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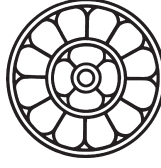
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXXII

No. 11

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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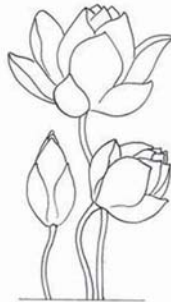


## O YE POWERS

O ye Powers of the Supreme and of the Mother, the Divine,  
I have come to you initiate, a bearer of the sign.  
For I carry the Name in me that nothing can efface.  
I have breathed in an illimitable spiritual Space  
And my soul through the unfathomable stillnesses has heard  
The god-voices of knowledge and the marvels of the Word.  
It has listened to the secret that was hidden in the night  
Of the inconscient infinities first when by His might  
He arose out of the caverns of the darkness self-enwrapped  
And the nebulae were churned up like to foam-froth and were shaped  
Till these millions of universes mystical upbuoyed  
Were outsprinkled as if stardust on the Dragon of the Void.  
I was there then in the infinitesimal and obscure  
As a seed soul in the fire seeds of the energies that endure.  
I have learned now to what purpose I have loitered as His spark  
In the midnight of earth Matter like a glow-worm in the dark  
And my spirit was imprisoned in the muteness of a stone,  
A soul thoughtless and left voiceless and impuissant and alone.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 676)*



# ARYAN ORIGINS

## Introductory

*(Continued from the issue of October 2019)*

In such an enquiry, it is obvious that a kind of science of linguistic embryology is the first necessity. In other words, it is only in proportion as we get away from the habits & notions & apparent facts of formed human speech in its use by modern & civilised people, only in proportion as we get nearer to the first roots & rudiments of the structure of the more ancient and primitive languages that we shall have any chance of making really fruitful discoveries. Just as from the study of the formed outward man, animal, plant, the great truths of evolution could not be discovered or, if discovered, not firmly fixed, — just as only by going back from the formed creature to its skeleton and from the skeleton to the embryo could the great truth be established that in matter also the great Vedantic formula holds good — of a world formed by development of many forms from one seed in the will of the Universal Being, *ya ekaṁ bijam bahudhā vidadhāti*, — so also in language if the origin & unity of human speech can be found & established, if it can be shown that its development was governed by fixed laws & processes, it is only by going back to its earliest forms that the discovery is to be made & proofs established. Modern speech is largely a fixed and almost artificial form, not precisely a fossil, but an organism proceeding towards arrest and fossilisation. The ideas its study suggests to us, are well-calculated to lead us entirely astray. In modern language the word is a fixed conventional symbol having for no good reason that we know a significance we are bound by custom to attach [to] it. We mean by *wolf* a certain kind of animal, but why we use this sound and not another to mean [it], except as a mere lawless fact of historical development, we do not know & do not care to think. Any other sound would, for us, be equally good for the purpose, provided the custom-bound mentality prevailing in our environment could be persuaded to sanction it. It is only when we go back to the early tongues and find, for instance, that the Sanscrit word for wolf means radically “tearing” that we get a glimpse of one law at least of the development of language. Again in modern speech we have fixed parts of speech; noun, adjective, verb, adverb are to us different words even when their forms are the same. Only when we go back to the earlier tongues do we get a glimpse of the striking, the illuminating fact that in the most fundamental forms a single monosyllable did service equally for noun, adjective, verb & adverb & that man in his earliest use of speech probably made in his mind little or no conscious difference between these various uses. We see the word *vrka* in modern Sanscrit used only as a noun signifying

wolf; in the Veda it means simply tearing or a tearer, is used indifferently as a noun or adjective, even in its noun-use has much of the freedom of an adjective and can be applied freely to a wolf, a demon, an enemy, a disruptive force or anything that tears. We find in the Veda, although there are adverbial forms corresponding to the Latin adverb in *e* and *ter*, the adjective itself used continually as a pure adjective & yet in a relation to the verb & its action which corresponds to our modern use of adverbs and adverbial or prepositional phrases or subordinate adverbial clauses. Still more remarkable, we find nouns and adjectives used frequently as verbs with an object in the accusative case depending on the verbal idea in their root. We are prepared, therefore, to find that in the simplest & earliest forms of the Aryan tongue the use of a word was quite fluid, that a word like *cit* for instance might equally mean to know, knowing, knows, knower, knowledge or knowingly & be used by the speaker without any distinct idea of the particular employment he was making of the pliant vocable. Again, the tendency to fixity in modern tongues, the tendency to use words as mere counters & symbols of ideas, not as living entities themselves the parents of thought, creates a tendency to limit severely the use of a single word in several different senses and also a tendency to avoid the use of many different words for the expression of a single object or idea. When we have got the word *strike* to mean a voluntary & organised cessation of work by labourers, we are satisfied; we would be embarrassed if we had to choose between this and fifteen other words equally common and having the same significance; still more should we feel embarrassed if the same word could mean a blow, a sunbeam, anger, death, life, darkness, shelter, a house, food and prayer. Yet this is precisely the phenomenon — again, I suggest, a most striking & illuminative phenomenon — we find in the early history of speech. Even in later Sanscrit the wealth of apparently unconnected significances borne by a single word is phenomenal, but in Vedic Sanscrit it is more than phenomenal and offers a serious stumbling-block to any attempt by moderns to fix the exact & indisputable sense of the Aryan hymns. I shall give evidence in this work for concluding that in yet earlier speech the licence was much greater, that each word, not only exceptionally but ordinarily, was capable of numerous different meanings and each object or idea could be expressed by many, often by as many as fifty different words each derived from a different root. To our ideas such a state of things would be one merely of lawless confusion negating the very idea of any law of speech or any possibility of a linguistic Science, but I shall show that this extraordinary freedom & pliancy arose inevitably out of the very nature of human speech in its beginnings & as a result of the very laws which presided over its pristine development.

By going back thus from the artificial use of a developed speech in modern language nearer to the natural use of primitive speech by our earlier forefathers we gain two important points. We get rid of the idea of a conventional fixed connection between the sound and its sense and we perceive that a certain object is expressed

by a certain sound because for some reason it suggested a particular & striking action or characteristic which distinguished that object to the earlier human mind. Ancient man did not say in his mind, as would the sophisticated modern, "Here is a grey carnivorous animal, with four legs, of the canine species who hunts in packs and is particularly associated in my mind with Russia and the winter & snow & the steppes; let us find a suitable name for him"; he had fewer ideas about the wolf in his mind, no preoccupation with ideas of scientific classification and much pre-occupation with the physical facts of his contact with the wolf. It was the chief all-important physical fact he selected, when he cried to his companion, not "Here is the wolf", but simply "This tearer", *ayam vṛkaḥ*. The question remains, why the word *vṛkaḥ* more than another suggested the idea of tearing. The Sanscrit language carries us one step back, but not yet to the final step, by showing us that it is not the formed word *vṛkaḥ* with which we have to deal, but the word *vṛc*, that root of which *vṛka* is only one of several outgrowths. For the second obsession it helps us to get rid of is the modern connection of the developed word with some precise shade of an idea that we have accustomed it to convey. The word *delimitation* & the complex sense it conveys are with us wedded together; we need not remember that it comes from *limes*, a boundary, & that the single syllable *lim*, which is the backbone of the word, does not carry to us by itself the fundamental core of the sense. But I think it can be shown that even in the Vedic times men using the word *vṛka*, had the sense of the root *vṛc* foremost in their minds and it was that root which to their mentality was the rigid fixed significant part of speech; the full word being still fluid and depending for its use on the associations awakened by the root it contained. If that be so, we can see partly why words remained fluid in their sense, varying according to the particular idea awakened by the root-sound in the mentality of the speaker. We can see also why this root itself was fluid not only in its significance, but in its use & why even in the formed and developed word the nominal, adjective, verbal & adverbial uses were even in the comparatively late stage of speech we find in the Vedas, so imperfectly distinguished, so little rigid & separate, so much run into each other. We get back always to the root as the determining unit of language. In the particular inquiry we have before us, the basis for a science of language, we make a most important advance. We need not inquire why *vṛka* meant tearer; we shall inquire instead what the sound *vṛc* meant to the early Aryan-speaking races and why it bore the particular significance or significances we actually find imbedded in it. We have not to ask why *dolabra* in Latin means an axe, *dalmi* in Sanscrit means Indra's thunderbolt, *dalapa* & *dala* are applied to weapons, or *dalanam* means crushing or Delphi in Greek is the name given to a place of caverns & ravines; but we may confine ourselves to an inquiry into the nature of the mother-root *dal* of which all these different but cognate uses are the result. Not that the variations noted have no importance, but their importance is minor & subsidiary. We may indeed divide the history of speech-origins into two parts, the embryonic



into which research must be immediate as of the first importance, the structural which is less important & therefore may be kept for subsequent & subsidiary inquiry. In the first we note the roots of speech and inquire how *vrc* came to mean to tear, *dal* to split or crush, whether arbitrarily or by the operation of some law of Nature; in the second we note the modifications and additions by which these roots grew into developed words, word-groups, word-families and word-clans and why those modifications & additions had the effect on sense & use which we find them to have exercised, why the termination *ana* turns *dal* into an adjective or a noun & what is the source & sense of the variant terminations *ābra*, *bhi*, *bha* (*Delphoi*, *dalbhāh*), *ān* (Grk. *ōn*) & *ana*.

This superior importance of the root in early language to the formed word is one of those submerged facts of language the neglect of which has been one of the chief causes of philology's abortiveness as a Science. The first comparative philologists made, it seems to me, a fatal mistake when, misled by the modern preoccupation with the formed word, they fixed on the correlation *pitā*, *patēr*, *pater*, *Vater*, *father* as the clef, the mula mantra, of their Science & began to argue from it to all sorts of sound or unsound conclusions. The real clef, the real correlation is to be found in this other agreement, *dalbha*, *dalana*, *dolabra*, *dolōn*, *delphi*, leading to the idea of a common mother-root, common word-families, common word-clans, kindred word-nations or, as we call them, languages. And if it had been also noticed, that in all these languages *dal* means also pretence or fraud and has other common or kindred significances and some attempt made to discover the reason for one sound having these various significant uses, the foundation of a real Science of Languages might have been formed. We should incidentally have discovered, perhaps, the real connections of the ancient languages & the common mentality of the so-called Aryan peoples. We find *dolabra* in Latin for axe, we find no corresponding word in Greek or Sanscrit for axe; to argue thence that the Aryan forefathers had not invented or adopted the axe as a weapon before their dispersion, is to land oneself in a region of futile & nebulous uncertainties & rash inferences. But when we have noted that *dolabra* in Latin, *dolōn* in Greek, *dala*, *dalapa* & *dalmi* in Sanscrit were all various derivatives freely developed from *dal*, to split, and all used for some kind of weapon, we get hold of a fruitful and luminous certainty. We see the common or original mentality working, we see the apparently free & loose yet really regular processes by which words were formed; we see too that not the possession of the same identical formed words, but the selection of the root word and of one among several children of the same root word to express a particular object or idea was the secret both of the common element & of the large & free variation that we actually find in the vocabulary of the Aryan languages.

