 1, pp. 310-20)

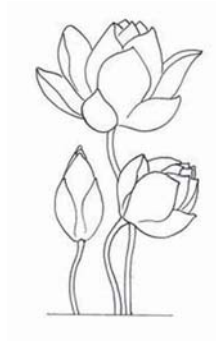


LEARNING SANSKRIT BY READING THE NALADAMAYANTI EPISODE

I suppose most learn only to be able to read French books, not to know the language well. *X* writes and reads fluently but he does not know the grammar — he has only just begun to learn it. *Y* does not know French so well — he has learned mostly by typing a lot of things in French. It is not many who know French accurately and idiomatically. *Z* was the best in that respect. I don't think many people would consent to make a principle of reading each book 3 or 4 times in the way you advocate, for very few have the scholarly mind — but two or three books should be so read — I learnt Sanskrit by reading the Naladamayanti episode in the Mahabharat like that with minute care several times.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA, Vol. 35, pp. 11-12)



EXPERIENCES AND REALISATIONS IN THE INTEGRAL YOGA

PART FOUR THE FUNDAMENTAL REALISATIONS OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA

SECTION ONE THREE STAGES OF TRANSFORMATION: PSYCHIC, SPIRITUAL, SUPRAMENTAL

Chapter One The Psychic and Spiritual Realisations

The Fundamental Realisations¹

1. The psychic change so that a complete devotion can be the main motive of the heart and the ruler of thought, life and action in constant union with the Mother and in her Presence.
2. The descent of the Peace, Power, Light etc. of the Higher Consciousness through the head and heart into the whole being, occupying the very cells of the body.
3. The perception of the One and Divine infinitely everywhere, the Mother everywhere and living in that infinite consciousness.

Four Bases of Realisation

You know the four things on which the realisation has to be based — (1) on a rising to a station above the mind, (2) on the opening out of the cosmic consciousness, (3) on the psychic opening, (4) on the descent of the higher consciousness with its peace, light, force, knowledge, Ananda etc. into all the planes of the being down to the most physical. All this has to be done by the working of the Mother's force aided by your aspiration, devotion and surrender. That is the Path. The rest is a matter of the working out of these things for which you have to have faith in the Mother's working.

1. The letter under this heading is Sri Aurobindo's reply to the question, "What are the fundamental realisations in the Yoga?" — Ed.

Three Realisations for the Soul

When one speaks of the Divine spark, one is thinking of the soul as a portion of the Divine which has descended from above into the manifestation rather than of something which has separated itself from the cosmos. It is the nature that has formed itself out of the cosmic forces — mind out of cosmic mind, life out of cosmic life, body out of cosmic matter.

For the soul there are three realisations — (1) the realisation of the psychic being and consciousness as the divine element in the evolution, (2) the realisation of the cosmic Self which is one in all, (3) the realisation of the supreme Divine from which both individual and cosmos have come and of the individual being (Jivatma) as an eternal portion of the Divine.

Foundations of the Sadhana

What you are experiencing is the true foundation of the spiritual life and realisation. It has three elements — first, the love which is the heart of Bhakti; then the descent of peace and equanimity which is the first necessary basis for realisation of self and the higher knowledge — what comes with it is the descent of the force which will work out in you the whole sadhana; thirdly, the feeling of a guiding presence or power which is the basis of Karma — of work and action founded in the spiritual consciousness.

*

You can reply to X that the three experiences he is having are the right ones — viz. the opening of the psychic through the heart, the descent of peace and the consciousness of his true being as the witness. But these experiences must be developed, deepened, completed and made the ordinary state of the consciousness. So established they become the triple foundation of the sadhana.

*

If you keep the wideness and calm as you are keeping it and also the love for the Mother in the heart, then all is safe — for it means the double foundation of the Yoga — the descent of the higher consciousness with its peace, freedom and security from above and the openness of the psychic which keeps all the effort or all the spontaneous movement turned towards the true goal.

*

To quiet the mind in such a way that no thoughts will come is not easy and usually takes time. The most necessary thing is to feel a quietude in the mind so that if thoughts come they do not disturb or hold the mind or make it follow them, but simply cross and pass away. The mind first becomes the witness of the passage of thought and not the thinker, afterwards it is able not to watch the thoughts but lets them pass unnoticed and concentrates in itself or on the object it chooses without trouble.

There are two main things to be secured as the foundations of sadhana — the opening of the psychic being and the realisation of the Self above. For the opening of the psychic being, concentration on the Mother and self-offering to her are the direct way. The growth of Bhakti which you feel is the first sign of the psychic development. A sense of the Mother's presence or force or the remembrance of her supporting and strengthening you is the next sign. Eventually, the soul within begins to be active in aspiration and psychic perception guiding the mind to the right thoughts, the vital to the right movements and feelings, showing and rejecting all that has to be put away and turning the whole being in all its movements to the Divine alone. For the self-realisation, peace and silence of the mind are the first condition. Afterwards one begins to feel release, freedom, wideness, to live in a consciousness silent, tranquil, untouched by any or all things, existing everywhere and in all, one with or united with the Divine. Other experiences come on the way, or may come, such as the opening of the inner vision, the sense of the Force working within and various movements and phenomena of the working etc. One may also be conscious of ascents of the consciousness and descents of Force, Peace, Bliss or Light from above.

*

I do not know why you doubt your experiences — you should accept them as genuine unless we expressly say anything to the contrary. In all the experiences you have sent me up to now, I have never found any that were not perfectly genuine; moreover, your observation of them is quite sound and accurate.

Your first experience was that of the opening of the psychic; you became aware of the psychic being and its aspirations and experiences and of the external being in front, as two separate parts of your consciousness. You were not able to keep this experience because the vital was not purified and pulled you out into the ordinary external consciousness. Afterwards, you got back into the psychic and were at the same time able to see your ordinary vital nature, to become aware of its defects and to work by the power of the psychic for its purification. I wrote to you at the beginning that this was the right way; for if the psychic is awake and in front, it becomes easy to remain conscious of the things that have to be changed in the external nature and it is comparatively easy too to change them. But if the psychic

gets veiled and retires into the background, the outer nature left to itself finds it difficult to remain conscious of its own wrong movements and even with great effort cannot succeed in getting rid of them. You can see yourself, as in the matter of the food, that with the psychic active and awake the right attitude comes naturally and whatever difficulty there was soon diminishes or even disappears.

I told you also at that time that there was a third part of the nature, the inner being (inner mind, inner vital, inner physical) of which you were not yet aware, but which must also open in time. It is this that has happened in your last experience. What you felt as a part of you, yourself but not your physical self, rising to meet the higher consciousness above, was this inner being; it was your (inner) higher vital being which rose in that way to join the highest Self above — and it was able to do so, because the work of purifying the outer vital nature had begun in earnest. Each time there is a purification of the outer nature, it becomes more possible for the inner being to reveal itself, to become free and to open to the higher consciousness above.

When this happens, several other things can happen at the same time. First, one becomes aware of the silent Self above — free, wide, without limits, pure, untroubled by the mental, vital and physical movements, empty of ego and limited personality, — this is what you have described in your letter. Secondly, the Divine Power descends through this silence and freedom of the Self and begins to work in the Adhara. This is what you felt as a pressure; its coming through the top of the head, the forehead and eyes and nose meant that it was working to open the mental centres — especially the two higher centres of thought and will and vision in the inner mental being. These two centres are called the thousand-petalled lotus and the *ājñā-cakra* between the eyebrows. Thirdly, by this working the inner parts of the being are opened and freed; you are liberated from the limitations of the ordinary personal mind, vital and physical and become aware of a wider consciousness in which you can be more capable of the needed transformation. But that is necessarily a matter of time and long working and you are only taking the first steps in this way.

When one goes into the inner being, the tendency is to go entirely inside and lose consciousness of the outside world — this is what people call Samadhi. But it is also necessary to be able to have the same experiences (of the Self, the workings in the inner consciousness etc.) in the waking state. The best rule for you will be to allow the entire going inside only when you are alone and not likely to be disturbed, and at other times to accustom yourself to have these experiences with the physical consciousness awake and participating in them or at least aware of them. You did therefore quite right in stopping the complete going inside while you were at X's place. There was no harm in having these experiences there or anywhere, but there should be nothing to draw the attention of others — especially of those who are not in the Yoga or in the atmosphere.

The Central Process of the Yoga

I have said that the most decisive way for the Peace or the Silence to come is by a descent from above. In fact, in reality though not always in appearance, that is how they always come; — not in appearance always, because the sadhak is not always conscious of the process; he feels the peace settling in him or at least manifesting, but he has not been conscious how and whence it came. Yet it is the truth that all that belongs to the higher consciousness comes from above, not only the spiritual peace and silence, but the Light, the Power, the Knowledge, the higher seeing and thought, the Ananda come from above. It is also possible that up to a certain point they may come from within, but this is because the psychic being is open to them directly and they come first there and then reveal themselves in the rest of the being from the psychic or by its coming into the front. A disclosure from within or a descent from above are the two sovereign ways of the Yoga-siddhi. An effort of the external surface mind or emotions, a tapasya of some kind may seem to build up something of these things, but the results are usually uncertain and fragmentary compared to the result of the two radical ways. That is why in this Yoga we insist always on an “opening” — an opening inwards of the inner mind, vital, physical to the inmost part of us, the psychic, and an opening upwards to what is above the mind — as indispensable for the fruits of the sadhana.

The underlying reason for this is that this little mind, vital and body which we call ourselves is only a surface movement and not our “self” at all. It is an external bit of personality put forward for one brief life and for the play of the Ignorance. It is equipped with an ignorant mind stumbling about in search of fragments of truth, an ignorant vital rushing about in search of fragments of pleasure, an obscure and mostly subconscious physical receiving the impacts of things and suffering rather than possessing a resultant pain or pleasure. All that is accepted until the mind gets disgusted and starts looking about for the real Truth of itself and things, the vital gets disgusted and begins wondering whether there is not such a thing as real bliss and the physical gets tired and wants liberation from itself and its pains and pleasures. Then it is possible for this little ignorant bit of surface personality to get back to its real Self and with it to these greater things — or else to extinction of itself, Nirvana.

The real Self is not anywhere on the surface but deep within and above. Within is the soul supporting an inner mind, inner vital, inner physical in which there is a capacity for universal wideness and with it for the things now asked for, — direct contact with the Truth of self and things, taste of a universal bliss, liberation from the imprisoned smallness and sufferings of the gross physical body. Even in Europe the existence of something behind the surface is now very frequently admitted, but its nature is mistaken and it is called subconscious or subliminal, while really it is very conscious in its own way and not subliminal but only behind the veil. It is, according to our psychology, connected with the small outer personality by certain

centres of consciousness of which we become aware by Yoga. Only a little of the inner being escapes through these centres into the outer life, but that little is the best part of ourselves and responsible for our art, poetry, philosophy, ideals, religious aspirations, efforts at knowledge and perfection. But the inner centres are, for the most part, closed or asleep — to open them and make them awake and active is one aim of Yoga. As they open, the powers and possibilities of the inner being also are aroused in us; we awake first to a larger consciousness and then to a cosmic consciousness; we are no longer little separate personalities with limited lives but centres of a universal action and in direct contact with cosmic forces. Moreover, instead of being unwilling playthings of the latter, as is the surface person, we can become to a certain extent conscious and masters of the play of nature — how far this goes depending on the development of the inner being and its opening upward to the higher spiritual levels. At the same time the opening of the heart centre releases the psychic being which proceeds to make us aware of the Divine within us and of the higher Truth above us.

For the highest spiritual Self is not even behind our personality and bodily existence but is above it and altogether exceeds it. The highest of the inner centres is in the head, just as the deepest is the heart; but the centre which opens directly to the Self is above the head, altogether outside the physical body, in what is called the subtle body, *sūkṣma śarīra*. This Self has two aspects and the results of realising it correspond to these two aspects. One is static, a condition of wide peace, freedom, silence: the silent Self is unaffected by any action or experience; it impartially supports them but does not seem to originate them at all, rather to stand back detached or unconcerned, *udāsīna*. The other aspect is dynamic and that is experienced as a cosmic Self or Spirit which not only supports but originates and contains the whole cosmic action — not only that part of it which concerns our physical selves but also all that is beyond it, this world and all other worlds, the supraphysical as well as the physical ranges of the universe. Moreover, we feel the Self as one in all, but also we feel it as above all, transcendent, surpassing all individual birth or cosmic existence. To get into the universal Self — one in all — is to be liberated from ego; ego either becomes a small instrumental circumstance in the consciousness or disappears from our consciousness altogether. That is the extinction or *nirvāṇa* of the ego. To get into the transcendent self above all makes us capable of transcending altogether even the cosmic consciousness and action — it can be the way to that complete liberation from the world-existence which is called also extinction, *laya*, *mokṣa*, Nirvana.

It must be noted however that the opening upward does not necessarily lead to peace, silence and Nirvana only. The sadhak becomes aware not only of a great, eventually an infinite peace, silence, wideness above us, above the head as it were and extending into all physical and supraphysical space, but also he can become aware of other things — a vast Force in which is all power, a vast Light in which is

all knowledge, a vast Ananda in which is all bliss and rapture. At first they appear as something essential, indeterminate, absolute, simple, *kevala*; a Nirvana into any of these things seems possible. But we can come to see too that this Force contains all forces, this Light all lights, this Ananda all joy and bliss possible. And all this can descend into us. Any of them and all of them can come down, not peace alone; only the safest is to bring down first an absolute calm and peace for that makes the descent of the rest more secure; otherwise it may be difficult for the external nature to contain or bear so much Force, Light, Knowledge or Ananda. All these things together make what we call the higher, spiritual or divine consciousness. The psychic opening through the heart puts us primarily into connection with the individual Divine, the Divine in his inner relations with us; it is especially the source of love and bhakti. This upward opening puts us into direct relation with the whole Divine and can create in us the divine consciousness and a new birth or births of the spirit.

For when the Peace is established, this higher or Divine Force from above can descend and work in us. It descends usually first into the head and liberates the inner mind centres, then into the heart centre and liberates fully the psychic and emotional being, then into the navel and other vital centres and liberates the inner vital, then into the Muladhara and below and liberates the inner physical being. It works at the same time for perfection as well as liberation; it takes up the whole nature part by part and deals with it, rejecting what has to be rejected, sublimating what has to be sublimated, creating what has to be created. It integrates, harmonises, establishes a new rhythm in the nature. It can bring down too a higher and yet higher force and range of the higher Nature until, if that be the aim of the sadhana, it becomes possible to bring down the supramental force and existence. All this is prepared, assisted, farthered by the work of the psychic being in the heart centre; the more it is open, in front, active, the quicker, safer, easier the working of the Force can be. The more love and bhakti and surrender grow in the heart, the more rapid and perfect becomes the evolution of the sadhana. For the descent and transformation imply at the same time an increasing contact and union with the Divine.

That is the fundamental rationale of the sadhana. It will be evident that the two most important things here are the opening of the heart centre and the opening of the mind centres to all that is behind and above them. For the heart opens to the psychic being and the mind centres open to the higher consciousness and the nexus between the psychic being and the higher consciousness is the principal means of the siddhi. The first opening is effected by a concentration in the heart, a call to the Divine to manifest within us and through the psychic to take up and lead the whole nature. Aspiration, prayer, bhakti, love, surrender are the main supports of this part of the sadhana — accompanied by a rejection of all that stands in the way of what we aspire for. The second opening is effected by a concentration of the consciousness in the head (afterwards, above it) and an aspiration and call and a sustained will for

the descent of the divine Peace, Power, Light, Knowledge, Ananda into the being — the Peace first or the Peace and Force together. Some indeed receive Light first or Ananda first or some sudden pouring down of knowledge. With some there is first an opening which reveals to them a vast infinite Silence, Force, Light or Bliss above them and afterwards either they ascend to that or these things begin to descend into the lower nature. With others there is either the descent, first into the head, then down to the heart level, then to the navel and below and through the whole body, or else an inexplicable opening — without any sense of descent — of peace, light, wideness or power or else a horizontal opening into the cosmic consciousness or, in a suddenly widened mind, an outburst of knowledge. Whatever comes has to be welcomed — for there is no absolute rule for all, — but if the peace has not come first, care must be taken not to swell oneself in exultation or lose the balance. The capital movement however is when the Divine Force or Shakti, the power of the Mother comes down and takes hold, for then the organisation of the consciousness begins and the larger foundation of the Yoga.

