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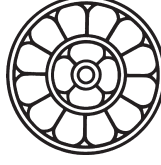
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXX

No. 3

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

Sri Aurobindo

VIDULA (Poem)	...	7
EXPERIENCES AND REALISATIONS IN THE INTEGRAL YOGA	...	18
AN OPEN LETTER TO MY COUNTRYMEN	...	35
TO MY COUNTRYMEN	...	43

The Mother

‘I ASK FOR A GREATER LOVE’	...	47
ON THE DHAMMAPADA	...	48
WOMAN AND THE WAR	...	57
WOMAN AND MAN	...	60
FROM A CONVERSATION OF 26 JUNE 1957	...	61

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)

“PREFIGURE” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO	...	66
---	-----	----

Manoj Das

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI		
CHAPTER LIX: DECIDING THE DESTINY OF THE DANGEROUS:		
BRIGHT BRAINS AT WORK (2)	...	67

Mona Sarkar

ON WOMEN	...	77
----------	-----	----

REPORT OF THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

...	85
-----	----

VIDULA

This translation first appeared in the weekly *Bande Mataram* on 9 June 1907 under the title “The Mother to her Son”. The following note by Sri Aurobindo was printed above the text:

(There are few more interesting passages in the Mahabharat than the conversation of Vidula with her son. It comes into the main poem as an exhortation from Kunti to Yudhisthir to give up the weak spirit of submission, moderation, prudence, and fight like a true warrior and Kshatriya for right and justice and his own. But the poem bears internal evidence of having been written by a patriotic poet to stir his countrymen to revolt against the yoke of the foreigner. Sanjay, prince and leader of an Aryan people, has been defeated by the King of Sindhu and his Kingdom is in the possession of the invader. The fact of the King of Sindhu or the country around the Indus being named as the invader shows that the poet must have had in his mind one of the aggressive foreign powers, whether Persia, Graeco-Bactria, Parthia or the Scythians, which took possession one after the other of these regions and made them the base for inroads upon the North-West. The poet seeks to fire the spirit of the conquered and subject people and impel them to throw off the hated subjection. He personifies in Vidula the spirit of the motherland speaking to her degenerate son and striving to awaken in him the inherited Aryan manhood and the Kshatriya’s preference of death to servitude.)

Almost thirty-five years later Sri Aurobindo revised his translation for publication in *Collected Poems and Plays* (1942). At that time he struck out the above note and wrote the one reproduced below. — Ed. Note in CWSA Vol. 5

VIDULA

This poem is based on a passage comprising four chapters (Adhyayas) in the Udyog-parva of the Mahabharat. It is not a close translation but a free poetic paraphrase of the subject matter; it follows closely the sequence of the thoughts with occasional rearrangements, translates freely in parts, in others makes some departures or adds, develops and amplifies to bring out fully the underlying spirit and idea. The style of the original is terse, brief, packed and allusive, sometimes knotted into a pregnant obscurity by the drastic economy of word and phrase. It would have been impossible to preserve effectively in English

such a style; a looser fullness of expression has been preferred sacrificing the letter to the spirit. The text of a Calcutta edition has been followed throughout. The whole passage with its envoi or self-laudatory close reads like an independent poem dovetailed into the vast epic.

I

Hearken to the ancient converse of which old traditions tell,
 Of the youthful Sunjoy with his mother the indomitable
 Vidula, the passionate princess, royal in her mood and form,
 Fiery-souled, the resolute speaker with her tameless heart of storm,
 High her fame in kingly senates where the nations' princes met,
 Eloquent and proud and learned, with a soul foreseeing fate.
 Conquered by the King of Sindhu, hurled down from his lofty throne,
 As he lay unnerved and abject, came she to her warlike son,
 Vidula, the passionate princess, and she spoke with burning eyes,
 Scourging him with words like flakes of fire, bidding him arise.
 "Son", she cried, "no son of mine to make thy mother's heart rejoice!
 Hark, thy foemen mock and triumph, yet to live is still thy choice.
 Nor thy hero father got thee, nor I bore thee in my womb,
 Random changeling from some world of petty souls and coward gloom!
 Passionless and abject nature, stripped and void of bold desire,
 Nerveless of all masculine endeavour, without force and fire,
 Reckon not thy name midst men who liest flinging manhood far.
 Rise and bear thy yoke, thou warhorse, neighing for the crash of war!
 Make not great thy foemen with thy terrors, panic eyes behind.
 Thou, a king's son, canst thou tremble? Be a king indeed in mind,
 Soar up like a sudden eagle beating high against the wind.
 Out, arise, thou coward! lie not thus upon the ground o'erthrown,
 Shorn of pride, thy foes' delight, thy friends' shame, making fruitless moan.
 Easily a paltry river with the meagre floods o'erflows,
 Easily the fieldmouse with her mite of grain contented goes,
 Easily the coward ceases fainting from his great emprise.
 Break the serpent's fangs between thy hands and perish, not as dies
 Impotent a whining dog, go deathward; but as circles o'er his prey,
 But as wheels an angry falcon through the wide and azure day
 Watching for his moment, thou in fearless silence wait thy time
 Or with resonant and far-voiced challenge waken war sublime.
 Wherefore like a dead thing thunder-blasted liest thou on the ground?
 Rise, thou coward, seek not slumber while the victors jeer around.

Turn not miserably to thy set, but smiting with the sword
 Make the world re-echo! deem that thou wast born to be its lord,
 Not with middle place content nor abject; all subjection spurn.
 Stand erect, whate'er befall thee, roaring on thy hunters turn.
 Blaze out like a firebrand even if for a moment burning high,
 Not like the poor fire of husks that smoulders long, afraid to die.
 Better is the swift and glorious flame that mounting dies of power,
 Not to smoke in squalid blackness, hour on wretched futile hour.
 Out to battle, do thy man's work, falter not in high attempt;
 So a man is quit before his God and saved from self-contempt.
 For the great heart grieves not though he lose the glorious crown of strife,
 But he does the work before him holding cheap his body's life.
 Show thy prowess, be the hero thou wast born, with flashing glaive
 Hew thy way with God before thee to the heaven of the brave.
 All the wells that thou hast dug, the beasts that thou hast offered, all
 Fame is gone to wrack; thy roots of pleasure cut, the tree must fall.
 Eunuch, wherefore dost thou live? if thou must sink, with thy last breath
 Seize thy foeman by the thigh and drag him with thee down to death.
 Though his roots be cut, the strong man stands up stiff, he sinks not prone.
 Mark the warhorse in the battle with the sunken car o'erthrown,
 Up he struggles, full of pride and rage. Thou too like him exalt
 Thy low fortunes, lift thy great house shamed and ruined through thy fault.
 He whose perfect deeds as of a demigod in strength and mind
 Make not up the daily talk and glory of amazed mankind,
 What is he but one more clod to feed the fire and help the soil?
 He is neither man nor woman. Man is he whose fire and toil,
 Turned to wealth or turned to wisdom, truth or piety of soul,
 Travel through the spacious world renowned from pole to ringing pole,
 Or in austere works or knowledge or in valour quick and high
 He outdoes his fellow-creatures scaling the immortals' sky.
 Be not as the vagrant beggar seeking food from door to door,
 Shameless with his skull and rosary wretched handfuls to implore.
 Cowardly, ignoble and unfeeling is the life they lead,
 Equal to the houseless street-dog whom compassionate hands must feed.
 Let not ever son of mine be such an one as all men scorn,
 Without throne and without purple, weak, emaciate and forlorn,
 Mean and with mean things content and vaunting o'er a little gain.
 Such an one his foes delight in, but his friends are joyless men.
 We shall perish, exiles from our country, plagued with wretched want,
 All obscure who were so glorious, doomed to petty things and scant,
 Wandering in loveless places, dreaming at an alien door

Of delightful things and pleasant in our joyous lives of yore.
 Death and shame in thee I bore and fondly deemed I had a son.
 Better were a woman barren than to bear with labour one
 Sluggish, weak and hopeless, without noble wrath and warlike fire.
 Sunjoy, Sunjoy, waste not thou thy flame in smoke! Impetuous, dire,
 Leap upon thy foes for havoc as a famished lion leaps,
 Storming through thy vanquished victors till thou fall on slaughtered heaps.
 This is manhood to refuse defeat and insult not to bear.
 He who suffers and forgives, who bows his neck the yoke to wear,
 Is too weak for man, too base to be a woman. Loiterings
 Clog a mounting fortune, low contentment fetters, fear unwings,
 And a fainting over-pitiful heart she scorns for her abode.
 In thy strength reject these poisons, tread not vile subjection's road.
 Make thy man's heart hard like iron to pursue and take thy own.
 Out to battle! let not woman's weakness shame thy manhood, son.
 Fortune dogs the hero's goings who like Ocean in his pride
 Walks through life with puissant footsteps as a lion the hill-side.
 Even when he has gone where fate shall lead him, still his people climb
 On the wave of his great actions to a joy and strength sublime.
 For a King must exile pleasure, turn from safety to waylay
 Fortune for his nation like a hunter tracking down his prey.
 Wise and fortunate ministers shall help him, thousands share his joy."

But to Vidula, amazed and angry answered swift the boy.
 "Where shall be thy bliss, my mother, though the whole wide earth were thine,
 If thine eyes of me are vacant? the delight of raiment fine,
 Food and gems and rich enjoyments, what were these without thy son?"

But the mother in her surge of passion answered rushing on.
 "Be that Hell my foeman's where the loiterer and the coward climb,
 Who avoid occasion, murmuring, 'Why today? 'tis not the time.'
 May my friends go flocking to that world where the high-crested go,
 Who respect the self within them and its noble value know.
 But who, stripped of mastery, eat the bitter bread that others give,
 Miserable souls and strengthless, is it life that such men live?
 Live not with such abject living, be a prince and chief of men.
 Let the Brahmins look toward thee even as to the King of Rain
 All this world of creatures turns for sustenance with expectant eyes.
 Mighty Gods to mightier Indra from their golden thrones arise.
 Lo, his hands to whom all creatures for their bliss come crowding fast,
 As to a ripe-fruited tree the birds innumerably haste,

And his life indeed is counted, for he reaps the earth with deeds
 And on friend and fere and kinsman showers unasked their princely needs, —
 Living by his arm's strength, taking only what his hand has won,
 Gathering here an earthly glory, shining there like Indra's sun.

II

“Evil is thy state, O Sunjoy; lose the manhood from thy soul
 And thou treadst the path of vilest spirits with their Hell for goal.
 Shall a warrior born of warriors to whom Heaven gave fire divine,
 Spend it not in mighty actions lavish of the God within?
 Shall he hug his life for ever? He is then a thief to Heaven;
 For to swell the days of earth with glorious deeds that strength was given.
 Hear me, Sunjoy! Sindhu's monarch rules in might the conquered folk,
 But their hearts bend not before him, they abhor the foreign yoke.
 They from weakness sit with minds bewildered, full of hate and grief,
 Waiting sullenly a sea of miseries, hopeless of relief.
 Gather faithful friends and get thee valiant helpers; through our lands
 Working with a fierce persistence, strengthening still thy mighty hands.
 Others when they see thy daring shall be stirred to noble strife,
 Catch thy fire and rise in strong rebellion, scorning goods and life.
 Make with these a close and mighty following, seek the pathless hills,
 Regions difficult and strong and sullen passes walled with ills
 For the rash invader; there in arms expect the tyrant's hour;
 He is not a god to be immortal, not for ever lasts his power.
 Knowst thou not the ancient Brahmin with his deep and inward eye
 That beholds the ages, told of thee that lowly thou shouldst lie,
 Yet again arise and prosper? Victor¹ named, a victor be.
 Therefore have I chidden and urged thee, to awake thy destiny.
 O my son, believe me, he whose victory brings the common gain
 And a nation conquers with him, cannot fail; his goal is plain
 And his feet divinely guided, for his steps to Fate belong.
 O my son, think this whilst thou art fighting: ‘Generations long
 Of my fathers walk beside me and a nation's mighty dead
 Watch me; for my greatness is their own, my slavery bows their head.’
 In this knowledge turn thy thoughts to battle; Sunjoy, draw not back!
 Eviller plight is not nor sinfuller, this day's bread to lack
 Nor to know from whence shall come the bitter morrow's scanty meal.

1. “Sunjoy”, Sanskrit *sañjaya*, means “victory”.

It is worse than death of spouse or child such indigence to feel.
 That's a grief that strikes and passes, this a long and living death.
 In a house of mighty monarchs I derived my earliest breath;
 As from ocean into ocean sails a ship in bannered pride,
 To a house of mighty monarchs came I in my marriage-tide,
 Queen and Empress, filled with joys and blessings, worshipped by my lord,
 And my kin rejoiced to see me rich in wealth and jewelled hoard,
 Clothed in smooth and splendid raiment, girt with friends and nobly stored.
 When thou seest me weak and abject and the weeping of thy wife,
 Wilt thou in thy breath take pleasure, wilt thou love thy shameful life?
 Wouldst thou see thy household priests and holy teachers leave our side,
 Our retainers hopeless of their sustenance who had served thy pride?
 In thy proud aspiring actions, son, I lived; if these are past,
 Peace can dwell not in my bosom and my heart shall break at last.
 Must I then turn back the Brahmin when he sues for gold or lands?
 Shame would tear my heart-strings; never, Sunjoy, went with empty hands
 From thy father's seat or from thy mother's presence suppliant men.
 We were ever all men's refuge; shall we sue to others then?
 Life shall leave me rather, I will seek that house of nether calms.
 Never will I tread a stranger's floor and live upon his insolent alms.
 Lo! we toss in shoreless waters, be the haven to our sail!
 Lo! we drown in monstrous billows, be our boat with kindly hail!
 Save our hopeless fortunes! We are dead men drawing empty breath,
 Be a hero and deliverer, raise us from this living death.
 Dare to die, O hero! Where is then the foeman half so strong
 As to overcome thy onset? Who would choose to suffer long
 Years of sad despondent weakness? sudden death is better far.
 Single out their mightiest, let thy fame o'ertop the surge of war.
 Indra by the death of Vritra seized the monarchy of Heaven;
 Lord of teeming worlds, to him the largest sovereign part is given.
 Calling to his armoured foes defiance, lo, the hero proud
 Shouts his name across the roar of battle like a lion loud
 And he breaks their foremost, and they fall apart like scattered spray,
 Till he slays their leader and mightiest winning glory wide as day.
 Then his haters' hearts are troubled, then they bow reluctant heads.
 For he hurls his life into the battle and on death he treads
 Towards victory; all the cowards and the tremblers of the earth
 Come with gifts and incense crowding to provide his ease and mirth.
 Is it death thou fleest from? Sunjoy, savage is the fall of Kings,
 For a wise foe leaves no remnants, hands to stab or fugitive wings.
 To be King is heaven, O Sunjoy, sweet as nectar to the lip

Power is to the mighty. Son of Kings, thou holdest in thy grip
 Heaven or empire; rush then like a meteor on the vaunting foe!
 Reaper in the battle! kinglike lay their armèd thousands low.
 Sunjoy, terror of thy foemen, let me see not in thy close
 A poor crouching coward girt with weeping friends and shouting foes.
 Vail not thou thy crest to be a mock for Sindhu's laughing girls:
 Take her highborn damsels for thy handmaids, with her conquered pearls
 Wreath thy queen, be strong and splendid as of yore in youthful pride.
 Young and shaped to princely beauty, cultured, to great Kings allied,
 Such a man as thou to deviate from thy bold and radiant mood!
 Thou to bow thy neck to other yoke than Earth's, for alien food
 Speaking sweet to strangers, following with a meek inclinèd head!
 If I see thee thus degraded, I shall think my son is dead.
 But I know this country's mighty princes and their lordly race
 Firmer-rooted than the mountains in eternal kingliness.
 In our fathers and forefathers 'twas the same and in our sons
 Shall be and their progeny for ever while the Ganges runs.
 It was made by God a grandeur! Never prince of the ancient seed,
 Never prince who did the deeds of princehood in this land was bred,
 Who would crouch and gaze for sustenance, who in fear would bow his neck.
 Like a giant tree he has no joints to bend with, though he break;
 Break he may, but bends not. If he bows, to holy men in awe
 Bows he; if he yields, it is to justice and religion's law,
 Not to equal or inferiors: them he holds with sternest hand,
 Smiting still the strong ill-doer and the troublers of the land.
 Mightily like a maddened elephant through the world he storms abroad
 Conquering fate through high adventure, kneeling not to bear the load —
 Little recks if he has helpers or stands lonely, dispossessed;
 He is what he is and will not alter, lowers not his crest."

III

"Mother, mother stony-natured, ore of pitiless iron black
 Heaven collected and together forged thy dreadful heart to make.
 Mother mine heroic-minded, high-disdaining common mould,
 Dreadful is the warrior code of ethics that our princes hold,
 Harsh, devoid of love and sweetness; thou my mother driv'st me on
 To the battle like a stranger, like another woman's son!
 Am I not thy child? has any other in thy love a part?
 Yet thy words are harsh and ruthless. Will it please thy fiery heart

If I lie in battle cold and in my stead thou own the earth?
 What were all life's splendour, what were bright and fair things worth?
 When thine eyes seek me in vain, will these things soothe their sad desire?"