I have said enough to show the character of the inquiry which I propose to pursue in the present work. This character arises necessarily from the very nature of the problem we have before us, the processes by which language took birth and

formation. In the physical sciences we have a simple and homogeneous material of study; for, however complex may be the forces or constituents at work, they are all of one nature and obey one class of laws; all the constituents are forms developed by the vibration of material ether, all the forces are energies of this ethereal vibration which have either knotted themselves into these formal constituents of objects and are at work in them or else still work freely upon them from outside. But in the mental sciences we are confronted with heterogeneous material and heterogeneous forces and action of forces; we have to deal first with a physical material and medium, the nature & action of which by itself would be easy enough to study and regular enough in its action, but for the second element, the mental agency working in & upon its physical medium and material. We see a cricket ball flying through the air, we know the elements of action & status that work in and upon its flight and we can tell easily enough either by calculation or judgment not only in what direction it will pursue its flight, but where it will fall. We see a bird flying through the air, — a physical object like the cricket ball flying through the same physical medium; but we know neither in what direction it will fly, nor where it will alight. The material is the same, a physical body, the medium is the same, the physical atmosphere; to a certain extent even the energy is the same, the physical pranic energy, as it is called in our philosophy, inherent in matter. But another force not physical has seized on this physical force, is acting in it and on it and so far as the physical medium will allow, fulfilling itself through it. This force is mental energy, & its presence suffices to change the pure or molecular pranic energy we find in the cricket ball into the mixed or nervous pranic energy we find in the bird. But if we could so develop our mental perceptions as to be able to estimate by judgment or measure by calculation the force of nervous energy animating the bird at the moment of its flight, even then we could not determine its direction or goal. The reason is that there is not only a difference in the energy, but a difference in the agency. The agency is the mental power dwelling in the merely physical object, the power of a mental will which is not only indwelling but to a certain extent free. There is an intention in the bird's flight; if we can perceive that intention, we can then judge whither it will fly, where it will alight, provided always that it does not change its intention. The cricket ball is also thrown by a mental agent with an intention, but that agent being external and not indwelling, the ball cannot, once it is propelled in a certain direction, with a certain force, change that direction or exceed that force unless turned or driven forward by a new object it meets in its flight. In itself it is not free. The bird is also propelled by a mental agent with an intention, in a certain direction, with a certain force of nervous energy in its flight. Let nothing change in the mental will working it, & its flight may possibly be estimated & fixed like the cricket ball's. It also may be turned by an object meeting it, a tree or a danger in the way, an attractive object out of the way, but the mental power dwells within and is, as we should say, free to choose whether it shall be turned aside or not, whether it shall continue its way or

not. But also it is free entirely to change its original intention without any external reason, to increase or diminish its output of nervous energy in the act, to employ it in a direction and towards a goal which are quite foreign to the original object of the flight. We can study & estimate the physical & nervous forces it uses, but we cannot make a science of the bird's flight unless we go behind matter & material force and study the nature of this conscious agent and the laws, if any, which determine, annul or restrict its apparent freedom.

Philology is the attempt to form such a mental science, — for language has this twofold aspect; its material is physical, the sounds formed by the human tongue working on the air vibrations; the energy using it is nervous, the molecular pranic activities of the brain using the vocal agents and itself used & modified by a mental energy, the nervous impulse to express, to bring out of the crude material of sensation the clearness & preciseness of the idea; the agent using it is a mental will, free so far as we can see, but free within the limits of its physical material to vary & determine its use for that purpose of the range of vocal sound. In order to arrive at the laws which have governed the formation of any given human tongue, — and my purpose now is not [to] study the origins of human speech generally, but the origins of Aryan speech, — we must examine, first, the way in which the instrument of vocal sound has been determined and used by the agent, secondly, the way in which the relation of the particular ideas to be expressed to the particular sound or sounds which express it, have been determined. There must always be these two elements, the structure of the language, its seeds, roots, formation & growth, and the psychology of the use of the structure.

Alone of the Aryan tongues, the present structure of the Sanscrit language still preserves the original type of the Aryan structure. In this ancient tongue alone, we see not entirely in all the original forms, but in the original essential parts & rules of formation, the skeleton, the members, the entrails of this organism. It is through the study, then, of Sanscrit especially, aided by whatever light we can get from the more regular & richly-structured among the other Aryan languages, that we must seek for our origins. The structure we find is one of extraordinary initial simplicity and also of extraordinarily methodical & scientific regularity of formation. We have in Sanscrit four open sounds or pure vowels, *a, i, u, r* with their lengthened forms, *ā, ī, ū* and *ṛ* (we have to mention but may omit for practical purposes the rare vowel *ṝ*), supplemented by two other open sounds which the grammarians are probably right in regarding as impure vowels or modifications of *i* and *u*; they are the vowels *e* and *o*, each with its farther modification into *ai* and *au*. Then we have five symmetrical vargas or classes of closed sounds or consonants, the gutturals, *k, kh, g, gh, ṅ*, the palatals, *c, ch, j, jh, ñ*, the cerebrals, answering approximately to the English dentals, *t, th, d, dh, n*, the pure dentals, answering to the Celtic and Continental dentals we find in Irish and in French, Spanish or Italian, *t, th, d, dh, n* & the labials, *p, ph, b, bh, m*. Each of these classes consists of a hard sound, *k, c, t,*

*t, p* with its aspirate, *kh, ch, ṭh, th, ph*, a corresponding soft sound *g, j, ḍ, d, b* with its aspirate *gh, jh, ḍh, dh, bh*, and a class nasal, *ṇ, ñ, ṇ, n, m*. But of these nasals only the last three have any separate existence or importance; the others are modifications of the general nasal sound, *m-n*, which are found only in conjunction with the other consonants of their class and are brought into existence by that conjunction. The cerebral class is also a peculiar class; they have so close a kinship to the dental both in sound and in use that they may almost be regarded as modified dentals, rather than an original separate class. Finally, in addition to the ordinary vowels and consonants we have a class composed of the four liquids *y, r, l, v*, which were evidently treated as semivowels, *y* being the semivowel form of *i*, *v* of *u*, *r* of *ṛ*, *l* of *ḷ*, — this semivowel character of *r* and *l* is the reason why in Latin prosody they have not always the full value of the consonant, why for instance the *u* in *volucris* is optionally long or short; we have the triple sibilation *ś, ṣ* and *s, ś* palatal, *ṣ* cerebral, *s* dental; we have the pure aspirate, *h*. With the possible exception of the cerebral class & the variable nasal, it can hardly be doubted, I think, that the Sanscrit alphabet represents the original vocal instrument of Aryan speech. Its regular, symmetrical and methodical character is evident and might tempt us to see in it a creation of some scientific intellect, if we did not know that Nature in a certain portion of her pure physical action has precisely this regularity, symmetry & fixity and that the mind, at any rate in its earlier unintellectualised action, when man is more guided by sensation & impulse & hasty perception, tends to bring in the element of irregularity & caprice and not a greater method and symmetry. We may even say, not absolutely, but within the range of the linguistic facts & periods available to us, the greater the symmetry & unconscious scientific regularity, the more ancient the stage of the language. The advanced stages of language show an increasing detrition, deliquescence, capricious variation, the loss of useful sounds, the passage, sometimes transitory, sometimes permanent of slight & unnecessary variations of the same sound to the dignity of separate letters. Such a variation, unsuccessful in permanence, can be seen in the Vedic modification of the soft cerebral *ḍ* into a cerebral liquid, *ḷ*. This sound disappears in later Sanscrit, but has fixed itself in Tamil and Marathi. Such is the simple instrument out of which the majestic & expressive harmonies of the Sanscrit language have been formed.

The use of the instrument by the earlier Aryans for the formation of words seems to have been equally symmetrical, methodical & in close touch with the physical facts of vocal expression. These letters are used as so many seed sounds; out of them primitive root sounds are formed by the simple combination of the four vowels or less frequently the modified vowels with each of the consonants, the two dependent nasals *ṇ* and *ñ* and the cerebral nasal *ṇ* excepted. Thus with *d* as a base sound, the early Aryans were able to make for themselves root sounds which they used indifferently as nouns, adjectives, verbs or adverbs to express root ideas, — *da, dā, di, dī, du, dū, dṛ, dṝ*. All these roots did not endure as separate words, but

those which died, left an often vigorous progeny behind them which preserve in themselves the evidence for the existence of their progenitor. Especially have the roots formed by the short *a* passed out of use without a single exception. In addition the Aryans could form if they chose the modified root sounds *de*, *dai*, *do*, *dau*. The vowel bases were also used, since the nature of speech permitted it, as root sounds & root words. But obviously this kernel of language, though it might suffice for primitive beings, is too limited in range to satisfy the self-extensive tendency of human speech. We see therefore a class of secondary root sounds and root words grow up from the primitive root by the farther addition to it of any of the consonant sounds with its necessary or natural modification of the already existing root idea. Thus on the basis of the now lost primitive root *da*, it was possible to have four guttural short secondary roots, *dak*, *dakh*, *dag*, *dagh* & four long, *dāk*, *dākh*, *dāg*, *dāgh*, which might be regarded either as separate words or long forms of the short root; so also eight palatal, eight cerebral, with the two nasal forms *daṇ* & *dāṇ*, making ten, ten dental, ten labial, eight liquid, six sibilant and two aspirate secondary roots. It was possible also to nasalise any of these forms, establishing for instance *daṅk*, *daṅkh*, *daṅg* & *daṅgh*. It seems not unnatural to suppose that all these roots existed in the earliest forms of the Aryan speech, but by the time of our first literary records, the greater number of them have disappeared, some leaving behind them a scanty or numerous progeny, others perishing with their frail descendants. If we take a single example, the primitive base root *ma*, we find *ma* itself dead, but existing in the noun forms *ma*, *mā* & *mam*, *matih*, *matam*; *mak* existing only in the nasal form *maṅk* & in its own descendants, *makara*, *makura*, *makula* etc & in tertiary formations *makk* & *maks*; *makh* still existing as a root word in the forms *makh* and *maṅkh*; *mag* only in its descendants and in its nasal form *maṅg*, *magh* in its nasalised form *maṅgh*; *mac* still alive, but childless except in its nasal disguise *mañc*; *mach* dead with its posterity; *maj* alive in its descendants and its nasal form *mañj*, *majh* wholly obsolete. We find in the long forms *mā* and *māṅkṣ* as separate roots & words with *māk*, *mākh*, *māgh* & *māc* as their substantial parts, but more usually deriving it would seem from a lengthening of the short root than from the long form as a separate root. Finally, tertiary roots have been formed less regularly but still with some freedom by the addition of semivowels to the seed sound, in either primitive or secondary roots, thus giving us roots like *dhyai*, *dhvan*, *sru*, *hlād*, or of other consonants where the combination was possible, giving us roots like *stu*, *ścyut*, *hruḍ* etc, or else by the addition of another consonant to the final of the secondary root, giving us forms like *vall*, *majj*, etc. These are the pure root forms. But a sort of illegitimate tertiary root is formed by the vowel guna or modification, as, for example, of the vowel *ṛ* into *ar* & *ṛ* into *ār*, so that we have the alternative forms *ṛc* and *arc* or *ark*; the forms *cars* & *car*, replacing *cṛṣ* & *cṛ* which are now dead, the forms *mṛj* and *marj* etc. We find, too, certain early tendencies of consonantal modification, such as an initial tendency to get rid of the palatal *c*, *ch* and *j*, *jh*, replacing them by