The result of the concentration is not usually immediate — though to some there comes a swift and sudden outflowering; but with most there is a time longer or shorter of adaptation or preparation, especially if the nature has not been prepared already to some extent by aspiration and tapasya. The coming of the result can sometimes be aided by associating with the concentration one of the processes of the old Yogas. There is the Advaita process of the way of knowledge — one rejects from oneself the identification with the mind, vital, body, saying continually “I am not the mind”, “I am not the vital”, “I am not the body”, seeing these things as separate from one’s real self — and after a time one feels all the mental, vital, physical processes and the very sense of mind, vital, body becoming externalised, an outer action, while within and detached from them there grows the sense of a separate self-existent being which opens into the realisation of the cosmic and transcendent Spirit. There is also the method — a very powerful method — of the Sankhyas, the separation of the Purusha and the Prakriti. One enforces on the mind the position of the Witness — all action of mind, vital, physical becomes an outer play which is not myself or mine, but belongs to Nature and has been enforced on an outer me. I am the witness Purusha who am silent, detached, not bound by any of these things. There grows up in consequence a division in the being; the sadhak feels within him the growth of a calm silent separate consciousness which feels itself quite apart from the surface play of the mind and the vital and physical Nature. Usually when this takes place, it is possible very rapidly to bring down the peace of the higher consciousness and the action of the higher Force and the full march of the Yoga. But often the Force itself comes down first in response to the concentration and call and then, if these things are necessary, it does them and uses any other means or process that is helpful or indispensable.

One thing more. In this process of the descent from above and the working it

is most important not to rely entirely on oneself, but to rely on the guidance of the Guru and to refer all that happens to his judgment and arbitration and decision. For it often happens that the forces of the lower nature are stimulated and excited by the descent and want to mix with it and turn it to their profit. It often happens too that some Power or Powers undivine in their nature present themselves as the Supreme Lord or as the Divine Mother and claim the being's service and surrender. If these things are accepted, there will be an extremely disastrous consequence. If indeed there is the assent of the sadhak to the Divine working alone and the submission or surrender to that guidance, then all can go smoothly. This assent and a rejection of all egoistic forces or forces that appeal to the ego are the safeguard throughout the sadhana. But the ways of Nature are full of snares, the disguises of the ego are innumerable, the illusions of the Powers of Darkness, Rakshasi Maya, are extraordinarily skilful; the reason is an insufficient guide and often turns traitor; vital desire is always with us tempting to follow any alluring call. This is the reason why in this Yoga we insist so much on what we call *samarpana* — rather inadequately rendered by the English word surrender. If the heart centre is fully opened and the psychic is always in control, then there is no question; all is safe. But the psychic can at any moment be veiled by a lower upsurge. It is only a few who are exempt from these dangers and it is precisely those to whom surrender is easily possible. The guidance of one who is himself by identity or represents the Divine is in this difficult endeavour imperative and indispensable.

What I have written may help you to get some clear idea of what I mean by the central process of the Yoga. I have written at some length but, naturally, could cover only the fundamental things. Whatever belongs to circumstance and detail must arise as one works out the method, or rather as it works itself out, — for the last is what usually happens when there is an effective beginning of the action of the sadhana.

* * *

Chapter Two **Conditions of Transformation**

Realisation and Transformation

Transformation is something progressive, but certainly there must be realisation before the complete transformation is possible.

The Three Transformations

There are three stages of the sadhana, psychic change, transition to the higher levels of consciousness — with a descent of their conscious forces — the supramental. In

the last even the control over death is a later, not an initial stage. Each of these stages demands a great length of time and a high and long endeavour.

*

To be *sthitaprajña* merely means to have one's thinking mind settled in the spiritual consciousness in the realisation of Self. That does not necessarily transform the other parts of the nature. The bringing down of the Force and Light of the higher consciousness, the opening of the psychic and the centres of the mind, vital and physical, the consent and receptive opening of the nature to the workings of the psychic and the higher consciousness, finally the opening to the supramental are the conditions of transformation. What do you mean by "attaining" the higher consciousness? The higher consciousness is something above the mind, vital and body of the human being. It is wholly spiritual. To attain may mean only to be able to go into it at will or to remain in it with a part of one's consciousness, while the rest goes on in the old way. Psychic transformation is when the whole being is remoulded into the nature of the psychic; spiritual transformation is when the whole being is spiritualised; supramental transformation is when the whole being is supramentalised — that cannot be done automatically by merely being aware of the higher consciousness or attaining it in the ordinary limited sense.

The physical is of course the basis — that of the Overmind is in between the two hemispheres. The lower hemisphere must contain all the mind including its higher planes, the vital, the physical. The upper hemisphere contains the Divine existence-consciousness-bliss, with the Supermind as its means of self-formulation. The Overmind is at the head of the lower hemisphere and is the intermediate or transitional plane between the two.

The psychic being stands behind the heart supporting the mind, life and body. In the psychic transformation there are three main elements: (1) the opening of the occult inner mind, inner vital, inner physical, so that one becomes aware of all that lies behind the surface mind, life and body; (2) the opening of the psychic being or soul by which it comes forward and governs the mind, life and body turning all to the Divine; (3) the opening of the whole lower being to the spiritual truth — this last may be called the psycho-spiritual part of the change. It is quite possible for the psychic transformation to take one beyond the individual into the cosmic. Even the occult opening establishes a connection with the cosmic mind, cosmic vital, cosmic physical. The psychic realises the contact with all existence, the oneness of the Self, the universal love and other realisations which lead to the cosmic consciousness.

But all that is a result of the opening to the spiritual above and it comes by an infiltration or reflection of the spiritual light and truth in mind, life and body. The spiritual transformation proper begins or becomes possible when one rises above the mind and lives there governing all from above. Even in the psychic transformation

one can rise above by a sort of going above of the mental, vital, physical being and a return, but one does not yet live above in the summit consciousness where Overmind has its seat with the other planes that are above the human Mind.

The supramental transformation can only come when the lid between the lower and higher hemispheres or halves of existence is removed and the Supermind instead of the Overmind becomes the governing power of the existence — but of that nothing can be spoken now.

Preparation for the Supramental Change

Get the psychic being in front and keep it there, putting its power on the mind, vital and physical — so that it shall communicate to them its force of single-minded aspiration, trust, faith, surrender, direct and immediate detection of whatever is wrong in the nature and turned towards ego and error, away from Light and Truth.

Eliminate egoism in all its forms; eliminate it from every movement of your consciousness.

Develop the cosmic consciousness — let the egocentric outlook disappear in wideness, impersonality, the sense of the cosmic Divine, the perception of universal forces, the realisation and understanding of the cosmic manifestation, the play.

Find in place of ego the true being — a portion of the Divine, issued from the World-Mother and an instrument of the manifestation. This sense of being a portion of the Divine and an instrument should be free from all pride, sense or claim of ego or assertion of superiority, demand or desire. For if these elements are there, then it is not the true thing.

Most, even in doing Yoga, live in the mind, vital, physical, lit up occasionally or to some extent by the higher mind and by the illumined mind; but to prepare for the supramental change it is necessary (as soon as, personally, the time has come) to open up to the Intuition and the Overmind, so that these may make the whole being and the whole nature ready for the supramental change. Allow the consciousness quietly to develop and widen, and the knowledge of these things will progressively come.

Calm, discrimination, detachment (but not indifference) are all very important, for their opposites impede very much the transforming action. Intensity of aspiration should be there, but it must go along with these. No hurry, no inertia — neither rajasic over-eagerness nor tamasic discouragement — a steady and persistent but quiet call and working. No snatching or clutching at realisation, but allowing realisation to come from within and above and observing accurately its field, its nature, its limits.

Let the power of the Mother work in you, but be careful to avoid mixture or the substitution in its place of either a magnified ego-working or a force of Ignorance

presenting itself as Truth. Aspire especially for the elimination of all obscurity and unconsciousness in the nature.

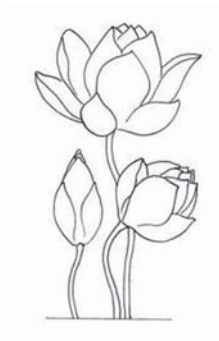
These are the main conditions of preparation for the supramental change, but none of them is easy, and they must be complete before the nature can be said to be ready. If the true attitude (psychic, unegoistic, open only to the Divine Force) can be established, then the process can go on much more quickly. To take and keep the true attitude, to further the change in *oneself*, is the help that can be given, the one thing needed to assist the general change.

*

1. Loss of egoism — including all ambition (even “spiritual” ambition), pride, desire, self-centred life, mind, will.
2. Universalisation of the consciousness.
3. Absolute surrender to the transcendental Divine.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Letters on Yoga – III*, CWSA, Vol. 30, pp. 319-34)



INDIAN POLITY

(Continued from the issue of July 2016)

2

The true nature of the Indian polity can only be realised if we look at it not as a separate thing, a machinery independent of the rest of the mind and life of the people, but as a part of and in its relation to the organic totality of the social existence.

A people, a great human collectivity, is in fact an organic living being with a collective or rather — for the word collective is too mechanical to be true to the inner reality — a common or communal soul, mind and body. The life of the society like the physical life of the individual human being passes through a cycle of birth, growth, youth, ripeness and decline, and if this last stage goes far enough without any arrest of its course towards decadence, it may perish, — even so all the older peoples and nations except India and China perished, — as a man dies of old age. But the collective being has too the capacity of renewing itself, of a recovery and a new cycle. For in each people there is a soul idea or life idea at work, less mortal than its body, and if this idea is itself sufficiently powerful, large and force-giving and the people sufficiently strong, vital and plastic in mind and temperament to combine stability with a constant enlargement or new application of the power of the soul idea or life idea in its being, it may pass through many such cycles before it comes to a final exhaustion. Moreover, the idea is itself only the principle of soul manifestation of the communal being and each communal soul again a manifestation and vehicle of the greater eternal spirit that expresses itself in Time and on earth is seeking, as it were, its own fullness in humanity through the vicissitudes of the human cycles. A people then which learns to live consciously not solely in its physical and outward life, not even only in that and the power of the life idea or soul idea that governs the changes of its development and is the key to its psychology and temperament, but in the soul and spirit behind, may not at all exhaust itself, may not end by disappearance or a dissolution or a fusion into others or have to give place to a new race and people, but having itself fused into its life many original smaller societies and attained to its maximum natural growth pass without death through many renaissances. And even if at any time it appears to be on the point of absolute exhaustion and dissolution, it may recover by the force of the spirit and begin another and perhaps a more glorious cycle. The history of India has been that of the life of such a people.

The master idea that has governed the life, culture, social ideals of the Indian people has been the seeking of man for his true spiritual self and the use of life —

subject to a necessary evolution first of his lower physical, vital and mental nature — as a frame and means for that discovery and for man's ascent from the ignorant natural into the spiritual existence. This dominant idea India has never quite forgotten even under the stress and material exigencies and the externalities of political and social construction. But the difficulty of making the social life an expression of man's true self and some highest realisation of the spirit within him is immensely greater than that which attends a spiritual self-expression through the things of the mind, religion, thought, art, literature, and while in these India reached extraordinary heights and largenesses, she could not in the outward life go beyond certain very partial realisations and very imperfect tentatives, — a general spiritualising symbolism, an infiltration of the greater aspiration, a certain cast given to the communal life, the creation of institutions favourable to the spiritual idea. Politics, society, economics are the natural field of the two first and grosser parts of human aim and conduct recognised in the Indian system, interest and hedonistic desire: Dharma, the higher law, has nowhere been brought more than partially into this outer side of life, and in politics to a very minimum extent; for the effort at governing political action by ethics is usually little more than a pretence. The coordination or true union of the collective outward life with Moksha, the liberated spiritual existence, has hardly even been conceived or attempted, much less anywhere succeeded in the past history of the yet hardly adult human race. Accordingly, we find that the governance by the Dharma of India's social, economic and even (though here the attempt broke down earlier than in other spheres) her political rule of life, system, turn of existence, with the adumbration of a spiritual significance behind, — the full attainment of the spiritual life being left as a supreme aim to the effort of the individual — was as far as her ancient system could advance. This much endeavour, however, she did make with persistence and patience and it gave a peculiar type to her social polity. It is perhaps for a future India, taking up and enlarging with a more complete aim, a more comprehensive experience, a more certain knowledge that shall reconcile life and the spirit, her ancient mission, to found the status and action of the collective being of man on the realisation of the deeper spiritual truth, the yet unrealised spiritual potentialities of our existence and so ensoul the life of her people as to make it the Lila of the greater Self in humanity, a conscious communal soul and body of Virat, the universal spirit.

Another point must be noted which creates a difference between the ancient polity of India and that of the European peoples and makes the standards of the West as inapplicable here as in the things of the mind and the inner culture. Human society has in its growth to pass through three stages of evolution before it can arrive at the completeness of its possibilities. The first is a condition in which the forms and activities of the communal existence are those of the spontaneous play of the powers and principles of its life. All its growth, all its formations, customs, institutions are then a natural organic development, — the motive and constructive

power coming mostly from the subconscious principle of the life within it, — expressing, but without deliberate intention, the communal psychology, temperament, vital and physical need, and persisting or altering partly under the pressure of an internal impulse, partly under that of the environment acting on the communal mind and temper. In this stage the people is not yet intelligently self-conscious in the way of the reason, is not yet a thinking collective being, and it does not try to govern its whole communal existence by the reasoning will, but lives according to its vital intuitions or their first mental renderings. The early framework of Indian society and polity grew up in such a period as in most ancient and mediaeval communities, but also in the later age of a growing social self-consciousness they were not rejected but only farther shaped, developed, systematised so as to be always, not a construction of politicians, legislators and social and political thinkers, but a strongly stable vital order natural to the mind, instincts and life intuitions of the Indian people.

A second stage of the society is that in which the communal mind becomes more and more intellectually self-conscious, first in its more cultured minds, then more generally, first broadly, then more and more minutely and in all the parts of its life. It learns to review and deal with its own life, communal ideas, needs, institutions in the light of the developed intelligence and finally by the power of the critical and constructive reason. This is a stage which is full of great possibilities but attended too by serious characteristic dangers. Its first advantages are those which go always with the increase of a clear and understanding and finally an exact and scientific knowledge and the culminating stage is the strict and armoured efficiency which the critical and constructive, the scientific reason used to the fullest degree offers as its reward and consequence. Another and greater outcome of this stage of social evolution is the emergence of high and luminous ideals which promise to raise man beyond the limits of the vital being, beyond his first social, economic and political needs and desires and out of their customary moulds and inspire an impulse of bold experiment with the communal life which opens a field of possibility for the realisation of a more and more ideal society. This application of the scientific mind to life with the strict, well-finished, armoured efficiency which is its normal highest result, this pursuit of great consciously proposed social and political ideals and the progress which is the index of the ground covered in the endeavour, have been, with whatever limits and drawbacks, the distinguishing advantages of the political and social effort of Europe.

On the other hand the tendency of the reason when it pretends to deal with the materials of life as its absolute governor, is to look too far away from the reality of the society as a living growth and to treat it as a mechanism which can be manipulated at will and constructed like so much dead wood or iron according to the arbitrary dictates of the intelligence. The sophisticating, labouring, constructing, efficient, mechanising reason loses hold of the simple principles of a people's vitality; it cuts it away from the secret roots of its life. The result is an exaggerated dependence on

system and institution, on legislation and administration and the deadly tendency to develop, in place of a living people, a mechanical State. An instrument of the communal life tries to take the place of the life itself and there is created a powerful but mechanical and artificial organisation; but, as the price of this exterior gain, there is lost the truth of life of an organically self-developing communal soul in the body of a free and living people. It is this error of the scientific reason stifling the work of the vital and the spiritual intuition under the dead weight of its mechanical method which is the weakness of Europe and has deceived her aspiration and prevented her from arriving at the true realisation of her own higher ideals.

It is only by reaching a third stage of the evolution of the collective social as of the individual human being that the ideals first seized and cherished by the thought of man can discover their own real source and character and their true means and conditions of effectuation or the perfect society be anything more than a vision on a shining cloud constantly run after in a circle and constantly deceiving the hope and escaping the embrace. That will be when man in the collectivity begins to live more deeply and to govern his collective life neither primarily by the needs, instincts, intuitions welling up out of the vital self, nor secondarily by the constructions of the reasoning mind, but first, foremost and always by the power of unity, sympathy, spontaneous liberty, supple and living order of his discovered greater self and spirit in which the individual and the communal existence have their law of freedom, perfection and oneness. That is a rule that has not yet anywhere found its right conditions for even beginning its effort, for it can only come when man's attempt to reach and abide by the law of the spiritual existence is no longer an exceptional aim for individuals or else degraded in its more general aspiration to the form of a popular religion, but is recognised and followed out as the imperative need of his being and its true and right attainment the necessity of the next step in the evolution of the race.