But the mother answered still with words that breathed her soul of fire.
 "Dear my son, for joy or sorrow twofold is the great life's scope,
 To be righteous in our actions, to fulfil each human hope.
 Private welfare, high religion, both alike should urge thee on.
 It has come at last, the mightiest hour of all thy life, O son.
 Now if thou shouldst spurn occasion from vile fear or pitifulness,
 All thy beauty were dishonoured and thy strength grows thy disgrace.
 When dishonour stains thee, should I shape my words to soothe thy mind?
 Like a she-mule's were my mother's love, a brutish impulse blind.
 Leave the path of fools and cowards, vileness hated by the wise.
 Strange the sorcery of affection sealing up this people's eyes!
 But not mine! While only thou art noble, art thou dear and loved.
 But a graceless son or grandchild by aspiring thoughts unmoved,
 Crude and brutish-brained with unformed soul, revolts a father's mind,
 Knowing he had all in vain his labour to create his kind.
 Shrink not from a noble action, stoop not to unworthy deed!
 Vile are they who stoop, they gain not Heaven's doors, nor here succeed.
 Kshatriyas on this world were loosed for battle by their Maker high,
 Sunjoy, for the strife and victory, and they conquer or they die.
 Ever by their doom of Nature to a labour unrevoked
 And a fierce hard-hearted action for the people's safety yoked,
 Conquering or dying, glorious Indra's radiant world they share:
 Yet his heavenly mansions to a warrior's heart are not so dear
 As to dare and triumph, as the gust and glory of the strife,
 As to set his foes beneath his feet and drink the joy of life.
 When the thinking soul of manhood is insulted and oppressed,
 Deep he burns with fire for ever and revenge is in his breast,
 Till he's strong to hurl disfigured self away and nobly cease
 Or to crush the proud wrongdoer; other way is none to peace.
 Wilt thou faint for difficulty and sorrow? they but strengthen men.
 Even a little pleasure comes not here without a little pain,
 Without struggle no delight is and without delight the soul
 Cannot live, but ceases like the Ganges in the ocean's roll."

Then King Sunjoy answered, faintly now, but making once more moan.
 "Not such counsel thou shouldst give me. Mother, still I am thy son.
 Be as dumb men are, my mother, be as dull and joyless things;

Look to pity and softness only, not the iron moods of Kings.”
 “Greatest were my joy then if thy thoughts like mine grew eagle-eyed.
 Thou bidst me to woman’s softness? I bid thee to masculine pride.
 When the men of Sindhu are not, blotted by thy hands from life,
 When thou winnest difficult victory from the clutch of fearful strife,
 I shall know thou art my offspring and shall love my son indeed.”

But King Sunjoy, “Where have I a single helper in my need?
 All alone what man can struggle? Without means who groweth great?
 I have neither friends nor treasure; when I view my dreadful state,
 Fallen, helpless, wretched, all my sick heart turns from useless toil
 As a sinner lost despairs of heaven for a thing so vile.
 But, O mother, if thy wisdom find an issue from this net,
 Tell me, mother; I may do thy lofty bidding even yet.”

“Never scorn thyself for past defeat; be bold and proud of heart.
 Fortune goes and comes again; she seeks us only to depart.
 Foolish are those careful thinkers who would ponder all their days,
 Thinking this and that, and leap not to their crown, ask perfect ways.
 Where is in the world an action whose result is wholly sure?
 Here uncertainty’s the one thing certain. To a noble lure
 Man puts forth his manhood, wins and is or dies in the attempt.
 They who act not, try not, they are nothing and their crown contempt.
 Single is inaction’s nature to forego Fate’s mighty call:
 Double-edged high aspiration wins life’s throne or loses all.
 Knowing that his life is transient, sure of its uncertainties,
 Swift the hero clashing with adversity jostles for increase.
 All you who are men, awake and rise and struggle; free and great
 Now resolve to be and shrink not from the dangerous face of Fate.
 Be you resolute for victory; this shall drag her to your side,
 For the iron will takes Fortune captive like a vanquished bride.
 Call the gods to bless thy purpose; set the Brahmin’s subtle brain
 And the nation’s princes in thy vanguard; fight! thou shalt attain.
 There are angered bold ambitious natures, many a breast
 Arrogant and active, there are men insulted and disgraced
 By the foreign tyrant, there are soaring spirits that aspire,
 Minds of calm courageous wisdom, quiet strengths and souls of fire,
 Desperate men with broken fortunes; link thyself to these and dare.
 Care not for his giant armies, care not for his tools of war.
 With these native flames to help thee, those shall break like piles of cloud
 When a mighty storm awakes in heaven and the winds grow loud.

Give them precedence, rise to yield them courtesy, speak them ever fair;
 They shall make thee then their leader and for thee shall do and dare.
 When the tyrant sees his conquered foeman careless grown of death,
 Bent on desperate battle, he will tremble, he will hold his breath
 Like a man who sees a Python lashing forward for the grip.
 Doubtless he will strive to soothe or tame thee, but if thou escape
 His deceit and violence, he will parley, give and take for peace.
 So at least there's gained a respite and good terms for thy increase.
 Respite and a footing gained, then gather wealth to swell thy force.
 Friends and helpers crowd around him who has money and resource,
 But the poor man they abandon and they shun his feeble state,
 Losing confidence, saying, 'Where are then his means and favouring fate?'
 When thy foe shall grow thy helper, cessions new and treaties make,
 Then thou'lt understand how easy 'twas to win thy kingdom back.

IV

"Never should a prince and leader bow his haughty head to fear,
 Let his fortune be however desperate, death however near.
 If his soul grow faint, let him imprison weakness in his heart,
 Keep a bold and open countenance and play on a hero's part.
 If the leader fear and faint, then all behind him faint and fear.
 So a king of men should keep a dauntless look and forehead clear.
 Now this nation and this army and the statesmen of the land,
 All are torn by different counsels and they part to either hand.
 Some affect as yet the foreign tyrant, many leave his side,
 Others yet shall leave him, frowning, for his insults and his pride.
 Some there are, thy friends who love thee, but they serve and eat his bread,
 Weak, though praying for thy welfare, like poor cattle bound and led,
 Like a cow that sees her calf tied, so they serve reluctantly,
 Yet they sorrow in thy sorrow, weeping as for kin that die.
 Some there are whom thou hast loved and honoured, loyal friends of old,
 Who believe yet in the nation though its king grow faint and cold.
 Yield not to thy fear, O Sunjoy; let not such thy side forsake
 Scorning thy poor terrors. Wake for victory, Sunjoy! Warrior, wake!
 I have laboured to provoke the will, the strength thy heart within.
 All is truth I've uttered and thou knowst it; thy despair was sin.
 Know that thou hast still great treasure, know that I have funds concealed,
 Mighty stores that I alone know; thou shalt have them for the field.
 Know that thou hast numerous secret helpers, friends who wait their hour,

Daring to endure privation and disaster's utmost power.
 They shall turn not backward from the battle, they are helpers, friends
 Such as daring souls aspirant need for their gigantic ends."
 So she spoke with words of varied splendour urging him to dare
 Till his gloom and shadow left him and his foolish weak despair.

"O thou strong and resolute speaker, even the feeblest fainting soul
 Would put darkness from him, listening, for thy words would make him whole.
 I will high uphold my country in its swift precipitous fate,
 Having thee to lead me on whose vision past and future wait.
 My denial and my silence were but craft; consent deferred
 Drew thee on to speak lest I should lose even one inspiring word.
 It is sudden nectar to the desolate to find a friend!
 Now I rise to smite the foe and cease not till I make an end."
 Out he rushed to desperate battle burning in his pride and might,
 As a noble warhorse wounded rushes faster to the fight.
 Stung with arrows of her speech he did his mother's high command
 Driving out the foe and stranger, freeing all the conquered land.

Lo, this strong and famous poem that shall make men gods for might,
 Kindling fiery joy of battle. When a King has lost the fight
 By his foemen whelmed and broken, let his well-wishers and friends
 Read to him this poem. All who need high strength for noble ends,
 Let them read it daily; for the warrior hearing turns to flame,
 Tramples down a hundred foemen and acquires a deathless name.
 And the pregnant woman who shall hear it day by day
 Bears a hero or a strong man dowered with strength to help or slay,
 Or a soul of grandiose virtues, or a helper of the Light,
 Or a glorious giver blazing with the spirit's radiance bright.
 But a daughter of high princes and a fighter's wife shall bear
 Splendid like a flame and swift and fortunate, strong to dare,
 Unapproachable in battle and invincible in war,
 Armèd champion of the right, injustice' scourge, some human star.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translations, CWSA, Vol. 5, pp. 105-17)

EXPERIENCES AND REALISATIONS IN THE INTEGRAL YOGA

(Continued from the issue of January 2017)

PART FOUR THE FUNDAMENTAL REALISATIONS OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA

SECTION THREE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES AND REALISATIONS

Chapter One Experiences of the Self, the One and the Infinite

Peace, Calm, Silence and the Self

That [*state of vast peace and calm*] is the basic experience of the higher consciousness — it is what is called the realisation of the Atman (the Self).

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It is the Atman, the spiritual being above the mind — the first experience of it is a silence and calm (which one perceives afterwards to be infinite and eternal) untouched by the movements of mind and life and body. The higher consciousness lives always in touch with the Self — the lower is separated from it by the activities of the Ignorance.

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When one becomes aware of the Self calm, silent, wide, universal, it is no longer covered over by the ignorance; when one identifies with the Self and not with the mind, life and body and their movements or with the small ego, that is the release of the Self.

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And how is the outer nature to rise into the higher Prakriti before you realise the Self? The higher nature is that of the higher consciousness of which the first basis is the peace and wideness and realisation of the Self, the One that is all.

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The gaining of peace makes it easier to get the experience of the pure and free Self.

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If not aspiration, at least keep the idea of what is necessary — (1) that the silence and peace shall become a wideness which you can realise as the Self, (2) the extension of the silent consciousness upwards as well so that you may feel its source above you, (3) the presence of peace etc. all the time. These things need not all come at once, but by realising what has to be in your mind, any falling towards a condition of inertia can be avoided.

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What one feels first [*in the silence*] is the pure existence of the self, without any idea, characteristic or movement — existence pure and simple, Sat Brahman — or else one feels that and a vast peace and wideness. Afterwards other things are felt such as Ananda, but always with this as the basis.

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A great wave (or sea) of calm and the constant consciousness of a vast and luminous Reality — this is precisely the character of the fundamental realisation of the Supreme Truth in its first touch on the mind and the soul. One could not ask for a better beginning or foundation — it is like a rock on which the rest can be built. It means certainly not only a Presence, but *the* Presence — and it would be a great mistake to weaken the experience by any non-acceptance or doubt of its character.

It is not necessary to define it and one ought not even to try to turn it into an image; for this Presence is in its nature infinite. Whatever it has to manifest of itself or out of itself, it will do inevitably by its own power, if there is a sustained acceptance.

It is quite true that it is a grace sent and the only return needed for such a grace is acceptance, gratitude and to allow the Power that has touched the consciousness to develop what has to be developed in the being — by keeping oneself open to it. The total transformation of the nature cannot be done in a moment; it must take long and proceed through stages; what is now experienced is only an initiation, a foundation for the new consciousness in which that transformation will become possible. The automatic spontaneity of the experience ought by itself to show that it is nothing constructed by the mind, will or emotions; it comes from a Truth that is beyond them.

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The vastness, the overwhelming calm and silence in which you feel merged is what is called the Atman or the silent Brahman. It is the whole aim of many Yogas to get this realisation of Atman or silent Brahman and live in it. In our Yoga it is only the first stage of the realisation of the Divine and of that growing of the being into the higher or divine Consciousness which we call transformation.

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A sadhak of integral Yoga who stops short at the Impersonal is no longer a sadhak of integral Yoga. Impersonal realisation is the realisation of the silent Self, of the pure Existence, Consciousness and Bliss in itself without any perception of an Existent, Conscient, Blissful. It leads therefore to Nirvana. In the integral knowledge the realisation of the Self and of the impersonal Sachchidananda is only a step, though a very important step, or part of the integral knowledge. It is a beginning, not an end of the highest realisation.

The True Self Within

The experience described in your letter is a glimpse of the realisation of the true Self which is independent of the body. When this settles itself there is the liberation (*mukti*). Not only the body, but the vital and mind are felt to be only instruments and one's self is felt to be calm, self-existent and free and wide or infinite. It is then possible for the psychic being to effect in that freedom the full transformation of the nature. All your former experiences were preparing for this, but the physical consciousness came across. Now that you have had the glimpse of the self separate from the body, this physical difficulty may soon be overcome.

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The experience you have is the experience of the true self. Untouched by grief and joy, desire, anxiety or trouble, vast and calm and full of peace, it observes the agitations of the outer being as one might the play of children. It is indeed the divine element in you. The more you can live in that, the firmer will be the foundation of the sadhana. In this self will come all the higher experiences, oneness with the Divine, light, knowledge, strength, Ananda, the play of the Mother's higher forces. It does not always become stable from the first, though for some it does; but the experience comes more and more frequently and lasts till it is no longer covered by the ordinary nature.

The Self and the Sense of Individuality

Yes, the sense of individuality can disappear altogether when all is peace and wideness. One feels that the peace and wideness are oneself, but not in an individual sense — for it is the “Atman” of everybody else also. Afterwards there can come an experience of another kind of I, but it is a universalised I which contains everybody else and is in unison with everybody else and is itself contained in the Divine. This is what Yogins sometimes call the “large” as opposed to the small Aham. I have written of it as the true Person.

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The Self is essentially universal; the individualised self is only the universal experienced from an individual centre. If what you have realised is not felt to be one in all, then it is not the “Atman”; possibly it is the central being not yet revealing its universal aspect as Atman.

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The Self is felt as either universal, one in all, or a universalised individual the same in essence as others, extended everywhere from each being but centred here. Of course centre is a way of speaking, because no physical centre is usually felt — only all the action takes place around the individual.

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All is in the self; when identified with the universal self, all is in you.

Also, the microcosm reproduces the macrocosm — so all is present in each, though all is not expressed (and cannot be) in the surface consciousness.

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There is the experience of the microcosm (the universe in oneself) in which all that is in the macrocosm (the larger universe) is present. All these things are for experience, for knowledge and must be taken as such. No merely personal turn should be given to them.

The Disappearance of the “I” Sense

The essential “I” sense disappears when there is the stable realisation of the one universal Self in all and that remains at all moments in all conditions under any circumstances. Usually this comes first in the Purusha consciousness and the extension to the Prakriti movements is not immediate. But even if there are “I” movements in the Prakriti reactions, the Purusha within observes them as the continued running of an old mechanism and does not feel them as his own. Most Vedantists stop there, because they think that those reactions will fall away from one at death and all will disappear into the One. But for a change of the nature it is necessary that the experience and seeing of the Purusha should spread to all the parts, mind, vital, physical, subconscious. Then the ego movements of Prakriti can also disappear gradually from one field after another till none is left. For this a perfect samata even in the cells of the body and in every vibration of the being is necessary — *samam hi brahma*. One is then quite free from it in works also. The individual remains but that is not the small separative ego, but a form and power of the Universal which feels itself one with all beings, an acting centre and instrument of the Universal Transcendent, full of the Ananda of the presence and the action but not thinking or moving independently or acting for its own sake. That cannot be called egoism. The Divine can be called an ego only if he is a separate Person limited as in the Christian idea of God by his separateness (though even there esoteric Christianity abolishes the limitation). An I which is not separate in that way is no I at all.

The Self and the Cosmic Consciousness

One has first to become aware of the Self and its wide silence and eternal peace and acquire the cosmic consciousness in which one is aware of the whole universe as one with oneself and to live in that. One has at the same time to be aware — it becomes possible when one lives in the cosmic consciousness, cosmic Self and cosmic Nature, — of the different beings in oneself, psychic, mental, vital, physical, and then there appears also the central being which stands above all of them and is the source of all the surface personalities. It is only then that one can know the aspect or bhava one is intended to manifest.

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The Cosmic Spirit or Self contains everything in the cosmos — it upholds cosmic Mind, universal Life, universal Matter as well as the Overmind. The Self is more than all these things which are its formulations in Nature.

A Vision of the Universal Self

What you saw in the vision was the wide and luminous infinite of what is called the universal Self or spirit. It is that which is one of the fundamental things into which one enters when one reaches the higher consciousness and goes above. The personal being naturally feels itself as something very small and insignificant in that Infinite. But in that Infinite there are higher and higher levels and it is to these levels that the Mother was leading you when she took you by the hand. This often happens in meditation or trance when one has once gone upward into the spiritual infinity. The reason why you did not see the Mother's form was not that the Mother hid herself or anything in you came between, but that you were both moving in the formless Infinite as spiritual beings and so it was easier to feel the presence than to see any physical form. Not that the form cannot be there, but it is less insistent and therefore not so soon seen as on the physical plane.

The silence in the head and heart and the emptiness are both necessary and desirable. When they are there, the consciousness finds them natural and they give it the sense of lightness and release; that is why the thoughts or speech of the old kind are foreign to it and when they come give fatigue. This silence and emptiness must grow, so that the higher consciousness with its knowledge, light, Ananda, peace can come down in it and progressively replace the old things. They must indeed occupy not only head and heart but the whole body.

The Self Experienced on Various Planes

It is probably the true Cosmic Self or spirit with its cosmic consciousness and power that you feel on a plane above the ordinary mind or vital or physical — what plane is not as yet clear — for what you describe is common to this Self on whatever plane it manifests; it is felt like that as soon as the being or any part of the being detaches itself from the surface Ignorance.

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The Self is met first on the level of the Higher Mind, but it is not limited to one station — it is usually felt as something outspread in wideness, but one may also feel a centralising consciousness in the Sahasrara or above it.

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A complete silence makes realisation of the Self more possible — but that can be had on the Higher Mind level far below Overmind.

The Self and Time

In the self or pure existence there is no time or space — except spiritual space or wideness.

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Yes — in the silence of the self there is no time — it is *akāla*.

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Yes, that is correct. In the first realisation of silence in the higher consciousness there is no Time — there is only the sense of pure existence, consciousness, peace or a strong featureless Ananda. If anything else comes in it is a minor movement on the surface of this timeless self-existence. This and the sense of liberation that comes with it is the result of the mind's quiescence. At a higher level this peace and liberation remain, but can be united with a greater and freer dynamic movement.