*k* and *g*, a tendency entirely fulfilled in Latin, but arrested in the course of half-fulfilment in Sanscrit. This principle of *guna* is of great importance in the study of the physical formation of the language & of its psychological development, especially as it introduces a first element of doubt and confusion into an otherwise crystal clearness of structure & perfect mechanic regularity of formation. The vowel *guna* or modification works by the substitution either of the modified vowel, *e* for *i*, *o* for *u*, so that we have from *vi* the case form *ves* (*veḥ*), from *jānu* the case form *jānoḥ*, or of the pure semivowel sound, *y* for *i*, *v* for *u*, *r* or, a little impurely, *ra* for *ṛ*, so that from *vi* we have the verbal form *vyantaḥ*, from *śu* the verbal form *aśvat*, from *vṛ* or *vṛt* the noun *vrata*, or else of the supported semivowel sound, *ay* for *i*, *av* for *u*, *ar* for *ṛ*, *al* for *lṛ*, so that we have from *vi* the noun *vayas*, from *śru* the noun *śravas*, from *sṛ* the noun *saras*, from *klṛp* the noun *kalpa*. These forms constitute the simple *gunation* of the short vowel sounds *a*, *i*, *u*, *r*, *ṛ*, *lṛ*; in addition we have the long modification or *vriiddhi*, an extension of the principle of lengthening which gives us the long forms of the vowels; we have *ai* or *āy* from *i*, *au* or *āv* from *u*, *ār* from *ṛ*, *āl* from *lṛ*, while *a* has no *vriiddhi* proper but only the lengthening *ā*. The principal confusion that arises out of this primitive departure from simplicity of sound-development is the frequent uncertainty between a regular secondary root and the irregular *gunated* root. We have for instance the regular root *ar* deriving from the primitive root *a* and the illegitimate root *ar* deriving from the primitive root *r*; we have the forms *kala* and *kāla*, which, if judged only by their structure, may derive either from *klṛ* or from *kal*; we have *ayas* and *āyus* which, similarly judged, may derive either from the root forms *a* and *ā* or from the root forms *i* and *ī*. The main consonantal modifications in Sanscrit are structural & consist [of] the assimilation of like consonants, a hard sound becoming soft by association with a soft sound, a soft sound hard by association with a hard sound, aspirates being replaced in conjunction by the corresponding unaspirated sound and modifying their companion in return, eg *lapsyate* and *labdhum* from *labh* substituted for *labh-syate* and *labh-tum*, *vyūḍha* from *vyūh* replacing *vyūh-ta*. Beyond this tendency to obey certain subtle but easily recognisable tendencies of mutual modification, which in themselves suggest only certain minor and unimportant doubts, the one really corruptive tendency in Sanscrit is the arrested impulse towards disappearance of the palatal family. This has gone so far that such forms as *ketu* can be considered by Indian grammarians, quite erroneously, to proceed from the root *cit* and not from the root *kit* which is its natural parent. In reality, however, the only genuine palatal modifications are those in *sandhi*, which substitute *k* for *c*, *g* for *j* at the end of a word or in certain combinations, eg *lagna* for *lajna*, *vakṛ* for *vactṛ*, *vakva* for *vacva*, the noun *vākya* from the root *vac*, the perfect *cikāya* & *cikye* from *ci*. Side by side with these modificatory combinations we have regular forms, such as *yajña*, *vācya*, *cicāya*, *cicye*. It is even open to question whether the forms *cikāya*, *cikye* are not rather from the root *ki* than actual descendants from the parent root *ci* in whose nest



they have found a home.

These elements of variation noted, we are in a position to follow the second stage in the flowering of speech from the root state to the stage in which we pass on by a natural transition to the structural development of language. So far we have a language formed of the simplest and most regular elements; the seed sounds *a, i, u, k, kh* etc — eight vowels & their modifications, four in number; five classes of consonants & three nasals; one quaternary of liquids or semivowels; three sibilants; one aspirate; based on each of these, their first developments, the primitive and parent roots, as from the seed sound *v*, the primitive root group *va, vā, vi, vī, vu, vū, vr, vṛ* and possibly *ve, vai, vo, vau*; round each primitive root its family of secondary roots, round the primitive *va* its family, *vak, vakh, vag, vagh, vac, vach, vaj, vajh, vaṭ, vaṭh, vaḍ, vaḍh, vaṇ, vat, vath, vad, vadh, van, vap, vaph, vab, vabh, vam, & possibly vay, var, val & vav, vaś, vaṣ, vas, vah*; — the eight or more families of this group forming a root clan, with a certain variable number of tertiary descendants such as *vañc, vañj, vand, vall, vañś, vañh, vraj*, etc. Forty of these clans would constitute the whole range of primitive language. Each word would in the primitive nature of language, like each man in the primitive constitution of human society, fulfil at once several functions, noun, verb, adjective and adverb at once, the inflection of the voice, the use of gesture & the quickness of the instinct making up for the absence of delicacy & precision in the shades of speech. Such a language though of small compass would be one, it is clear, of great simplicity, of a mechanical regularity of formation, built up perfectly in its small range by the automatic methods of Nature, and sufficient to express the first physical & emotional needs of the human race. But the increasing demands of the intellect would in time compel a fresh growth of language and a more intricate flowering of forms. The first instrument in such a growth, the first in urgency, importance & time, would be the impulse towards distinguishing more formally between the action, the agent and the object, & therefore of establishing some sort of formal distinction, however vague at first, between the noun-idea and the verb-idea. The second impulse, possibly simultaneous, would be towards distinguishing structurally, — for it is possible that the various root forms of one family were already used for that object, — between the various times and shades of the action, of establishing in modern language tense forms, voices, moods. The third impulse would be towards the formal distinction of various attributes, such as number & gender, & various relations of the agent & object themselves to the action, of establishing case forms & forms of singularity, duality, plurality. The elaboration of special forms for adjective and adverb seems to have been a later, the latter in fact the latest of the operations of structural development, because in the early mentality the need of these distinctions was the least pressing.

When we examine how the old Aryan speakers managed the satisfaction of these needs & this new & richer efflorescence of the language plant, we find that Nature in them was perfectly faithful to the principle of her first operations and that

the whole of the mighty structure of the Sanscrit language was built up by a very slight extension of her original movement. This extension was secured & made possible by the simple, necessary & inevitable device of using the vowels *a*, *i*, *u* & *r* with their long forms and modifications as enclitic or support sounds subsequently prefixed sometimes to the root, but at first used to form appendage sounds only. The Aryans by the aid of this device proceeded, just as they had formed root words by adding the consonant sounds to the primitive root sounds, by adding for instance *d* or *l* to *va* had formed *vad* & *val*, so now to form structural sounds by adding to the developed root word any of the same consonant sounds, pure or conjunct with others, with an enclitic sound either as the connective support or the formatory support or both, or else by adding the enclitic sound alone as a substantial appendage. Thus, having the root *vad*, they could form from it at their will by the addition of the consonant *t*, *vadat*, *vadit*, *vadut*, *vadṛt* or *vadata*, *vadita*, *vaduta*, *vadṛta*, or *vadati*, *vaditi*, *vaduti*, *vadṛti* or *vadatu*, *vaditu*, *vadutu*, *vadṛtu*, or else *vadatṛ*, *vaditr*, *vadutr*, *vadṛṛ*; or else they could use the enclitic only & form *vada*, *vadi*, *vadu*, *vadṛ*; or they could employ the conjunct sounds *tr*, *ty*, *tv*, *tm*, *tn*, and produce such forms as *vadatra*, *vadatya*, *vadatva*, *vadatma*, *vadatna*. As a matter of fact we do not find and would not expect to find all these possibilities actually used in the case of a single word. With the growth of intellectual richness & precision there would be a corresponding growth in the mental will-action & the supersession of the mechanical mind-processes by more clearly & consciously selective mind-processes. Nevertheless we do find practically all these forms distributed over the root clans & families of the Aryan word-nation. We find the simple nominal forms built by the addition of the sole enclitic richly & almost universally distributed. The richness of forms is much greater in earlier Aryan speech than in later literature. From the root *san*, for instance, we find in Vedic speech all the forms *sana*, *sani*, *sanu* (contracted into *snu*), but in later Sanscrit they have all disappeared. We find also in Veda variants like *caratha* & *carātha*, *rati* & *rāti*, but in later Sanscrit *carātha* has been rejected, *rati* & *rāti* preserved but rigidly distinguished in their significance. We find most roots in possession of the *a* noun form, many in possession of the *i* form, some in possession of the *u* form. We find a preference for the simple hard consonant over the aspirate and the soft; *p* is more frequent in structural nouns than *ph* or *bh*, but both *ph* & *bh* occur; *p* is more frequent than *b*, but *b* occurs. We find certain consonants preferred over others, especially *k*, *t*, *n*, *s* either in themselves or in their combinations; we find certain appendage forms like *as*, *in*, *an*, *at*, *tr*, *vat*, *van*, formalised into regular nominal and verbal terminations. We see double appendages; side by side with the simple *jītvā*, we may have *jītvāra*, *jītvān* etc. Throughout we see or divine behind the present state of the Sanscrit language a wide & free natural labour of formation followed by a narrowing process of rejection & selection. But always the same original principle, either simply or complexly applied, with modification or without modification of the root vowels & consonants, is & remains



the whole basis & means of noun structure.

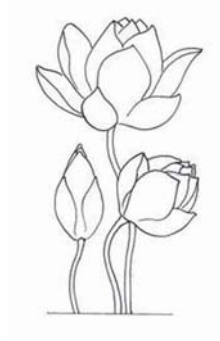
In the variations of the verb, in the formation of case we find always the same principle. The root conjugates itself by the addition of appendages such as *mi*, *si*, *ti* etc, *m*, *s*, *t*, *ta*, *va* (all of them forms used also for nominal structures) either simply or with the support of the enclitic *a*, *i* or rarely *u*, short, lengthened or modified, giving us such forms as *vacmi*, *vadāmi*, *vakṣi*, *vadasi* or *vadāsi*, *vadat*, *vadati*, *vadāti*. In the verb forms other devices are used such as the insertion of an appendage like *n*, *nā*, *nu* or *nī* in preference to the simple vowel enclitic; the prefixing of the enclitic *a* to help out or augment the fixing of tense significance; the reduplication of the essential part of the root in various ways; etc. We notice the significant fact that even here Vedic Sanscrit is much richer & freer in its variations, Sanscrit itself more narrow, rigid & selective, the former using alternative forms like *bhavati*, *bhavāti*, *bhavat*, the latter rejecting all but the first. The case inflexions differ from the verb-forms only in the appendages preferred, not in their principle or even in themselves; *as*, *am*, *es*, *os*, *ām* are all verbal as well as nominal inflexions. Substantially the whole of the language with all its forms & inflexions is the inevitable result of the use by Nature in man of one single rich device, one single fixed principle of sound formation employed with surprisingly few variations, with an astonishingly fixed, imperative & almost tyrannous regularity but also a free & even superfluous original abundance in the formation. The inflexional character of Aryan speech is itself no accident but the inevitable result, almost physically inevitable, of the first seed-selection of sound process, that original apparently trifling selection of the law of the individual being which is at the basis of all Nature's infinitely varied regularities. Fidelity to the principle already selected being once observed, the rest results from the very nature & necessities of the sound-instrument that is employed. Therefore, in the outward form of language, we see the operation of a regular natural law proceeding almost precisely as Nature proceeds in the physical world to form a vegetable or an animal genus & its species.