The small early Indian communities developed like others through the first stage of a vigorous and spontaneous vitality, finding naturally and freely its own norm and line, casting up form of life and social and political institution out of the vital intuition and temperament of the communal being. As they fused with each other into an increasing cultural and social unity and formed larger and larger political bodies, they developed a common spirit and a common basis and general structure allowing of a great freedom of variation in minor line and figure. There was no need of a rigid uniformity; the common spirit and life impulse were enough to impose on this plasticity a law of general oneness. And even when there grew up the great kingdoms and empires, still the characteristic institutions of the smaller kingdoms, republics, peoples were as much as possible incorporated rather than destroyed or thrown aside in the new cast of the socio-political structure. Whatever could not survive in the natural evolution of the people or was no longer needed, fell away of itself and passed into desuetude: whatever could last by modifying itself to new

circumstance and environment, was allowed to survive: whatever was in intimate consonance with the psychical and the vital law of being and temperament of the Indian people became universalised and took its place in the enduring figure of the society and polity.

This spontaneous principle of life was respected by the age of growing intellectual culture. The Indian thinkers on society, economics and politics, Dharma Shastra and Artha Shastra, made it their business not to construct ideals and systems of society and government in the abstract intelligence, but to understand and regulate by the practical reason the institutions and ways of communal living already developed by the communal mind and life and to develop, fix and harmonise without destroying the original elements, and whatever new element or idea was needed was added or introduced as a superstructure or a modifying but not a revolutionary and destructive principle. It was in this way that the transition from the earlier stages to the fully developed monarchical polity was managed; it proceeded by an incorporation of the existing institutions under the supreme control of the king or the emperor. The character and status of many of them was modified by the superimposition of the monarchical or imperial system, but, as far as possible, they did not pass out of existence. As a result we do not find in India the element of intellectually idealistic political progress or revolutionary experiment which has been so marked a feature of ancient and of modern Europe. A profound respect for the creations of the past as the natural expression of the Indian mind and life, the sound manifestation of its Dharma or right law of being, was the strongest element in the mental attitude and this preservative instinct was not disturbed but rather yet more firmly settled and fixed by the great millennium of high intellectual culture. A slow evolution of custom and institution conservative of the principle of settled order, of social and political precedent, of established framework and structure was the one way of progress possible or admissible. On the other hand, Indian polity never arrived at that unwholesome substitution of the mechanical for the natural order of the life of the people which has been the disease of European civilisation now culminating in the monstrous artificial organisation of the bureaucratic and industrial State. The advantages of the idealising intellect were absent, but so also were the disadvantages of the mechanising rational intelligence.

The Indian mind has always been profoundly intuitive in habit even when it was the most occupied with the development of the reasoning intelligence, and its political and social thought has therefore been always an attempt to combine the intuitions of life and the intuitions of the spirit with the light of the reason acting as an intermediary and an ordering and regulating factor. It has tried to base itself strongly on the established and persistent actualities of life and to depend for its idealism not on the intellect but on the illuminations, inspirations, higher experiences of the spirit, and it has used the reason as a critical power testing and assuring the steps and aiding but not replacing the life and the spirit — always the true and

sound constructors. The spiritual mind of India regarded life as a manifestation of the self: the community was the body of the creator Brahma, the people was a life body of Brahman in the *samaṣṭi*, the collectivity, it was the collective Narayana, as the individual was Brahman in the *vyasṭi*, the separate Jiva, the individual Narayana; the king was the living representative of the Divine and the other orders of the community the natural powers of the collective self, *prakṛtayah*. The agreed conventions, institutes, customs, constitution of the body social and politic in all its parts had therefore not only a binding authority but a certain sacrosanct character.

The right order of human life as of the universe is preserved according to the ancient Indian idea by each individual being following faithfully his swadharma, the true law and norm of his nature and the nature of his kind and by the group being, the organic collective life, doing likewise. The family, clan, caste, class, social, religious, industrial or other community, nation, people are all organic group beings that evolve their own dharma and to follow it is the condition of their preservation, healthy continuity, sound action. There is also the dharma of the position, the function, the particular relation with others, as there is too the dharma imposed by the condition, environment, age, *yugadharma*, the universal religious or ethical dharma, and all these acting on the natural dharma, the action according to the Swabhava, create the body of the Law. The ancient theory supposed that in an entirely right and sound condition of man, individual and collective, — a condition typified by the legendary Golden Age, Satya Yuga, Age of Truth, — there is no need of any political government or State or artificial construction of society, because all then live freely according to the truth of their enlightened self and God-inhabited being and therefore spontaneously according to the inner divine Dharma. The self-determining individual and self-determining community living according to the right and free law of his and its being is therefore the ideal. But in the actual condition of humanity, its ignorant and devious nature subject to perversions and violations of the true individual and the true social dharma, there has to be superimposed on the natural life of society a State, a sovereign power, a king or governing body, whose business is not to interfere unduly with the life of the society, which must be allowed to function for the most part according to its natural law and custom and spontaneous development, but to superintend and assist its right process and see that the Dharma is observed and in vigour and, negatively, to punish and repress and, as far as may be, prevent offences against the Dharma. A more advanced stage of corruption of the Dharma is marked by the necessity of the appearance of the legislator and the formal government of the whole of life by external or written law and code and rule; but to determine it — apart from external administrative detail — was not the function of the political sovereign, who was only its administrator, but of the socio-religious creator, the Rishi, or the Brahminic recorder and interpreter. And the Law itself written or unwritten was always not a thing to be new created or fabricated by a political and legislative authority, but a thing already

existent and only to be interpreted and stated as it was or as it grew naturally out of pre-existing law and principle in the communal life and consciousness. The last and worst state of the society growing out of this increasing artificiality and convention must be a period of anarchy and conflict and dissolution of the dharma, — Kali Yuga, — which must precede through a red-grey evening of cataclysm and struggle a recovery and a new self-expression of the spirit in the human being.

The main function of the political sovereign, the king and council and the other ruling members of the body politic, was therefore to serve and assist the maintenance of the sound law of life of the society: the sovereign was the guardian and administrator of the Dharma. The function of society itself included the right satisfaction of the vital, economic and other needs of the human being and of his hedonistic claim to pleasure and enjoyment, but according to their right law and measure of satisfaction and subject and subordinated to the ethical and social and religious dharma. All the members and groups of the socio-political body had their Dharma determined for them by their nature, their position, their relation to the whole body and must be assured and maintained in the free and right exercise of it, must be left to their own natural and self-determined functioning within their own bounds, but at the same time restrained from any transgression, encroachment or deviation from their right working and true limits. That was the office of the supreme political authority, the sovereign in his Council aided by the public assemblies. It was not the business of the state authority to interfere with or encroach upon the free functioning of the caste, religious community, guild, village, township or the organic custom of the region or province or to abrogate their rights, for these were inherent because necessary to the sound exercise of the social Dharma. All that it was called upon to do was to coordinate, to exercise a general and supreme control, to defend the life of the community against external attack or internal disruption, to repress crime and disorder, to assist, promote and regulate in its larger lines the economic and industrial welfare, to see to the provision of facilities, and to use for these purposes the powers that passed beyond the scope of the others.

Thus in effect the Indian polity was the system of a very complex communal freedom and self-determination, each group unit of the community having its own natural existence and administering its own proper life and business, set off from the rest by a natural demarcation of its field and limits, but connected with the whole by well-understood relations, each a copartner with the others in the powers and duties of the communal existence, executing its own laws and rules, administering within its own proper limits, joining with the others in the discussion and the regulation of matters of a mutual or common interest and represented in some way and to the degree of its importance in the general assemblies of the kingdom or empire. The State, sovereign or supreme political authority was an instrument of coordination and of a general control and efficiency and exercised a supreme but not an absolute authority; for in all its rights and powers it was limited by the Law

and by the will of the people and in all its internal functions only a copartner with the other members of the socio-political body.

This was the theory and principle and the actual constitution of the Indian polity, a complex of communal freedom and self-determination with a supreme coordinating authority, a sovereign person and body, armed with efficient powers, position and prestige, but limited to its proper rights and functions, at once controlling and controlled by the rest, admitting them as its active copartners in all branches, sharing the regulation and administration of the communal existence, and all alike, the sovereign, the people and all its constituent communities, bound to the maintenance and restrained by the yoke of the Dharma. Moreover the economic and political aspects of the communal life were only a part of the Dharma and a part not at all separate but inextricably united with all the rest, the religious, the ethical, the higher cultural aim of the social existence. The ethical law coloured the political and economic and was imposed on every action of the king and his ministers, the council and assemblies, the individual, the constituent groups of the society; ethical and cultural considerations counted in the use of the vote and the qualifications for minister, official and councillor; a high character and training was expected from all who held authority in the affairs of the Aryan people. The religious spirit and the reminders of religion were the head and the background of the whole life of king and people. The life of the society was regarded not so much as an aim in itself in spite of the necessary specialisation of parts of its system, but in all its parts and the whole as a great framework and training ground for the education of the human mind and soul and its development through the natural to the spiritual existence.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(The Renaissance in India and Other Essays on Indian Culture,
CWSA, Vol. 20, pp. 396-403)*



‘I LIE AT THY FEET AND WAIT . . .’

May 19, 1914

This mental being which throughout my individual existence had the power to set all my faculties working: deep devotion for Thee, infinite compassion for men, ardent aspiration for knowledge, effort for self-perfection — seems to have fallen into a deep sleep and no longer sets anything at all in movement. All the individual faculties slumber and the consciousness is not yet fully awake in the transcendent states; that is, its wakefulness in them is intermittent and in between there is sleep. Something in this being aspires for solitude and absolute silence for a little while, so as to come out of this unsatisfactory transition; and something else knows that it is Thy will that this instrument be consecrated to the service of all, even if this must apparently be harmful to its self-perfecting.

Something in this being tells Thee, O Lord:

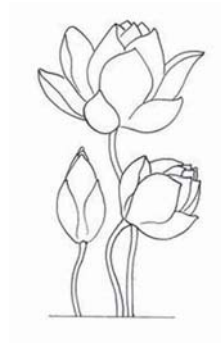
“I know nothing,
I am nothing,
I can do nothing,
I am in the darkness of inconscience.”

And something else knows that it is Thyself and thus the supreme perfection.

What is going to come out of that? How will such a state come to an end? Whether it is inertia or true patience, I do not know; but without haste or desire I lie at Thy feet and wait. . . .

THE MOTHER

(*Prayers and Meditations*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 147)



A CONVERSATION OF SEPTEMBER 20, 1960

X has spoken to me several times of his lack of esteem for most people in the Ashram: "Why does Mother keep all these empty pots?" he says.

If he imagines for one moment that I believe all the people here are doing sadhana, he is grossly mistaken!

The idea is that the earth as a whole must be prepared in all its forms, including even those least ready for the transformation. There must be a symbolic representation of all the elements on earth upon which we can work to establish the link. The earth is a symbolic representation of the universe, and the group is a symbolic representation of the earth.

Sri Aurobindo and I had discussed the matter in 1914 (quite a long time ago), for we had seen two possibilities: what we are now doing, or to withdraw into solitude and isolation until we had not only attained the Supermind, but begun the material transformation as well. And Sri Aurobindo rightfully said that we could not isolate ourselves, for as you progress, you become more and more universalised, and consequently . . . you *take the burden upon yourself* in any case.

And life itself has responded by bringing people forward to form a nucleus. Of course, we clearly saw that this would make the work a bit more complex and difficult (it gives me a heavy responsibility, an enormous material work), but from the overall point of view — for the Work — it's indispensable and even inevitable. And in any case, as we were later able to verify, each one represents simultaneously a possibility and a special difficulty to resolve. I have even said, I believe, that each one here is an impossibility.

But this way of seeing is too far removed from the state of mind and spiritual education in which X has lived, of course, for him to understand. Nor am I in favour of proselytising (*to convince X*); it would disturb him quite needlessly. He has not come here for that. He came here for something special, something I wanted which he brought, and I have learnt it. Now it's excellent, he is a part of the group in his own fashion, that's all. And in a certain way, his presence here is having a very good effect on a whole category of people who had not been touched but who are now becoming more and more favourably inclined. It was difficult to reach all the traditionalists, for example, the people attached to the old spiritual forms; well, they seem now to have been touched by something.

When Amrita, seized with zeal, wanted to make him understand what we were doing here and what Sri Aurobindo had wanted, it almost erupted into an unpleasant situation. So after that, I decided to identify myself with him to see — I had never done this, because normally I only do it when I am responsible for someone, in

order to truly help someone, and I've never felt any responsibility in regard to X. So I wanted to see his inner situation, what could and could not be done. That was the day you saw him coming down from our meditation in an ecstatic state, when he told you that all separation between him and me had dropped away — it was to be expected, I anticipated as much!

But when I did that, I saw what X wanted to do for me. As a matter of fact, I recalled that when we first met I had told him that everything was all right up to this point (*Mother indicates the region above the head*), but below that, in the outer being, I wanted to hasten the transformation, and things there were difficult to handle.

When Sri Aurobindo was here, I never bothered about all this; I was constantly up above and I did what the *Gita* and the traditional writings advise — I left it to Nature's care. In fact I left it to Sri Aurobindo's care. "He is making the best use of it," I would say. "He will manage it, he will do with it what he wants." And I was constantly up above. And from up there I worked, leaving the instrument as it was because I knew that he would see to it.

Actually, it was very different at that time because I was not even aware of any resistance or any difficulty in the outer being; it was automatic, the work was done automatically. Later on, when I had to do both things — what he had been doing as well as what I was doing — it became rather complicated and I realised there were many . . . what we could call 'gaps' — things which had to be worked out, transformed, set right before the total work could be done without hindrance. So then I began. And several times I thought how unfortunate it was that I had never studied or pursued certain ancient Indian disciplines. Because, for example, when Sri Aurobindo and I were working to bring down the supramental forces, a descent from the mental plane to the vital plane, he was always telling me that everything I did (when we 'meditated' together, when we worked) — all my movements, all my gestures, all my postures, all my reactions — was absolutely tantric, as if I had pursued a tantric discipline. But it was spontaneous, it did not correspond to any knowledge, any idea, any will, nothing, and I thought it was like that simply because, as He knew, naturally I followed.

Later on, when Sri Aurobindo left his body, I said to myself, "If only I knew what he had known, it would be easier!" So when Swami and later X came, I thought, "I am going to take advantage of this opportunity." I had written to Swami that I was working on transforming the cells of the body and that I had noticed the work was going faster with X's influence. So it was understood that X would help when he came — that's how things began, and this idea has remained with X. But I have raced on — I don't wait. I've raced on, I've gone like wildfire. And now the situation is reversed. What I wanted to find out, I found out. I experienced what I wanted to experience, but he is still . . . He is very kind, actually, he wants really to help me. So, when I identified with him the other day during our meditation, I realised that he wanted to give silence, control and perfect peace to the physical mind. My own

‘trick’, if you will, is to have as little relationship with the physical mind as possible, to go up above and stay there — this (*Mother indicates her forehead*), silent, motionless, turned upwards, while That (*gesture above the head*) sees, acts, knows, decides — all is done from there. Only there can you feel at ease.

Along the way, I once went down into this physical mind for a while to try to set it right, to organise it a little (it was done rather quickly, I didn’t stay there long). So when I went inside X, I saw . . . It was rather curious, for it’s the opposite of the method we follow. In his material consciousness (physical and vital), he has trained himself to be impersonal, open, limitless, in communication with all the universal forces. In the physical mind, silence, immobility. But in the speculative mind, the one there at the very top of the head . . . what an organisation, phew! . . . All the tradition in its most superb organisation, but such a ri-gi-dity! And it had a pretty quality of light, a silver blue — *very* pretty. Oh, it was very calm, wonderfully calm and quiet and still. But what a ceiling it had! — the outer form resembled rigid cubes. Everything inside was beautiful, but that . . . There was a very large cube right at the top, I recall, bordered by a purple line, which is a line of power — all this was quite luminous. It looked like a pyramid; the smaller cubes formed a kind of base, the lower part of which faded into something cloudy, and then this passed imperceptibly downwards to a more material realm, or in other words, the physical mind. The cube on top was the largest and most luminous, and the least yielding — even inflexible, you could say. The others were somewhat less defined, and at the bottom it was very blurred. But up at the top! — that’s where I wanted to go, right to the top.