The Self and Life

It is always possible to have realisations of a kind on the mental-spiritual plane even if the vital is still impure. There is a sort of separation of the mental Purusha and Prakriti which results in a knowledge that has no transforming effect on the life. But the theory of these Yogis is that one has to know the Self; life and what one does in life do not matter. Have you not read of the Yogi who came with his concubine and Ramakrishna asked him, "Why do you live like that?" He answered, "All is Maya, so it does not matter what I do so long as I know the Brahman." It is true Ramakrishna replied, "I spit on your Vedanta", but logically the Yogi had a case. For if all life and action are Maya and only the silent Brahman is real — well!

Experiences of Infinity, Oneness, Unity

What you felt as a strong subtle air was the concrete expression of consciousness or conscious existence in itself independent of the body. As yet the experience is still limited by the body, but when it is felt without that limit then it is a sense of a wide ether filling all space, Akash Brahman. As this grows, the body sense disappears and when the mind also is quite inactive, one feels oneself to be that spreading out to all Infinity.

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The feeling you have of all being one and not this a tree or that such and such an object, seems to be a first touch of the realisation of all being One. For it is so that one sees things then, — all seems to be One and not something separate like a tree or a house. The tree or house is only a form in the One; the tree is really that One.

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It is only by feeling all things as one spiritual substance that one can arrive at unity [*of matter, energy and mind*] — unity is in the spiritual consciousness. The material point is only one point among millions of millions — so that is not the base of unity. But once you get the unity in consciousness, you can feel through that the unity of mind substance, mind force, etc., the unity of life substance (mobile) and life force, the unity of material substance and energies. Being — consciousness of being — energy of consciousness — form of consciousness, all things are really that.

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The spiritual consciousness [*mentioned in the preceding letter*] is that which is in contact with Sachchidananda, that is, with the pure existence, consciousness and bliss of the Divine. Any contact with Sachchidananda must bring either peace or bliss.

Living in the Divine

There can be no mental rule or definition [*of the kind of life possible after union with the Purushottama*]. One has first to live in the Divine and attain to the Truth — the will and awareness of the Truth will organise the life.

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To be always merged in the Divine is not so easy. It can be done only by an absorption in one's own inner self or by a consciousness that sees all in the Divine and the Divine in all and is *always* in that condition. There is none [*here*] who has attained to that yet.

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Chapter Two **Experiences on the Higher Planes**

The Higher or Spiritual Consciousness

It [*the consciousness above the head*] is what we call the higher or spiritual consciousness — it contains or supports all the higher planes, the higher worlds. When one begins to feel this always above, it is a great step forward in the sadhana; then the consciousness can go up there and from there see, discern and control all that is in the mind, vital and body. It is the meeting-place of the ascending and descending forces, as you see.

Breaking into the Spiritual Consciousness

Of course, Krishnaprem's view about the canalisation of Niagara is my standpoint also.¹ But for the human mind it is difficult to get across the border between mind and spirit without making a forceful rush or push along one line only and that must be some line of pure experience in which, especially if it is the bhakta way, one gets easily swallowed up in the rapids (did not Chaitanya at last disappear in the waters?) and goes no farther. The first thing is to break into the spiritual consciousness, any part of it, anyhow and anywhere, afterwards one can explore the country, to which exploration there can hardly be a limit, one is always going higher and higher, getting wider and wider; but there is a certain intense ecstasy about the first complete plunge which is extraordinarily seizing. It is not only the bhakta's rapture, but the jnani's plunge into Brahma-Nirvana or Brahmananda or release into the still eternity of the Self that is of that seizing and absorbing character — it does not look at first as if one could or would care or need to get beyond into anything else. One cannot find fault with the Sannyasi lost in his laya or the bhakta lost in his ecstasy; they remain there probably because they are constituted for that and it is the limit of their leap. But all the same it has always appeared to me that it is a stage and not the end; I subscribe fully to the canalisation of Niagara.

1. *In a letter to the correspondent, Krishnaprem said that there are two stages of bhakti. In the first stage of rapturous adoration, the light and bliss of Krishna rush down into the bhakta just as water rushes over Niagara Falls. In the second stage the water flows through great pipes into mighty turbines which supply a continent with power. — Ed.*

Wideness and the Higher Consciousness

The first experience there [*on the higher plane*] is peace and calm and wideness. It is not till these are settled that other experiences of that plane can come.

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The experience you had of the wideness with many roads opening was an image of the higher consciousness in which all the movements of the being are open, true and happy — the ignorance and incapacity of the lower nature disappear. It is that that the light from above is bringing.

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Wideness is necessary for the working of the higher consciousness — if the being is shut up in itself, there can be intense experiences and some opening to touches from the heights, but not the full stable basis for the transformation.

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Wideness is a sign of the extension of the consciousness out of the ordinary limits — whiteness of the wideness means that it is the pure consciousness one is feeling, unless it is white light or luminous white which indicates the Mother's consciousness there or some influence of it. The subtle barrier you felt must have been the same thing that prevents your ascent from the heart and from it going beyond into the regions above. There is always a sort of lid there and it is only when that is opened or disappears that one can go freely above. One can be aware of the "unseen wideness" but one is not oneself there until that is done.

*

If the workings are really those of the higher consciousness or if these predominate the ego fades out — but there is also often a wideness of opening to the universal mental, vital, physical existence and, if the sadhak responds more to these than to the higher consciousness, then he does not get free. Sometimes even the ego gets aggrandised. But if the psychic is awake, then there is not this danger; one finds one's true being in place of the ego.

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She has had experiences but on the mental and vital plane. It is only a real descent of the higher consciousness from above that can give a peaceful and beautiful merging of the atoms (?)² into the wideness of the Divine — that is to say one feels the very cells sharing in that peace and wideness. This is possible even if the material body is ill. In most cases it is the subtle body that feels like that, but as the subtle penetrates everywhere the gross physical, the physical body also feels like that. But then it does not feel disturbed by the pains or motions of the illness — they do not affect its peace or Ananda.

Degrees in the Higher Consciousness

The plane makes a considerable difference in the power and luminosity and completeness etc. of the experience. A mental realisation is very different from an overmental or supramental although the Truth realised may be the same. So also to know Matter as the Brahman has a very different result from knowing Life, Mind, Supermind or Ananda as the Brahman. If realising the Divine through the Mind was just the same as realising him on higher planes, there would be no meaning in this Yoga at all — there would be no need of ascending to Supermind or bringing Supermind down.

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The consciousness which he calls supramental, is no doubt above the human mind, but it should be called the higher consciousness. In this higher consciousness there are many degrees, of which the supramental is the summit or the source. It is not possible to reach that summit or source all at once; first, all the lower consciousness has to be purified and made ready. That is the meaning of the Light he saw, whose inner body or substance is too dense and powerful to be penetrated at present.

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The higher consciousness is that above the ordinary mind and different from it in its workings; it ranges from higher mind through illumined mind, intuition and overmind up to the border line of the supramental.

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2. The question mark is Sri Aurobindo's. The sadhika had written, "Every atom of the body is merging peacefully and beautifully into the wideness." — Ed.

The Self governs the diversity of its creation by its unity on all the planes from the Higher Mind upwards, for there some realisation or vision of the One Truth or the Universal is the natural frame and basis of the whole consciousness. But the higher one rises upward, the more the spiritual view changes, the power of consciousness changes, the Light becomes ever more intense and potent. The essential static realisation of Infinity and Eternity and the Timeless One remains the same, but the vision of the workings of the One becomes ever wider and is attended with a greater instrumentality of Force and a more comprehensive grasp of what has to be known and done. All possible forms and constructions of things become more and more visible, more perfectly put in their proper place, more luminously utilisable. A clear spacious thought-knowledge in the Higher Mind becomes a mass of illuminations in the Illumined Mind and heightens into direct intimate vision on the Intuition level. But the Intuition sees in flashes and combines through a constant play of light — through a chain or coordinated harmony of revelations, inspirations, intuitions, swift discriminations. The Overmind sees calmly, steadily, in great masses and deep and large extensions of space and time and relation, globally, in wholes; it has the universal touch not only in spirit but in its manner. It creates and acts in the same way — for the Overmind is the world of the great Gods, the divine Creators. But each Godhead creates in his own way; he sees all but that all is seen from his own divine viewpoint. There is not the absolute supramental harmony and certitude. These are some of the differences. I speak of these planes in themselves — for when they act in the human consciousness, they are necessarily much diminished in their working, for they have to work with and depend on the human instrumentation or man's smaller seeking mental intelligence, his passionate turbid vital and mental, his cabined and narrow physical intellect — their workings get badly mixed up with these inferior modes of consciousness and their diluted light of ignorance. Only when these lower impotencies are quieted can those higher powers get a fuller force and reveal more of their original luminous character.

The Higher Planes and the Supermind

The Ignorance can act from above the head — but not as part of the higher planes — it comes from outside. The higher planes just above the head are not however the absolute Truth; that you only get in the supermind.

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Absolute certitude about all things can only come from the supermind. Meanwhile one has to go on with what knowledge the other planes give.

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The Truth manifesting on all the planes is one thing, the Supramental is another, although it is the source of all Truth.

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To go into the supermind is impossible for the human mind. One has to rise into the higher planes of consciousness above human mind and transform the human mind into that; only afterwards can we hope to touch the supermind.

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One has to go by stages, and to reach and be conscious on the higher planes between mind and Overmind is already sufficiently difficult without insisting on Supermind as the immediate goal.

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One has to know about Overmind and Supermind but there should be no ambition to reach them — it should be regarded as a natural end of the sadhana which will come of itself. The concentration should be all on the immediate step — whatever is being done at the time. So have the working of the Power and let it work all out step by step.

Levels of the Higher Mind

What you see is perfectly correct. These three are three levels of the higher Mind — on the lowest the consciousness is in connection with the Divine not directly but through the touch of the Light, Peace, Power and Knowledge, on the second it is in the Light etc. and already sees the Divine, on the third it is in union with the Divine and surrendered. These are three well known conditions of the higher consciousness in its approach to the Divine.

An Illumined Mind Experience

You probably went up into the illumined Mind which has a pale blue light and were receiving there lights from the higher planes and occasionally seeing the flash of the full orb of the Divine Truth.

It is always a mistake for the mind to become active and wanting to know while the experience is going on — it usually stops the experience or disturbs or alters it in some way. The mind must remain passive till the experience is over.

Overmind Experiences

Overmind experience comes when one rises to the overmind plane and sees things as they are on that plane or as they look to the consciousness which sees the other planes from the overmind view. When one is in the mind, life or physical plane, then it is the overmind Influence that comes down and modifies the mind, life or physical workings in greater or less degree according to the possibilities or the thing to be done at the moment. It is not the sole power as it is in its own plane but works under mental, vital or physical conditions. Its power is more subjective than objective — it is easy for it to change our view and experience of the object and our knowledge about it, but not so easy for it to change the object or its nature or circumstances or the outward state of things in that plane.

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It is perfectly simple, it is the attraction towards the Divine Oneness represented in concrete experience. Is it the concreteness of the experiences that puzzles you? All experience there [*in the Overmind*] tends to be concrete, there are no “abstract” truths as in the mind, — even thought in the Overmind is a concrete force and a palpable substance.

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Yes — it is one aspect of the Truth: for in the Overmind there are many aspects of Truth, separate or combined together or arranged one above the other.

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Both [*visions*] are true on different levels of the Overmind plane or in different cosmic formulations that come from the Overmind. All aspects are there in the Overmind, even those which the intellect considers contradictory to each other — in the Overmind they are not contradictions, but complementary to each other.

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It is perfectly natural. In these experiences you become aware of the consciousness proper to other planes. Thus you get the experience of being a form of the Divine Consciousness, the Mother, and while the experience lasts you feel her power — when the experience ceases, you come back to your normal state, the power withdraws. These experiences impregnate the consciousness with the Overmind knowledge and they prepare it for transformation.

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The overmind experience does not necessarily deliver from the lower vital and physical movements — it changes them only to a certain extent and prepares them for a greater Truth.

Overmind Experiences and the Supermind

People talk very lightly of the overmind and the supermind as if it were quite easy to enter into them and mistake inferior movements for the overmental or supramental, thereby confusing the Truth and delaying the progress of the sadhana.

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Certainly, it [*the overmind descent*] is necessary for those who want the supramental change. Unless the overmind opens, there can be no direct supramental opening of the consciousness. If one remains in mind, even illumined mind or the intuition, one can have indirect messages or an influence from the supramental, but not a direct supramental control of the consciousness or the supramental change.

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It is only the supermind that has an absolute freedom from error. The Overmind presents truths in all sorts of arrangements all of which taken together presents something like the whole truth — but these again are reflected in you in the terrestrial consciousness or conveyed to your terrestrial consciousness by the descent from the higher planes; but in receiving it the terrestrial consciousness can make mistakes in interpretation, in understanding, in application, in arrangement.

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It is not very clear [*in the correspondent's letter*] what is meant by this Knowledge-Will. It is usually a description of the Supramental where there is no division between Knowledge and Will, each acting on each other or rather fixed together in oneness and therefore infallible. You say it has taken form in mind, vital and body; if that were so, it would mean the final and decisive transformation; so it cannot be the Supramental. It must be some overmind truth plane.

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There are certain things in these three letters that are not correct, notably:

(1) He seems to say that beyond the overmind there is a plane of “higher luminous Intelligence”. This is impossible. Beyond the overmind there is the Supermind — the overmind is the highest of all the planes below the supramental, and he is not yet in touch with the supramental. What he calls here the overmind cannot be the true overmind. His experiences are those of the mind opening to the higher mental planes and trying to bring down something from them and their powers into the mind, life and body.

(2) E.g. his classification of four worlds (Parvati-Shankar etc.) is an attempt of the mind to interpret something he had seen, but it has not got it at all right. If Mahasaraswati stopped him at this moment, it must have been because his mind was making a wrong formation and it was no use carrying it any farther.

At this stage of his Yoga he must observe what is going on, but not attach a definitive or final importance to any such classifications or mental arrangements. The mind at this stage sometimes gets these things correctly, sometimes makes formations of them which are not correct and have to be discarded or set right when a higher knowledge comes.

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Your experience means manifestly the uniting of the Ishwara-Shakti sides of the manifestation — as in the Hara-Gauri figure — with the result of a universalisation of the individual consciousness indicated by the shooting out towards infinite distances. The currents are of course the currents of the double force working to make this liberation. The blue and gold must be the blue of Krishna and the gold of the Mother (Durga-Mahakali).

All this is not a supramental experience, but comes from the Overmind. But the overmind experiences must come first and liberate the consciousness. It is only after the overmind liberation that the true experience of the supermind can come.

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You must realise that the supramentalisation of the overmind is one of the most difficult things possible and proceed with great care so as to avoid haste and error.

Reflected Experience of the Higher Planes

One can get the experiences of a higher plane by reflection or some partial descent in the lower.

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It is the experience of the transcendent planes as reflected on the higher planes of consciousness (Overmind, etc.), in relation to them; just as one can have an experience of Sachchidananda and these planes as reflected in the mind or vital or physical consciousness, so one can have it there — but on each plane it appears in a different way.

Trance and the Higher Planes

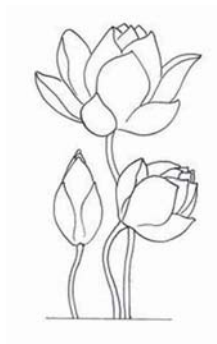
The higher planes are not planes on which man is naturally conscious and he is even not open to their direct influence — only to some indirect influence from those nearest to the human mind. He can reach them only in a deep inner condition or trance and the higher he goes the less easy is it for him to be conscious of them even in trance. If you are not conscious of your inner being, then it is more difficult to be conscious in trance.

Living in a Higher Plane

To live in a higher plane and see the action on the physical from it as something separate is a definite stage in the movement towards transformation.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Letters on Yoga – III, CWSA, Vol. 30, pp. 389-411)



AN OPEN LETTER TO MY COUNTRYMEN

The position of a public man who does his duty in India today, is too precarious to permit of his being sure of the morrow. I have recently come out of a year's seclusion from work for my country on a charge which there was not a scrap of reliable evidence to support, but my acquittal is no security either against the trumping up of a fresh accusation or the arbitrary law of deportation which dispenses with the inconvenient formality of a charge and the still more inconvenient necessity of producing evidence. Especially with the hounds of the Anglo-Indian Press barking at our heels and continually clamouring for Government to remove every man who dares to raise his voice to speak of patriotism and its duties, the liberty of the person is held on a tenure which is worse than precarious. Rumour is strong that a case for my deportation has been submitted to the Government by the Calcutta Police and neither the tranquillity of the country nor the scrupulous legality of our procedure is a guarantee against the contingency of the all-powerful fiat of the Government watchdogs silencing scruples on the part of those who advise at Simla. Under such circumstances I have thought it well to address this letter to my countrymen, and especially to those who profess the principles of the Nationalist party, on the needs of the present and the policy of the future. In case of my deportation it may help to guide some who would be uncertain of their course of action, and, if I do not return from it, it may stand as my last political will and testament to my countrymen.

The situation of the Nationalist party is difficult but not impossible. The idea of some that the party is extinct because its leaders are sentenced or deported, is an error which comes of looking only at the surface. The party is there, not less powerful and pervading than before, but in want of a policy and a leader. The first it may find, the second only God can give it. All great movements wait for their God-sent leader, the willing channel of His force, and only when he comes, move forward triumphantly to their fulfilment. The men who have led hitherto have been strong men of high gifts and commanding genius, great enough to be the protagonists of any other movement, but even they were not sufficient to fulfil one which is the chief current of a worldwide revolution. Therefore the Nationalist party, custodians of the future, must wait for the man who is to come, calm in the midst of calamity, hopeful under defeat, sure of eventual emergence and triumph and always mindful of the responsibility which they owe not only to their Indian posterity but to the world.