We have taken one step in the perception of the laws that govern the origin & growth of language; but this step is nothing or little unless we can find an equal regularity, an equal reign of fixed process on the psychological side, in the determining of the relation of particular sense to particular sound. No arbitrary or intellectual choice but a natural selection has determined the growth & arrangement of the sounds, simple or structural, in their groups & families. Is it an arbitrary or intellectual choice or a law of natural selection that has determined their significances? If the latter be true & it must be so if any Science of language be possible, then having this peculiar arrangement of significant sounds, certain truths follow inevitably. First, the seed sound *v* for example must have in it something inherent to it which connected it in man's mind originally, in the first natural state of speech, with the actual senses borne by the primitive roots *va*, *vā*, *vi*, *vī*, *vu*, *vū*, *vṛ*, *vṝ* in the primitive language. Secondly, whatever variations there are in sense between these

roots must be determined originally by some inherent tendency of significance in the variable or vowel element, *a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, ṛ, ṝ*. Thirdly, the secondary roots depending on *va, vac, vakh, vañj, vam, val, vap, vah, vaś, vas* etc must have a common element in their significances and, so far as they varied originally, must have varied as a result of the element of difference, the consonantal termination *c, kh, j, m, l, p, h, ś, s* respectively. Finally, in the structural state of language, although as a result of the growing power of conscious selection other determining factors may have entered into the selection of particular significances for particular words, yet the original factor cannot have been entirely inoperative and such forms as *vadana, vadatra, vāda* etc must have been governed in the development of their sense dominantly by their substantial & common sound-element, to a certain extent by their variable & subordinate element. I shall attempt to show by an examination of the Sanscrit language that all these laws are actually true of Aryan speech, their truth being borne out or often established beyond any shadow of doubt by the facts of the language.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Vedic and Philological Studies*, CWSA, Vol. 14, pp. 559-576)



## ‘DO NOT LET US LOSE SIGHT OF THE GOAL’

**June 26, 1914**

Hail to Thee, O Lord, Master of the world. Give us the power to do the work without being attached to it and to develop the capacities of individual manifestation without living in the illusion of personality. Strengthen our vision of reality; make firm our perception of unity; deliver us from all ignorance, all darkness.

We do not ask for the perfection of the instrument, knowing that in the world of relativities all perfection is relative: this instrument, fashioned for action in this world, must, in order to be able to act, belong to this world; but the consciousness that animates it should be identified with Thine, it should be the universal and eternal consciousness animating the varied multitude of bodies.

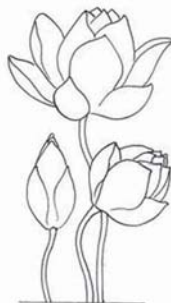
O Lord, grant that we may rise above the ordinary forms of manifestation so that Thou mayst find the tools necessary for Thy new manifestation.

Do not let us lose sight of the goal; grant that we may always be united with Thy force, the force which the earth does not yet know and which Thou hast given us the mission to reveal to it.

In a deep meditation, all the states of manifestation consecrate themselves to Thy manifestation.

THE MOTHER

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 1, p. 186)*



## TRUE HUMILITY — SUPRAMENTAL PLASTICITY — SPIRITUAL REBIRTH

As I have often been questioned about it, I shall touch briefly on the meaning of true humility, supramental plasticity and spiritual rebirth. Humility is that state of consciousness in which, whatever the realisation, you know the infinite is still in front of you. The rare quality of selfless admiration about which I have spoken to you is but another aspect of true humility; for it is sheer arrogance that refuses to admire and is complacent about its own petty achievements, forgetting the infinite which is always ahead of it. However, you need to be humble not only when you have nothing substantial or divine in you but even when you are on the path of transformation. Paradoxical though it may sound, the Divine who is absolutely perfect is at the same time absolutely humble — humble as nothing else can ever be. He is not occupied in admiring Himself: though He is the All, He ever seeks to find Himself in what is not-Himself — that is why He has created in His own being what seems to be a colossal not-Himself, this phenomenal world. He has passed into a form in which He has to discover endlessly in time the infinite contents of that which He possesses entirely in the eternal consciousness.

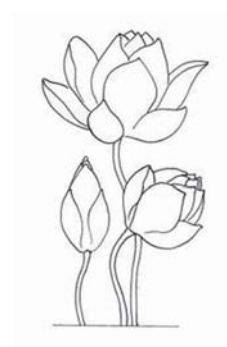
One of the greatest victories of this ineffable humility of God will be the transformation of Matter which is apparently the most undivine. Supramental plasticity is an attribute of finally transformed Matter. The supramental body which has to be brought into being here has four main attributes: lightness, adaptability, plasticity and luminosity. When the physical body is thoroughly divinised, it will feel as if it were always walking on air, there will be no heaviness or *tamas* or unconsciousness in it. There will also be no end to its power of adaptability: in whatever conditions it is placed it will immediately be equal to the demands made upon it because its full consciousness will drive out all that inertia and incapacity which usually make Matter a drag on the Spirit. Supramental plasticity will enable it to stand the attack of every hostile force which strives to pierce it: it will present no dull resistance to the attack but will be, on the contrary, so pliant as to nullify the force by giving way to it to pass off. Thus it will suffer no harmful consequences and the most deadly attacks will leave it unscathed. Lastly, it will be turned into the stuff of light, each cell will radiate the supramental glory. Not only those who are developed enough to have their subtle sight open but the ordinary man too will be able to perceive this luminosity. It will be an evident fact to each and all, a permanent proof of the transformation which will convince even the most sceptical.

The bodily transformation will be the supreme spiritual rebirth — an utter casting away of all the ordinary past. For spiritual rebirth means the constant throwing away of our previous associations and circumstances and proceeding to live as if at

each virgin moment we were starting life anew. It is to be free of what is called Karma, the stream of our past actions: in other words, a liberation from the bondage of Nature's common activity of cause and effect. When this cutting away of the past is triumphantly accomplished in the consciousness, all those mistakes, blunders, errors and follies which, still vivid in our recollection, cling to us like leeches sucking our life-blood, drop away, leaving us most joyfully free. This freedom is not a mere matter of thought; it is the most solid, practical, material fact. We really are free, nothing binds us, nothing affects us, there is no obsession of responsibility. If we want to counteract, annul or outgrow our past, we cannot do it by mere repentance or similar things, we must forget that the untransformed past has ever been and enter into an enlightened state of consciousness which breaks loose from all moorings. To be reborn means to enter, first of all, into our psychic consciousness where we are one with the Divine and eternally free from the reactions of Karma. Without becoming aware of the psychic, it is not possible to do so; but once we are securely conscious of the true soul in us which is always surrendered to the Divine, all bondage ceases. Then incessantly life begins afresh, then the past no longer cleaves to us. To give you an idea of the final height of spiritual rebirth, I may say that there can be a constant experience of the whole universe actually disappearing at every instant and being at every instant newly created!

THE MOTHER

*(Questions and Answers 1929-1931, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 3, pp. 175-77)*



## A CONVERSATION OF 26 MAY 1929

*If our will is only an expression or echo of the universal will, where is the place of individual initiative? Is the individual only an instrument to register universal movements? Has he no power of creation or origination?*

All depends upon the plane of consciousness from which you are looking at things and speaking of them or on the part of the being from which you act.

If you look from one plane of consciousness, the individual will appear to you as if he were not only an instrument and recorder, but a creator. But look from another and higher plane of consciousness with a wider view of things and you will see that this is only an appearance. In the workings of the universe whatever happens is the result of all that has happened before. How do you propose to separate one being from the integral play of the manifestation or one movement from the whole mass of movements? Where are you going to put the origin of a thing or its beginning? The whole play is a rigidly connected chain; one link merges imperceptibly into another. Nothing can be taken out of the chain and explained by itself as if it were its own source and beginning.

And what do you mean when you say that the individual creates or originates a movement? Does he do it all out of himself or out of nothing as it were? If a being were able to create in that way a thought or feeling or action or anything else, he would be the creator of the world. It is only if the individual goes back in his consciousness into the greater Consciousness which is the origin of things, that he can be an originator; he can initiate a movement only by identifying himself with the conscious Power which is the ultimate source of all movements.

There are many planes of consciousness; and the determinism of one plane is not the same as the determinism of another. So, when you speak of the creative individual, of what part of him are you thinking? For he is a very composite entity. Is it his psychic being of which you speak, or the mental or the vital or the physical? Between the unseen source of a movement and its manifestation, its external expression through the individual, there are all these steps and many others; and on each many modifications of it take place, many distortions and deformations. It is these changes that give the illusion of a new creation, a new origin, or a new starting-point for a movement. It is like when you put a stick into water; you see the stick, not in its true line, but bent into an angle. But it is an illusion, a distortion by the sight; it is not even a real angle.

Each individual consciousness, you can say, brings into the universal movement something that you can call from a certain point of view its own deformation or from another its own quality of the movement. These individual motions are part of

the play of the Divine movement; they are not themselves origins, they are a transformation of things whose origin you must seek in the universe as a whole.

The sense of separation is spread everywhere, but it is an illusion; it is one of those false moods of which we must be cured if we want to enter into the true consciousness. The mind cuts the world into small bits: it says, here this stops, there that begins, and by this fragmentation it succeeds in distorting the universal movement. There is one great flow of a single, all-embracing, all-containing consciousness which manifests in an ever unrolling universe. This is the truth that stands behind everything here; but there is too this illusion which masks the truth from you, the illusion of these many movements which imagine that they are separate from one another, that they stand by themselves, in themselves and for themselves and that each is a thing in itself apart from the rest of the universe. They have the impression that their action and reaction upon one another is something external, as if they were like different worlds standing in each other's presence but with no point of contact except some external relations at a distance. Each sees himself as if he were a separate personality existing in its own right. This error of the separative sense has been allowed as part of the universal play, because it was necessary that the one consciousness should objectify itself and fix its forms. But because it has been allowed in the past, it does not follow that the illusion of separateness must always continue.

In the universal play there are some, the majority, who are ignorant instruments; they are actors who are moved about like puppets, knowing nothing. There are others who are conscious, and these act their part, knowing that it is a play. And there are some who have the full knowledge of the universal movement and are identified with it and with the one Divine Consciousness and yet consent to act as though they were something separate, a division of the whole. There are many intermediary stages between that ignorance and this full knowledge, many ways of participating in the play. There is a state of ignorance in which you do a thing and believe that it was you who decided it; there is a state of lesser ignorance in which you do it knowing that you are made to do it but you do not know how or why; and there is too a state of consciousness in which you are fully aware, — for you know what it is that acts through you, you know that you are an instrument, you know how and why your act is done, its process and its purpose. The state of ignorance in which you believe that you are the doer of your acts persists so long as it is necessary for your development; but as soon as you are capable of passing into a higher condition, you begin to see that you are an instrument of the one consciousness; you take a step upward and you rise to a higher conscious level.

*Do hostile forces attack one on the mental plane as they do in the vital world?*

It is difficult to give a precise answer without going into a number of explanations

into which we cannot now enter.

Mind is one movement, but there are many varieties of the movement, many strata, that touch and even press into each other. At the same time the movement we call mind penetrates into other planes. In the mental world itself there are many levels. All these mind-planes and mind-forces are interdependent; but yet there is a difference in the quality of their movements and for facility of expression we have to separate them from one another. Thus we can speak of a higher mind, an intermediary mind, a physical and even a quite material mind; and there are many other distinctions that can be made.

Now, there are mental planes that stand high above the vital world and escape its influence; there are no hostile forces or beings there. But there are others — and they are many — that can be touched or penetrated by the vital forces. The mind-plane that belongs to the physical world, the physical mind, as we usually call it, is more material in its structure and movement than the true mind and it is very much under the sway of the vital world and the hostile forces. This physical mind is usually in a kind of alliance with the lower vital consciousness and its movements; when the lower vital manifests certain desires and impulses, this more material mind comes to its aid and justifies and supports them with specious explanations and reasonings and excuses. It is this layer of mind that is most open to suggestions from the vital world and most often invaded by its forces. But there is in us a higher mind which moves in the region of disinterested ideas and luminous speculations and is the originator of forms, and there is a mind of pure ideas that have not yet been put into form; these greater mind-levels are free from the vital movements and the adverse forces, because they stand far above them. There may be contradictory movements there; there may be movements and formations that come into clash with the Truth or are in conflict with one another; but there is no vital disturbance, nothing that can be called hostile. The true philosopher mind, the mind that is the thinker, discoverer, maker of forms, and the mind of pure ideas that are not yet put into form, are beyond this inferior invasion and influence. But this does not mean that their motions cannot be imitated or their creations misused by perverse or hostile beings of a greater make and higher origin than those of whom I have till now spoken.