When I got there, I felt a moment of anguish; my feeling was that nothing could be done. Not for him in particular, but universally, for all those in his category — it seemed *hopeless*. If that was perfection, then nothing more could be done. This lasted only a second, but it was painful. And then I tried . . . that is, I wanted to bring my consciousness down into the highest cube — this eternal, universal and infinite consciousness which is the first and foremost expression of the manifestation — but . . . nothing doing. It was impossible. I tried for several minutes and saw that it was absolutely impossible. So I had to make a curious movement (I couldn’t get through it, it was impassable), I had to come back down into the so-called lower consciousness (not lower, actually — it was vast and impersonal), and from there I came out and regained . . . my equilibrium. This is what gave me that splitting headache I told you about. I came out of there as if I were carrying the weight . . . the weight of an irreducible absolute — it was dreadful. Unfortunately, I was unable to rest afterwards, and as people were waiting to see me, I had to talk — which is very tiring for me. And this produced a bubbling in my head, like a . . . this dark blue light of power in matter was there, shot through with streaks of white and gold, and all this was flashing back and forth in my head, this way and that way — I thought I was going to have a stroke! (*Mother laughs*)

This lasted a good half hour before I could calm it down, make it quiet, quiet. And I saw that this came from the fact that he wanted to bring the Power down, to transmit the Power into the physical mind! But as soon as I'm put in contact with the Power, you understand, it makes everything explode! (*Mother laughs*) It felt exactly like my head was going to explode!

I felt better that night because I was concentrated, but my head was still hurting a little. Then the following day I said to myself, or rather I told him inwardly, "Whether you like it or not, I am bringing down what's up above; it is the only way I can feel comfortable!" And I told you what happened — as soon as I sat down I was so surprised, for he didn't start doing what he had done the day before; I myself did the same thing, I . . . participated, so to speak, in his will (so as to find out), but with the resolve to remain consciously in contact with the highest consciousness, as always, and to bring it down. And it came in a marvellous flood. He was quite happy, he did not protest! . . . All the pain was gone, there was nothing left, it was perfect. Only towards the end of the meditation did he again want to start doing his little trick of enclosing my physical mind in this construction, but it didn't last — I watched all this from above.

And he isn't aware of this, actually, he isn't aware at all. If he were told, he would absolutely deny it — for him, it's an opening onto Infinity! . . . But in fact, it's always like that, we are always shut in, each of us — each one is enclosed inside certain limits which he doesn't feel, for should he feel it, he would get out! Oh, I know this feeling very well, for when I was with Sri Aurobindo I was open in this way (*gesture towards the heights*), and I always had this feeling of "Yes, my child . . ." — He tolerated me the way I was and waited for it to change. That's truly how things are, you know. And now I feel my limits, which are the limits of the world as it is at present, but beyond that there's an unmanifested immensity, eternity and infinity — to which we are closed. It merely seeps in — it is not the great opening. What I am trying to bring about is the great opening. Only when it has opened wide will there really be the . . . (how should I put it?) the irreducible thing, and all the world's resistance, all its inertia, even its obscurity will be unable to swallow it up — the determining and transforming thing . . . I don't know when it will come.

But this experience with X was really interesting. I learned many things that day, many things . . . If you concentrate long enough on any one point, you discover the Infinite (and in his own experience he found the infinite), what could be called your own Infinite. But this is not what *we* want, not this; what we want is the direct and integral contact between the manifested universe and the Infinite out of which this universe has emerged. So then it is no longer an individual or personal contact with the Infinite, it's a total contact. And Sri Aurobindo insists on this, he says that it's absolutely impossible to have the transformation (not the contact, but the supramental transformation) without becoming universalised — that is the first condition. You cannot become supramental before being universal. And to be

universal means to accept everything, be everything, become everything — really to accept everything. And as for all those who are shut up in a system, even if it belongs to the highest regions of thought, it is not *That*.

But to each his destiny, to each his work, to each his realisation, and to want to change someone's destiny or someone's realisation is very wrong. For it simply throws him off balance — that's all it does.

But for us who want an integral realisation, are all these mantras and this daily japa really a help, or do they also shut us in?

It gives discipline. It's an almost subconscious discipline of the character more than of thought.

Especially at the beginning, Sri Aurobindo used to shatter to pieces all moral ideas (you know, as in the *Aphorisms*, for example). He shattered all those things, he shattered them, really shattered them to pieces. So there's a whole group of youngsters here who were brought up with this idea that "We can do whatever we want, it doesn't matter in the least!" — that they need not bother about all those concepts of ordinary morality. I've had a hard time making them understand that this morality can be abandoned only for a higher one . . . So, one has to be careful not to give them the Power too soon.

It's an almost physical discipline. Moreover, I have seen that the japa has an organising effect on the subconscious, on the inconscient, on matter, on the body's cells — it takes time, but by persistently repeating it, in the long run it has an effect. It is the same principle as doing daily exercises on the piano, for example. You keep mechanically repeating them, and in the end your hands are filled with consciousness — it fills the body with consciousness.

I have a hard time making X understand that I have work to do when I'm with him. He doesn't understand that one can work.

Of course not! A disciplined work, which to us seems important, is to him basically an ignorance. What is true to such a person is a contemplative, ecstatic life — along with a sentiment of compassion and charity, so that nonetheless you spend a bit of your time helping out the poor brutes! But the true thing is ecstatic contemplation. As for those who are advanced and yet still attach some importance to work — it's irrational!

The only way I can make him understand that I have work to do is to tell him, "Mother asked me to do it"; then he keeps quiet.

Yes, he doesn't dare say a thing . . . He doesn't understand it very well. What funny

ideas, eh! He must think I have funny ideas, but anyway . . . In the end, he tells himself, “Oh, it’s just because she’s born in France that she is still carrying this burden!”

It’s quite funny.

Sri Aurobindo saw more clearly. He said — it was even the first thing he told the boys around him when I came in 1914 (he had only seen me once) — he told them that I, Mirra (he immediately called me by my first name), “was born free”.

And it’s true, I know it, I knew it then. In other words, all this work that usually has to be done to become free was done beforehand, long ago — quite convenient!

He saw me the next day for half an hour. I sat down — it was on the verandah of the ‘Guest House’, I was sitting there on the verandah. There was a table in front of him, and Richard was on the other side facing him. They began talking. Myself, I was seated at his feet, very small, with the table just in front of me — it came to my forehead, which gave me a little protection . . . I didn’t say anything, I didn’t think anything, try anything, want anything — I merely sat near him. When I stood up half an hour later, he had put silence in my head, that’s all, without my even having asked him — perhaps even without his trying.

Oh, I had tried — for years I had tried to catch silence in my head . . . I never succeeded. I could detach myself from it, but it would keep on turning . . . But at that moment, all the mental constructions, all the mental, speculative structures . . . none of it remained — a big hole.

And such a peaceful, such a luminous hole!

Afterwards, I kept very still so as not to disturb it. I didn’t speak, above all I refrained from thinking and held it, held it tight against me — I said to myself, “Make it last, make it last, make it last . . .”

Later on, I heard Sri Aurobindo saying that there were two people here to whom he had done this and as soon as there was silence, they panicked: “My God, I’ve gone stupid!” And they threw it all overboard by starting to think again.

Once it was done, it was done. It was well-rooted.

For years, from 1912 to 1914, I did endless exercises, all kinds of things, even pranayama — if it would only shut up! Really, if it would only be quiet! . . . I was able to go out (that wasn’t difficult), but inside it kept turning.

This lasted about half an hour. I quietly remained there — I heard the noise of their conversation, but I wasn’t listening. And then when I got up, I no longer knew anything, I no longer thought anything, I no longer had any mental construction — everything was gone, absolutely gone, blank! — as if I had just been born.

(Soon afterwards)

I went to inaugurate the sugar factory the other day. I had an amusing experience.

From the material point of view, it's almost hellish — the noise, the smell — a nauseating smell. I had to apply all my will not to be physically disturbed — they made me climb up narrow little stairs, go down, climb back up, look into deep pits. At some places there weren't even guardrails, so I had really to control myself.

I was watching all this sugar cane — piles of sugar cane — which is thrown into the machine, and then it travels along and falls down to be crushed, crushed, and crushed some more. And then it comes back up to be distilled. And then I saw . . . all this is living when it's thrown in, you see, it's full of its vital force, for it has just been cut. As a result, the vital force is suddenly hurled out of the substance with an extreme violence — the vital force comes out . . . the English word *angry* is quite expressive of what I mean — like a snarling dog. *An angry force*.

So I saw this — I saw it moving about. And it kept coming and coming and coming, accumulating, piling up (they work 24 hours a day, six days a week — only on the seventh do they rest). So I thought that this angry force must have some effect on the people — who knows, maybe this is what creates accidents. For I could see that once the sugar cane was fully crushed and had gone back up the chute, this force that had been beaten out was right there. And this worried me a little; I thought that there must be a certain danger in doing such a thing! . . . What saves them is their ignorance and their insensitivity. But Indians are never entirely insensitive in the way Westerners are — they are much more open in their subconscious.

I didn't speak of it to anyone, but it caused me some concern. And just the next day the machine broke down! When I was informed, immediately I thought . . . It was then repaired, and again it broke down — three times. Then the following night, just before ten o'clock . . . I should mention that during the day I had thought, "But why not attract these forces to our side, take them and satisfy them, give them some peace and joy and use them?" I thought about it, concentrated a little, but then I didn't bother any further. At ten o'clock that evening, they came upon me — in a flood! They kept coming and coming. And I was busy with them the whole time. They were not ugly (not so luminous either!), they were wholesome, straightforward — honest forces. So I worked on them. This began exactly at 9:30, and for one hour I was busy working. After an hour, I'd had enough: "Listen, this is quite fine, you're very nice, but I can't spend all my time like this! We shall see what to do later" — for it absorbed my whole consciousness. They kept coming and coming (you understand what that means to a body?!). So at 10:30 I told them, "Listen, my little ones, be quiet now, that's enough for today . . ." At 10:30, the machine broke down!

I found out, of course, because they log everything at the factory, so when they came to inform me of the breakdown the next morning, I asked them what time it had happened — exactly 10:30.

After that, I made a kind of pact with them — the trouble, you see, is that there

are constantly new ones. If only they were the same! They are constantly coming in new floods, so there was the need of a permanent formation over there. I've tried to make this permanent formation, to take and absorb them, to calm them down and scatter them a little so they don't accumulate in one spot, which in the end could be dangerous.

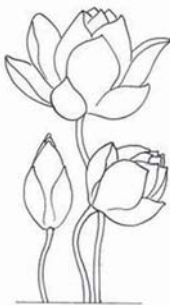
I found this quite amusing.

The most recent incident took place a few days ago, for there was a general excitement in the factory due to the expected visit of a government minister during the day. That afternoon, exactly at half past three, I felt that I had to make a little concentration. So I paid attention and saw poor L praying to me. He was praying, praying, calling me — such a strong call that it pulled me. I was having my bath (you know what happens when I'm very strongly pulled — I'm stopped right in the very midst of a gesture, then the consciousness goes wandering off! And I can't do anything, it stops me dead. That's exactly what happened to me in the bathroom). When I saw what was happening, I straightened things out. Then they must have had their ceremony, for suddenly I felt, "Ah, now it has calmed down, it's all right." And I went on to something else.

The next day, L came to see me. He told me that shortly before 3:30, the machine had stopped once again, but this time it was quickly set right; they found out right away what had to be done. And then he told me that at 3:45 he had started praying to me that all should go well. "Oh, I know!" I said.

Things can be done in this way. In truth, a lot can be done — it's man's ignorance that gets him in trouble.

THE MOTHER



THE PATH OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

A LETTER TO CLEAR SOME CONFUSIONS

I have yours of 12.10.80 before me, a discovery from a pile of overlooked papers. The questions you have asked are of persisting importance. So it is not too late for a try to answer them, with, of course, an apology for the inordinate delay of nearly 2 years. I hope the length of my answer will make up for the length of the time elapsed.

You begin: "A great deal of confusion can result if we read Sri Aurobindo directly and read the opinions of his disciples on spiritual matters. Some time ago Lalita wrote in *Mother India* about a dream-experience in which the Gods of the Overmind attempted to impede her advance and tried to prevent her from going to the Mother. Compare this with the Mother's statement: 'I am sure that these Gods will help Man to realise the Supramental Truth in future' — or words to that effect."

I think you have really presented not a contradiction but a pair of possibilities. The Gods of the Overmind have their own splendid plane of a satisfied divine life. They do not turn in self-surrender to the Supermind. Theirs is a typical world and, like all typical worlds, it is self-sufficient and it has a self-sufficiency of the finest kind possible because it is a plane of the greatest spiritual experiences short of the utter Transcendence static or dynamic. It is not the natural business of the Overmind Gods to lead to the Supramental and, actually, whichever rare Yogis have reached the Overmind have felt they had attained the supreme Divinity, so marvellous and manifold are the vastnesses of light and bliss and power there. Indeed India in the past missed the secret of the Supermind which had been known to the Rigveda and the early Upanishads because she came to believe that the Overmind was the highest reach of spirituality before the ultimate Unknown, the sheer Supracosmic. Those Yogis found nothing in the Overmind pointing them to the Supramental Dynamism. No Overmind God showed a guiding finger towards a grander Beyond. It is not the work of a typical plane to carry us further: its work is to encompass us with its own magic and magnificence and mystery. To put it negatively, it cannot but stand in the way of what is above it. On a spiritual level like the Overmind this is not done in a hostile manner: it is done by the very Dharma of a typical level. And when we realise that the Overmind has itself a tremendous divine richness any sort of hostility to the essentially spiritual is unthinkable about it. But we cannot deny, either, that it is not in the least concerned to take us to the Supramental. How can it be concerned when it is itself not so formed as automatically to surrender to the Transcendence that is the Supramental? So you must not be surprised by the turn you observe in Lalita's expression in recounting her dream-vision. In her experience the self-sufficiency or

typal limitation of the Overmind Gods got translated in this form.

On the other hand, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have the power to secure the assistance of Overmind divinities in taking the disciples to the Supramental. They would not coerce these divinities but they can enlist their help: one of the significances of the Siddhi or Victory Day — 24 November 1926 — is precisely that the realisation of the Overmind Consciousness in the very physical being would be a step towards the descent of the Supermind into the body. Sri Aurobindo got by that realisation the possibility of the Overmind Gods co-operating in his supernal venture. However, from this we cannot conclude that the whole activity of the Overmind would be mobilised in all its modes to serve the Aurobindonian mission. Each of us by rising to or drawing down the Overmind can certainly make use of it as a stepping-stone towards the Supramental, yet the nature of the Overmind as a typal plane is bound to act as if that plane were a terminus. Many an aspirant is so dazzled even by spiritual levels below the Overmind as to think he has attained the Supramental. Whether the Overmind serves as a passage conducting one to the Supermind or as a golden “blind alley” depends on the aspirant’s state and attitude.

It depends also on what entity he contacts. There is Krishna, for instance, who, according to Sri Aurobindo, manifested the Overmind Consciousness on earth and whose Consciousness was said to have descended on 24 November 1926. But he is not thereby classified as a God of the Overmind like Shiva or any other. Although working through that level and through its divinities, he is really the transcendent Godhead, the Purushottama Himself, one with the Supramental Self of Sri Aurobindo inasmuch as he is, as Sri Aurobindo has said, the Anandamaya Purusha, the Supreme Spirit who is the source of all Avatars. Krishna can be a direct co-operator with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. That is why Sri Aurobindo writes in a letter to Narayan Prasad, who was a Vaishnavite by inclination, that what is done in the Ashram is Krishna’s work and that therefore no contradiction exists for a follower of Krishna in accepting the Mother. But, of course, here we should guard against the fallacy of thinking that all traditional worshippers of Krishna are all the time doing the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, which surely goes far beyond traditional Vaishnavism. Krishna’s work today, as distinguished from his work in the past, is the Aurobindonian Yoga: this is how we have to interpret the letter I am speaking of. To follow Krishna without surrendering to the Mother is to be confined to Krishna’s past work.

This point is very momentous and provides the key to your next puzzlement. You write: “The Mother, questioned about a certain popular religious leader, remarked: ‘One spiritual Guru does not pronounce on another.’ Yet going to other Gurus is disapproved by Ashram people in general.” Then you wonder how one reconciles “this One-Guru attitude” with Sri Aurobindo’s words¹ about the ideal sadhaka: “. . . it is necessary that he should . . . cast from himself that exclusive tendency of egoistic mind which cries, ‘My God, my Incarnation, my Prophet, my Guru’, and opposes it to all other realisation in a sectarian or a fanatical spirit. All

sectarianism, all fanaticism must be shunned; for it is inconsistent with the integrity of the divine realisation.