Meanwhile the difficulties of our situation ask for bold yet wary walking. The strength of our position is moral, not material. The whole of the physical strength in the country belongs to the established authority which our success would, so far as its present form is concerned, abolish by transforming it out of all possibility of

recognition. It is natural that it should use all its physical strength to prevent, so long as it can, that transformation. The whole of the moral strength of the country is with us. Justice is with us, nature is with us, the law of God which is higher than any human justifies our action, youth is for us, the future is ours. On that moral strength we must rely for our survival and eventual success. We must not be tempted by any rash impatience into abandoning the ground on which we are strong and venturing on the ground on which we are weak. Our ideal is an ideal which no law can condemn; our chosen methods are such that no modern Government can expressly declare them illegal without forfeiting its claim to be considered a civilised administration. To that ideal and to those methods we must firmly adhere and rely on them alone for our eventual success. A respect for the law is a necessary quality for endurance as a nation and it has always been a marked characteristic of the Indian people. We must therefore scrupulously observe the law while taking every advantage both of the protection it gives and the latitude it still leaves for pushing forward our cause and our propaganda. With the stray assassinations which have troubled the country we have no concern, and, having once clearly and firmly dissociated ourselves from them, we need notice them no farther. They are the rank and noxious fruit of a rank and noxious policy and until the authors of that policy turn from their errors, no human power can prevent the poison-tree from bearing according to its kind. We who have no voice either in determining the laws or their administration, are helpless in the matter. To deportation and proclamation, the favourite instruments of men incapable of a wise and strong rule, we can only oppose a steady and fearless adherence to the propagandism and practice of a lawful policy and a noble ideal.

Our ideal is that of Swaraj or absolute autonomy free from foreign control. We claim the right of every nation to live its own life by its own energies according to its own nature and ideals. We reject the claim of aliens to force upon us a civilisation inferior to our own or to keep us out of our inheritance on the untenable ground of a superior fitness. While admitting the stains and defects which long subjection has induced upon our native capacity and energy, we are conscious of that capacity and energy reviving in us. We point to the unexampled national vigour which has preserved the people of this country through centuries of calamity and defeat, to the great actions of our forefathers continued even to the other day, to the many men of intellect and character such as no other nation in a subject condition has been able to produce, and we say that a people capable of such unheard-of vitality is not one which can be put down as a nation of children and incapables. We are in no way inferior to our forefathers. We have brains, we have courage, we have an infinite and various national capacity. All we need is a field and an opportunity. That field and opportunity can only be provided by a national government, a free society and a great Indian culture. So long as these are not conceded to us, we can have no other use for our brains, courage and capacity than to struggle unceasingly to achieve them.

Our ideal of Swaraj involves no hatred of any other nation nor of the administration which is now established by law in this country. We find a bureaucratic administration, we wish to make it democratic; we find an alien government, we wish to make it indigenous; we find a foreign control, we wish to render it Indian. They lie who say that this aspiration necessitates hatred and violence. Our ideal of patriotism proceeds on the basis of love and brotherhood and it looks beyond the unity of the nation and envisages the ultimate unity of mankind. But it is a unity of brothers, equals and freemen that we seek, not the unity of master and serf, of devourer and devoured. We demand the realisation of our corporate existence as a distinct race and nation because that is the only way in which the ultimate brotherhood of humanity can be achieved, not by blotting out individual peoples and effacing outward distinctions, but by removing the internal obstacles to unity, the causes of hatred, malice and misunderstanding. A struggle for our rights does not involve hatred of those who mistakenly deny them. It only involves a determination to suffer and strive, to speak the truth boldly and without respect of persons, to use every lawful means of pressure and every source of moral strength in order to establish ourselves and disestablish that which denies the law of progress.

Our methods are those of self-help and passive resistance. To unite and organise ourselves in order to show our efficiency by the way in which we can develop our industries, settle our individual disputes, keep order and peace on public occasions, attend to questions of sanitation, help the sick and suffering, relieve the famine-stricken, work out our intellectual, technical and physical education, evolve a Government of our own for our own internal affairs so far as that could be done without disobeying the law or questioning the legal authority of the bureaucratic administration, this was the policy publicly and frankly adopted by the Nationalist party. In Bengal we had advanced so far as to afford distinct proof of our capacity in almost all these respects and the evolution of a strong united and well-organised Bengal had become a near and certain prospect. The internal troubles which came to a head at Surat and the repressive policy initiated immediately afterwards, culminating in the destruction of our organisations and the effective intimidation of Swadeshi workers and sympathisers by official underlings, have both been serious checks to our progress and seem for the moment to have postponed the realisation of our hopes to a distant future. The check is temporary. Courage and sane statesmanship in our leaders is all that is wanted to restore the courage and the confidence of the people and evolve new methods of organisation which will not come into conflict even with the repressive laws.

The policy of passive resistance was evolved partly as the necessary complement of self-help, partly as a means of putting pressure on the Government. The essence of this policy is the refusal of co-operation so long as we are not admitted to a substantial share and an effective control in legislation, finance and administration. Just as "No representation, no taxation" was the watchword of American constitu-

tional agitation in the eighteenth century, so “No control, no co-operation” should be the watchword of our lawful agitation — for constitution we have none, — in the twentieth. We sum up this refusal of co-operation in the convenient word “Boycott”, refusal of cooperation in the industrial exploitation of our country, in education, in government, in judicial administration, in the details of official intercourse. Necessarily, we have not made that refusal of co-operation complete and uncompromising, but we hold it as a method to be enlarged and pushed farther according as the necessity for moral pressure becomes greater and more urgent. This is one aspect of the policy. Another is the necessity of boycott to help our own nascent energies in the field of self-help. 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. The only question is the extent and conditions of the boycott and that must be determined by the circumstances of the particular problem in each case. The general spirit of passive resistance has first to be raised, afterwards it can be organised, regulated and, where necessary, limited.

The first obstacle to our evolution is the internal dispute which has for the moment wrecked the Congress and left in its place the hollow and mutilated simulacrum of a National Assembly which met last year at Madras and, deprived though it is of the support of the most eminent local leaders, purposes to meet again at Lahore. It is a grievous error to suppose that this dispute hung only on personal questions and differences of a trifling importance. As happens inevitably in such popular contests, personal questions and differences of minor importance intervened to perplex and embitter the strife, but the real questions in debate were those which involved the whole future development of the spirit and form of self-government in this country. Were that spirit and form to be democratic or oligarchic? Were they to be constitutional in procedure or governed by arbitrary and individual choice and discretion? Was the movement to be progressive and national or conservative and parochial in its aims, policy and spirit? These were the real issues. The Nationalist party stood for democracy, constitutionalism and progress. The Moderate party, governed by an exaggerated respect for old and esteemed leaders, helped, without clearly understanding what they did, those who stood for oligarchy, arbitrary procedure and an almost reactionary conservatism. Personal idiosyncracies, preferences, aversions settled like a thick cloud over the contest, the combatants on both sides flung themselves on every point of difference material or immaterial as a pretext or a weapon, the tactics of party warfare were freely used and, finally, the deliberate obstinacy of a few Moderate leaders in avoiding discussion of the points of difference and the unruly ardour of the younger men on both sides led to the violent scenes at Surat and the break-up of the Congress. If the question is ever to be settled to the advantage of national progress, the personal and minor differences must be banished from the field and the real issues plainly and dispassionately considered.

The questions of particular importance which divide the parties, are the exact form of Swaraj to be held forward as an ideal, the policy of passive resistance and the form of certain resolutions. The last is a question to be decided by the Congress itself and all that the Nationalists demand is that discussion shall not be burked and that they shall not be debarred from their constitutional right of placing their views before the National Assembly. On the other points, they cannot sacrifice their ideal or their policy, but their contention is that these differences ought not in a free deliberative assembly to stand in the way of united progress. The Swaraj matter can easily be settled by the substitution of “full and complete self-government” for “self-government on Colonial lines” in the Swaraj resolution. The difference as to passive resistance hinges at present on the Boycott resolution which the Nationalist party — and in this they are supported by a large body of Moderate opinion, — cannot consent to sacrifice. But here also they are willing to submit the question to the arbitrament of a freely elected Congress, though they refuse to recognise a close and limited Subjects Committee as the final authority. It will be seen therefore that the real question throughout is constitutional. The body which at present calls itself the Congress, has adopted a constitution which is close, exclusive, undemocratic and so framed as to limit the free election of delegates by the people. It limits itself by proposing a number of articles of faith in a particular form of words to every intending delegate before he can take his seat; it aims at the election of delegates only by select bodies and associations instead of the direct election of the people; it excuses many from the chances of election and gives them an undue weight in the disposal of the affairs of the assembly. These and similar provisions no democratic party can accept. A Nationalist Conference or a Moderate Convention may so guard its integrity, but the Congress is and must be a National Assembly admitting freely all who are duly elected by the people. The proposed passing of this reactionary constitution by a body already limited under its provisions will not cure the constitutional defect. It is only a Congress elected on the old lines that can determine the future provisions for its constitution and procedure with any hope of universal acceptance.

It is not therefore by any manipulation of the Convention Congress that a solution of the problem can be brought about, but by the Provincial Conferences empowering the leaders of both parties to meet in Committee and provide for an arrangement which will heal differences and enable the Congress to work smoothly and freely in the future. If there is a minority who refuse to associate themselves with any such attempt, the majority will be justified by the mandate of the Provinces in disregarding them and meeting to carry out the popular wish. Once the lines are settled they can be submitted to the free choice of a freely elected Congress for acceptance, rejection or modification. This will restore a Congress on sound constitutional lines in which the bitter experience of the past may be relied on to prevent those mistakes of obstinacy and passion which prevented a solution of the problem at Surat.

Outside the Congress the chances of united working are more complete than within it. There are only two questions which are likely either to trouble harmony or hamper action. The first is the question of the acceptance or rejection of the present reforms introducing, as they do, no element of popular control nor any fresh constitutional principle except the unsound principle of privileged representation for a single community. This involves the wider question of co-operation. It is generally supposed that the Nationalist party is committed to the persistent and uncompromising refusal of co-operation until they get the full concession of Swaraj. Nationalist publicists have not cared to combat this error explicitly because they were more anxious to get their ideal accepted and the spirit of passive resistance and complete self-help popularised than to discuss a question which was not then a part of practical politics. But it is obvious that a party advancing such a proposition would be a party of doctrinaires and idealists, not of practical thinkers and workers. The Nationalist principle is the principle of "No control, no co-operation." Since all control has been refused and so long as all control is refused, the Nationalist party preaches the refusal of co-operation as complete as we can make it. But it is evident that if, for instance, the power of imposing protective duties were given to a popular and elective body, no serious political party would prefer persistence in commercial boycott to the use of the powers conceded. Or if education were similarly made free of official control and entrusted to a popular body, as Lord Reay once thought of entrusting it, no sensible politician would ask the nation to boycott that education. Or if the courts were manned by Indian judges and made responsible not to the Executive but to a Minister representing the people, arbitration would immediately take its place as a supplementary aid to the regular courts. So also the refusal to co-operate in an administration which excludes the people from an effective voice does not involve a refusal to co-operate in an administration of which the people are an effective part. The refusal of autocratic gifts does not involve a refusal to take up popular rights inalienably secured to the people. It is on the contrary with the object of compelling the concession of the various elements of Swaraj by peaceful moral pressure and in the absence of such concessions developing our own institutions to the gradual extrusion and final supplanting of bureaucratic institutions that the policy of self-help and passive resistance was started. This acceptance of popular rights does not imply the abandonment of the ideal of complete autonomy or of the use of passive resistance in case of any future arbitrary interference with the rights of the people. It implies only the use of partial Swaraj as a step and means towards complete Swaraj. Where the Nationalists definitely and decisively part company with an influential section of the Moderates is in refusing to accept any petty or illusory concession which will draw away our aspirations from their unalterable ideal or delude the people into thinking they have secured real rights.

Another question is that of cleaving to and enforcing the Boycott. In Bengal, even if there are some who are timid or reactionary enough to shrink from the word

or the thing, the general feeling in its favour is emphatic and practically unanimous. But it is time now to consider seriously the question of regulating the boycott. Nationalists have always demurred to the proviso "as far as possible" in the Swadeshi resolution on account of the large loophole its vagueness left to the hesitating and the lukewarm, and they have preferred the form "at a sacrifice". But it will now be well if we face the concrete problems of the boycott. While we must keep it absolute wherever Swadeshi articles are procurable as also in respect to pure luxuries with which we can dispense, we must recognise that there are necessities of life and business for which we have still to go to foreign countries. The public ought to be guided as to the choice of the countries which we shall favour in the purchase of these articles, — necessarily they must be countries sympathetic to Indian aspirations, — and those which we shall exclude. The failure to deal with this question is largely responsible for the laxity of our political boycott and our consequent failure to get the Partition rescinded. There are also other questions, such as the attempt of shopkeepers and merchants to pass off foreign goods wholesale as Swadeshi, which must be taken up at once if the movement is not to suffer a serious setback.

A final difficulty remains, — by what organisation are we to carry on the movement even when these questions are settled? The Nationalist programme was to build up a great deliberative and executive organisation on the basis of a reconstituted Congress, and this scheme still remains the only feasible means of organising the country. Even if a united Congress cannot be secured, the provinces ought to organise themselves separately, and perhaps this may prove to be the only possible way of restoring the Congress, by reconstituting it from the bottom. Even the District organisations, however, cannot work effectively without hands, and these we had provided for in the Sabhas and Samitis of young men which sprang up on all sides and were just succeeding in forming an efficient network of organisation all over Bengal. These are now being suppressed by administrative order. It becomes a question whether we cannot replace them by a loose and elusive organisation of young men in groups ordering each its own work by common agreement and working hand in hand, but without a rigid or definite organisation. I throw out the suggestion for consideration by the leaders of thought and action in the provinces where unity seems at all feasible.

This then is the situation as it presents itself to me. The policy I suggest to the Nationalist party may briefly be summed up as follows: —

1. Persistence with a strict regard to law in a peaceful policy of self-help and passive resistance.
2. The regulation of our attitude towards the Government by the principle of "No control, no co-operation."
3. A rapprochement with the Moderate party wherever possible and the reconstitution of a united Congress.
4. The regulation of the Boycott movement so as to make both the political

and the economic boycott effective.

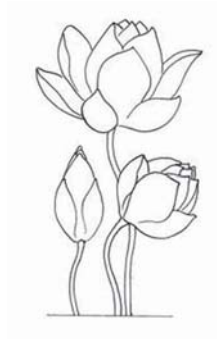
5. The organisation of the Provinces if not of the whole country according to our original programme.

6. A system of co-operation which will not contravene the law and will yet enable workers to proceed with the work of self-help and national efficiency, if not quite so effectively as before, yet with energy and success.

Karmayogin, 31 July 1909

AUROBINDO GHOSE

(*Karmayogin*, CWSA, Vol. 8, pp. 150-60)



TO MY COUNTRYMEN

Two decisive incidents have happened which make it compulsory on the Nationalist party to abandon their attitude of reserve and expectancy and once more assume their legitimate place in the struggle for Indian liberties. The Reforms, so long trumpeted as the beginning of a new era of constitutional progress in India, have been thoroughly revealed to the public intelligence by the publication of the Councils Regulations and the results of the elections showing the inevitable nature and composition of the new Councils. The negotiations for the union of Moderates and Nationalists in a United Congress have failed owing to the insistence of the former on the Nationalists subscribing to a Moderate profession of faith.

The survival of Moderate politics in India depended on two factors, the genuineness and success of the promised Reforms and the use made by the Conventionists of the opportunity given them by the practical suppression of Nationalist public activity. The field was clear for them to establish the effectiveness of the Moderate policy and the living force of the Moderate party. Had the Reforms been a genuine initiation of constitutional progress, the Moderate tactics might have received some justification from events. Or had the Moderates given proof of the power of carrying on a robust and vigorous agitation for popular rights, their strength and vitality as a political force might have been established, even if their effectiveness had been disproved. The Reforms have shown that nothing can be expected from persistence in Moderate politics except retrogression, disappointment and humiliation. The experience of the last year has shown that, without the Nationalists at their back, the Moderates are impotent for opposition and robust agitation. The political life of India in their hands has languished and fallen silent.

By the incontrovertible logic of events it has appeared that the success and vigour of the great movement inaugurated in 1905 was due to the union of Moderate and Nationalist on the platform of self-help and passive resistance. It was in order to provide an opportunity for the reestablishment of this union, broken at Surat, that the Nationalists gathered in force at Hughly in order to secure some basis and means of negotiation which might lead to united effort. The hand which we held out, has been rejected. The policy of Lord Morley has been to rally the Moderates and coerce the Nationalists; the policy of the Moderate party led by Mr. Gokhale and Sir Pherozshah Mehta has been to play into the hands of that policy and give it free course and a chance of success. This alliance has failed of its object; the beggarly reward the Moderates have received, has been confined to the smallest and least popular elements in their party. But the rejection of the alliance with their own countrymen by the insistence on creed and constitution shows that the Moderates mean to persist in their course even when all motive and political justification for it

have disappeared. Discomfited and humiliated by the Government, they can still find no way to retrieve their position nor any clear and rational course to suggest to the Indian people whom they misled into a misunderstanding of the very limited promises held out by Lord Morley.

Separated from the great volume of Nationalist feeling in the country, wilfully shutting its doors to popularity and strength by the formation of electorates as close and limited as those of the Reformed Councils, self-doomed to persistence in a policy which has led to signal disaster, the Convention is destined to perish of inanition and popular indifference, dislike and opposition. If the Nationalists stand back any longer, either the national movement will disappear or the void created will be filled by a sinister and violent activity. Neither result can be tolerated by men desirous of their country's development and freedom.