*What are the conditions in the psychic world? How is it situated with regard to the hostile forces?*

The psychic world or plane of consciousness is that part of the world, the psychic being is that part of the being which is directly under the influence of the Divine Consciousness; the hostile forces cannot have even the remotest action upon it. It is a world of harmony, and everything moves in it from light to light and from progress to progress. It is the seat of the Divine Consciousness, the Divine Self in the individual



being. It is a centre of light and truth and knowledge and beauty and harmony which the Divine Self in each of you creates by his presence, little by little; it is influenced, formed and moved by the Divine Consciousness of which it is a part and parcel. It is in each of you the deep inner being which you have to find in order that you may come in contact with the Divine in you. It is the intermediary between the Divine Consciousness and your external consciousness; it is the builder of the inner life, it is that which manifests in the outer nature the order and rule of the Divine Will. If you become aware in your outer consciousness of the psychic being within you and unite with it, you can find the pure Eternal Consciousness and live in it; instead of being moved by the Ignorance as the human being constantly is, you grow aware of the presence of an eternal light and knowledge within you, and to it you surrender and are integrally consecrated to it and moved by it in all things.

For your psychic being is that part of you which is already given to the Divine. It is its influence gradually spreading from within towards the most outward and material boundaries of your consciousness that will bring about the transformation of your entire nature. There can be no obscurity here; it is the luminous part in you. Most people are unconscious of this psychic part within them; the effort of Yoga is to make you conscious of it, so that the process of your transformation, instead of a slow labour extending through centuries, can be pressed into one life or even a few years.

The psychic being is that which persists after death, because it is your eternal self; it is this that carries the consciousness forward from life to life.

The psychic being is the real individuality of the true and divine individual within you. For your individuality means your special mode of expression and your psychic being is a special aspect of the one Divine Consciousness that has taken shape in you. But in the psychic consciousness there is not that sense of division between the individual and the universal consciousness which affects the other parts of your nature. You are conscious there that your individuality is your own line of expression, but at the same time you know too that it is an expression objectifying the one universal consciousness. It is as though you had taken a portion out of yourself and put it in front of you and there were a mutual look and play of movement between the two. This duality was necessary in order to create and establish the objectivised relation and to enjoy it; but in your psychic being the separation that sharpens the duality is seen to be an illusion, an appearance and nothing more.

*Is there a difference between the “spiritual” and the “psychic”? Are they different planes?*

Yes, the psychic plane belongs to the personal manifestation; the psychic is that which is divine in you put out to be dynamic in the play. But when we speak of the spiritual we are thinking of something that is concentrated in the Divine rather than

in the external manifestation. The spiritual plane is something static behind and above the outward play; it supports the instruments of the nature, but is not itself included or involved in the external manifestation here.

But in speaking of these things one must be careful not to be imprisoned by the words we use. When I speak of the psychic or the spiritual, I mean things that are very deep and real behind the flat surface of the words and intimately connected even in their difference. Intellectual definitions and distinctions are too external and rigid to seize the true truth of things. And yet, unless you are very much in the habit of speaking to one another, there is almost a necessity of defining the sense of your words, if you are to understand each other. The ideal condition for a conversation is when the minds are so well attuned that the words are only a support for a spontaneous mutual understanding and you need not explain at each step what you utter. This is the advantage when you talk always with the same persons; an attuned harmony is established between their minds and the significance of the things spoken penetrates them at once.

There is a world of ideas without form and it is there that you must enter if you want to seize what is behind the words. So long as you have to draw your understanding from the forms of words, you are likely to fall into much confusion about the true sense; but if in a silence of your mind you can rise into the world from which ideas descend to take form, at once the real understanding comes. If you are to be sure of understanding one another, you must be able to understand in silence. There is a condition in which your minds are so well attuned and harmonised together that one perceives the thought of the other without any necessity of words. But if there is not this attunement, there will always be some deformation of your meaning, because to what you speak the other mind supplies its own significance. I use a word in a certain sense or shade of its sense; you are accustomed to put into it another sense or shade. Then, evidently, you will understand, not my exact meaning in it, but what the word means to you. This is true not of speech only, but of reading also. If you want to understand a book with a deep teaching in it, you must be able to read it in the mind's silence; you must wait and let the expression go deep inside you into the region where words are no more and from there come slowly back to your exterior consciousness and its surface understanding. But if you let the words jump at your external mind and try to adapt and adjust the two, you will have entirely missed their real sense and power. There can be no perfect understanding unless you are in union with the unexpressed mind that is behind the centre of expression.

We spoke once of individual minds as worlds that are distinct and separate from one another; each is shut up in itself and has almost no direct point of contact with any other. But that is in the region of the inferior mind; there your own formations close you in; you cannot get out of them or out of yourself; you can understand only yourself and your own reflection in things. But here in this higher region of the

unexpressed mind and its purer altitudes you are free; when you enter there, you go out of yourself and penetrate into a universal mental plane in which each individual mental world is dipping as if into a huge sea. There you can understand entirely what is going on in another and read his mind as if it were your own, because there no separation divides mind from mind. It is only when you unite in that region with others that you can understand them; otherwise you are not attuned, you do not touch, you have no means of knowing precisely what is happening in another mind than yours. Most often when you are in the presence of another you are quite ignorant of what he thinks or feels; but if you are able to go beyond and above this external plane of expression, if you can enter into a plane where a silent communion is possible, then you can read in that other as you would in yourself. Then the words you use for your expression are of very little importance, because the full comprehension lies beyond them in something else and a minimum of words is sufficient for your purpose. Long explanations are not necessary there; you do not need that a thought should be brought out into full expression, for the direct vision of what is meant is with you.

*Will a time come when the hostile forces will be there no longer?*

When their presence in the world is no more of any use, they will disappear. Their action is used as a testing process, so that nothing may be forgotten, nothing left out in the work of transformation. They will allow no mistake. If you have overlooked in your own being even a single detail, they will come and put their touch upon that neglected spot and make it so painfully evident that you will be forced to change. When they will no longer be required for this process, their existence will become useless and they will vanish. They are suffered to exist here, because they are necessary in the Great Work; once they are no more indispensable, they will either change or go.

*Will it be a long time before that happens?*

All depends upon your point of view. For time is relative; you can speak of it from the ordinary external human standpoint or from the deeper viewpoint of an inner consciousness or from the outlook of the Divine.

Whether the thing to be done takes a thousand years or only a year according to the human computation, does not matter at all, if you are one with the Divine Consciousness; for then you leave outside you the things of the human nature and you enter into the infinity and eternity of the Divine Nature. Then you escape from this feeling of a great eagerness of hurry with which men are obsessed, because they want to see things done. Agitation, haste, restlessness lead nowhere. It is foam on the sea; it is a great fuss that stops with itself. Men have a feeling that if they are

not all the time running about and bursting into fits of feverish activity, they are doing nothing. It is an illusion to think that all these so-called movements change things. It is merely taking a cup and beating the water in it; the water is moved about, but it is not changed for all your beating. This illusion of action is one of the greatest illusions of human nature. It hurts progress because it brings on you the necessity of rushing always into some excited movement. If you could only perceive the illusion and see how useless it all is, how it changes nothing! Nowhere can you achieve anything by it. Those who are thus rushing about are the tools of forces that make them dance for their own amusement. And they are not forces of the best quality either.

Whatever has been done in the world has been done by the very few who can stand outside the action in silence; for it is they who are the instruments of the Divine Power. They are dynamic agents, conscious instruments; they bring down the forces that change the world. Things can be done in that way, not by a restless activity. In peace, in silence and in quietness the world was built; and each time that something is to be truly built, it is in peace and silence and quietness that it must be done. It is ignorance to believe that you must run from morning to night and labour at all sorts of futile things in order to do something for the world.

Once you step back from these whirling forces into quiet regions, you see how great is the illusion! Humanity appears to you like a mass of blind creatures rushing about without knowing what they do or why they do it and only knocking and stumbling against each other. And it is this that they call action and life! It is empty agitation, not action, not true life.

I said once that, to speak usefully for ten minutes, you should remain silent for ten days. I could add that, to act usefully for one day, you should keep quiet for a year! Of course, I am not speaking of the ordinary day-to-day acts that are needed for the common external life, but of those who have or believe that they have something to do for the world. And the silence I speak of is the inner quietude that those alone have who can act without being identified with their action, merged into it and blinded and deafened by the noise and form of their own movement. Stand back from your action and rise into an outlook above these temporal motions; enter into the consciousness of Eternity. Then only you will know what true action is.

THE MOTHER

*(Questions and Answers 1929-1931, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 3, pp. 58-68)*

## “A DIAMOND IS BURNING UPWARD” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

I don't know if this poem is truly mystical or merely misty. Please give it your consideration.

A diamond is burning upward  
In the roofless chamber walled  
By the ivory mind;  
An orb entrandèd<sup>1</sup> glows  
Where ~~the~~<sup>2</sup> earth-storm never blows —  
But the two wide eyes are blind  
the  
To its virgin soar behind  
Their ruby and emerald.

The one pure bird finds rest  
In the crescent moon of a nest  
Which infinite boughs upbear . . .  
phantom  
Flung out on ~~noisy~~ air  
In a colour-to-colour race  
Yet never ending their quest,  
The two birds dream they fly  
Though fixed in the narrow sky  
~~our~~  
Of ~~the~~ futile human face.  
a

*(Amal's question in the left margin:)*

2. Should this “the” be dropped.

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

1. Eh, what? “Entranced” I know and “stranded” I know and am; but entranded I know not.

I don't know which it is, but it sounds very surrealistic. Images and poetry very beautiful, but significances and connections are cryptic. Very attractive, though.

17 February 1938

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### A DIAMOND IS BURNING UPWARD

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Flung out on phantom air  
In a colour-to-colour race  
Yet never ending their quest,  
The two birds dream they fly  
Though fixed in the narrow sky  
Of a futile human face.

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

## NEEDLEWORK IN THE MOTHER'S EMBROIDERY DEPARTMENT

*(Continued from the issue of October 2019)*

Bela, one of the young girls sent by the Mother to work with Vasudha shares with us her treasured memories:

Sri Aurobindo Ashram of 2005 is so different from what it was in 1940 when I first stepped in here as a girl of 13. Our Ashram has passed through innumerable stages and phases since it was established in 1926.

My first Darshan of the Mother took place in the Ashram courtyard when she came out onto Dyuman-bhai's terrace. I stood with Nolini-da on one side and my father, Girindra Ghosh, on the other. I gazed at her with wonder! The Mother looked directly at me for a few seconds then smiled and nodded. I was overjoyed to have been noticed and acknowledged. Later, Nolini-da explained to me that by her nod, Mother had indicated her permission for me to join in the evening meditation. But a greater joy awaited me the following evening when we went to meet the Mother in her room. It is difficult for me to describe the extraordinary feeling that overtook me when I went up to her and knelt down for her blessing. It was an unforgettable experience. Then came 15<sup>th</sup> August, — another memorable day in my life. It was my first Darshan of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were seated on a sofa and one by one we went to offer our pranam to them. I still remember almost every detail of that glorious day. When it was my turn for pranam I came and stood before them. Sri Aurobindo looked at me for a long time. I remained still and then I turned my gaze to Mother. She was smiling sweetly at me. This Darshan was a heavenly experience for me.

During the 25 days of my stay as a visitor in the Ashram I would spend the mornings helping Mridu-di who prepared food for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. After my lunch in the Ashram Dining Room, I would lend a helping hand in the wiping section for a while. Once I was back in my room, I would take up my embroidery work on a silk tablecloth which I wished to offer to the Mother before leaving Pondicherry.