“On the contrary, the sadhaka of the integral Yoga will not be satisfied until he has included all other names and forms of Deity in his own conception, seen his own Ishta Devata in all others, unified all Avatars in the unity of Him who descends in the Avatar, welded the truth in all teachings into the harmony of the Eternal Wisdom.” If you properly probe my statement on Krishna’s present work as compared to his past one, you will get the true angle from which the Mother’s remark and Sri Aurobindo’s words are to be viewed. The Mother simply refrained from passing judgment: she did not set on a basis of equality the teaching or even the status of all Gurus. Also, the policy of “Live and let live” is adopted. But surely she never implied that a disciple of Sri Aurobindo might just as well go to another teacher as live under Sri Aurobindo: the utmost she can be taken to imply is that different people are drawn to different Gurus and one should not pass depreciatory verdicts or expect everybody to become an Aurobindonian straight away. Neither do Sri Aurobindo’s words indicate that instead of wanting the reader to attend to the multifaceted system explained in *The Synthesis of Yoga* he let the seeker loose among all the old systems as if all were of equal importance as what he was setting forth. Furthermore, there was no Ashram as such at that time: Sri Aurobindo was writing in 1914 in his monthly magazine *Arya*, 12 years before the establishment of the Ashram with the Mother in charge. The crucial experiment of — to utilise the terms I have chosen — carrying Krishna’s work forward in a practical, detailed, regular way under the Mother’s Guruship had not started. Once you grasp what this “forward” signifies, you will not pose against each other the specific Aurobindonian mission and the wide-visioned stance Sri Aurobindo and the Mother always take in general.

What does it mean to carry Krishna’s work forward? It means that the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo — the Supramental Yoga — goes beyond all tradition not only of a sectarian kind but also of the kind Sri Aurobindo reads in the Gita, a union of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti Yogas reaching a climax in a call to abandon all Dharmas — in the sense of formulated laws or disciplines — and take refuge in the Purushottama who is above every one of them and holds the secret of some total realisation. Yes, a step beyond the farthest that was hinted at in the past — and necessarily so since no Yoga of old could be designated “Supramental” in the connotation intended by Sri Aurobindo. Doubtless, many traditional movements are included in the new Yoga, but as a whole it is intimately bound up with the quest of something which has never before been deeply explored and fully mobilised. Sri Aurobindo found in the subtle domains where tracks remain of all endeavours no sign of what he searched for and arrived at: the plenary possession of the ultimate creative and transformative power of the Transcendent Divine, the power that alone can re-create mind and vitality and body in the image of their perfect originals and lead the evolving psyche

here and now to its status of being a flawless child of the Supreme Mother with its mental, vital and physical instruments an unobstructed channel of Her Truth-Consciousness and Truth-force at world-work. Breaking away on the whole from tradition even while assimilating into a new use many of its Godward elements, the Aurobindonian Yogi has to take great care not to be entrapped in the ancient formulas, be they ever so flaming and felicitous.

This does not imply that he cannot be on friendly terms with the adherents of other Yogas. You have cited the example of Kapali Shastri “visiting many Great Souls like Ramana Maharshi, Vasishta Ganapathy Muni as well as the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and yet being a true child of the Mother and having an exemplary surrender”. Then you ask: “How is it that his personal relations with Maharshi continued although he had chosen the Path of Sri Aurobindo?” You have not properly assessed these relations. Kapali Shastri was originally a follower of Ramana Maharshi and closely connected with Ganapathy Muni who too was a disciple of the latter. So it was natural for him not to cut adrift from them altogether, especially as they were, as you say, “Great Souls”. But don’t you see what radical inner break there must have been if after having followed Ramana Maharshi he actually became a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and took up permanent residence in their Ashram? It is not just as if after being originally an Aurobindonian he made contacts with other spiritual Masters in a casual way. His example is exactly of one who makes a fundamental turn which involves total inner exclusive adherence to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. A turn like that rules out any mixing up of the old with the new. And such a turn is indeed necessary in some form or other for an Aurobindonian.

An Aurobindonian does not ever look down upon past spiritual achievements. How can he when they have to be part of his own sadhana? He has respect for every spiritual seeker’s object of devotion. In fact he will not make it his job to win converts. Proselytisation is never his function. He puts before others what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have revealed and made accessible and, if somebody is really interested, he tries to guide him towards his Masters. Yes, he is not a fanatic of a faith suffering from a superiority-complex. But, at the same time, he has to keep burning in himself the sense that a special influence has been brought by his Gurus and a special inner path has been hewn out by them, which should not be allowed to feel pulls from past spiritualities. The work undertaken by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is a very difficult one and it has two obstacles to meet in its dissemination. On the one side, the materialism of the West with its triumphant science brushing aside the traditional religious instinct and all inward turn towards Soul and Spirit and God. On the other side, strange as it may seem, the spirituality of the East with its stupendous achievements, its fulfilling experiences of a beatific Beyond, compared to which earth and its life and its projects seem a bagatelle. Not that Western science and Eastern other-worldliness are to be entirely shunned. The Aurobindonian Yogi accepts science’s stress on terrestrial concerns and its vision of a long evolution

looking forward to a more and more effective life. He also accepts, with the spiritual giants of the East, the reality of other worlds than the physical and their culmination in some superb of infinity and eternity. But he insists on bringing all the Beyond to bear upon the earth as the scene of spiritual fulfilment and he insists on evolution flowering in an ever greater consciousness of inner realities, in the light of which earth-concerns are to be evaluated and developed both individually and collectively. In consequence he has to guard against being invaded by the common temper of modern science and the general trend of ancient Yoga.

Having opened wide the doors of his inner self to the supra-terrestrial forces he needs to be particularly vigilant about this trend, for he is more likely to be penetrated by it than by that temper. Hence, while fighting free, as the passage you quote from Sri Aurobindo puts it, of "that exclusive tendency of egoistic mind which cries, 'My God, my Incarnation, my Prophet, my Guru'", he will still be profoundly mindful of not being inwardly inundated by whatever sweep somebody else's God, Incarnation, Prophet, Guru may bring, no matter how beautifully, towards an Ideal which finally looks away from the earth-scene to some far-away deific Heaven or an all-absorbing Brahman-Nirvana. The encroachment of conventional fervours and popular practices which take the name of the Creator but have no true sense of the mighty self-conversion and self-exceeding demanded by the Aurobindonian Yoga has also to be resisted. Although the best elements of these fervours and practices, such as devotion and worship and prayer, are inevitably present in this Yoga which centrally aspires towards the Personal Divine who alone can ultimately perfect the human person, they have "suffered a sea-change" and are attuned to a different call of divine distances, another oceanic rhythm of the Blissful Beloved's heart. The doer of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga cannot afford to let his arduous undertaking be diluted even by the finest and highest of the past and present. That is all that is asked of him — and legitimately asked. It does not contradict the wide understanding, the warm valuation, the sympathetic assimilation at a radical level of all pursuits of God by man, which Sri Aurobindo in that passage from *The Synthesis* expects of those who take to his Integral Yoga. But a catholic outlook should never make them lose sight of the innovation both in aim and in overall process that this Yoga definitely brings and which has to be protected from a tug by the power of the God-pursuits extant around them.

Such a proviso convicts of a partial yet serious misapprehension the person you refer to — "a senior devotee of the Ashram living in Bombay" who told you: "The idea that this Yoga is superior to others is nonsense! There is One Divine but many manifestations of the Divine." He has the catholic outlook I have mentioned and he is right in pooh-poohing terms like "superior" but he seems utterly insensitive to what Sri Aurobindo has made plain² — "the bringing in of a Power of consciousness (the supramental) not yet organised or active directly in earth-nature, even in the spiritual life, but yet to be organised and made directly active" by means of a

Yoga which “aims not at a departure out of world and life into a Heaven or a Nirvana, but at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object”, this object being “not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sole sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth-consciousness here, a cosmic, not solely a supra-cosmic achievement.” Sri Aurobindo has added that a method has been openly put forth — “preconised” is his unusual interesting word, meaning “openly or publicly declared” — for “the total and integral change of the consciousness and nature, taking up old methods but only as a part action and passing on to others that are distinctive”, a method which he has not “found . . . (as a whole) . . . proposed or realised in the old Yogas.”

With all this in the background you have to understand the statement you quote that “Sri Aurobindo’s Path includes all other Paths, it is like an Ocean” and the report you submit of A. B. Purani having said in Bombay that “Sri Aurobindo’s Path is like a vast ‘Maidan’ [= open field] and one cannot truly say that it is a separate Path.” Purani’s meaning is that there is no exclusiveness about the Aurobindonian Path, stipulating that only such and such persons can take to it or that only this or that particular religio-spiritual school can enter it. Being on one side a quintessence, as it were, of all past and present Godward endeavours, it can draw together persons of all kinds and accept approaches from all religio-spiritual schools — provided that we realise the other side of it which calls towards something beyond the various starting-points. Purani was too well aware of Sri Aurobindo’s thought to have meant that the Aurobindonian Yoga was merely an *omnium gatherum* (to use a dog-Latin expression). His true drift may be traced to some words of the Master himself:³ “I have never said that my Yoga was something brand new in all its elements. I have called it the integral Yoga and that means that it takes up the essence and many processes of the old Yogas — its newness is in its aim, standpoint and the totality of its method.” Purani knew that this “newness” amounted to something really revolutionary, entitling Sri Aurobindo to declare:⁴ “Our Yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.”

A spiritual adventure on an immense scale, fraught as it is with diverse surprises and unprecedented challenges, demands a great deal of care and caution and concentrated wakefulness. Absence of sectarianism and fanaticism, presence of sympathetic synthesis of whatever is fine and sincere and progressive in the history of aspiring humanity do not justify a facile plunging into a species of eclecticism, a reckless glancing here and leaning there, an irresponsible running along “old walks”, as if every road led to Pondicherry. Even “seemingly allied ideals and anticipations — the perfectibility of the race, certain Tantric sadhanas, the effort after a complete physical siddhi by certain schools of Yoga, etc. etc.”⁵ — even these that justify, for Sri Aurobindo, “the view that the spiritual past of the race has been a preparation of Nature not merely for attaining to the Divine beyond the world, but also for this

very step forward [*namely, the triple transformation, psychic, spiritual, supramental*] which the evolution of the earth-consciousness has still to make"⁶ — even movements appearing similar to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga require a judicious approach, for they had other dynamisms behind them than the one which Sri Aurobindo has set going. Much more discreet have to be our contacts with prolongations of religio-spiritual seekings from times gone, however great those times and however genuine the prolongations and however deserving their propagators may be of being considered as possessing — in the phrase you cite from your "senior devotee" — "the cosmic consciousness" (which, by the way, for all its wonderfulness is far indeed from the Supermind of the Aurobindonian revelation). Without any airs of superiority and without discouraging sincere followers of other disciplines, we have still to keep inwardly clear of what you term "multiple influences".

You have written to me: "Recently when I asked a veteran disciple of the Ashram about going to other Gurus, he told me clearly to avoid going to them as it would result in confusion. Even M. P. Pandit told me so — stressing the danger of countercurrents and crosscurrents of spiritual forces." You have the right advice here. A "disciple living outside the Ashram" may be tempted to come in touch with spiritual teachers near at hand and he may fear that, as you say, he may "stagnate otherwise". I would suggest your creating inwardly a protective zone around you with the Mother's secret presence: then there can be no stagnation and you will pass through environmental enticements safely.

As to your query — "Is it that when one is drawn solely to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, one is guilty of narrow-mindedness, arrogant airs and trying to create a new religion?" — the full answer has to exceed your specific terms and run: "A true Aurobindonian, although infused with religion's essence and core which is spirituality, is always wide, calm, considerate, free from the clutch of dogmatism which popularly and superficially marks off one religion from another. Living in the inmost mystical heart of religion, he still does not aim at creating a new religion alongside the old ones and similar to them, any more than he aims at founding a new system of spiritual philosophy and practice on a level with those in the field or even a new school of Yoga comparable and competing with the existing ones. Serenely he reflects the dimension of a time to come. He regards everything around him with a comprehending, appreciative and in some respects assimilative eye, and in that sense he can be deemed a person widely religious, philosophical, spiritual, Yogic standing together with all that is present; yet he keeps untouched a crystalline centre in himself, for he never forgets that he is beckoned to a future hitherto undreamt-of not only by any path so far named religious but also by those which in distinction may currently be styled philosophical, spiritual or Yogic."

10.7.1982

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

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1. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 66.
2. *Letters on Yoga-II*, CWSA, Vol. 29, pp. 400-01.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 399.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 401.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 399-400.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 400.

Both the ideas of the intellect, its discriminations, and the aspirations of the heart and life, their approximations, have behind them realities at which they are the means of arriving. Both are justified by spiritual experience; both arrive at the divine absolute of that which they are seeking. But still each tends, if too exclusively indulged, to be hampered by the limitations of its innate quality and its characteristic means. We see that in our earthly living, where the heart and life followed exclusively failed to lead to any luminous issue, while an exclusive intellectuality becomes either remote, abstract and impotent or a sterile critic or dry mechanist. Their sufficient harmony and just reconciliation is one of the great problems of our psychology and our action.

Sri Aurobindo

(*The Synthesis of Yoga — II*, CWSA, Vol. 24, p. 580)

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of July 2016)

Chapter: LIV

“AUROBINDO-PHOBIA”: THE TWO MAJOR REASONS

Government could clearly see that the new national consciousness growing rapidly all over the country was almost solely Sri Aurobindo's creation and so also was the spirit of revolution by which the youths of the country were being influenced. But unfortunately for them and fortunately for India and the world, they could produce no substantial evidence to prove the charge of waging war against Sri Aurobindo. And as they had failed before, they failed again.

Sisir Kumar Mitra¹

The fact that the major newspapers in English, Bengali and other languages continued to carry for several days editorial comments on Mr. Beachcroft's judgment, letters on the trial as a whole and news of meetings celebrating Sri Aurobindo's acquittal at different places in India, indicates the immense interest the public evinced in the matter and its expectation from the Press.

The Bengalee criticised the police as well as the judiciary for having treated the prisoners like criminals while their guilt was yet to be proved. There was no reason for those responsible to guard the prisoners to inflict on them the “rigours of convicted felons” and bring them to the court “manacled and chained”. It wrote further:

The unique length of the trial was due to the presence of Babu Aurobindo Ghose among the prisoners. He was the one man whom the prosecution was most anxious to convict. That was the popular impression and the Judge has endorsed it. He says in his judgement: “He is the accused whom more than any other the prosecution are anxious to have convicted and but for his presence in the dock, there is no doubt the case would have finished long ago.” And yet after all he had to be discharged; and even *The Statesman* has to admit that the evidence against him was fragmentary. If so, was it not a grave piece of blundering on the part of the prosecution to have implicated him in this case, with the result that the trial was prolonged to an inordinate length with all the unhappy consequences which have marked its progress? Mr. Beachcroft indeed

vigorously defends the police and with equal vigour condemns the procedure adopted by Mr. Das in his defence. Both the apology and the condemnation lose much of their point when Mr. Beachcroft declared in effect and substance that the celebrated “Sweets” letter alleged to have been addressed by Barindra Ghose to Aurobindo was a forgery. “For myself I cannot understand Barin,” writes the Judge, “signing his name in full in a letter to his brother Aurobindo in this way especially when it is remembered that both the brothers were at Surat at the time.” A little leaven, be it for good or for evil, leaveneth the mass. The presence of a single piece of evidence of this kind in the conduct of the prosecution at least demonstrates the fact that there were persons connected with the prosecution who were prepared to go to any length to secure a conviction and that the superior officers exercised but little supervision over them . . .²

The same paper carried the following observation by ‘A Lawyer’, entitled “Humour and Pathos”:

All honour to Mr. Beachcroft! In whatever way we may criticise his judgement of the conspiracy case, it will be admitted by one and all that he has shown absolute independence of mind. He has soared beyond the passions and prejudices of the hour, and has demonstrated what a fair judge ought to be. He was not blind to the fact that the man the prosecution wanted to be convicted was Aurobindo Ghose, and but for his presence in the dock so much valuable time and money would not have been wasted. That most important personage has been acquitted. Ours is the moral victory, and failure is for the prosecution. This itself speaks volumes for Mr. Beachcroft. . . .

But most humorous, if not cynical, is the attitude of some of the Anglo-Indian journals. Like the baffled rage of a wounded serpent they are gnashing their teeth because Aurobindo has once again eluded the clutches of the police. We have not yet forgotten those articles, to say the least, in bad taste, that appeared in the editorial of *The Statesman*, when Aurobindo was acquitted in his previous sedition trial. But I do not want to recall the controversy. “This is the second charge of sedition,” exclaims *The Empire*, “of which he has been acquitted, *not proven*.” Mark the words *not proven*. The force of the words is that sufficient evidence could not be produced (or should we say, “manufactured”?) to prove his guilt. Not that he is innocent, — it would bleed the heart of *The Empire* to admit that — but his guilt could not be proved. Well, well! The situation has its comical aspect!