The period of waiting is over. We have two things made clear to us, first, that the future of the nation is in our hands, and, secondly, that from the Moderate party we can expect no cordial co-operation in building it. Whatever we do, we must do ourselves, in our own strength and courage. Let us then take up the work God has given us, like courageous, steadfast and patriotic men willing to sacrifice greatly and venture greatly because the mission also is great. If there are any unnerved by the fear of repression, let them stand aside. If there are any who think that by flattering Anglo-India or coquetting with English Liberalism they can dispense with the need of effort and the inevitability of peril, let them stand aside. If there are any who are ready to be satisfied with mean gains or unsubstantial concessions, let them stand aside. But all who deserve the name of Nationalists, must now come forward and take up their burden.

The fear of the law is for those who break the law. Our aims are great and honourable, free from stain or reproach, our methods are peaceful, though resolute and strenuous. We shall not break the law and, therefore, we need not fear the law. But if a corrupt police, unscrupulous officials or a partial judiciary make use of the honourable publicity of our political methods to harass the men who stand in front by illegal ukases, suborned and perjured evidence or unjust decisions, shall we shrink from the toll that we have to pay on our march to freedom? Shall we cower behind a petty secrecy or a dishonourable inactivity? We must have our associations, our organisations, our means of propaganda, and, if these are suppressed by arbitrary proclamations, we shall have done our duty by our motherland and not on us will rest any responsibility for the madness which crushes down open and lawful political activity in order to give a desperate and sullen nation into the hands of those fiercely enthusiastic and unscrupulous forces that have arisen among us inside and outside India. So long as any loophole is left for peaceful effort, we will not renounce the struggle. If the conditions are made difficult and almost impossible, can they be worse than those our countrymen have to contend against in the Transvaal? Or shall we, the flower of Indian culture and education, show less capacity and self-devotion

than the coolies and shopkeepers who are there rejoicing to suffer for the honour of their nation and the welfare of their community?

What is it for which we strive? The perfect self-fulfilment of India and the independence which is the condition of self-fulfilment are our ultimate goal. In the meanwhile such imperfect self-development and such incomplete self-government as are possible in less favourable circumstances, must be attained as a preliminary to the more distant realisation. What we seek is to evolve self-government either through our own institutions or through those provided for us by the law of the land. No such evolution is possible by the latter means without some measure of administrative control. We demand, therefore, not the monstrous and misbegotten scheme which has just been brought into being, but a measure of reform based upon those democratic principles which are ignored in Lord Morley's Reforms, — a literate electorate without distinction of creed, nationality or caste, freedom of election unhampered by exclusory clauses, an effective voice in legislation and finance and some check upon an arbitrary executive. We demand also the gradual devolution of executive government out of the hands of the bureaucracy into those of the people. Until these demands are granted, we shall use the pressure of that refusal of co-operation which is termed passive resistance. We shall exercise that pressure within the limits allowed us by the law, but apart from that limitation the extent to which we shall use it, depends on expediency and the amount of resistance we have to overcome.

On our own side we have great and pressing problems to solve. National education languishes for want of moral stimulus, financial support, and emancipated brains keen and bold enough to grapple with the difficulties that hamper its organisation and progress. The movement of arbitration, successful in its inception, has been dropped as a result of repression. The Swadeshi-Boycott movement still moves by its own impetus, but its forward march has no longer the rapidity and organised irresistibility of forceful purpose which once swept it forward. Social problems are pressing upon us which we can no longer ignore. We must take up the organisation of knowledge in our country, neglected throughout the last century. We must free our social and economic development from the incubus of the litigious resort to the ruinously expensive British Courts. We must once more seek to push forward the movement toward economic self-sufficiency, industrial independence.

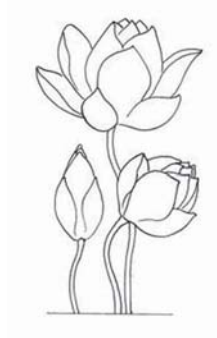
These are the objects for which we have to organise the national strength of India. On us falls the burden, in us alone there is the moral ardour, faith and readiness for sacrifice which can attempt and go far to accomplish the task. But the first requisite is the organisation of the Nationalist party. I invite that party in all the great centres of the country to take up the work and assist the leaders who will shortly meet to consider steps for the initiation of Nationalist activity. It is desirable to establish a Nationalist Council and hold a meeting of the body in March or April of the next year. It is necessary also to establish Nationalist Associations throughout

the country. When we have done this, we shall be able to formulate our programme and assume our proper place in the political life of India.

Karmayogin, 25 December 1909

AUROBINDO GHOSE

(*Karmayogin*, CWSA, Vol. 8, pp. 372-76)



‘I ASK FOR A GREATER LOVE’

May 24, 1914

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

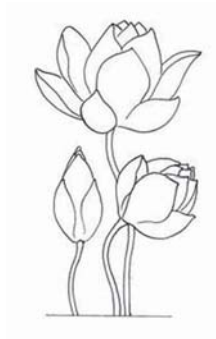
O my sweet Master, I aspire for Thee, for the knowledge of what Thou art, for identification with Thee. I ask for a greater love, growing always purer, always vaster, always more intense and I find myself as it were submerged in Matter; is this Thy reply? As Thou hast Thyself accepted to be thus submerged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

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

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

THE MOTHER

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



ON THE DHAMMAPADA

Every Friday I shall read out to you a few verses of the Dhammapada, then we shall meditate on that text. This is to teach you mental control. If I think it necessary I shall give you an explanation.

The Dhammapada begins with conjugate verses; here is the first one:

In all things the primordial element is mind. Mind predominates. Everything proceeds from mind.

Naturally, this concerns the physical life, there is no question of the universe.

If a man speaks or acts with an evil mind, suffering follows him as the wheel follows the hoof of the bullock that pulls the cart.

That is to say, ordinary human life, such as it is in the present world, is ruled by the mind; therefore the most important thing is to control one's mind; so we shall follow a graded or "conjugate" discipline, to use the Dhammapada's expression, in order to develop and control our minds.

There are four movements which are usually consecutive, but which in the end may be simultaneous: to observe one's thoughts is the first, to watch over one's thoughts is the second, to control one's thoughts is the third and to master one's thoughts is the fourth. To observe, to watch over, to control, to master. All that to get rid of an evil mind, for we are told that the man who acts or speaks with an evil mind is followed by suffering as closely as the wheel follows the hoof of a bullock that ploughs or draws the cart.

This is our first meditation.

30 August 1957

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Mind predominates. Everything proceeds from mind. In all things the primordial element is mind. If a man speaks or acts with a purified mind, happiness accompanies him as closely as his inseparable shadow.

This is the counterpart of what we read last time. The Dhammapada contrasts a purified mind with an evil mind. We have already said that there are four successive stages for the purification of the mind. A purified mind is naturally a mind that does

not admit any wrong thought, and we have seen that the complete mastery of thought which is required to gain this result is the last achievement in the four stages I have spoken of. The first is: to observe one's mind.

Do not believe that it is such an easy thing, for to observe your thoughts, you must first of all separate yourself from them. In the ordinary state, the ordinary man does not distinguish himself from his thoughts. He does not even know that he thinks. He thinks by habit. And if he is asked all of a sudden, "What are you thinking of?", he knows nothing about it. That is to say, ninety-five times out of a hundred he will answer, "I do not know." There is a complete identification between the movement of thought and the consciousness of the being.

To observe the thought, the first movement then is to step back and look at it, to separate yourself from your thoughts so that the movement of the consciousness and that of thought may not be confused. Thus when we say that one must observe one's thoughts, do not believe that it is so simple; it is the first step. I suggest that this evening in our meditation we take up this first exercise which consists in standing back from one's thought and looking at it.

6 September 1957

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"He has insulted me, he has beaten me, he has humiliated me, he has robbed me." Those who nourish thoughts such as these never appease their hatred.

The Dhammapada tells us first of all that bad thoughts bring about suffering and good thoughts bring about happiness. Now it gives examples of what bad thoughts are and tells us how to avoid suffering. Here is the first example, I repeat: "He has insulted me, he has beaten me, he has humiliated me, he has robbed me"; and it adds: "Those who nourish thoughts such as these never appease their hatred."

We have begun our mental discipline, basing ourselves on the successive stages of mental development and we have seen that this discipline consists of four consecutive movements, which we have described in this way, as you surely remember: to observe, to watch over, to control and to master; and in the course of the last lesson we have learnt — I hope — to separate ourselves from our thoughts so as to be able to observe them as an attentive spectator.

Today we have to learn how to watch over these thoughts. First you look at them and then you watch over them. Learn to look at them as an enlightened judge so that you may distinguish between the good and the bad, between thoughts that are useful and those that are harmful, between constructive thoughts that lead to victory and defeatist thoughts which turn us away from it. It is this power of discernment that we must acquire now; that will be the subject of our meditation tonight.

As I have told you, the Dhammapada will give us examples, but examples are only examples. We must ourselves learn how to distinguish thoughts that are good from those that are not, and for that you must observe, as I have said, like an enlightened judge — that is to say, as impartially as possible; it is one of the most indispensable conditions.

13 September 1957

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“He has insulted me, he has beaten me, he has humiliated me, he has robbed me.” Those who do not nourish thoughts such as these foster no hatred.

This is the counterpart of what we read the other day. But note that this concerns only thoughts that generate resentment. It is because rancour, along with jealousy, is one of the most widespread causes of human misery.

But how to avoid having rancour? A large and generous heart is certainly the best means, but that is not within the reach of all. Controlling one’s thought may be of more general use.

Thought-control is the third step of our mental discipline. Once the enlightened judge of our consciousness has distinguished between useful and harmful thoughts, the inner guard will come and allow to pass only approved thoughts, strictly refusing admission to all undesirable elements.

With a commanding gesture the guard will refuse entry to every bad thought and push it back as far as possible.

It is this movement of admission and refusal that we call thought-control and this will be the subject of our meditation tonight.

20 September 1957

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For, in truth, in this world hatred is not appeased by hatred; hatred is appeased by love alone. This is the eternal law.

This is one of the most celebrated verses of the Dhammapada, one of those most often cited — I would have liked to be able to say, “one of the most obeyed in the world”; unfortunately that would not be true. For people speak much of this teaching but do not follow it.

Yet, there is one aspect of the problem which is less spoken of but which seems perhaps more urgent still if you want things to change in the world, something

to which people give very little thought. I am going to surprise you. It is this: if love must be returned for hatred in order that the world may change, would it not be even more natural that love should be returned for Love?

If one considers the life and action and heart of men as they are, one would have every right to be surprised at all the hatred, contempt, or at best, the indifference which are returned for this immensity of Love which the divine Grace pours upon the world, for this immensity of Love which acts upon the world at every second to lead it towards the divine delight and which finds so poor a response in the human heart. But people have compassion only for the wicked, the deficient, the misshapen, for the unsuccessful ones and the failures — truly it is an encouragement to wickedness and failure.

If one thought a little more of this aspect of the problem, perhaps one would have less need to insist on the necessity of returning love for hatred, because if the human heart responded in all sincerity to the Love that is being poured into it with the spontaneous gratitude of a love which understands and appreciates, then things would change quickly in the world.

27 September 1957

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Many are those who are not aware that one day we all must die. And those who are aware of it appease their quarrels.

When you think you may die the next moment, immediately, automatically, there occurs in you a detachment from all material things; it is logical that from then on you think only of what does not depend upon this physical life and which is the only thing that will still belong to you once you have left this body, that is to say, the eternal existence. The Buddha did not use the word “Divine”, but it is essentially the same thing.

To think that one might die the next moment was formerly, in the ancient initiations, a discipline that one had to follow for a certain time, for the reason I have just mentioned and also in order to overcome all fear of death and to accustom oneself to it. In that age and at the time when the Dhammapada was spoken by the Buddha, the possibility of an earthly immortality was never mentioned because this possibility belonged to such a far-off future that there would have been no point in speaking of it.

Today Sri Aurobindo tells us that this possibility is near at hand and that we have only to prepare for it. But the essential condition even to prepare for it is to completely abolish all fear of death.

You must neither fear it nor desire it.

Stand above it, in an absolute tranquillity, neither fear it nor desire it.

4 October 1957

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Just as the strong wind uproots a feeble tree, so Mara overwhelms the man who lives only in pursuit of pleasure, who does not control his senses, who knows not how to moderate his appetite, who is lazy and wastes his energies.

In Buddhist literature, Mara represents the Spirit of Evil, all that is contrary or opposed to the spiritual life; in certain cases he represents death — not so much physical death as death to truth, to the spiritual being.

Here, it means that so long as one does not control one's senses and desires, and concerns oneself with external material satisfactions as the most important thing, one has not the will necessary to resist the attack of hostile forces and all that pulls us down and leads us away from the spiritual reality.

The Dhammapada does not take its stand so much on the moral point of view; it is not evil as men understand it with their blind justice and their arbitrary sense of good and bad. Evil, from the spiritual point of view, is truly that which leads us away from the goal, which sometimes even tears us away from the deepest purpose of our existence, from the truth of our being and prevents us from realising it.

This is the way in which it should be understood.

11 October 1957

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Just as the strong wind has no hold upon a mighty rock, so Mara has no hold upon a man who does not live in pursuit of pleasure, who has good control of his senses, who knows how to moderate his appetite, who is endowed with unshakable faith and who wastes not his energies.

What the Dhammapada means when it speaks of faith is not at all the belief in a dogma or a religion, it is not even faith in the teaching of the Master; it is faith in one's own possibilities, the certitude that whatever the difficulties, whatever the obstacles, whatever the imperfections, even the negations in the being, one is born for the realisation and one *will* realise.

The will must never falter, the effort must be persevering and the faith unshakable. Then instead of spending years to realise what one has to realise, one can do it in a few months, sometimes even in a few days and, if there is sufficient

intensity, in a few hours. That is to say, you can take a position within yourself and no bad will that attacks the realisation will have any more power over you than the storm has over a rock.

After that, the way is no longer difficult; it becomes extraordinarily interesting.

18 October 1957

*

He who puts on the yellow robe while he is yet impure, lacking in self-control and lacking in loyalty, truly he is unworthy to wear the yellow robe of the monk.

Of course, the yellow robe, in the literal sense, is the robe of the Buddhist monks; it became the robe of all who practised asceticism. But this is not what the Dhammapada truly means to say, because there is no lack of men who wear the yellow robe but are not purified of their taints. The yellow robe is taken as the symbol of consecration to the spiritual life, the external sign of renunciation of all that is not an exclusive concentration upon the spiritual life.

What Buddhism means by “impurities” is chiefly egoism and ignorance; because, from the Buddhist standpoint, the greatest of all taints is ignorance, not ignorance of external things, of the laws of Nature and of all that you learn at school, but the ignorance of the deepest truth of things, of the law of the being, of the Dharma.

It is noteworthy that the two defects insisted upon here are lack of self-control and lack of loyalty. Loyalty means here sincerity, honesty; what the Dhammapada censures most severely is hypocrisy: to pretend that you want to live the spiritual life and not to do it, to pretend that you want to seek the truth and not to do it, to display the external signs of consecration to the divine life — here symbolised by the yellow robe — but within to be concerned only with oneself, one’s selfishness and one’s own needs.

It is interesting to note the insistence of the Dhammapada on self-control, for according to the Buddhist teaching, excess in all things is bad. The Buddha always insisted on the Middle Path. You must not be too much on one side nor too much on the other, exaggerate one thing or the other. You must have measure, balance in all things, the balance of moderation.

Therefore the qualities that make you worthy of leading the spiritual life are to have an inner balance, a balance in your action, and to be moderate in everything, to be sincere, honest, loyal.

Balance, moderation, loyalty, honesty: this is the subject of our meditation.

8 November 1957

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But he who has discarded all impurity, who is firmly attached to the precepts of morality, who knows how to moderate his appetite and who is loyal, he, truly, is worthy to wear the yellow robe.

I would not like you to take this text as a moral catechism. It certainly has a much deeper and truer meaning, because in all truly spiritual teachings, morality as it is mentally conceived is out of place.

So too the word “impurity”. Pure, as it is understood morally, has not at all the meaning it is given in a truly spiritual teaching; and particularly from the Buddhist standpoint, purity is absence of ignorance, as I have already told you last time, and ignorance means ignoring the inner law, the truth of the being. And loyalty means not to take the illusion for the reality, the changing and fluctuating appearances for the inner and real permanence of the being.

We can say then that self-control and self-mastery, measure, absence of desire, the search for the inner truth of the being and the law of its self-manifestation are very necessary preoccupations for those who want to practise the spiritual life.

To be true to oneself, to one’s goal, not to let oneself be moved by disorderly impulses, not to take the changing appearances for the Reality, these are the virtues that one must have in order to progress on the way of spirituality.

15 November 1957

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Those who take error for truth, and the truth for error, will never attain the supreme goal, for they are led astray by vain desires and false views.

A comment could be added; for, if one were satisfied with taking error for truth and truth for error, it should be logically very easy to make one’s choice as soon as one found for some reason or other or with some help, what is truly the truth and what is truly the error; one adopts the truth and rejects the error. But unfortunately one loves one’s error, somewhere in the being there is an unwillingness to recognise what is true.

My experience is like this: whenever you sincerely want to know the truth, you do know it. There is *always* something to point out the error to you, to make you recognise the truth. And if you observe yourself attentively you find out that it is because you prefer error that you do not find the truth.

Even in small details, the very smallest — not to speak of the big things of life, the big decisions that one has to take — even in the smallest things, whenever the aspiration for the truth and the will to be true are wholly sincere, the indication always comes. And precisely, with the method of the Buddhist discipline, if you

follow up within yourself the causes of your way of being, you always find out that persistence in error comes from desire. It is because you have the preference, the desire to feel, to act, to think in a particular way, that you make the mistake. It is not simply because you do not know what is true. You do not know it precisely because you say in a vague, general, imprecise way, "Oh, I want the truth." In fact, if you take a detail, each detail, and put your finger on it, you discover that you are playing the ostrich in order not to see. You put up something uncertain, something vague, a veil, in order not to see behind it.