On the last day of my visit, I went to the Mother to present the tablecloth and to seek her blessings. Before Mother could say anything, I pleaded with her: "I like you so much, I want to stay here with you. Please keep me with you."

The Mother, with a beautiful smile on her face replied, "Certainly you can stay; but next time." Then she put her hand a few inches above my head and

continued, "You must grow big. Now it will be difficult for you to stay without a guardian."

Exactly three years later, on 8<sup>th</sup> of August I was back in Pondicherry, this time for good. I was simply amazed to find that the Mother had my room ready for me! A few days later, my work in the Ashram was also decided. In those days the Mother selected the work for each one. Nolini-da called me and said that I was to go to Swarna-di's house and work there with Minu. Swarna-di used to cut and stitch dress materials and prepare gowns, coats, and other things for the Mother.

I used to watch Swarna-di take a new cloth material and cut it exactly according to a dress model made of big brown paper. I presume that these paper dress models came from the Mother's room through Datta.

The Mother always wore hand-stitched clothes. Since my childhood, I enjoyed doing embroidery. So, I was very happy to begin my work here. Minu and I helped Swarna-di in stitching and we also did a little embroidery work, usually on the border of Mother's gowns.

My working hours were 7.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. and after lunch, 2 p.m. to 5 p. m. everyday. Around 8 o'clock in the morning we would all leave our work to go for pranam in the Ashram. It was wonderful in those days — we had the golden opportunity of seeing the Mother several times a day. Every afternoon at 3.30 p.m. Swarna-di would give Minu and me fruits that had been sent for us by the Mother. After this, instead of continuing with our needlework we would turn our attention to washing the Mother's garments.

The Mother wanted us to learn more about embroidery, so from 1946 onwards I started going to Vasudha-ben's house with Minu and Jaya. Vasudha-ben was popularly known as Akka. Once the Mother sent word to us that she would be coming to our department and see how we were doing our work. We were very excited and immediately began to make preparations for her visit. We placed a chair for her with a beautiful cover on it. Bibha-di did an 'alpana' in front of the chair. The Mother's car stopped in front of our building. All of us were working quietly in our own places but were eagerly waiting for her arrival. The Mother came in and watched each of us doing our work. Then she took her seat and we all went to her, offered our salutation and received the sweets she had brought for us. What a lovely day it was for all of us. I remember we were blessed with another visit of the Mother to our department on one occasion of Akka's birthday.

We began to do embroidery work on a larger scale and the members of this department increased in number. Earlier we had seen Mother only in sarees and gowns, but from 1948 she started wearing salwar-kameez too when she went out to play tennis in the evenings.

Our group now consisted of Subhadra, Anusuya, Meenakshiamma, Gauri



Ganguli, Ichchha-ben, Jaya, Minu, myself and our in-charge, Akka, who taught us many new stitches for our needlework. In 1946 (?) when the Second World War was coming to an end, we had a quiet 'Peace' celebration in the Ashram. It was organised by the Mother. We stitched bedcovers, tablecloths, chaircovers, cushions and cushion-covers, curtains etc. On each piece we embroidered with golden thread the design of a dragon.<sup>1</sup>

During this period, one day I had a strange experience. While embroidering an eye of a dragon, all of a sudden, I vividly felt the Mother stitching the design through me, as if she was within me and doing the work. The memory of this remarkable experience has always remained with me.

We would put our full concentration in our needlework and while we worked we tried to remember the Mother silently in our minds.

Most of the designs that we stitched in our department were the creative art of Sanjiban-da and a few were by Krishnalal-ji. On the day of the 'Peace' celebration, Sri Aurobindo's room and the Mother's room were decorated with the new embroidered linen.

Later, in 1956, when the Ashram Exhibition House was set up, all this dragon-embroidered handwork was displayed there, along with other items, for a short while for everyone to see. This was the first exhibition held in the Ashram. Till 1960 all that we stitched in our department was for the Mother's use. Gradually a change came. A variety of products were now coming up with the entry of new workers in the Embroidery Department.

We were learning something new all the time — new designs, new methods and new ways of stitching. We were learning to do embroidery on different kinds of cloth materials, with different combinations of colour threads. As I was learning externally, I was also constantly learning something deep within.

My attitude towards life, my thinking, my ideas began to change. Life becomes beautiful and meaningful when one lives and works for the Divine.

The finished products began to be displayed in the departments and some of these products were taken by the devotees as mementos from the Ashram and in return they gave an offering to the Mother.

Since we devoted most of our time to our work, we were not able to attend school as regular students, so the Mother arranged private classes for us.

In the evenings we went to the Playground throughout the week for group activities and games. One day, I was unable to perform well in a competition due to a problem with my eyes. Later, when I went to the Mother and told her about it, she looked at me and said, "What a pity, exercise and work give us

1. The designs of dragons were done by Sanjiban. In 1947, the Mother had given him a small card with dragons on it to be used as samples by him. In the Chinese lore, dragons, depending on their colour, represent forces of different levels in nature.

good health and a good mind.”

When Mother fell ill in 1962, Akka began to spend more and more time in the Mother's room. Anusuya was asked to supervise the work in the department, where not only did we do all the needlework, but we continued to do the washing and ironing of all the Mother's clothes. Work was divided very well amongst us and we always tried to work together very harmoniously. Apart from doing our own share of work, we also lent a helping hand to others whenever it was necessary. After the sudden tragic death of Anusuya, our department underwent another change. Ichchha-ben and Minu were given the supervision work. But Akka came now and then to see us at work. She would bring messages and instructions for us from the Mother. We too, on our part, would send our messages or queries to the Mother through her.

One day in 1966 Akka came to me and said, “Bela, I want you to teach embroidery to the students of our school.” From then onwards, I became a faculty member of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

The children began to come to the Embroidery Department to learn needlework. As the number of students increased Akka arranged a room in ‘Delafon’ (the building where the students had their classes) where I was to take my classes henceforth. I began to learn a lot as a teacher; it was very interesting. An affectionate bond was growing between the children and me and I felt very happy, and I enjoy the children's company, being a teacher till today.

We may mention here that boys and girls of the age between seven and nine were the students. With much care the teachers helped them to learn embroidery. Twice a year when exhibitions were held in the department, the work of the children was also displayed. Their embroidered small pieces were indeed remarkable. The interesting part of it was that all their products would be booked beforehand as the parents bought these!

Bela's narrative continues:

Today all the work in the Embroidery Department is going on as before with the same spirit and dedication. Whatever is produced here is not only for our Ashram inmates, but for other devotees, and also for all who appreciate beautiful artistic needlework.

With the Mother's gracious help may we go on striving towards perfection and always remain open to her divine Love.

This reminiscence gives us some glimpses of the life in the Ashram of those early times and a vivid image of those wonderful years of the growth of this department under the Mother's guidance. Now we mention a few more examples of

the work in the department. The work done by Sarala Ganguli (mother of Gauri-di) needs to be specially mentioned. Her embroidery was of a different kind. She used to pass the fine coloured thread within each of the woven threads of the cloth and created the effect of weaving similar to the ones found in the well-known woven sarees of Dhaka (East Bengal). Bela had learned this type of work from her and used it on Mother's garments. She used to praise Sarala-di's embroidery work a lot.

When in 1948, the Mother started wearing salwar-kameez in the evenings, one day I entered Priti's (Das Gupta) room and found Gauri and Priti sitting on the floor and doing some embroidery. On enquiring about the work I was told that they were embroidering a border on the Mother's kameez. It was the first one to be done so and I was cautioned not to tell anyone about it. The Mother too did not know about it. Priti and Gauri were the first ones to have this brilliant idea of doing some embroidery on the Mother's kameez. From then on, this dress of hers was either embroidered or painted or prepared of some beautiful woven material.

It was not only the ladies who did embroidery. One year we saw a gown for the Mother beautifully embroidered by Chandubhai, one of the workers in our electric service and also a coach for games in the Department of Physical Education. That was quite an unexpected event for us. However soon Neel, a young Parsi, appeared on the scene and joined the department. 'Where did you learn to embroider?' Vasudha had asked him once. He said that when he was a small boy, he was sent to a convent school in Bombay with his elder sisters. Boys up to twelve years were allowed to study there. In his class there were two boys. The girls had to learn to do hand-stitches in different ways and the boys were given knitting. So Neel learned to knit in the class and that was his initiation to this art. He did wonderful embroidery on gowns and kameezes and stoles for the Mother. He introduced a new aspect in the department's work: he created beautiful shades in the designs by using a small length of split silk threads in the designs which gave the effect of painting to the work. Neel said that there was always an encouragement from the Mother, who would ask Akka three or four months before his birthday on 6<sup>th</sup> March, if Neel was going to do anything. When he wanted to do something new he would prepare some designs and show them to Akka and Akka would advise him and give him the material or he would himself buy it from the market and work on it. Though Mother did not use synthetic material, the very last time in 1962, when Neel did some embroidery for the Mother it was done on a nylon piece. He had purchased two pieces — one light blue and the other light pink. He sent the pieces to the Mother who chose the blue one. He worked on that for the Mother and Neel says that he was extremely happy when she used the stole.

Siloo Solena, sister-in-law of Neel, was also doing most beautiful embroidery and for the choice of right colours for her work she consulted and took the guidance from Neel. She used to do Mother's gowns and salwar-kameezes, and sarees, in cross-stitches done on fine gauze canvas.

Some elderly ladies would take the work from the department and work at home. They received the material on which the required design would be traced along with the coloured threads for their work. They did the embroidery! And what beautiful work at that.

Not only embroidery but other types of needlework were also done here. Vasudha taught quite a number of people to prepare laces of different types such as tatting lace, pillow lace, teneriff lace etc. and beautiful items prepared with different types of laces were offered to the Mother. We have already mentioned the chemise in crochet work prepared by Swarna and Sarala. We remember also the exquisite crochet works done by Nolina (elder sister of Sahana). She used to split lengthways the silk embroidery thread which is already very thin, and used that for the crochet work. We had the opportunity to see once a shawl she had made for the Mother. It was a beautiful work and was almost weightless! In later years beautiful paintings on dresses and sarees were being developed. Sometimes another type of handwork was kept in the department — beautiful batik work done here for the first time which would occasionally be displayed in this department. This work was done under Sanjiban's guidance.

I remember seeing Gauri doing embroidery on the Mother's kameez in the Playground, while waiting for the Mother to come to her room. It was a beautiful design of a tree and a bird was sitting on one of its branches. I was struck by the way she was stitching. She took a small length of thread split it in half and used a little of it on the bird's body to give a particular shade. Neel had taught them this process. As for the tree, the trunk was stitched but leaves were left to be done. She told me that Jayantilal, one of the Ashram artists would paint the leaves. This would give different dimensions to the design. Combining painting with embroidery was a new line of development in the embroidery work in the Ashram. This was introduced by Milli (Bratati), herself an artist, in-charge of a new section, 'Art House'. It was started under the Mother's guidance, where beautiful fabric painting and embroidery work were started sometime in 1968.

Vrinda, a young student of the Centre of Education started to do embroidery. Her embroidery was unique. She filled up her designs with very fine running stitches. The shades were marvellously blended. Her first offering to the Mother was the portraits sketched by the Mother of herself and Sri Aurobindo, now done in embroidery. When Akka took her work to the Mother, the Mother passed her palm a few times lovingly over the design and her comment was: "Oh this is not embroidery, this is painting!" Vrinda is still producing her wonderful work which for her is her offering to the Mother. Some of the women of the department are now learning with Vrinda's help to embroider in the same way.