But Aurobindo need not trouble about these petty matters. His innocence has been vindicated, his whole life has been laid bare to the world. The world shall judge him, history shall record its opinion — not *The Empire* or *The*

Statesman. This reminds me that his name has been struck off the rolls of graduates from his college at Cambridge, even before the judgement was delivered — at least rumour hath it so. But the great men have been seldom recognised in their own times. Was not Shelley expelled from Oxford as a rebel and now one of the grandest sights of Oxford is the statue of Shelley!³

The lawyer's insinuation regarding Sri Aurobindo's name being deleted from the roll of graduates of course was wrong. In fact, Sri Aurobindo occupies a most prominent place in the official history of King's College. But the "rumour" is only a sample of numerous hearsays buzzing in the air — all bred by an overwhelming sympathy for Sri Aurobindo and a sense of revolt for the treatment he had received. The correspondent of *The Bengalee* reported the reactions in Madras, quoting a local newspaper that wrote: Sri Aurobindo's "private life is noted for unsullied purity, his writings always breathe a noble spirit, characterised by spiritual fervour still unknown in India" and that it was gross injustice to trouble "a man of such a right-thinking nature and such a just and liberal soul".⁴

Innumerable telegrams felicitating Sri Aurobindo on his acquittal had reached him. Newspapers published a list of the first batch of them that included congratulatory messages from Madras, Vellore, Petlad and Lahore.⁵

The Bombay correspondent of *The Bengalee*, quoting the newspaper *Akhbari Saudagar*, reported that the Police Commissioner "stopped" a public meeting convened by the Bombay National Union in order to congratulate Sri Aurobindo.⁶

We reproduce a few lines from a long article in the *Bangabandhu* of 11th May, 1909 (as translated by an Intelligence official) to indicate the second major reason for the Government's anxiety to punish Sri Aurobindo, according to the impression of many among the *élite* of India, apart from the main reason — choking the voice of the Nationalists by depriving them of their indispensable source of inspiration.

The learned Judge plainly says that the Government of Bengal and the Government of India as well suspected Aurobindo to be guilty and were very anxious to get him convicted. It is, of course, quite natural for them to do so under the influence of suspicion. The Government of India thought that if a highly accomplished man like Aurobindo who was held in high esteem by the people of India, could be convicted and punished for such a heinous offence, it would be easy for them to strike terror into the hearts of his followers and admirers.⁷

To quote a few lines from the *Tirhut Samachar* of Muzzafarpore:

All the Indians are rejoicing at the acquittal of Babu Aurobindo, as God protects his devotees at last. . . . Mr. Das displayed considerable ability in conducting the case and his praises are being sung everywhere.⁸

An interview Sri Aurobindo granted to the *Sanjivani* got wide publicity in the Indian Press. We reproduce below an editorial observation on the interview carried in *India*, a journal published from London, in its issue of June 18, 1909:

Strange and disconcerting revelations as to the treatment of under-trial prisoners in India have been made by Mr. Aurobindo Ghose in the course of an interview which has appeared in the *Sanjivani*.

Were you treated in the Alipore Jail as political prisoners?

No; they used to keep us in solitary cells. They kept me in a secluded cell.

What is a solitary cell like?

It is a small room with no windows, but iron bars in the front.

Arrangements for bathing?

A bucketful of water in all. We had to bathe, wash the eating utensils — do everything with it. In the solitary cell I had to spend one and half months in this condition. I had to keep inside the cell always. They did not even allow me to read any book. Our sleep used to be broken when guards changed three or four times at night. They would not leave us until, after shouting, they roused us from sleep. This being done three or four times; we could sleep no more. Sometime after, the doctor came and gave directions and we were allowed to walk twice during the daytime in front of the cell. Eight or ten days after this, books were allowed in. I wanted the Gita and the Upanishad from home and they were given to me. But they gave no light at night, so I could not read. Two coarse blankets were allowed for the bed and we had to lie on the blankets spread on the floor.

The *India* goes on:

No less remarkable is the account given of the conversation that passed between Mr. Ghose and Mr. Halliday, the Commissioner of Police at Calcutta, immediately after the former's arrest:

Just as I was brought before Mr. Halliday immediately after the arrest, he said: "Are you not ashamed of your share in this dastardly crime?" I said, "What right have you to assume that I had any share in it?" Mr. Halliday said, "I don't assume; I know." To this I said: "I don't know what you imagine you know. I deny all connection."

The *India* then comments:

The result of the trial has shown how faulty Mr. Halliday's 'knowledge' of Mr. Ghose's guilt was. What reason is there to suppose that there is any more solid foundation for the suspicions upon which he and other police officers procured the deportations in December last? And what right had he to address a man after this fashion whose innocence was still to be disproved?⁹

The *Bengalee* of 21st May 1909 carried this item:

MR. AUROBINDO GHOSE INTERVIEWED

His Prison Experiences

The *Sanjivani* publishes another instalment of the interview by its representative with Mr. Aurobindo Ghose. We give below an English translation of the same:

In Mr. Birley's Court:

So, you were in solitary imprisonment till the 18th May when your case came up for hearing before Mr. Birley?

Yes.

You had to keep standing the whole day in the court, day after day?

Yes, that was the arrangement at the beginning. But the case went on dragging its weary length, it was physically impossible to keep standing and as days went on we used to sit down every now and then. But we were made to stand up again whenever the court should hear us talking. We used to read at this time — some Bankim Babu's novels, others Vivekananda's works and some others the Gita or the Upanishad. But this did not last long for reading was soon prohibited by order of Mr. Birley.

When the court rose for lunch, you used to get an opportunity to talk to each other?

Yes.

What did you do then?

Ullaskar, Hem Das and others used to enlighten us with their entertaining witticism.

Was it not rather unnatural that with such serious charges against them they could afford to indulge in witticism?

As far as they were concerned, that was not quite unnatural. None of them would bother himself in the least as to the result of the case.

What do you mean?

I mean to say that everybody was under the impression that guilty or not guilty he was sure to be punished.

Is it a fact that Kunjalal Shah cried as reported in the newspaper?

No; that is a lie. None cried at all. I did not see anybody cry or look sorry. Kunjalal suffered for some days from a sort of pain in the stomach. It may be that newspaper reporters came to their conclusion from the uneasy expression of his features.

You said about entertaining witticism of Hem Das, Ullaskar and others. Will you say what they were like?

Well, some of the witnesses spoke bad English; others' pronunciations were very defective while some others made strange gestures. Ullaskar made excellent caricatures of all this — so true and life-like that it was difficult to restrain loud laughter. Hem Das, Upendra and others used to tell various amusing stories. Indeed, we were in a way made to forget of our real position as prisoners by these various entertainments.

Contemplation and Amusement

Was there any change since the solitary confinement ceased?

We were removed to another place. We used to live together in three or four large rooms. Barin, Bibhuti, Bejoy, Naren Baksi, Kunjalal and some others and myself used to live in one room. In another there were Hem Das, Upendra Bannerjee and others — in this room they used to spend their nights and days in amusement and play. In another room there were Naren Gossain, Debabrata and perhaps Hrishikesh also.

Then one room was the room of contemplation and the other was the room of amusements. But what about the third room?

Debabrata and Hrishikesh used to be engaged in performing spiritual practices while Naren Gossain spent his time in conversation and song. Naren Gossain could sing well. After a few days we all were kept in one large room.

What about your food and bath? Even then that lafsi?

Yes, there was a hydrant nearby and consequently good bathing facility. The food was nearly as before. Only those who were ill or weak used to get hospital food. . . .

But all this changed after the murder of Naren Gossain?

Yes. . . .

Did Naren Gossain say anything to you about the false statements which he subsequently made in court regarding yourself?

Yes. He said to one, "I had no desire to implicate Aurobindo Babu, but I would not be saved without implicating him, and therefore I have also implicated him."

He did not use to come to you often after becoming an approver?

On the day he gave evidence as an approver, he was removed to the European ward. . . .

Solitary Confinement Again

What happened after Gossain's murder?

In half an hour's time the jail authorities came to our hall and sent us away. They made a thorough search and we were deprived of everything excepting the clothes we were wearing. After a few days solitary confinement became our lot again. We were kept separate and everything went on as at the beginning.

And the treatment towards you became harsher than before?

Of course, it was very very harsh. We were guarded by armed highlanders. I have heard they were ordered to shoot anybody who would try to escape or make any disturbance. All articles from outside were prohibited; even friends were interdicted without the Magistrate's permission. Those who were ill would

get no treatment. Arrangements as to bath and food were made similar to those at the beginning; we were not allowed to speak to one another, not even to jail employees. Only one or two of us could get any books. Only those who were engaged in spiritual exercises did not feel all this much, but to all others this month was a month of great suffering. The court was then closed. We met again after the reopening of the court, but since then we were all along kept in solitary cells.¹⁰

Sri Aurobindo was never given to histrionics or any form of the usual oratorical habits. Then, he spoke in English which only a portion of the audience understood. But from a number of C.I.D. and newspaper reports it is clear that he commanded an inexplicable sway over his listeners who were always large in number. He was always greeted with long, thunderous applause when he stood up and when he finished speaking. A remarkable and reverential silence received his speech.

There were several reports of his speeches in *The Times* of London, in its issues of July and August 1909. Here are some:

As things were, the audience on August 7 consisted of about 5000 persons, of whom about a half was youthful . . . the sole orator of the Calcutta boycott meeting, Babu Bhupendranath Bose, excited no enthusiasm whatever, partly because his speech was too moderate and partly because it was only audible to a small number. The Bengalis have primitive ideas as to the organisation of a meeting and Babu Bhupendranath was expected to harangue an open-air audience, numbering some thousands, from the top of a small dining table. Mr. Bradlaugh or Dr. Clifford would have failed under such conditions. The remarkable fact was, however, that damped as the crowd was by a long essay, it burst into loud cheering when Mr. Aurobindo Ghose was seen standing near the dining table aforesaid. He was unquestionably the hero of the meeting.

What is to be noted, Sri Aurobindo's voice could not have been louder than his predecessor's, yet he was "the hero of the meeting". *The Times* goes on:

As to Mr. Aurobindo Ghose's views, there is no uncertainty. In his 'Last Will and Testament' he has declared for a general boycott of the Government and a refusal to cooperate in any one of its activities: —

Boycott of foreign goods is a necessary condition for the encouragement of Swadeshi industries; boycott of Government Schools is a necessary condition for the growth of national education; boycott of British courts is a necessary condition for the spread of arbitration.

He advocates, in short, Passive Resistance to Government and a refusal to

cooperate in any way. Apparently this is the gospel accepted by the young Bengal.¹¹

The Times of July 14 said:

There have been sinister indications lately of attempts to revive the mischievous boycott movement and to arrange great anti-British demonstrations. . . . Mr. Aurobindo Ghose who has delivered fiery speeches, surpassed himself on Sunday when he assured an audience chiefly composed of students that imprisonment was not so terrible as it seemed. He urged his hearers to assemble in thousands and renew their vow to the boycott, which was necessary in order to secure the undoing of the partition of Bengal, and to prevent the exploitation of India by foreign trade and save the people from chronic starvation. He ridiculed Lord Morley's reforms as shoddy, brummagem goods, and advocated passive resistance and suffering in the country's cause . . ."¹²

Then, *The Times* of July 20 reports:

Boycott preparations still continue throughout Bengal. Political meetings are being held regularly in College Square here, Mr. Aurobindo Ghose being the principal speaker. He said yesterday that if meetings were stopped this would give incentive to certain persons, with a result which one trembled to contemplate. He added that co-operation with the Government was impossible so long as self-government was denied to the people.¹³

The *Nayak* (Calcutta) of the 24th June 1909 wrote:

“Aurobindo-phobia”

The Police seem to be suffering from Aurobindo-phobia. Whenever there is talk of Aurobindo Babu's going anywhere, the Police of that place are panic-stricken, thinking perhaps that the people of the places visited by Aurobindo Babu will at once declare their independence! Aurobindo Babu had lately been to Barisal. As soon as the report of his intention to attend the conference at that place reached the ears of the local police, they were greatly agitated. One of the Inspectors is reported to have even gone the length of asking the leaders of the Conference to bring anyone they liked to the meeting except Aurobindo Babu. He also declared that perhaps the Police would be obliged to break up the meeting if Aurobindo Babu attended it.¹⁴

The following satirical note which was published in the *Karmayogin*, was reproduced in the *Pallibarta* (Bongong) of the 25th January 1910, and in some other papers:

Postal Precaution

Sj. Aurobindo Ghose has recently received an anonymous letter giving him the momentous information that a certain Gopal Chandra Ray of the C.I.D. with several assistants is busy watching 6 College Square and the post office and copying all the letters and post cards that come in his name without exception. Sj. Aurobindo has not the honour of the noble Gopal's acquaintance, nor is he even aware whether this gentleman has any corporeal existence. The letter may be a hoax; or it may be sent by one of the "assistants", weary to death of copying letters and post cards and of the inclement and uncomfortable business of an open-air watch fanned by the breezes of Goldighi in this season. It does not matter to the gentleman honoured by these attentions whether the whole police force occupy Goldighi for inquisitorial purposes or whether numerous editions of his correspondence are turned out for the use of posterity by the disinterested labours of the C.I.D. Still, he has suggested to us certain proposals to be placed before the Government in this connection and we proceed to make them. In the first place, for the sake of humanity, a comfortable stall might be put up in the square for the vigilant cow-keeper and his herd whence they could watch more happily and quite as effectively. Secondly, if the Government would kindly instruct the post office not to lose one-tenth of Aurobindo Babu's letters after copying them and delay the greater part of the others, there would probably be no harm done to the Empire. Thirdly, Sj. Aurobindo Ghose begs us to inform the authorities that he was never greatly in the habit of writing letters before and, after the exposure of his private correspondence with his friends and family by the prosecution in the Alipore Case, he has almost dropped the practice, except in urgent matters of business. It is possible, therefore, for this part of the investigation to be carried on very cheaply, and the Government must not be deceived by any representations on the part of Gopal or others that a big staff is wanted. Further, we are instructed to inform all intending correspondents of the above-mentioned facts so that they may not be disturbed or anxious about Sj. Aurobindo's health if they get no answer to their letters. Secondly, it would be advisable for them, when writing to him, to forward a copy of the letter to the secretary to the Bengal Government or to Mr. Denham of the C.I.D. Thirdly, if anyone wishes to send by post specimens of bombs, revolvers, or anything explosive or plans and estimates for a conspiracy or insurrection great or small, he had better send it either by hand or through the editors of *The Statesman* or *Englishman*. No reply need be expected.¹⁵

(To be continued)

MANOJ DAS

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All Yoga strives towards union with the Highest, the Spirit, the Self, the Divine, or whatever other name or aspect we seize of the One Eternal and Infinite.

And by union we mean, first, contact constant and increasing with the consciousness of the Divine or Infinite, then to assimilate it or assimilate ourselves to it, then to become not only like to it and full of it, but to enter into it and dwell in it, to become that divine consciousness and being, essence of its essence and so abolish all division that separates us from the Divinity from whom we came.

Sri Aurobindo

(Essays Divine and Human, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 332)

SONGS FROM THE SOUL

(Continued from the issue of July 2016)

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

HOSTILE FORCES

In my ignorance I think that I am sharply isolated by my body from the Universal outside, that mental and vital movements rise independently within me and belong to myself. But it appears to a closer insight that I constitute only a centre or point, a particular medium or receptacle on which all sorts of mental, vital and physical movements coming from the outside are manifesting themselves. But the object of our Yoga is to surmount these lower movements and allow only the Truth that is descending from above to manifest in us.

Thoughts and desires and impulses constantly enter into us from the Universal; they come sometimes as fully formed, sometimes as suggestions, as mere exciting or stimulating influences; they come from the human race as well as from beings and forces other than the human; they fill up our whole being with falsehoods and perversions, and thus retard the manifestation of the Truth. But they can enter into us only because we keep ourselves open to them, nay, often invite them; our ignorance and egoism, our ambition, vanity, attachment, low desires leave the gates constantly open to all sorts of influences which are the determined enemies of truth.

In order to be free from them we must keep ourselves absolutely clean and pure, always alert to detect their approach, always full of the divine attributes of peace, light, harmony, joy, power, love; and for this we have only to keep our heart and soul always open to Thee in personal devotion, O Mother Divine.

DIVINITY OF MAN

Thou art so high, so great, Mother, yet so near to me, so much my own! By Thy great love Thou hast awakened me to my own greatness. I am no worm of the earth, mean or low, but I am really a part of Thy divine self, Thy own child, Thy flesh and blood.

Let me no more forget my divinity, Mother; it is the forgetfulness of my real self that has been the cause of all my bondage and misery. We cling to the things of the earth, because we do not know our true glory and greatness, our true affinity to

Thee, Mother. Henceforth, my sole aim will be to manifest my relation to Thee at every moment, in every detail of my life.