Whenever there is sincerity, you find that the help, the guidance, the grace are always there to give you the answer and you are not mistaken for long.

It is this sincerity in the aspiration for progress, in the will for truth, in the need to be truly pure — pure as it is understood in the spiritual life — it is this sincerity which is the key to all progress. With it you know — and you *can*.

There is always, somewhere in the being, something which prefers to deceive itself, otherwise the light is there, always ready to guide, but you shut your eyes in order not to see it.

22 November 1957

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Those who know the true to be true and the false to be false, they attain the supreme goal, for they pursue right desires and correct views.

We saw last time that it is not sufficient to be able to distinguish what is right from what is wrong. At first sight this seems to be the most difficult point. It is quite obvious that if everyone had to find it out for himself, it would be a very long work; you can pass your whole life going through innumerable experiences which little by little will enlighten you as to what is right and what is not.

Therefore it is easier to rely on someone who has done the work before you and whom you have simply to ask, "Is this true? Is that false?" Evidently, that offers a great advantage, but unfortunately it is not always sufficient; for if you have the desire that things should be in a certain way and that what you prefer should be right, then you are not always ready to listen to good advice.

The last sentence, "for they pursue right desires", which seems to be a commonplace, is perhaps the most difficult part of the problem.

In this book, in this teaching, there are short sentences that appear so simple. If you read without sufficient reflection, you tell yourself, "But it is self-evident, you recognise as true what is true and as false what is false, what does that mean then?" But first of all it is not so easy to distinguish what is true from what is not, then to recognise, that is to say, to admit that a certain thing is true; and above all it is more

difficult still perhaps to recognise that a certain thing is false.

In reality, in order to discern exactly what is false requires such sincerity in the aspiration, such resolution in the will to be true that even this little phrase “to know the true to be true and the false to be false” means a very considerable realisation. And the conclusion, “they attain the supreme goal” is a great promise.

There are teachings which say that one must have no desire at all; they are the ones that aim at a complete withdrawal from life in order to enter into the immobility of the Spirit, the absence of all activity, all movement, all form, all external reality. To attain that one must have no desire at all, that is to say, one must completely leave behind all will for progress; progress itself becomes something unreal and external. But if in your conception of Yoga you keep the idea of progress, and if you admit that the whole universe follows a progression, then what you have to do is to shift the objective of desire; instead of turning it towards things that are external, artificial, superficial and egoistical, you must join it as a force of realisation to the aspiration directed to the truth.

These few words, “they pursue right desires”, are a proof that the teaching of the Buddha, in its essence, did not turn away from the realisation upon earth, but only from what is false in the conception of the world and in activities as they are carried on in the world. Thus when he teaches that one must escape from life, it is not to escape from a life that would be the expression of the truth but from the illusory life as it is ordinarily lived in the world.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that in order to reach the Truth and to have the power of realising this Truth you must join the spiritual consciousness to a progressive mental consciousness.

And these few words certainly prove that such was the original conception of the Buddhist teaching.

6 December 1957

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1929-1931, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 3, pp. 183-194)

WOMAN AND THE WAR

You have asked me what I think of the feminist movement and what will be the consequences of the present war for it.

One of the first effects of the war has certainly been to give quite a new aspect to the question. The futility of the perpetual oppositions between men and women was at once made clearly apparent, and behind the conflict of the sexes, only relating to exterior facts, the gravity of the circumstances allowed the discovery of the always existent, if not always outwardly manifested fact, of the real collaboration, of the true union of these two complementary halves of humanity.

Many men were surprised to see how easily women could replace them in most of the posts they occupied before, and to their surprise was added something of regret not to have found sooner a real partner of their work and their struggles in her whom more often they had only considered as an object of pleasure and distraction, or at best as the guardian of their hearth and mother of their children. Certainly woman is that and to be it well requires exceptional qualities, but she is not only that, as the present circumstances have amply proved.

In going to tend the wounded in the most difficult material conditions, actually under the enemy's fire, the so-called weak sex has proved that its physical energy and power of endurance were equal to those of man. But where, above all, women have given proof of exceptional gifts is in their organising faculties. These faculties of administration were recognised in them long ago by the Brahmanic India of before the Mohammedan conquest. There is a popular adage there which says: "Property governed by woman means prosperous property." But in the Occident Semitic thought allied to Roman legislation has influenced customs too deeply for women to have the opportunity of showing their capacity for organisation.

It is true that in France one frequently sees the woman absolute mistress of the administration of her house even from the pecuniary point of view, and the proverbial riches of the French *petite bourgeoisie* proves that the system has a good side. It was rare however to see the feminine faculties utilised to direct undertakings of great importance, and until now the confidential posts of public administration had always been closed to them. The present war has shown that in refusing the co-operation of women the governments deprived themselves of precious help. I will cite you an event as example.

A few months after the outbreak of the war, when the Germans had almost entirely occupied the Belgian territory, the inhabitants of the invaded regions were in indescribable misery. Fortunately, thanks to the initiative of several rich American men and women, a Society was founded to supply the most urgent needs of the sorely tried populations. As the result of certain military operations a fairly large

group of small villages were suddenly deprived of all food. Famine was imminent. The American Society sent a message to some similar English Societies asking that five vans of the most indispensable supplies should be dispatched immediately. These vans must reach their destination in three days. The men to whom this request was addressed replied that it was quite impossible to comply with it. Luckily a woman heard of the matter. It seemed terrible to her that in such tragic circumstances one could use the word "impossible". She belonged to a group of women who aided the wounded and sufferers of the war. Immediately they promised the American Society they would satisfy it and in three days the numerous obstacles were overcome though some of the difficulties, especially those concerning transport, seemed truly unsurmountable. A powerful organising mind, an ardent will, had done the miracle: the provisions arrived in time and the dreadful misery of famine was thus avoided.

This is not to say that only woman's exceptional qualities have been revealed by the present war. Her weaknesses, her faults, her pettiness have also been given the opportunity of display, and certainly if women wish to take the place they claim in the governing of nations they must progress much further in the mastery of self, the broadening of ideas and points of view, in intellectual suppleness and oblivion of their sentimental preferences in order to become worthy of the management of public affairs.

It is certain that purely masculine politics have given proof of incapacity; they have foundered too often in their search of strictly personal interest, and in their arbitrary and violent action. Doubtless women's politics would bring about a tendency to disinterestedness and more humanitarian solutions. But unfortunately, in their present state, women in general are creatures of passion and enthusiastic partisanship; they lack the reasoning calm that purely intellectual activity gives; the latter is undoubtedly dangerous because hard and cold and pitiless, nevertheless it is unquestionably useful to master the overflow of sentiment which cannot hold a predominant place in the ruling of collective interests.

These faults which would be serious if the activity of women had to replace that of men, could form, on the contrary, by a collaboration of the two sexes, an element of compensation for the opposite faults of men. That would be the best means of leading them gradually to mutual perfecting. To reduce the woman's part to solely interior and domestic occupations, and the man's part to exclusively exterior and social occupations, thus separating what should be united, would be to perpetuate the present sad state of things, from which both are equally suffering. It is in front of the highest duties and heaviest responsibilities that their respective qualities must unite in a close and confident solidarity.

Is it not time that this hostile attitude of the two sexes facing one another as irreconcilable adversaries should cease? A severe, a painful lesson is being given to the nations. On the ruins piled up now, new constructions more beautiful and more harmonious can be erected. It is no longer the moment for frail competitions and

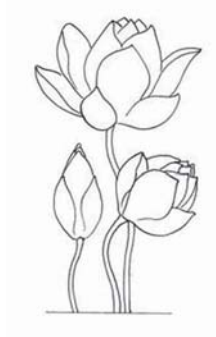
self-interested claims; all human beings, men or women, must associate in a common effort to become conscious of the highest ideal which asks to be realised and to work ardently for its realisation. The question to be solved, the real question is then not only that of a better utilisation of their outer activities, but above all that of an inner spiritual growth. Without inner progress there is no possible outer progress.

Thus the problem of feminism, as all the problems of the world, comes back to a spiritual problem. For the spiritual reality is at the basis of all others; the divine world, the Dhammata of Buddhism, is the eternal foundation on which are built all the other worlds. In regard to this Supreme Reality all are equal, men and women, in rights and in duties; the only distinction which can exist in this domain being based on the sincerity and ardour of aspiration, on the constancy of the will. And it is in the recognition of this fundamental spiritual equality that can be found the only serious and lasting solution for this problem of the relation of the sexes. It is in this light that it must be placed, it is at this height that must be sought the focus of action and new life, around which will be constructed the future temple of Humanity.

7 July 1916

THE MOTHER

(*Words of Long Ago*, CWM 2nd Ed, Vol. 2, pp. 147-50)



WOMAN AND MAN

Let us first take for granted that pride and impudence are always ridiculous: only stupid and ignorant people are arrogant. As soon as a human being is sufficiently enlightened to have a contact, however slight, with the all-pervading mystery of the universe, he becomes necessarily humble.

Woman, by the very fact of her passivity, having more easily than man the intuition of the Supreme Power at work in the world, is more often, more naturally humble.

But to base the fact of this humility on need is erroneous. Woman needs man not more than man needs woman; or rather, more exactly, man and woman have an equal need of one another.

Even in the mere material domain, there are as many men who depend materially upon women as there are women who depend upon men. If humility were a result of that dependency, then, in the first case, the men ought to be humble and the women to have the authority.

Besides, to say that women should be humble because it is thus that they please men, is also erroneous. It would lead one to think that woman has been put on earth only for the purpose of giving pleasure to man — which is absurd. All the universe has been created to express the Divine Power, and human beings, men or women, have for special mission to become conscious of and to manifest that Eternal Divine Essence. Such is their object and none other. And if they knew and remembered that more often, men and women would cease to think of petty quarrels about priority or authority; they would not see a greater mark of respect in the fact of being served than of serving, for all would consider themselves equally as servitors of the Divine, and would make it their honour to serve ever more and ever better.

THE MOTHER

(Words of Long Ago, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 2, p. 151)

FROM A CONVERSATION OF 26 JUNE 1957

Mother, will the first supramental body be like this?

Like what?

A transformation without passing through a terrestrial birth?

Ah! Excuse me, you must not confuse things. There are two things. There is the possibility of a purely supramental creation on one hand, and the possibility of a progressive transformation of a physical body into a supramental body, or rather of a human body into a superhuman body. Then it would be a progressive transformation which could take a certain number of years, probably a considerable number, and would produce a being who would no longer be a “man” in the animal sense of the word, but would not be the supramental being formed fully outside all animality, for its present origin is necessarily an animal one. So, a transmutation may take place, a transformation that’s enough to liberate the being from this origin, but all the same it wouldn’t be a purely and entirely supramental creation. Sri Aurobindo has said that there will be an intermediary race — a race or perhaps some individuals, we don’t know — an intermediary rung which could serve as a passage or could be perpetuated according to the needs and necessities of creation. But if one starts from a body formed in the same way as human bodies are at present, the result will never be the same as a being formed entirely according to the supramental method and process. It will perhaps be more on the superhuman side in the sense that all animal expression may disappear, but it won’t be able to have the absolute perfection of a body that’s purely supramental in its formation.

And in this transformed human body will there be a differentiation between man and woman?

What, what are you saying?

If the Supermind accepts this transformed body . . .

Accepts? What do you mean, “accepts”?

I mean “descends” in this half-human body — will there be a differentiation?

But it is not like that, it is not a bottle into which one pours some liquid! It’s not that!

Are you asking whether the body will keep its masculine or feminine form? Probably this will be left to the choice of the being who enters the house, the occupant . . . Does it interest you very much, this difference?

(Laughter)

You tell us that there won't be any difference, but so far there is still a great difference.

From what point of view? If it is the physical appearance, I agree — and yet, not so much as all that, but still . . . From what point of view?

From the point of view of the idea of sex, that there are two different sexes. That still exists.

The idea! But that's the fault of the person who thinks! One can very well dispense with thinking. You know, these very petty limits of thought are things which ought to disappear before you can even attempt to transform your body. If you still have these very petty ideas which are purely animal, there is not much hope that you could begin the least process for the transformation of your body. You must first transform your thought. . . . For that is something which is still crawling far down below. If you are not able to feel that a conscious and living being can be quite free, even in a certain definite form, from all feeling of sex, it . . . it means that you are still up to your neck in the original animality.

In the inner thought one feels it, but in the actuality of material life . . .

What about the actuality?

In the outer life I haven't yet realised that. In the inner . . .

You spend your time thinking about it?

But one may live twenty-four hours out of twenty-four without giving a single thought to this difference! You must really be hypnotised by this affair. Do you suppose that when I speak to you I think that you are a man and when I speak to Tara I think she is a woman?

Still there is a difference!

Ah! but it is not at all necessary.

In theory I understand.

In theory! What theory?

That there is no difference. But when I am in contact with someone, either I am speaking to a man or a woman.

Well, it's a great pity both for you and for the other person.

No, it is just the very opposite of what ought to happen! When you are in contact with someone and speaking with him, it is precisely to what surpasses all animality that you should speak; it is to the soul you must speak, never to the body. Even more is asked of you, for you are asked to address the Divine — not even the soul — the one Divine in every being, and to be conscious of that.

But if only one person is conscious and the other is a brute, what will happen?

If you alone are conscious? And what do you know about it? And how and on what plane do you judge that the other is not conscious?

His way of replying.

But perhaps he thinks the same of you!

Well, I tell you that so long as it is not the divine Presence you address when you speak to someone, it means you are not conscious of it in yourself. And then it's terribly presumptuous to judge what state the other person is in. What do you know about it? If you yourself are not conscious of the Divine in the other being, what right have you to say whether he is conscious of it or not? On what basis? Your small outer intelligence? But it knows nothing! It is quite incapable of perceiving anything whatever.

Unless your vision is *constantly* the vision of the Divine in all things, you have not only no right but no capacity to judge the state which others are in. And to pronounce a judgment on someone without having this vision spontaneously, effortlessly, is precisely an example of the mental presumptuousness of which Sri Aurobindo always spoke. . . . And it so happens that one who has the vision, the consciousness, who is capable of seeing the truth in all things, never feels the need to judge anything whatever. For he understands everything and knows everything. Therefore, once and for all, you must tell yourselves that the moment you begin to judge things, people, circumstances, you are in the most total human ignorance.

In short, one could put it like this: when one understands, one no longer judges and when one judges, it means that one doesn't know.

Judging people is one of the first things which must be totally swept away

from the consciousness before you can take even a step on the supramental path, because that is not a material progress or a bodily progress, it is only a very little progress of thought, mental progress. And unless you have swept your mind clean of all its ignorance, you cannot hope to take a step on the supramental path.

In fact, you have said something terrible. When you said, “I cannot speak to his soul if he is a brute”, well, you have given yourself away . . . you have stuck a label on yourself. There you are.

All those who have truly and sincerely had the experience of the divine Presence, all those who have truly been in contact with the Divine, have always said the same thing: that sometimes, even often, it is in what is most decried by men, most despised by men, most condemned by human “wisdom”, that one can see the divine light shining.

They are not mere words, they are living experiences.

All these ideas of good and evil, good and bad, higher, lower, all these notions belong to the ignorance of the human mind, and if one really wants to come into contact with the divine life, one must liberate oneself totally from this ignorance, one must rise to a region of consciousness where these things have *no* reality. The feeling of superiority and inferiority completely disappears, it is replaced by something else which is of a very different nature — a sort of capacity for filtering appearances, penetrating behind masks, shifting the point of view.

And these are not words, it is altogether true that *everything* changes its appearance, totally, that life and things are completely different from what they appear to be.

All this contact, this ordinary perception of the world loses its reality completely. This is what appears unreal, fantastic, illusory, non-existent. There is something — something very material, very concrete, very physical — which becomes the reality of the being, and which has nothing in common with the ordinary way of seeing. When one has this perception — the perception of the work of the divine force, of the movement being worked out behind the appearance, *in* the appearance, through the appearance — one begins to be ready to live something truer than the ordinary human falsehood. But not before.

There is no compromise, you see. It is not like a convalescence after an illness: you must change worlds. So long as your mind is real for you, your way of thinking something true for you, real, concrete, it proves that you are not there yet. You must first pass through to the other side. Afterwards you will be able to understand what I am telling you.

Pass through to the other side.

It is not true that one can understand little by little, it is not like that. This kind of progress is different. What is more true is that one is shut up in a shell, and inside it something is happening, like the chick in the egg. It is getting ready in there. It is in there. One doesn't see it. Something is happening in the shell, but outside one

sees nothing. And it is only when all is ready that there comes the capacity to pierce the shell and to be born into the light of day.

It is not that one becomes more and more perceptible or visible: one is shut in — shut in — and for sensitive people there is even that terrible sensation of being compressed, of trying to pass through and then coming up against a wall. And then one knocks and knocks and knocks, and one can't go through.

And so long as one is there, inside, one is in the falsehood. And only on the day when by the Divine Grace one can break the shell and come out into the Light, is one free.

This may happen suddenly, spontaneously, quite unexpectedly.

I don't think one can go through gradually. I don't think it is something which slowly wears and wears away until one can see through it. I haven't had an instance of this so far. There is rather a kind of accumulation of power inside, an intensification of the need, and an endurance in the effort which becomes free from all fear, all anxiety, all calculation; a need so imperative that one no longer cares for the consequences.

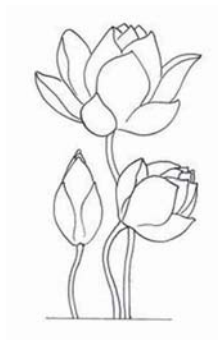
One is like an explosive that nothing can resist, and one bursts out from one's prison in a blaze of light.

After that one can no longer fall back again.