\* \* \*

### **Accessories to The Mother's Outfits:**

#### **Veil, Stole, Cape, Kittycap, Footwear, Handbag and Crown**

The veil was a piece of fine cloth of either silk or chiffon or any other soft material with a dimension of about 50cms x 1m. As with all her other clothes, this would have beautiful embroidered designs or be decorated with some work in lace. Whenever she came out of her room her head would be covered with a veil, the long ends of which were fixed behind the head.

The stole was used by the Mother when she lived on the second floor of the main Ashram building from March 1962, and when she never came down to the rooms on the first floor. She stopped wearing the coat and used a stole over her gown. This was again a piece of fine silk, georgette or chiffon. The pieces were about 2m long with a regular width of the cloth. These were beautifully embroidered or hand-painted. She draped the stole over her shoulders, the long ends hanging in front.

Before we take up the topic of the cape, we mention another item. From the end of November there would be heavy rain and occasional cyclones. The weather would be chilly. When the monsoon rains were over, the climate would turn quite cold.

Here is a note of the Mother:

Vasudha,

Would you bring me a waistcoat to the playground at about 6 o'clock in the evening? It is really too hot to put it on before I leave the house and without it at sunset I would feel cold. I am asking you to bring it instead of taking it myself in the car, because I need you to pin the veil<sup>2</sup> properly on it.

I hope it will not inconvenience you.

With all my affection and blessings.

January 10, 1949

*(Letters to my little smile, p. 119)*

During one of the cold seasons, it suddenly occurred to Priti Das Gupta to get a cape for the Mother from Calcutta. On her request, her uncle brought one for the Mother. Both of them offered it to her and needless to say they were delighted when she accepted it.

The Mother started wearing it in the Playground. Gauri attended to her needs in the Playground. She would put the cape on her inside her room in the Playground. Only then did the Mother come out and stand in front of the map of India, and then the March Past in the Playground would begin.

2. The chunni.

Mother never used the cape inside her room in the Ashram main building.

However, from 1961 onwards she came to the balcony of the second floor to give her darshan on the special days to the people gathered on the street below. She used a cape then.

The kittycap was used by her in the evenings with salwar-kameez. We are told that she had seen a picture of a lady wearing it. She liked it and asked Mona Pinto to stitch one for her. The name 'kittycap' was also given by her. A loose netted cap with two bands at the front: the back is twisted and tucked in so that it fits tightly on the head; the bands are then wrapped around it to keep it in place. Her kittycaps were made of silk nettings.

An important accessory to the Mother's main outfits of sarees, gowns etc. were her footwear. This work was done by many.

In the early years, we remember seeing Gauri doing beautiful embroidery on the two narrow straps of the Mother's slippers while she was waiting for the Mother to come down to the Meditation Hall to give her blessings to the children who had gathered there after their morning school session was over. What a beautiful work it was! Lakshmi-ben, daughter of Khodabhai Patel, had settled in the Ashram with the other members of her family, in the late nineteen forties. She was the first person to start making footwear for the Mother. She shared with us the wonderful reminiscences of her work with the Mother. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have this precious record with us and to be able to reproduce it for our readers. Here is the report:

Mother used to wear matching chappals, a special type of chappals, matching with her dresses. Her chappals used to be made in Bombay and sent here, from J.J. (the famous footwear makers). My father used to offer sarees to the Mother at the time of Darshan or Pooja. At that time, Modern Silk House was the biggest shop here. And the owner was a devotee and also a friend of my brother. Whenever new bundles of sarees arrived, he would let us know. Once, my father decided to take the whole bundle for the Mother to choose from. The Mother chose sarees of different colours and then said to my father that she would also like to have matching sandals along with those sarees. My father remembered that Manibhai (Chandrakant's father) had brought a pair of chappals for the Mother from Bombay. The Mother had liked them also. They were very light, made of cork, but nails had been used in making them. The Mother asked my father to get five or six pairs of chappals of different colours. All the six boxes came. My father used to offer things to the Mother through me. Then I just thought that the Mother lives here in Pondicherry and her cobbler lives in Bombay! This is quite funny, why should it be so? If the cobbler can make her chappals, then why can't I? I was rather young at that time. But very innocently this idea crossed my mind. It was a very strong



thought even though I had never even seen the actual needle with which cobblers work! I asked my father whether out of these six pairs of the Mother's slippers, I could keep one single pair with me so as to try to make the Mother's chappals properly. My father was quite wonderstruck at this strange request of mine. But he told me to go and ask the Mother instead of answering me anything in favour or against.

In the morning when I took all the boxes of her slippers, I kept one box with me. Mother was observing everything. Then I said: "Mother, I want to ask you something. It is a request, Mother, I want to try to make your slippers." She asked: "Can you make them? How will you make them?" I said: "Mother, first I will open them up and see what are the materials used in them." The Mother smiled and said: "Do not spoil them." Then she said: "Don't put any nails in them, just stitch them." I didn't know anything till then. I came back home and opened up the slippers. I didn't sleep the whole night. I was so excited that the Mother had given me her chappals to learn to do it. Somehow or the other, I got the shape right, and with the chappals, went to Govindaraju (the person who was in charge of the Ashram cobblers' department) to learn the names of different parts, materials used etc. I wrote down everything in detail. I brought suede and leather and then made the slippers. The slippers that came from Bombay had 30 nails in them. I took out all the nails and put them in a box. When the chappals were ready, I thought I would give them to her on my birthday. The Mother was so happy to see that, my God! . . . And then I showed her all the nails that I had taken out. What I had done was that after taking out all the nails, I had the chappals stitched back. As my needles were small and I didn't know the art, I called Govindaraju to stitch them. I told him to come properly dressed, after a fresh bath. My father told him to spend whatever was necessary for making the Mother's chappals. He brought a new big needle and soon the work was finished. The Mother was really very, very pleased because she saw that it could be done without the nails. Then she told me to take all the other five pairs of slippers and redo them like the first pair. But she gave them to me one by one. This is how I started making the Mother's chappals.

I used to ask Vasudha-ben what dresses the Mother was going to have and accordingly I tried to prepare the slippers. All the slippers that Mother used in the Playground were made by me. Then one day she told me to change all the old ones from inside also. She told me to use new cloth. Again, one by one, I changed the material in all the chappals and remade them. . . . Later she used to wear slippers with soles made of warm cloth only as house chappals.

All this happened in the late nineteen forties. When Lakshmi-ben left Pondicherry, others in the department took up the work and Mother's slippers continued

to be made here.

In the nineteen fifties, Sunanda Poddar was one of the lucky few who did this work. She gives us an interesting account of her work and experience:

Earlier, when the Mother had settled down in the Ashram, she wore slippers as her footwear.

As time passed the need for new footwear was felt; someone must have tried making them in the Ashram. Even the design of the two straps of the original was followed. That is why all the Mother's slippers that are still in the Ashram, either with sadhaks or lovingly kept in good condition in her room, are of the same style.

As the Mother's dresses were made in the Ashram so were her footwear, mostly matching the saris or gowns or kameezes.

Many Ashram ladies and some men too prepared these with lots of love. The adoration and skill and perfection which went in this work offered to her is simply magnificent.

Each design on the two straps was drawn by the artists. Then the ladies sat and poured their skill and love and embroidered the design in gold, silver and multi-coloured threads.

Sometimes they worked overnight to complete the slippers to reach the Mother for Darshan or birthdays.

Making the base of the slippers was a tough job. A leather shape matching the size of her feet with the two straps were made. Then, first of all, everything was covered with strong cotton cloth. Next came the interesting part of stitching the silk covering on the inside sole. The decorated straps were attached next — very neatly. Lastly the sole below was covered with dark felt.

There are many interesting stories and experiences connected with the Mother's feet and footwear.

Here is just one of them.

A girl who had newly arrived had an open-eye vision on the beach at the Ashram tennis ground. She was sitting and watching the sea waves breaking on the shore. She suddenly saw the impression of the Mother's feet on the wet sand in front of her. She rushed to the spot and tried to hold back the waves before they washed away the prints of the Mother's feet.

That is where the vision ended.

Some seven or eight months passed. This girl went to the Mother for her birthday blessing. Those were the days when the Mother used to select and give special gifts for the birthdays. Mostly they were books. This girl was also expecting the same. But the Mother is the Mother. The packet given to this very lucky girl contained a pair of Mother's gold brocade slippers!

You can guess the joy this gift must have given her.



In 1948 the Mother started to play tennis. She wore the Japanese 'tabi' which covers the foot upto the ankle. Priti Das Gupta writes:

When the Mother played tennis, she would always wear a pair of 'tabi', a special Japanese footwear which was neither shoe nor sock but it was most comfortable. The pairs of 'tabi' that the Mother had brought from Japan were all more or less worn out. One day the Mother was talking to Vasudha about 'tabi' at the tennis-court. They were discussing how to procure these 'tabi'. As I was standing beside them, I overheard everything. And as luck would have it, just a few days later my youngest uncle arrived here. He was going to Japan and had come to the Mother to ask for her permission. I was delighted beyond words.

"You have to get some 'tabi' for Mother from Japan," I told my uncle.

"Get me the measurement of the Mother's feet. Only then will the 'tabi' fit her," my uncle replied.

With a sheet of paper and pencil in my hand I entered her room in the Playground. She had come back after playing tennis and was resting on her sofa.

"Could you please place your feet on this paper? I will make a tracing. My youngest uncle (Himanshu), is going to Japan. He will get some 'tabi' for you and needs your size," I told her.

The Mother agreed at once.

I bent down to trace out the Mother's feet. The more I looked at her feet, the more I was filled with wonder. My hand would just not move. I had never had such an opportunity to look at her feet for so long. . . .

I do not remember how long I must have sat there staring at the Mother's feet. I suddenly came back to my senses when the Mother gently touched my head. I quickly traced out her Feet with the pencil.

*(Moments Eternal, pp. 3-4)*

The Mother wore the 'tabi' and used platform slippers made of cork. This was the type of footwear she used in the Playground.

This is the report we get again from Lakshmi-ben's reminiscences regarding her experience of making the first of such slippers for the Mother:

Sometime later, one day the Mother told me, "I want slippers made — ½" here, here 1" and here." That meant 2 ½" (from top of the heel in a slipper) platform model. Inside, I put cork and it was very light. With a blade I used to cut the cork. There was no machine in those days. I used to cut everything by hand only. At some places I stitched and at other places I pasted it. I had to make the suede very thin. I used to place it on the floor and then cut it with a cutter that

Govindaraju had got from Madras for this work. I learnt how to use it. Suede was like leather and I had to slice it as thin as cloth so that I could give it the right shape. I still remember the design and also how it was cut. I had the measurement of the Mother's chappal with me. She put her feet and drew it. That was the exact measurement.

Later on, Udar got these made by the cobblers who worked in the basement of the 'Golconde' building. Gautam Chawla, then a young boy, learnt to make this from the cobblers and later prepared these slippers for the Mother.

Mother went to play tennis at about 4 p.m. After the game she would come to the Playground and then would go back to the Ashram building. When she came out for the evening she carried a large, white handbag.

Another accessory for the Mother's outfits prepared here was known as the 'crown'. This was made of a broad band of cloth, the material matching the Mother's saree. The crowns were embroidered with threads in gold or silver and set with some precious stones and beautiful designs were made. This band, or the crown, the Mother fixed around her forehead to hold the pallu of the saree which covered her head. In the early thirties Lalita used to prepare these crowns for the Mother. But later others also prepared this item for the Mother.