The consciousness that I am Thy child will enable me to reject everything impure or undivine, to conquer all lower desires and attachments, to rise above all the petty joys and sorrows of the earth; it will feed the flame of my aspiration towards infinite light and power and joy.

Thy great love will sustain me in that divine consciousness, Mother, and steadily raise me to Thy divine life.

INERT PASSIVITY

The inert passivity of our nature is a great obstacle to our progress. The slightest force from the Universal can cause disturbance in us, and once our nature is disturbed, it has an obstinate tendency to continue in that state. It is for this reason that forces of falsehood find us an easy prey, and the light of Truth remains hidden from us.

When our mind is once set in motion by some thought or suggestion, it continues to revolve round it like a mechanical wheel. It returns again and again to its thoughts and conceptions without in the least making any progress in knowledge. So too the vital being is pulled in all directions by the lower pleasures of life, and is easily bound by attachments. The body is at the mercy of the physical forces of Nature, and cannot move beyond the habits and instincts which have been imposed on it. Thus, we go on in our old way wasting our time and energy, moving always but making no progress anywhere.

In Thy wonderful divine way, Mother, Thou hast shown us the way out of this hopeless predicament. Thou hast given us a life where, protected by Thee from all evil influences, we can easily break away from our old life, and prepare for our speedy transformation. In Thy grace Thou hast always kept Thyself before us as the embodiment of light and power and joy; and Thou art always keeping us full of the purest thoughts and feelings and aspirations. It is thus opening ourselves to Thy personal influence, Mother, that we can hope to conquer the obstinacy of our ignorant nature and rise to the glories of the life divine.

INNER ORGANISATION

The life I live here may appear to be dull, idle and empty from the outside; but in reality it is much more busy, full, and joyous for me than it was ever before in my life.

In the past I was being blindly driven by the forces of Nature, and I ignorantly mistook the hustle of these forces to be my busy life. Now I am realising my own

self, observing the forces that play in and around me, refusing to be a mere tool in their hands, sternly rejecting the lower impulses, calmly waiting for whatever comes from Thee, Mother. Every moment I have to be alert, watchful even in my sleep. In the inner organisation of my own self I have much more intensive and interesting work than when I was a helpless slave in the grip of alien forces.

Then, Mother, the more I empty myself of the lower things, the more Thou fillest me with Thy divine life. By Thy light Thou removest my darkness, by Thy inspiration Thou givest me enlightened work, by Thy love Thou hast made my life a heaven of divine joy.

In fact, life was never more rich, full, and happy for me than what I am living now under Thy grace and direct protection.

REST AND SILENCE

Give me rest. Mother, give me calm and peaceful rest at Thy feet. I won't any more go out to play in the world; I am tired of it, Mother, sorely tired.

How I busy myself in vain and useless efforts pretending that I am doing God's work! I run after name and fame; I strain every nerve in me to attain it, only to find at last that it is a mere empty bubble that cannot stand a pinprick. All the time Thou smilest, Mother, and allowest Thy child to have his play.

I run after the beautiful and the joyful things in the world, I stake my all to attain them and, lo! they recede at my approach; they completely vanish at my touch, and sore disappointment alone lies in wait for me! All the time, Thou smilest, Mother, Thou allowest Thy child to have his way.

No more of it, Mother, I have done with it for good. Allow me now to rest peacefully at Thy feet, absolutely unconcerned about anything that may go on in the world outside. Let me look at Thy beautiful face, let my heart be cheered up by Thy graceful smiles; let me incessantly call Thee "Mother, Mother" simply for the joy of it.

Allow me to drink deep at the fountain of Thy sweetness; allow me to get strength from Thy strength, light from Thy light, life from Thy life. Then Thou mayest send me to do Thy work in the world. Till then, Mother, allow me to have peaceful rest at Thy feet, and in silence grow into Thy divine life.

* * *

What a relief it is to be freed from the restless activity of the mind and the body, and to fall into the stillness of the soul! But all my efforts in this direction have failed again and again. The more I try to still my mind and stop the incessant formations of thoughts and ideas, the more they enter into me and occupy the mind. I try to throw

away the movements coming from the universal Prakriti, but they again and again push into me with irresistible force.

I am tired of these restless movements, Mother, and do not know how to get rid of them permanently. I now place my head at Thy feet. Mother, and open myself to Thee, so that Thy deep silence may more and more descend into me. Let Thy silence fall on my thoughts and emotions, on my cravings and desires; let peace descend on my perturbed soul and a deep calm reign all over my being. In that silence Thou wilt descend into me, Mother, and establish Thy rule of *ananda* in every part of my being.

(To be continued)

ANILBARAN

(Songs from the Soul, Amiya Library, Calcutta, 1946, pp. 100-11)

The problem of consciousness can only be solved if we go back to a radical state of our existence in which things get back to their reality. For there they are no longer a mass of phenomena which have to be cleared up, classified, organised by the perceptions, conceptions and relative logic of the human intellect. These perceptions, these concepts, this logic belong to an imperfect instrument and the arrangements they make can only be provisional and, at that, onesided and only half-true or a good deal less than half-true — and even that truth is of an inferior kind, a constructed representation and not truth itself in its own nature. In fact the intellect sees only the phenomenon, it cannot go back behind it; when it tries, it only arrives at other and more occult phenomena. The truth of things can only be perceived when one gets to what may be called summarily the spiritual vision of things and even there completely only when there is not only vision but direct experience in the very substance of one's own being and all being.

Sri Aurobindo

(Essays Divine and Human, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 320)

THE FLUTTER OF RAPTURE

The song of the conch ripples in my breath
Hark, O friend, the song of the conch rings in my breath.

This is not a matter of one auspicious moment
This is a fact that flows like time, all the while.
I inhale, leap and keep floating like a puff
And my being stretches to spaces beyond.

The atoms in my being resound
Echoing the airs crooned in perfect tune
To the tap of a tambourine.
Ho-ji-ho, the chanting cheer, the flawless airs.
Hark, O friend, the song of the conch rings in my breath.

A brilliant lamp is burning day and night.
All the cells of my body are forever bright.
The blood that in my veins circles up and down
Is my prayer in a rhythmic, luminous sway
Uttered in silence the whole year round.
My limbs fly and flap like a banner
Lost in the flutter of absolute rapture!

Ho-ji-ho, the flutter of absolute rapture . . .
Hark, O men, the song of the conch rings in my breath.

DHIRENDRA MEHTA

(Translated by Dhanavanti from the original Gujarati)

THE THIRD ROCK FROM THE SUN

Introduction

According to scientific estimates, there are at least 100 billion galaxies in the visible universe and each galaxy has at least 100 to 200 billion stars. Thus the total number of the stars in the visible universe is at least 10^{22} *i.e.* 1 followed by twenty-two zeros. To put this in perspective, there are more stars in the visible universe than there are grains of sand on all the beaches and all the deserts of the world combined (according to scientists at least 10 times more). And many of these stars will have planets. A recent scientific study concluded that, “stars are orbited by planets as a rule, rather than the exception” (*Nature* 481: 7380) and scientists are discovering many new exoplanets now. Even if we conservatively estimate one planet per star, the number of planets would run into many billions and billions. Out of all these billions and billions of planets, what is so special about this ‘Third Rock From The Sun’ (name of a popular English comedy TV serial) or as Satyavan says in *Savitri*, “little hillock called green earth”¹? Does the earth have any special significance? or is it just one amongst the billions of planets in the universe, totally insignificant, just a speck of dust in the vast multitude of the universe? Is there any spiritual or occult significance to the earth, other than there being life on it? Is there any truth behind the ancient lore of the gods and titans needing to take birth here on earth to evolve? or is it just human vanity glorifying the earth?

The Scientific View

For the point of view of the astronomers, here is well-known astronomer, Carl Sagan saying,

Who are we? We find that we live on an insignificant planet of a humdrum star lost in a galaxy, tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe in which, there are far more galaxies than people. (*Cosmos* [1985] 160)

A similar view is echoed by astrophysicist Eric Chaisson,

At every level in our inventory, nothing seems special about our Earth, our Sun, our Galaxy, our Local Group. Evidently, mediocrity reigns throughout. Such is our niche in the universe. (*Epic of Evolution: Seven Ages of the Cosmos*)

1. p. 723.

And Stephen Hawkins, the celebrated scientist puts it thus:

The human race is just a chemical scum on a moderate-sized planet, orbiting around a very average star in the outer suburb of one among a hundred billion galaxies. (Interview on the 1995 show *Reality on the Rocks: Beyond our Ken*)

The significance, if any, of the earth, according to science, is due to the presence of life on it. The earth is teeming with life in all shapes and all forms. In the harshest environment, from the depth of oceans where sunlight can hardly penetrate, to the coldest places on the poles, to the hottest sulphur springs — life is present almost everywhere on earth. The tenacity of life on earth makes it all the more likely that life exists on other planets, outside our solar system, in what are called exoplanets. With more and more exoplanets being discovered, some with characteristics like the earth's, it may not be long before life is discovered on other planets.

Here it may be pertinent to point out that the scientists' search is limited to the extra-terrestrial worlds, those which are on the physical plane and which can be seen and measured by physical instruments. And though the limits of the physical universe have gone on expanding as more and more powerful instruments have been built, seemingly at some point of time its outer limit would be reached. Occultism and spiritual experience on the other hand, do not limit themselves to the physical plane and the existence of many other supra-physical planes is for them a lived reality. According to Indian tradition there are 7 planes of existence and in occultism and spiritual literature many supra-physical worlds and subtle planes have been described.

The Spiritual View

From the spiritual and occult viewpoint, the earth is of supreme importance, for it is a symbolic concentration of the universe. It is the place where all the worlds meet, where all the planes of consciousness intermix, with the result that all worlds act upon the earth. At the same time the earthly actions have repercussions on all the other worlds. It is in order to concentrate the work of transformation that the earth has been formed. Any progress made on the earth is automatically radiated to the other occult worlds. In a talk on 23.9.1953, the Mother says:

And from the occult standpoint, earth (which is nothing from the astronomical standpoint; in the immensity of the astronomical skies, earth is a thing absolutely without interest and without importance), but from the occult and spiritual point of view, earth is the concentrated symbol of the universe. For it is much more easy to work on one point than in a diluted vastness. All those who do the work know this. Well, for the convenience and necessity of work, the

whole universe has been concentrated and condensed symbolically in a grain of sand which is called Earth. And therefore it is the symbol of everything; all that is to be changed, all that is to be transformed, all that is to be converted is there. This means that if one concentrates on this work and does it there, all the rest will follow automatically, otherwise there will be no end — and no hope.
(CWM, Vol. 5, pp. 274-75)

The significance of the earth is due to the direct descent of the supreme consciousness in the most obscure matter. The Divine Presence, which is present in all things and beings is specially present upon earth, for the descent is direct from the Supreme into the obscurity of matter, without passing through the various levels of consciousness.

On 18.5.1955 while talking about the gods and goddesses, the Mother said:

. . . And from there (*Overmind*) they presided over the creation of the material universe and the earth. And one of the proceedings was the formation of the earth as a symbolic creation representative of the whole universe, in order to condense and concentrate the problem so that it might be solved more easily. And this earth, though it may be from the astronomical point of view something infinitesimal and as unimportant as can be, from the occult point of view of the universal creation it is a symbol which represents the universe so perfectly that by transforming the earth one can through contagion or analogy transform the universe, because the earth is the symbol of the universe.
(CWM, Vol. 7, pp. 157-58)

And similarly on 25.1.1956, the Mother explained in a very simple and concrete manner the meaning and purpose of the gods and titans taking birth on the earth:

. . . our earth which from the astronomical point of view seems to be only a small insignificant planet in the midst of all the stars and all the worlds, our earth has been formed to become the symbol of the universe and the point of concentration for the work of transformation, of divine transmutation.

And because of that, in this Matter which was perhaps the most obscure and most inconscient of all the Matter of the universes, there plunged and incarnated directly the Divine Consciousness, from the supreme Origin right into the obscurest Matter, without going through any intermediate stages, *directly*. Consequently, the two extremes touch, the Supreme and the most inconscient, and the universal circle closes. And so earthly life is the easiest means, one might say, or the most rapid, of becoming conscious of the Divine.

And it is so true that even the great cosmic Individualities, when they want to be converted or to unite with the Origin, take a physical body for that,

because it is more convenient for them, for it can be done faster and better than if they had to progress through all the states of being, from any one of the states of being in the universe to the supreme Origin.

It is easier to come down into a human body and find the divine Presence there, it is quicker. Imagine the serpent biting its tail, it makes a circle, doesn't it? So, if something wants to be united with the Divine, it is easier to enter the tail than to go the whole round of the body! As the head bites the tail, well, if you enter the tail you are immediately in contact with the head, otherwise you have to go all the way round to reach the head. (*CWM*, Vol. 8, pp. 35-36)

And on 23.10.1957 speaking of the importance of the earth according to old traditions, the Mother reveals the hidden secret, the central motive behind the creation of the earth:

In fact, according to very old traditions, the Earth, from the deeper spiritual point of view, has been created as a symbolic concentration of universal life so that the work of transformation may be done more easily, in a limited, concentrated "space" — so to say — where all the elements of the problem are gathered together so that, in the concentration, the action may be more total and effective. So he [Sri Aurobindo] speaks only of terrestrial existence, but we can understand that it is a symbolic existence, that is, that it *represents* a universal action. It is a symbolic, concentrated representation. And he says that "the central motive", that is, the purpose of terrestrial existence is to awaken, to develop and finally to reveal in a total manifestation the Spirit which is hidden at the centre of Matter and impels this Matter *from within* outwards towards a progressive development which will liberate the Spirit working from within.

(*CWM*, Vol. 9, p. 210)

According to Sri Aurobindo, it is the hidden Spirit which is hidden at the centre of Matter, and works upon Matter from within to manifest Itself, more and more, in progressive stages, till the whole of Matter becomes the manifestation of the Spirit. As he says in *Savitri*:

And Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. (*CWSA*, Vol. 34, p. 709)

The Mother while talking about the secret of nature and the purpose for which the universe has been created, said on 7.5.1958:

The universe is an objectivisation of the Supreme, as if He had objectivised himself outside of himself in order to see himself, to live himself, to know

himself, and so that there might be an existence and a consciousness capable of recognising him as their origin and uniting consciously with him to manifest him in the becoming. There is no other reason for the universe. The earth is a kind of symbolic crystallisation of universal life, a reduction, a concentration, so that the work of evolution may be easier to do and follow. And if we see the history of the earth, we can understand why the universe has been created. It is the Supreme growing aware of himself in an eternal Becoming; and the goal is the union of the created with the Creator, a union that is conscious, willing and free, in the Manifestation.

That is the secret of Nature. Nature is the executive Force, it is she who does the work. (*CWM*, Vol. 9, p. 321)

Thus, we understand the special status of the earth, the special purpose of its creation, the special formation that it is.

The Divine Presence

Even if we accept that the earth is symbolic concentration of the universe to expedite the work, how is the work carried out? What is the great secret of the earth?

The earth is an evolutionary world while all other worlds are typical. Here on earth the Divine presence is there even in the most inconscient matter. There is a direct intervention, without any intermediary, of the Supreme Consciousness in the most inconscient matter. This Divine presence is in all beings and things and it is this Divine presence, this divine consciousness hidden in all things, which in its unfolding, impels matter to a gradual and progressive development which we call evolution and makes the earth an evolutionary world.

The Mother explains it in a talk on 24.3.1951:

The formation of the earth as we know it, this infinitesimal point in the immense universe, was made precisely in order to concentrate the effort of transformation upon one point; it is like a symbolic point created in the universe to make it possible, while working directly upon one point, to radiate it over the entire universe.

If we want to make the problem a little more comprehensible, it is enough to limit ourselves to the creation and the history of the earth, for it is a good symbol of universal history.

From the astronomical point of view the earth is nothing, it is a very small accident. From the spiritual point of view, it is a symbolic willed formation. And as I have already said, it is only upon earth that this Presence is found, this direct contact with the supreme Origin, this presence of the divine Consciousness hidden in all things.

The other worlds have been organised more or less hierarchically, if one may say so, but the earth has a special formation due to the direct intervention, without any intermediary, of the supreme Consciousness in the Inconscient.

(*CWM*, Vol. 4, p. 242)

This divine presence in matter is the Special Grace given to the earth. In humans, this divine presence is the psychic around which they develop and evolve from life to life, awakening matter out of its inertia, helping it on its path back to the Divine. This psychic being is present only on the earth and in none of the other worlds. Even the cosmic beings, what we call the gods and the titans, lack the psychic and need to take birth upon the earth to experience it.

The Mother said on 10.6.1953:

In a human being, there is the divine Presence and the psychic being — at the beginning embryonic, but in the end a being wholly formed, conscious, independent, individualised. That does not exist in the vital world. It is a special grace given to human beings dwelling in matter and upon earth.