It is truly a new birth.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1957-1958, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 9, pp. 131-37)



SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of January 2017)

Chapter: LIX

Deciding the Destiny of the Dangerous: Bright Brains at Work (2)

A wide God-knowledge poured down from above,
A new world-knowledge broadened from within:
His daily thoughts looked up to the True and One,
His commonest doings welled from an inner Light.¹

Before we focus further on the brain-storming exchange that went on among the top brass of the government on the issue of dealing with their mighty and most dangerous foe, we could have a brief evaluation of the response to and influence of the two new journals edited by Sri Aurobindo, on those who were accustomed to get their direction from his words in the *Bande Mataram*.

While making penetrating observations on political and social problems of the time, he was drawing the attention of his readers to issues of timeless importance, throwing new lights on them, covering subjects such as different disciplines of Yoga, the process of evolution, the greatness of the individual and the question of fate and free-will.

The two journals were read avidly by the intellectuals of the time and the educated public for its uniqueness as well as widely by those who sought light from it on current issues. Here is an extract from the reminiscences of Suresh Chandra Deb, who worked on the staff of the *Bande Mataram* for a while:

(Sri Aurobindo) came out to a world where a “hush” and a “silence” had set in, the national mind waiting for a new lead. I was then a teacher at the National School, Sylhet. . . . During the next Pujā recess two or three of us hastened to Calcutta to meet the “Chief”; he was putting up at the College Square house of Krishna Kumar Mitra. We had our *Darshan*, a winsome smile welcoming us. We felt ourselves on a pilgrimage, believing that he was engaged in a new Sadhana. . . . My companions were more receptive of the new psycho-physical discipline that the “Chief” was prepared to impart. The *Karmayogin* (English) and the *Dharma* (Bengali), the two weeklies preaching a new Nationalism, were more in my line. We interpreted the truths inculcated through these two

papers in the light of our own experience, in consonance with our individual capacities. These brought to our thoughts and activities some sort of a coherence out of the confusion created by the repression by the Government and the safe policy of our elder politicians. He showed us the way out of our bewilderment; we learnt to understand what Indian Nationalism stood for and the ideal of the “Karmayogin”.²

While he was “dangerous” for the British rulers of India, he was divine for many at the same time. While his words and actions inspired innumerable people all over India, Sri Aurobindo as a person too fascinated so many far beyond Bengal. The weekly journal *India*, edited by the great Tamil poet Subramania Bharati, published from Madras and later from Pondicherry, sent as its correspondent Parthasarathi, the brother of its publisher S. Srinivasacharya, to interview Sri Aurobindo in Calcutta. The correspondent’s impression of the person he met was no less important than his report of the conversation.

A few passages from it:

A Conversation with Sriman Aravindo Ghose

A few days ago one of our correspondents went to Calcutta and spoke to *Mahajnnani* (supremely wise) Sriman Aravindo Ghose on several topics. We give here excerpts from the conversation.

Our correspondent had the *darshan* of Aravinda-babu at 6, College Square, Calcutta. The house belongs to Babu Krishna Kumar Mitra, who has been deported. The family of Babu Krishna Kumar resides downstairs, while the office of his journal *Sanjivani* is located upstairs. In two rooms here, Aravinda-babu does his writing work and speaks to those who come to see him.

When our correspondent saw Aravinda-babu there, the first thought that came to his mind, it seems, was, “Is this Aravinda-babu?” But then, he had not seen Aravinda-babu’s eyes as yet. Aravindo is of a lean frame; and he was sitting like a very ordinary man with a piece of cloth thrown over his upper body. On seeing him our correspondent could only wonder, “Is this the Yogi born to redeem us through an upheaval, showing a new way to India?”

It was when he saw the eyes that our correspondent felt reassured. Oh! how knowing those eyes were! What grace in them! What peace! *Mahashanti, mahashanti!* The room exuded a great *sattwic shanti*.

Our correspondent asked a few questions about the Narayan *darshan* which Aravinda-babu had experienced when he was in prison. Since a *darshan* of the Supreme is a rarity in this age, our correspondent wondered whether Aravinda-babu’s *darshan* could have come about in the dream-state. But when he listened to Aravindo’s reply, all his doubts vanished. When our corres-

pondent saw the humility, the peace, the solemnity, the innocence and the light that appeared on Aravindo's face when he answered, it was very clear to him that Aravindo is indeed a *Mahasiddha* (*Person of Supreme Realisation*).

Aravindo: "Yes, I saw Narayana. I had all my *darshans* in the waking state; they were not dreams."

Correspondent: "Is there a way to reach the state you are speaking about?"

Aravindo: "Yes. Yoga is the way." . . .

Later our correspondent turned the conversation from spiritual to worldly matters.

Correspondent: "All Calcutta is rife with the rumour that the Government is going to deport you. If perchance they take you away from us what shall we do?"

Aravindo: "It seems that the Viceroy and his council have not accepted the suggestion."

Correspondent: "The authorities will not do anything against you now. We know that God shall allow none to touch you, because you are destined to show the way to the nation for a while yet."

Aravindo-babu smiled.

Our Correspondent's Thoughts

Our correspondent writes of the thoughts that rose in his mind even as the conversation was going on:

Aravindo's voice was very calm. A state of peace generated in my mind. There was peace everywhere. It gave me great bliss to think that I was in the presence of a great being who has suffered much out of his love for the country, one whose utterances have been the wonder of the whole nation, and who was one of the Rishis of the *Swadeshi Dharma*. I was astonished to see him conversing with me calmly and peacefully even while his own brother was awaiting the death sentence.

Aravindo continued to answer with great grace the several questions put to him by our correspondent. . . .³

Even though Sri Aurobindo and his well-wishers like the correspondent of *India* were under the impression that the Government had given up the idea of deporting him, the debate in the top rung of the administration on whether to go on an appeal against his acquittal or to deport him under some pretext remained alive for the whole range of the period — beginning with the day Mr. Beachcroft delivered

his judgment till the end of February 1910 when they decided to arrest him once again for the so-called seditious article entitled “To My Countrymen”.

It is well known that towards the end of July 1909 Sister Nivedita had warned him of the Government’s plan to deport him and had advised him to lead the movement from outside the country. It is also well-known that if the Government did not proceed in that direction, it was because of the effect of a signed article “An Open Letter to My Countrymen” in the *Karmayogin*. But the restraint was only temporary. In January 1910 the Government of India instructed the State Government to explore grounds, on the basis of Sri Aurobindo’s article “To My Countrymen” which condemned the Morley-Minto Reforms with powerful arguments. A long series of correspondence had taken place before and after that between the State Government and the Government of India on the million dollar question of whether to deport Sri Aurobindo or not, whether to put him behind bars under some other pretext or not. The documents on this issue and their background would constitute a thick volume, even excluding the exchange between the two top-most personages in the ruling hierarchy, Lord Minto, the Governor General of India and Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India in the British Cabinet, which should be presented in a separate chapter.

Here are some of them:

On the 9th of July 1909, the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, wrote to the Chief Secretaries to the Governments of Bengal and Eastern Bengal and Assam:

The Government of India observe that Arabindo Ghose, since his acquittal in the Alipore Sessions Court, has made in Bengal (and Eastern Bengal and Assam), a series of speeches, which, though not actually seditious, are in their opinion of a distinctly inflammatory character. He has also begun to publish a magazine, the *Karmayogin*, in which these speeches are reproduced, and the general tone of which is very similar to that of the speeches. I am to invite the attention of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor to this campaign which is almost certain to lead to a recrudescence of the unrest and the violence produced by that condition in the past. I am accordingly to enquire what steps he proposes or recommends to be taken in order to stop the activity of Arabindo Ghose. The Government of India think that if preventive action is possible there should be no hesitation in taking it.⁴

On the 29th July, 1909, Sir Charles Allen, Kt., I.C.S., Offg. Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal addressed a long letter to the Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, on this subject. Extract:

I am now to submit herewith a complete set of the speeches delivered by Arabindo Ghose since his acquittal in the Alipore Bomb Case, and to enclose as an appendix to this letter, for the information of the Government of India, a brief summary of his speeches. The Lieutenant-Governor has considered whether the speeches, though not justifying a prosecution for sedition, would warrant him in proposing action under Regulation III of 1818 in regard to Arabindo Ghose. After careful deliberation His Honour has arrived at the conclusion that for the following reasons he would not be justified in doing so.

It is clear that in certain of his speeches Aurobindo Ghose has been preaching nationalism as a kind of religion, his argument being that it is the will of God that national ideals should live and grow in India, and that he has been specially inspired to proclaim them.

Arabindo Ghose has also referred to swaraj as his ideal. He himself has attributed different meanings to this term at different times, but the general use of the word and the context in which it occurs hardly suggest absolute political independence and he is very careful to explain that it is not independence to be obtained by physical force. He seems at times to speak of it in a sort of spiritual sense as moral independence. His expressions are so guarded that his exhortations to strength, courage and independence are also susceptible of explanation from the subjective point of view as moral strength and courage. That is no doubt the sense in which he would explain them. In a court of law the explanation would probably be accepted, and to intelligent readers unaffected by special knowledge as to the existing political situation in India, it would appear to be the natural and reasonable explanation.

In his several speeches Arabindo Ghose has never advocated any form of opposition to Government action, except passive resistance. He has made many deprecatory references to violence and has exhorted the people to proceed peacefully. He has made two references to salvation coming swiftly, and by this he is understood to mean that if the boycott were complete and successful it would bring the Government to their knees and compel them to comply with the demands of the extremist party. In his Khulna speech Arabindo Ghose certainly made some references to killing, but the speech was on a religious subject and mystical in tone. He made no direct reference to any political question and the killing appears to refer to incidents in Hindu Mythology, with the application that under divine inspiration men would subordinate their private inclination and judgment to what they felt to be the divine will. The doctrine if it is correctly explained is no doubt most dangerous, but the absence of any direct political reference makes its application uncertain.

The Lieutenant-Governor is perfectly aware that the explanation of Arabindo Ghose's speeches suggested above may not be what the speaker himself really intended to convey to his hearers, and certainly is not that which

a large portion of his audience will attribute to them. There is unquestionably a risk that force, courage and resistance may be interpreted in their most literal sense, and that his exhortations to display these qualities may give rise to acts of violence. But in His Honour's opinion the risk is not very great. His audiences cannot for the most part understand his mystical religion and his creed of passive resistance. It is possible that he may excite nationalistic feelings and that these may seek violent forms of expression, but so far no such results have appeared. It must also be remembered that although the language of the speeches is extremely eloquent, Arabindo Ghose is no master of oratorical effect and can only speak in English. It seems that his reputation and the circumstances of his imprisonment and acquittal have far more effect on his audiences than the speeches themselves.

Sir Edward Baker is giving the situation his most close and careful attention, and will not hesitate to recommend preventive action should this be necessary. But as at present advised, he is not prepared to recommend that Arabindo Ghose should be deported under Regulation III of 1818. Such action at the present moment could only be founded upon Arabindo Ghose's recent speeches and writings, and since these are susceptible of an interpretation not inconsistent with lawful aims, it is impossible to proceed upon them. Should on the one hand, his style of oratory develop new characteristics, or on the other, should it appear that unlawful manifestations can be traced to its effects, His Honour will lose no time in adopting whatever course seems appropriate.⁵

After some more letters and telegrams were exchanged on this subject, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal wrote to the Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, on 18th August, 1909:

Sir Edward Baker has given very careful consideration to the question whether an appeal should be preferred or not. In ordinary or non-political cases Government would certainly not appeal, unless the chance of a conviction by the Appellate Court were held by its legal advisers to be considerably stronger than they are held to be in the present instance by Mr. Strangman. In a case of the very exceptional character of the present one, His Honour would be disposed to require an even stronger probability of success before proceeding further than in a case of no political importance. In Sir Edward Baker's judgment Arabindo Ghose is one of the most dangerous factors in the present situation. The Lieutenant-Governor is himself disposed to believe that Arabindo Ghose was guilty of the offences charged against him; and if there were a good prospect of obtaining a conviction, he would have been ready to prefer an appeal. Such a course would, however, certainly cause a revival of public feeling against the Government and in favour of the accused, a feeling which

at present shows signs of dying out; and, if the appeal should fail, that price would have been paid for nothing. For these reasons I am to state that Sir Edward Baker has decided not to prefer an appeal against the acquittal of Arabindo Ghose.⁶

We reproduce passages from the next most interesting series of papers⁷ in this regard:

Mr. Strangman, the Advocate General, Bombay, considers that an appeal against Arabindo's acquittal would have 'a fair chance' of success. Ordinarily the Government should not appeal against an acquittal unless the perversity of the decision is clear and the probability of the appeal succeeding amounts almost to certainty; and even when these two conditions are present the Government would not sanction an appeal unless the case is of such importance that the public interests require the alleged miscarriage of justice to be corrected.

Of the importance of this case there is no doubt, and if there has been a miscarriage of justice it is in the public interests that it should be corrected.

The Advocate General, Bombay, holds that there has been a miscarriage of justice, Mr. Norton holds the same view, as apparently also does Mr. Chapman, the Legal Remembrancer. The Lieutenant-Governor is 'disposed to believe that Arabindo Ghose was guilty of the offences charged against him.' I think we may conclude that there has been a miscarriage of justice.

On the other hand, it is clear that the probability of success falls very far short of certainty and the essential question for consideration is whether the circumstances of the case justify the Government in accepting the risk of failure.

Sir Edward Baker tells us that he regards Arabindo Ghose as 'one of the most dangerous factors in the present situation'.

Another argument in favour of appeal is that Arabindo's acquittal has been proclaimed by the native press throughout India as showing that his prosecution was entirely unjustifiable, while Mr. Beachcroft's rejection of the "Sweets" letter, on very flimsy grounds, has been taken as one more piece of evidence of the unscrupulous and criminal action of the police.

On the other hand, an appeal by the Government would be regarded by the native press, and possibly by a not inappreciable section of the public, as an act of persecution, and though this charge would be completely met if the appeal were successful, its failure would strengthen the feeling against the Government, and would almost certainly increase to a very great extent the influence of Arabindo Ghose. It would also strengthen the sentiment created by the High Court's decisions in the Midnapore and Barrah cases that the Government is the despotic tyrant and the High Court the palladium of liberty.

I venture to recommend, therefore, that the Lieutenant-Governor's decision

be accepted but that Sir Edward Baker be instructed to reconsider his decision as soon as the Alipore case appeal is concluded; and he may further be requested to instruct Mr. Norton to press the 'Sweets' letter against Barin in supporting the conviction of the latter. If the High Court accepts that letter as genuine it will be a strong piece of evidence against Arabindo; and it is also desirable that the police should be cleared of the aspersions which have been cast upon them in connexion with that letter.

The Viceroy should see the case at once. His Excellency will perhaps desire that it should be circulated.

H. A. Stuart,
22-8-1909

I agree with the line of action proposed and especially with the suggestion that Mr. Norton should be instructed to press the "Sweets" letter against Barin. The importance of that letter is of itself reason enough for deferring a decision on the present question until we know the results of the appeal now before the High Court.

In the letter of 29th July Bengal argues that the risk arising from Arabindo's recent utterance is not very great by reason of their mystical and religious character and thus arrives at the conclusion that it would not be proper to deport him. In my opinion this feature in his speeches is their most dangerous element and renders deportation the most appropriate method of dealing with him. Bengal has completely failed to understand the Khulna speech, which refers to one of the most famous incidents of Hindu mythology, and conveys an obvious suggestion of a highly militant character, which no one among the audience could fail to appreciate.

The object of his speeches is perfectly clear — to exalt the idea of Swaraj in its extreme form to the level of religious dogma and to diffuse it as widely as possible. He is trying to popularise Swaraj as an article of faith. He may or may not succeed, but there can be no question as to the danger arising from the attempt.

H. H. R(isley),
22-8-1909

I agree in the action proposed. Please circulate.

M(into),
23-8-1909

I agree.

J. O. M(iller),
24-8-1909

I also agree in the proposed action.

G. F. W(ilson),
26-8-1909

I also.

S. P. S(inha),
26-8-1909

K(itchener),

25-8-1909

H.H. R(isley),

26-8-1909

Draft for approval.

P. W. Monie,
26-8-1909

Notwithstanding the arguments and their niceties in regard to action or inaction regarding Sri Aurobindo neither the State Government nor the Government of India could be at peace as long as he was at large. As late as on 14 January 1910 Sir Harold Stuart, K.C.V.O., C.S.I., Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, wrote to the Chief Secretary of Bengal the following letter on the article "To My Countrymen" lest the opportunity to use something in that piece that could be interpreted as seditious slips away! Meanwhile the article was being translated into some other languages and that was another matter of concern. Wrote Sir Harold:

I am directed to invite the attention of his honour the Lieutenant-Governor to an article "My Countrymen" signed by Arabindo Ghose which appears on the pages 4-5 of the *Karmayogin* of the 25th December 1909 and was reprinted in the *Mahratta* of the 2nd January 1910. I am to ask that, with his honour's permission, the legal advisers of the Government of Bengal may be consulted (if this has not already been done) whether they consider that a prosecution of the writer will prove successful. If their answer is in the affirmative, I am to suggest the expediency of the early institution of the proceedings against Arabindo Ghose.⁸

After several rounds of consultations and hesitation, the Government decided to prosecute him under Section 124 A (Sedition), Indian Penal Code, on the 25th of February 1910. However, for some inexplicable reason, no action followed the decision. Were they waiting for something more to happen? So far nothing has

come to the surface to resolve this mystery. The police no doubt believed that their prey was very much within the stretch of their iron arms, thanks to the vigilance of the C.I.D. men set to keep watch on his movements. But by and by their bosses must have woken up to the reality that their men were affected by hallucination. Sri Aurobindo had become invisible for some time. Only a regular warrant could enable the police to search any place, to raid any house, to capture him.

Hence on the 4th of April 1910 the Chief Presidency Magistrate issued the warrant for his arrest.

And that was the day Sri Aurobindo reached the French Indian territory of Pondicherry — reasonably beyond the clutch of the British Indian government!