(*CWM*, Vol. 5, p. 98)

And on 30.3.1955, the Mother said:

The psychic being is a terrestrial formation. It is human beings who have a psychic being which has been developed upon earth and by earthly life and which is a projection of the divine Consciousness into Matter to awaken Matter out of its inertia so that it takes the path back to the Divine.

(*CWM*, Vol. 7, p. 104)

And on 1.2.1967, the Mother in a talk gave a more detailed explanation of the soul and the psychic being,

The soul is the eternal essence at the centre of the psychic being. The soul is in fact like a divine spark which puts on many states of being of increasing density, down to the most material; it is inside the body, within the solar plexus, so to say. These states of being take form and develop, progress, become individualised and perfected in the course of many earthly lives and form the psychic being. When the psychic being is fully formed, it is aware of the consciousness of the soul and manifests it perfectly. (*CWM*, Vol. 16, p. 358)

On 1.3.1951, the Mother talking about the psychic being, stated that the psychic belongs only to the earth and the beings of other worlds or planes of consciousness, even the cosmic beings of the Overmind, what we call the gods, lack the psychic. She says:

The psychic is the being organised by the divine Presence and it belongs to the earth — I am not speaking of the universe, only of the earth; it is only upon earth that you will find the psychic being. The rest of the universe is formed in quite a different way.

The universe contains all the domains higher than the physical: there is a global physical comprising the mental, the vital, etc., and all the domains above the mental are domains of a spiritual order, domains which are, for us, domains of the spirit, and it is this “spirit” which little by little, progressively, materialises itself to arrive at Matter as we conceive it. The beings of the Overmind, for instance, and all the beings of the higher regions have no psychic being — the “angels” have no psychic being. It is only upon earth that the psychic life begins, and it is just the process by which the Divine has awakened material life to the necessity of rejoining its divine origin. Without the psychic, Matter would never have awakened from its inconscience, it would never have aspired for the life of its origin, the spiritual life. Therefore, the psychic being in the human being is the manifestation of spiritual aspiration; but there is a spiritual life independent of the psychic. (*CWM*, Vol. 4, pp. 164-65)

And when the disciple asked whether there was correspondence between the psychic world and the earth, the Mother answered:

But I have already told you that it is only upon earth that the psychic being gets its experiences to individualise itself. Hence there is an almost absolute interdependence between the psychic world and the earth.

(*CWM*, Vol. 4, p. 165)

On 24.3.1951, the Mother was specifically asked if the beings of other worlds and planets had a psychic being. The Mother once again affirmed the presence of the psychic only on the earth and stated:

No, it is a purely terrestrial phenomenon. Only, there is nothing against the idea that psychic beings may go to the other worlds if it so pleases them. There is no reason to think that one cannot, if one went to another planet, meet psychic beings; it is not impossible; but these would be psychic beings formed upon earth who have become free in their movement, going here and there at will for some reason or other. All knowledge in all traditions, from every part of the earth, says that the psychic formation is a terrestrial formation and that the growth of the psychic being is something that takes place upon earth. But once they are formed and free in their movement, they can go anywhere in the universe, they are not limited in their movement; but their formation and growth belong to the terrestrial life, for reasons of concentration.

(*CWM*, Vol. 4, p. 243)

And in a talk of 9.6.1954, the Mother stated:

This means that if there were no psychic in Matter, it would not be able to have any direct contact with the Divine. And it is happily due to this psychic presence in Matter that the contact between Matter and the Divine can be direct and all human beings can be told, “You carry the Divine within you, and you have only to enter within yourself and you will find Him.” It is something very particular to the human being or rather to the inhabitants of the earth. In the human being the psychic becomes more conscious, more formed, more conscious and more independent also. It is individualised in human beings. But it is a speciality of the earth. It is a direct infusion, special and redeeming, in the most inconscient and obscure Matter, so that it might once again awake through stages to the divine Consciousness, the divine Presence and finally to the Divine Himself. It is the presence of the psychic which makes man an exceptional being — I don’t like to tell him this very much, because already he thinks too much of himself; he has such a high opinion of himself that it is not necessary to encourage him! But still, this is a fact — so much so that there are beings of other domains of the universe, those called by some people demigods and even gods, beings, for instance, of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind, who are very eager to take a physical body on earth to have the experience of the psychic, for they don’t have it. These beings certainly have many qualities that men don’t, but they lack this divine presence which is altogether exceptional and exists only on the earth and nowhere else. All these inhabitants of the higher worlds, the Higher Mind, Overmind and other regions have no psychic being. Of course, the beings of the vital worlds don’t have it either. But these latter don’t regret it, they don’t want it. There are only those very rare ones, quite exceptional, who want to be converted, and for this they act without delay, they immediately take a physical body. The others don’t want it; it is something which binds them and constrains them to a rule they do not want.

But it is a fact, so I am obliged to state that this is how it is, that it is an exceptional quality of the human being to carry within himself the psychic and, truly speaking, he does not take full advantage from it. He does not seem to consider this quality as something very, very desirable, from the way he treats this presence — exactly that! He prefers to it the ideas of his mind, prefers the desires of his vital being and the habits of his physical.

I don’t know how many of you have read the Bible; it is not very entertaining to read it, and besides, it is very long, but still, in the Bible there is a story I have always liked very much. There were two brothers, if I am not mistaken, Esau and Jacob. Well, Esau was very hungry, that’s the story, isn’t it? I believe he was a hunter or something; anyway, the story goes like this. He came back home very hungry, and told Jacob he was very hungry, and he was

so hungry that he said to him, “Listen, if you give me your mess of pottage” (Jacob had prepared some stew), “if you give me your mess of pottage I will give you my birthright.” You know, one can understand the story quite superficially, but it has a very profound meaning: the birthright is the right of being the son of God. And so he was quite ready to give up his divine right because he was hungry, for a concrete, material thing, for food. This is a very old story, but it is eternally true. (*CWM*, Vol. 6, pp. 160-62)

Thus we have seen above that time and again the Mother has confirmed that the psychic belongs only to the earth and it grows and evolves only on the earth. It is on earth for reasons of concentration, so that the work could be concentrated on one point and thus done more rapidly — the work being to raise the densest matter to the divine consciousness, to manifest the divine here on the earth in the most inconscient matter.

Progress Only on Earth

We have seen that it is the Divine Presence directly in most inconscient matter, without any intermediary, that gives special importance to the earth. Around this Divine Presence, the psychic being grows and evolves, manifesting the Divinity more and more, till the whole universe will be the manifestation of the Divine. And as earth is the chosen place, the symbolic concentration of the universe, it is only on earth that progress can be made. It is only on earth that one evolves, as all other worlds are typical worlds, and this is the meaning of the old traditions, when they speak of the unique importance of human birth on earth and of even the gods and titans aspiring to take birth on earth. It is only in human birth that one can consciously collaborate with nature and accelerate the evolutionary movement by the process of yoga, while in the case of all other beings on earth, it is nature which is doing yoga and carrying forward the evolution. The human being by doing yoga and making a concentrated effort can achieve in a short time what it would take nature ages and ages to achieve. Thus the human birth on earth is doubly blessed, firstly due to the special position of the earth and secondly due to the conscious collaboration one can make with nature and accelerate the process of evolution, condensing it to one lifetime or a few lifetimes. And this progress is possible on earth only, when one is present in a physical body. As the Mother said on 27.12.1957:

It is in life that you must transform yourself. It is upon earth that you progress and it is upon earth that you realise. It is in the body that you win the Victory.
(*CWM*, Vol. 3, p. 198)

And in the course of another talk, (24.2.1951) she said:

Here I must tell you a very important thing: the psychic being can progress and form itself only in the physical life and upon earth. As soon as it leaves a body, it enters into a rest which lasts for a more or less long time according to its own choice and its degree of development — a rest for assimilation, for a passive progress so to say, a rest for passive growth which will allow this same psychic being to pass on to new experiences and make a more active progress. (CWM, Vol. 4, p. 144)

And on 1.7.1935, the Mother said:

It is during one's physical life on earth that one has the opportunity to purify oneself, to make spiritual progress. (CWM, Vol. 17, p. 108)

And on 13.5.1953, giving the reason behind boredom, the Mother says:

When one does not progress, one gets bored — old and young, everybody — because we are here upon earth to progress. (CWM, Vol. 5, p. 48)

During the same talk, she gave the clue to that state which we all crave for — happiness:

... because life upon earth is made to be a field for progress and if we progress to the maximum we draw the maximum benefit from our life upon earth. And then one feels happy. When one does the best one can, one is happy. (CWM, Vol. 5, pp. 49-50)

Again on 2.2.1955, during a talk, the Mother said that progress is made only in a body on earth and exhorts us all to make the maximum use of the human life:

We are upon earth; the period one passes on earth is that in which one can make progress. One does not progress outside terrestrial life. The earthly, material life is essentially the life of progress, it is here that one makes progress. Outside the earthly life one takes rest or is unconscious or one may have periods of assimilation, periods of rest, periods of unconsciousness. But as for the periods of progress, they are on the earth and in the body. So, when you take a body it is to make progress, and when you leave it the period of progress is over.

And true progress is sadhana; that is, it is the most conscious and swiftest progress. Otherwise one makes progress with the rhythm of Nature, which means that it can take centuries and centuries and centuries and millenniums to make the slightest bit of progress. But true progress is that made by sadhana. In yoga one can do in a very short time what takes otherwise an interminable

time. But it is always in the body and always upon earth that it is done, not elsewhere. That is why when one is in a body one must take advantage of it and not waste one's time, not say, "A little later, a little later." It is much better to do it immediately. All the years you pass without making any progress are wasted years which you are sure to regret afterwards. (*CWM*, Vol. 7, p. 33)

And again, on 12.2.1958, she said:

Earthly life is the place for progress. It is here, on earth, that progress is possible, during the period of earthly existence. And it is the psychic which carries the progress over from one life to another, by organising its own evolution and development itself. (*CWM*, Vol. 9, p. 270)

And this is what she says, about the aim of life, on 5.11.1968:

To grow in consciousness is the very aim of life on earth. It is through the experience of successive lives that the range of the subconscious is gradually reduced.

By yoga and the effort to find the Divine in oneself and in life, one hastens the work considerably and it can be done in a few years.

(*CWM*, Vol. 16, p. 386)

And again talking about the goal of life, the Mother says on 21.12.1971:

Total union and the perfect manifestation of the Divine are the sole means of putting an end to the suffering and misery of the physical world which are the cause of subconscious pessimism. It is only in perfect union with the Divine that the consciousness can emerge into the eternal delight. And this conscious union is the true goal of earthly existence. (*CWM*, Vol. 16, p. 427)

And talking about the justification for the earthly life, the Mother says on 25.4.1956:

Yes, the justification of earthly existence is that one is on earth to realise the Divine.

Without this reason earthly life would be a monstrosity.

(*Silence*)

If there were not this supreme reason, of rediscovering the Divine and becoming Him, manifesting Him, realising Him externally, earthly life as it is would be something monstrous. (*CWM*, Vol. 8, p. 119)

And finally, on life being a field for progress, she says on 19.2.1972:

Life on earth is essentially a field for progress. But how brief life is for all the progress that has to be made!

To waste one's time seeking the satisfaction of one's petty desires is sheer folly. True happiness is possible only when one has found the Divine.

(CWM, Vol. 16, pp. 436-37)

Their Presence and Help

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are one consciousness in two bodies. They have never left the earth and have tirelessly striven to bring and establish light here.

The Mother during the course of a talk on 12.10.1955 said:

I am considering how from the beginning of the earth's history (we shall not go farther back to the antecedents, you know, for we have already enough to do with the earth), from the beginning of the earth's history, in one form or another, under one name or another, Sri Aurobindo has always presided over the great terrestrial transformations; and so when he tells you, "Well, this is the right time", perhaps he knows. That's all that I can say. (CWM, Vol. 7, p. 323)

And when she was asked if it was true that Sri Aurobindo, in a past life, took active part in the French Revolution, the Mother answered on 23.1.1960:

You can say that all through history Sri Aurobindo played an active part. Especially in the most important movements of history he was there — and playing the most important, the leading part. But he was not always visible.

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 10)

And speaking about herself, she said:

Since the beginning of the earth, wherever and whenever there was the possibility of manifesting a ray of the Consciousness, I was there.

(CWM, Vol. 13, p. 37)

And when a child asked her, (10.1.1935)

May I know, Mother, how many centuries ago You descended upon earth?

She replied,

I have never left the earth since it was formed. (*CWM*, Vol. 17, p. 75)

And in 1912, the Mother said:

That which is speaking to you now, is a faithful servant of the Divine. From all time, since the beginning of the earth, as a faithful servant of the Divine, it has spoken in the name of its Master. And as long as earth and men exist, it will be there in a body to preach the divine word.

So, wherever I am asked to speak, I do my best, as a servant of the Divine.

But to speak in the name of a particular doctrine or of a man, however great he may be, that I cannot do!

The Eternal Transcendent forbids me. (*CWM*, Vol. 13, p. 37)

Each one endeavouring to do yoga is helped to the utmost as the Mother stated on 2.2.1966:

By the very fact that you are living on earth, you are doing a yoga, even if you do not know it; and by the very fact that you are living here, you are helped in your yoga to the utmost of your possibilities. The only thing you lack is being conscious. (*CWM*, Vol. 16, p. 332)

And when a disciple, referring to the Mother's message, "The World is preparing for a big change. Will you help?", asked what is the great change referred to, the Mother replied on 2.1.1970:

This great change is the appearance on earth of a new race that will be to man what man is to the animal. The consciousness of this new race is already at work on earth to give light to all who are capable of receiving it and heeding it. (*CWM*, Vol. 16, p. 417)

And then of course there is the great promise that the Mother received on 7.12.1950, just two days after Sri Aurobindo left his body:

Lord, this morning Thou hast given me the assurance that Thou wouldst stay with us until Thy work is achieved, not only as a consciousness which guides and illumines but also as a dynamic Presence in action. In unmistakable terms Thou hast promised that all of Thyself would remain here and not leave the earth atmosphere until earth is transformed. Grant that we may be worthy of this marvellous Presence and that henceforth everything in us be concentrated on the one will to be more and more perfectly consecrated to the fulfilment of Thy sublime Work. (*CWM*, Vol. 13, p. 6)

In no uncertain terms Sri Aurobindo has promised that he would remain in the earth atmosphere not only as a consciousness but all of himself, as a living and dynamic Presence, helping, guiding, illumining all till the earth is transformed and like the Mother says let us be worthy of this Presence. And no doubt the same is true of the Mother also.

The Promise

All the ancient traditions refer to the Golden Age, the Ram Rajya, which will be established on the earth, when the rule of the divine will be evidently manifest and not hidden behind ignorance, when there will be progress from light to light and not from darkness to light, when the rule of truth will prevail — *satyameva jayate* — and not the rule of falsehood. It was for this Divine Life that the earth was made and in the course of its evolution it is inevitable that this Divine Life will be established on earth.

The Mother in the course of answering a disciple stated on 30.6.1929:

Ours is the most material world, but it is not necessarily “low down”, at least, not for that reason; if it is low down, it is because it is obscure and ignorant, not because it is material. It is a mistake to make “matter” a synonym for obscurity and ignorance. And the material world too is not the only world in which we live: it is rather one of many in which we exist simultaneously, and in one way the most important of them all. For this world of matter is the point of concentration of all the worlds; it is the field of concretisation of all the worlds; it is the place where all the worlds will have to manifest. At present it is disharmonious and obscure; but that is only an accident, a false start. One day it will become beautiful, rhythmic, full of light; for that is the consummation for which it was made. (CWM, Vol. 3, pp. 102-03)

The consummation for which the earth is made is the perfect union with the Divine. This is the promise which the Mother holds for us and this is the promise which Sri Aurobindo gives us in *Savitri*:

A divine force shall flow through tissue and cell
And take the charge of breath and speech and act
And all the thoughts shall be a glow of suns
And every feeling a celestial thrill.
Often a lustrous inner dawn shall come
Lighting the chambers of the slumbering mind;
A sudden bliss shall run through every limb
And Nature with a mightier Presence fill.

Thus shall the earth open to divinity
 And common natures feel the wide uplift,
 Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray
 And meet the deity in common things.
 Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
 The Spirit shall take up the human play,
 This earthly life become the life divine.

(CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 710)

One day this earthly life will become the life divine. This is the prophecy and this is the promise.

ANIL PURI

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12. Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (1985).
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All existence upon earth is an evolution, in an ascending series of figures, of what came down from a superconscious.

Eternity to be involved here in a subconscious Infinite.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 236 fn.)



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