(To be continued)

MANOJ DAS

Notes and References

1. *Savitri*, Book One, Canto 3.
2. Suresh Chandra Deb: "Sri Aurobindo as I knew Him"; *Mother India*, August 1950.
3. The Weekly *India*, Madras (Chennai); 18 September 1909. Reproduced in *Sri Aurobindo: His Political Life and Activities*; Compiled and Edited by Anurag Banerjee; Overman Foundation, Kolkata.
4. Old India Office Library (Archives), London, gathered by the author.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. Extracts from Indian News Agency Telegram No. 11; source as in Note 3.

ON WOMEN

[This conversation took place in 1958 in the Mother's room in the Ashram. The Mother used to come to the Playground and take classes for the children. In course of this conversation, she refers to what she had spoken in one of the 'Wednesday classes'.

The Mother first speaks about the young-boys' group (then group C and now called D). In those days, if there was any difficult work to be done in the Ashram, such as shifting of logs, guarding the farms at night, harvesting etc. the Mother would often ask me to organise it with the help of the group members. Those were memorable days — working as a team to finish the work assigned by her. This was her way of preparing us. Of course, her usual teasing was there to rectify our attitude.

The Mother then speaks about women and emphatically pronounces that one day women will equal men in all the fields of life. This was nearly 60 years ago — the Mother had foreseen developments which we are now witnessing, movements which the Mother had initially started.

The Mother spoke in French, and what she said was noted down from memory later. — M.S.]

It is good, my child, I am proud of your group. For, when there is a big work to be done, it is your group that comes first to participate. Whatever the work, I tell you to organise it and you accept it with joy and the work is done immediately. It is a big help. I do not have to bother asking here and there, to get workers on contract, who moreover demand an exorbitant price and do only one-tenth of the work they should be doing in a day, and that too, most unwillingly. And in spite of that, they ask for still more money, which means spending ten times more than the amount I had put aside for that work. That is not reasonable. And I do not have a bank at my disposal to be able to spend freely.

But like this, with you and your group to take care of it, everything works out fine and much faster.

It is a good training to do our work ourselves, and not to depend on others.

But then, (*referring to the work done by the boys*) perhaps the work is not done at the height of their consciousness, with the true attitude. They become easily excited and make a commotion which wastes a lot of energy.

If, instead, they learnt how to work quietly and with the necessary concentration, they would complete the work more rapidly and also as perfectly as possible. In this way, they would learn to work better, skilfully. . . .

It does not matter; they are still young and love to chat. But I am sure they will

soon learn to work as they should.

How old are they, the children of your group?

Between 16 and 22 or 23, Mother; some are younger still.

That is it, that is what I guessed. Nothing to worry about. At that age they are somewhat frivolous, and make a show of what they do; but it will go away in a few years. It is not a fault, they can easily correct it. It is not even a weakness. It is a little like boasting.

Still, they have done quite a few things, as if miraculously.

No, it is all right.

I am happy with the progress of your group, they receive a good training to face any circumstance.

I have confidence in them.

(The Mother speaks of some other things then asks)

Do you attend the classes that I take in the Playground, in the evening, on Wednesdays?

Yes, Mother.

So, were you there, the last time?

Yes, Mother.

Did you follow clearly what I explained regarding the performance of women and men, the distinctions that are usually made, and what I consider normal, natural, or the ideal that we must follow?

And you, what do you think? What did you understand?

Tell me something about it, so that I may know what you have in your head, whether you still suffer from this complex which affects most of you, — that women are inferior to men and that whatever they try, they can never equal the performance of men; that in their capacities, strength, skill, and even constitutionally, they are clumsy, weak and lack coordination and are bound to fail, — which corresponds to the general conclusion that women will always be inferior to men and that they can never equal the performance of men. Is it this what you understand?

No, Mother. What I understand is that at present they are far and cannot equal men in their performance because they have not had the chance, the opportunity to participate and to develop themselves; and that it is only recently that

they have become free and the doors have opened and they can participate. And as You have told us, their progress now, in the last two decades, is much more rapid than that of men in all the domains.

Ah, clever fellow that you are!

No, Mother. I fully agree with what You say, and because You have said it, I do not question it. Only, I have not thought in this direction. But now I am convinced of what You have said.

Is that so?

Yes, Mother.

Good. Then one sees some good sense in spite of the chaos, the doubt and the clouds of ill-will which are widespread among all the children without exception, even the little ones. They do not want to play with the girls, and with a disdainful air, they say, "I do not want to play with the girls, I do not like it, because they are weak," even when the girls have proved that not only are they superior, but in some fields they have clearly surpassed the performances of the boys of the same age — around 11, 12, 13. Till then one does not find any difference, either in the growth, in the vigour, in the endurance, in the skill or the speed and suppleness of the body. The girls can equal the boys in any field or surpass them in the activities which boys of their age will not be capable of.

The girls are generally more attentive, more concentrated, more conscientious than the boys. But as soon as they enter adolescence, they begin to think like feminine beings, like different entities according to their ways and customs. And then comes this rigid unhealthy education which looks only at one aspect of the human being and misses the truth behind things, which moreover, teaches what men have advocated since ancient times: that essentially, "women are weak, clumsy and incapable of anything in comparison to men. They are good only for producing children and doing household work. Just that and nothing more." That is why they have not taken their place beside men, except on rare occasions. But generally, men have subjugated women and have relegated them to an inferior position which has made them miserable and insignificant. Therefore an inferiority complex developed. They have been treated like the rejected ones, good for nothing, misfits in society's complex organisation. We see this trend of subjugation since antiquity. Perhaps not in the stone-age when the two together had to fight the animals for survival. There was no choice — live if you can defend yourself, or else, perish. But later, when man with his intelligence began to use the means at his disposal and to organise his life to settle down definitely, in accordance with the society and his little kingdoms,

he formulated rules, customs and objectives to better protect his surroundings. And also, to live in harmony, to make provision for his needs, for mutual safety and protection, he formulated rules and norms to live together in security and in an absolute confidence. It is since then that he saw that women had to be protected when they were expecting a child. Then began the whole affair with its norms and social, moral and utilitarian prejudices conforming to his development and his intelligence. It is since then that the structure of society took a definite form, with fixed objectives, and little by little, began the notion of religion, and so, women were condemned by tradition, bound by strict and rigid rules and consequently considered as unfit for society.

This began in antiquity, and the role of women in society was forcibly reduced. So, this is the condition of women — who could neither speak out nor keep count of the afflictions and the suffering perpetrated against them. They had to pass their life in slavery — the thousands and thousands of years of servile obedience which apparently rendered them half-dead. They have lost the sense of their individuality, become victims of circumstances and the pitiless coercions against women, whose existence was but an unbearable suffocation.

From this there followed the history of women, who by atavism, habit, instinct, became weak, mediocre and so powerless by the fact that they were degraded and made inactive, deprived of freedom and their independence to do any of the things which were permitted to men. It is in this manner that women were treated in society and communities since ages and millenniums. And little by little, they were trapped in such a way that they were no better than animals in cages. The story of man's evolution is filled with evidence of it. It was not in a day that the condition of women had been reversed, no, it is since centuries and centuries and that they have been maltreated, and now it has become part of their existence, so much so that they cannot think, nor act, nor take any action against the preconceived laws which have been imposed on them by society. That is why women have become timid, weak and they suffer from an inferiority complex. And it is not easy to overcome these weaknesses.

But they have shown emphatically their innate qualities since the beginning of this century, when there was a great resurgence of a power for the equal rights for women, a great leap forward for women's emancipation, an unprecedented progress and a will to establish themselves in an enlightened future. It is this which began so well, and today this movement for the liberation of women has grown in formidable proportions and almost the whole world respects and accepts this power that wants to establish itself; and among the great revolutions for the resurgence of humanity for a definitive and determined progress, this one can be considered as the focal point of an opening of incomparable magnitude. It is like a manifestation of an entity which revolutionises and takes the whole earth towards a new stage, a progressive movement that advances by leaps, and resuscitates the future of

humanity. Such was the need, the necessity of a radical change in terrestrial evolution, that one does not realise, — in this age where the mental development has followed a curve in its formidable ascent towards an apogee where all the extremes move towards the unity in the whole, — how can one make a differentiation between men and women? It is this that has received a good blow and seems to disappear. And it will not be long when this attitude of the inferiority complex in women will be replaced by assurance and an authority for their attempts and their adventures for progress.

Already in the mental domain, one sees disappearing gradually the distinctions that characterise women's efforts to equal men; and perhaps, soon, they will surpass men in some fields of pure ideas, because they possess inherent qualities of an intense concentration and an extraordinary patience, where men are at a disadvantage. That is why one cannot say when women will dominate men in a definite manner by their qualities of dedication and their direct vision of things. Or perhaps, Nature in her revenge, can play a trick to bring about the opposite, now letting women dominate men. Anything can happen. That is why I tell you to wait, to be patient and to see how, one after another, the mental, or rather social barriers are falling and vanishing into the past. As I had foreseen, it is happening, word for word.

There is no reason, no meaning, nor even the slightest basis to consider that women by tradition, customs and habit are weaker, inferior and less developed than men. But why is it so? Just because they were always inferior to men. And that is why they will always lag behind and can never equal men. What a strange argument! What stupidity! And what is the reason for that? It is because they were like that from antiquity, by tradition, by atavism, by habit that they have become weak and incapable of following or competing with men. And that is why they have been degraded and have become inferior.

But I say that it is only because of custom and habit, and not by a defect or by constitution that women have this inferiority complex. It is this that is taught to them, and stuffed into their little heads, that they can never equal men or stand up to them. It is this that has become so morbid and a part of their existence that they cannot look beyond this rut. They have become slaves of this circumstance and their mentality has become so narrow and shrunken that they cannot come out of themselves.

It is so difficult. One cannot imagine how much I am compelled to fight to break this barrier, what a wall of resistance, ill-will and adversity I must face to make people understand the necessity of a progressive movement — that each depends completely on the other, and that there is no lacuna between the two. This is the truth of existence,

And in fact, there is no difference between men and women. Physiologically as well as in the constitution, the cells, the muscles, the organs, even the skeleton, work and function in the same manner and also the glands that act more or less with

the same inherent functioning as the basis, only it can develop a little more in one and in another. And then the aggregate which constitutes the personality, the consciousness and the will which moves them are the same and identical. Only, it so happens that there is a difference. But then everyone is different, each from the other. There are no two alike. Yet they are all human beings, each one is different, has a particularity which is noticeable if one considers it, one sees that each person is different in proportion and in quality. One is big, the other small; one fat, the other thin. Even among men there is a whole range of difference. Yet the human species is the same. We find that one is more intelligent than the other, one stronger than the other, one more capable, more energetic, has more endurance than the other, an enormous difference in capacity from one person to another. This does not mean that they are a different species, or that one is inferior to the other. In all the domains of human existence, there is an enormous difference in quality, capacity, application, modes of expression, power of concentration, finally, one's whole life is more or less or partially the expression of what one manifests and in this, each one is different. It is this that characterises the diversity that the Creator has created. For each one there are strong points and weak points and it is in order to exceed oneself and to find the unity of the whole that there is this difference between one human being and another; for Him, there is no difference between women and men. They are the same and identical, having as witness, — a soul. That is all. And all this force is good only for the sceptics, for those who disdain women and provoke the controversy with negative and ill-willed formations, those who know nothing and criticise all the good things that are manifesting, which merely shows their ignorance. It can never be said that one is superior to the other. In the domain of the mind, women have already proved, in such a short time, that they are as intelligent as men. Isn't it so?

Yes, Mother.

And I assure you that it will not be long, when they will prove it in the domain of the vital, that is to say, the pure vital, as well as in the physical. It has just begun, it is not even fifty years and they continue to progress and to prove that their physical faculties are not at all inferior to those of men, because essentially men and women are the same and similar, that is to say, the body, the constitution, the entire system function in the same way, with the same goal, so why should there be a distinction in the type or modality? This I do not understand. I do not agree and do not want to accept that women are inferior to men. I can enumerate for you numerous domains. There you are. Do you doubt my proposition?

No, Mother.

I have already studied women's records of the last ten years and the present records, and similarly men's records for the same period and I have seen the difference and the progression of women was astounding for the same events in this period of time, and women, in comparison, are much better than men. Well, it is fantastic. One cannot compare. Women are far ahead, if one sees it with diagrams, the calculations and graphs. No comparison! The progress for men has become nearly static, with more or less a record, here and there, with the help of scientific equipment for a definite perfection. But those of women, it is stupendous and with a much greater degree of acceleration, and the records are being surpassed and exceeded each year.

I have come to the conclusion and know by experience that there will be no difference between the performances of men and those of women in each of the domains of human activity. And we will soon see what I predict. These are not idle words, because on the whole it is the soul that predominates and distinguishes human beings from the other animals. And in this domain, there are neither women nor men. It is the human being who aspires and wants to surpass the little functioning of his body. And with the enormous possibilities of the supramental forces, and the next stage that announces the radical transformation of the body, what is there that they will not be able to do? It is without limit and beyond our comprehension. Do you understand?

Yes, Mother.

Or do you doubt it?

But I did not say anything, Mother.

That is why I am asking.

Mother, all that You say, I do not question, I try to absorb as best as possible, but perhaps something escapes me.

Oh yes, it happens, and it comes back with greater vigour and penetrates deep within for a total comprehension. That is the way it works, stage by stage. It is the best attitude, to remain open to what I say; then little by little, one understands better.

Yes, Mother, but I never doubt what You tell me.

I know, my child, I know; that is why I reveal so many things to you, so many secrets, as well as my yoga.

Mother, I am very happy, make me thus, may I be able to serve Thee worthily.

Good. Good, my child.

Always and for ever.

Yes, it is all right.

Really speaking, I find no difference, because I see the soul of the person. And the soul is above gender, it is neither masculine nor feminine, nor neuter. It is the consciousness, a portion of the Supreme, the divine Reality that dwells in man. And in its expression in the manifestation, it has the same force, the same power, the same will, the same consciousness, the same truth, — so why would there be a difference in the expression in men and women? That I do not understand. Apparently, since antiquity women have been compelled to follow an arbitrary and crude method of subjugation which has made them incapable and inferior to men. But it does not mean that women cannot rid themselves of these shackles and hold their own against men.

The time has come when they will proclaim themselves equal to men in all the activities of life. It is not far, and we will see the truth of what I say. It will be a heresy to the specialists and those who follow dogmas. Then, they will be gasping for breath when they hear this . . . just as you were, when you came in. But me, I prefer to tell the truth, frankly and directly without fear and without subterfuge. There you are. Have you understood?

Yes, Mother.

Do not doubt it and do not be haunted by the old formula. The Truth marches towards its fulfilment, leaving behind the past with its mean and miserable burden and its attitude of narrowness and ill-will. This is what we can say: that the horizons are opening up, vast and resplendent, where women will be able to play the same role as men. No complexes of superiority and inferiority, and no difference in roles or activities — but souls in quest of the truth. . . .

I have spoken a lot. Has it entered your head or no? It is all the same for me, provided you have caught something. It is not a subject for discussion. We will have to wait and see. Have you understood now?

Yes, Mother.

Good. *Au revoir.*

MONA SARKAR

AN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE REPORT

[In February 1957, the Mother read out from an official report of the International Olympics Committee on the 1952 Helsinki Games. She read it out in French. She introduced the passage and added a final observation.

Here is a translation of the transcript of the recording which exists in the Mother's voice. The recording was played during the evening meditation in the Playground on 18 August 2016.]

Here is the first item, taken from an American magazine dealing with a research on the athletics championships during the Olympic Games. I will not read out the entire article, but only one part dealing with female athletes. Because I have spoken to you some time ago on this subject and this article, this portion of the article, is a perfect illustration of what I told you.

Extract from 'Research on Olympic athletes' by I. Joncle, J. Kilberg, A. Costello and I. Lobo of the International Olympic Committee.¹

The extremely high levels of the performances achieved by female athletes in track and field and by the swimmers in the Olympic games of 1952 can be categorised in three ways:

Firstly, some of the records for women are better than those of men in the beginning of the century. A team consisting of the athletes who have medals in the 1952 Olympics in women's items in track and field and swimming items could defeat most of the men's college teams in any part of the world.

Considering the fact that most of the men were not in the regular training, we consider that a woman, young, average and in good health, who wanted to develop her capacities of physical performance by a logical (methodical) training would do better than 99% of men. Naturally, the men's records remain better . . . than the women's records. But the conclusion that women are the invariably weaker sex no longer holds good.

Secondly, it emerges from these physiological and medical examinations that the biological differences of women do not present an unsurmountable natural obstacle to achieve and maintain physical performances of the first order.

1. The names of the authors may not be quite correctly spelt in the transcript here.

Thirdly, according to the aesthetic criteria applied, it has been shown that remarkable aesthetic types of forms and movements have come into being as a by-product, if it could be put that way, among the highest athletic achievements by women.

Now, if you all, you are still not convinced, it is because you are thick-headed.

Surrender is the decision taken to hand over the responsibility of your life to the Divine. Without this decision nothing is at all possible; if you do not surrender, the Yoga is entirely out of the question. Everything else comes naturally after it, for the whole process starts with surrender. You can surrender either through knowledge or through devotion. You may have a strong intuition that the Divine alone is the truth and a luminous conviction that without the Divine you cannot manage. Or you may have a spontaneous feeling that this line is the only way of being happy, a strong psychic desire to belong exclusively to the Divine: "I do not belong to myself," you say, and give up the responsibility of your being to the Truth. Then comes self-offering: "Here I am, a creature of various qualities, good and bad, dark and enlightened. I offer myself as I am to you, take me up with all my ups and downs, conflicting impulses and tendencies — do whatever you like with me." In the course of your self-offering, you start unifying your being around what has taken the first decision — the central psychic will. All the jarring elements of your nature have to be harmonised, they have to be taken up one after another and unified with the central being.

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