Here is an interesting account of this work from a recorded report by Lakshmi-ben remembering her work with the Mother in 1949. Lakshmi-ben says:

Once Ma brought to me her pearl necklace. Pearl signifies occultism. She held my hand and said: "I have something very, very old and it is broken and you have to remake it. Can you make it?" "Yes, I can make it." I would always say, "Mother, I shall try it." By remaking what she meant was that I should de-thread it and redo it. In my life I had not even seen pearls ever till then.

She took me by the hand into the room and then opened a drawer, brought out a tiny box and then said: "See, this is the thing, you have to make it again exactly like this." I said, "Mother, I will try." Then she said: "You have to come here and do it," meaning that I could not take it home to do it.

Till then I had never yet gone to her room upstairs. She was waiting for me at the entrance. She took me by my hand and made me sit down at a place saying: "Here there is enough light. So you sit here." Do you remember where Dyuman-bhai had kept the Mother's asana (seat) upstairs in her room? It was exactly there I was made to sit to work. I sat and then she herself went to bring the table and I always used to keep all things along with apron and napkin with me only. Then she said: "Very good, you must use an apron. I will give you a small velvet tray so that the pearl beads don't roll away." They were very, very tiny pearls.

I was in my twenties. It was November 1950. She was very kind to me.

She had given me a box and a velvet tray. A special thread was brought by my father and a special needle also. I do not even remember now how I repaired that necklace. I crossed the two threads and fixed four pearls on all sides and I criss-crossed the thread and made the necklace. After doing a part of it there was some meenakari work to be inserted. Then, again the other pearls were continued. It was a thick necklace with an ornate design. In between four squares there was one pink-coloured pearl in the middle, with four pearls around it. It was given to the Mother by her great friend in Japan, Mrs. Kobayashi. She told me: "Therefore I love this necklace so much. On this Darshan I want to wear it on the crown."

I used to go to the Mother at 2 p.m. in the afternoon for doing her necklace. She used to say: "Take a little rest and come." She used to be so careful about every small detail concerning us, you cannot imagine. I used to keep all my things with her and then return home. Then the next day when I would go, she herself would bring all the things for me — no one else would come. She would come with the table, tray and everything. There were other people there. But she would not tell anyone to bring my things. Then suppose after ½ hour or so, if it became a little cloudy, she would take me by my hand again to the window near the balcony and make me sit there near more light. At 4 p.m. she would take the box etc. again and keep those back in her cupboard. I would do my pranam and then taking flowers or fruits, I used to return home. . . .

First, I made only half of it for two days. It was a difficult work. The Mother was pleased because I used to keep everything ready. The Mother used to always say that everything should be perfect. It was the particular attitude that mattered most. She used to say, "You work slowly but perfectly." If the attitude is right, then all the things come around automatically. I am personally a very good organiser. I keep everything in great detail — all ready when needed.

Every day I would work only for two hours. And it took me 10 days to do the necklace. She would not allow me to work more than two hours as she used to say that it is hard on the eyes. Sometimes she would say: "Lakshmi, my child come and sit here." She herself was so busy doing so many works but she constantly kept an eye on my work and needs — if the light was correct or if I was hungry or tired. Her loving care was incredible. She used to give me so much love and tender care that I used to get totally overwhelmed. Sometimes she would come suddenly, just like that, with a typical smile on her face and with her hand hidden at the back. She would give me some biscuit or chocolate.

She told me: "I shall put this necklace on my crown on the Darshan day — 24<sup>th</sup> November." On the 23<sup>rd</sup> when I went upstairs, she told me twice, "I shall wear the necklace." She didn't wear it around the neck. I had hopes to

see that worn by her on the 24<sup>th</sup> as I had remade it. She would not wear bangles or necklaces. She used to wear finger rings and also anklets.

You know, in the first week of December Sri Aurobindo passed away. About a week before that I had a dream that I was sitting just like this in my garden room, in the open and something dropped from the sky on my lap and I saw that it was the same necklace. I picked it up as it was the Mother's mala from the crown. . . . In November Sri Aurobindo was not well and the Mother had almost retired to look after him. She was very busy. The Mother stopped wearing all these things after Sri Aurobindo passed away.

Years later, in 1957, the Mother started giving her sarees etc. to the Ashram inmates. Lakshmi-ben says:

When I went to the Mother, she said: "I am going to give you something special." I had forgotten all about it and she gave me that same mala I had redone for her. Then I realised that when it fell from the sky on my lap — may be that was the time when she had decided that for me.

This report by Lakshmi-ben makes us aware of all the work that was done for preparing the precious necklace again for the Mother's use. It reveals to us also the wonderful ways of the Mother's work.

We shall now digress a little. This topic on pearls brings back to our memory Mme. Théon's words to the Mother. Who was Madame Théon? In the first decade of the last century, the Mother went to Tlemcen, a little town in Algeria as a guest of Monsieur Théon and Madame Théon. Both were accomplished occultists and the Mother went there to practise occultism with them.

"I shall tell you about Madame Théon." Mother addressed her class of very young children.

"Madame Théon was born in the Isle of Wight," began Mother. "She lived in Tlemcen with her husband who was a great occultist. Madame Théon herself was an occultist with great powers, she was a remarkable clairvoyant and had mediumistic faculties. Her powers were of an exceptional order. She had received an extremely thorough and rigorous training, and could exteriorise, that is to say, from her material body she could go out in a subtle body, in full consciousness and do this twelve times in a row, up to the extreme limit of the world of forms. . . ."

(Sujata Nahar, *Mother's Chronicles*, Book Three, p. 118)

Once, while talking about the significance of numbers, the Mother said:

This deep meaning of numbers, . . . I got it in Tlemcen, in the Overmind. . . . It was above, just above the realm of the gods. It was there that the numbers took on a living meaning for me; not a mental game — a living meaning. . . .

That is where Madame Théon recognised me, because of the twelve pearls in a formation over my head. She told me, "You are That, because you have this. Only That can have this!" (*Ibid.*, p. 152)

This is a remarkable story.

*(To be continued)*

CHITRA SEN

*. . . the development of spiritual consciousness is an exceedingly vast and complex affair in which all sorts of things can happen and one might almost say that for each man it is different according to his nature and that the one thing that is essential is the inner call and aspiration and the perseverance to follow always after it no matter how long it takes or what are the difficulties or impediments — because nothing else will satisfy the soul within us.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 230)*

# **SRI AUROBINDO, THE PERFECT GENTLEMAN — “LIFE OF PREPARATION AT BARODA Part 3”**

*(Continued from the issue of October 2019)*

## **1. KINDNESS AND COMPASSION**

Sri Aurobindo's elder brothers earned well, yet he was the only one (Manmohan occasionally sent money) to send a monthly allowance regularly to his mother and sister. When Dinendra Kumar Roy pointed out this anomaly, Sri Aurobindo was most understanding of his brothers' circumstances explaining that his eldest brother (Benoybhusan) was impulsive and money slipped through his hands while the other (Manmohan) had just got married and marriage was an expensive luxury.<sup>1</sup>

When Manmohan stopped sending his share of the allowance to their mother and sister, Sri Aurobindo stepped in to make up the deficit although he had married a year earlier and was already sending a handsome sum every month. Furthermore, Manmohan was earning more than him. A letter on his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday to his maternal uncle reads:

My dear Boromama,

I am sorry to hear from Sarojini that Mejdada has stopped sending mother's allowance and threatens to make the stoppage permanent . . . This is very characteristic of Mejdada; it may even be described in one word as Manomaniac. Of course he thinks he is stopping your pension and that this will either bring you to reason or effectually punish you. But the main question is What is to be done now? Of course I can send Rs 40 now and so long as I am alone it does not matter very much, but it will be rather a pull when Mrinalini comes back to Baroda. However even that could be managed well enough with some self-denial and an effective household management. But there is a tale of woe behind.<sup>2</sup>

However, due to the drought conditions in Baroda at that time there was a possibility of his pay being reduced by half from Rs 360 to Rs 180. Yet he did not flinch from covering up for Manmohan, thus leaving almost nothing for himself and Mrinalini. He writes: “Of course if I get half pay I shall send Rs 80 to Bengal,

1. See Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, p. 10 (Dinendra Kumar Roy's *Aurobindo Prasanga* — Translated from Bengali by Maurice Shukla).

2. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 138.

hand over Rs 90 as my contribution to the expenses to Khaserao and keep the remaining 10 for emergencies".<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, Sri Aurobindo was always the pillar of support for his mother, Sarojini and Barin. A. B. Purani writes:

Aurobindo had to support his sister Sarojini at Bankipore after his return to India in 1893, when he joined the Baroda state service. He used to send money regularly from Baroda to his mother at Rohini. Later on (in 1901) Barin also came and stayed with him.<sup>4</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's generous disposition in understanding human nature was one of the aspects of his nobility. This again comes to the fore with his artist friend, Shashi Kumar Hesh. Sri Aurobindo openly praised Hesh's patriotism, love of literature and artistic genius but did not support his love of luxury. But this never affected their friendship. He told Dinendra Kumar Roy "that such an inclination towards luxury was a natural quality of great artists."<sup>5</sup>

Then in the case of Sarojini he constantly supported her, but regretted her inability to practise self-denial. In a letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1905 to Mrinalini Devi, he wrote: "Her desire for future happiness is very strong. I know not whether she will ever be able to overcome it. God's will be done."<sup>6</sup> Yet the bonding of brother and sister was quite strong.

Sri Aurobindo's generosity in understanding others is reflected in another incident that occurred in Pondicherry. A former sadhak had written a few articles but they were mainly full of quotations taken from Sri Aurobindo's writings. At this Nirodbaran muttered his protest, "There is hardly anything here except quotations." Sri Aurobindo smiled and answered, "It doesn't matter."<sup>7</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has written:

Pity may be reserved, so long as thy soul makes distinctions, for the suffering animals; but humanity deserves from thee something nobler; it asks for love, for understanding, for comradeship, for the help of the equal & brother.<sup>8</sup>

The Mother has said: "Love does not forgive, it understands and cures."<sup>9</sup>

3. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

4. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 24.

5. See Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, p. 10.

6. *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., p. 67.

7. Nirodbaran, *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, 2005, p. 248.

8. CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 446.

9. CWM, Vol. 16, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., p. 213.



If we go back in time, Sri Aurobindo's generosity was already well rooted from his days in England. As an adolescent in a foreign land Sri Aurobindo competed for and secured a Senior Classical Scholarship at King's College, Cambridge of £80 per year. He also passed the Indian Civil Service examination which allowed him the I.C.S. stipend for the probationary period. Despite constantly being hard-pressed for money, since his father rarely remitted any money, he helped his brothers.<sup>10</sup>

Irrespective of whether his brothers sent money to their mother and sister, Sri Aurobindo was fond of them. In England they had been alone and had faced great adversity — in one particular year they did not get enough to eat nor had enough warm clothing to protect themselves from the cold, harsh English winter — and this may have created a closer bonding amongst the brothers.

Sri Aurobindo candidly told his disciples that his eldest brother Benoybhusan (1867-1947) “was not at all poetic or imaginative. He took after my father. He was very practical but very easy to get on with. But he had fits of miserliness.”<sup>11</sup> Benoybhusan, too, was very fond of Sri Aurobindo and termed him as his “favourite brother”. Charu Chandra Dutt (1877-1952) was well acquainted with Benoybhusan since his father was Dewan of Cooch-Behar,<sup>12</sup> a State where Benoybhusan served as private tutor to the Maharaja. Dutt writes:

In the remote past, when I was a school-boy, Benoy, the eldest brother of Aurobindo, came to live in our little town. He used to regale us with interesting stories of many lands, and spoke often of his favourite brother, Auro, of his sweet temper and brilliant genius, of the fond love that their father bore him.<sup>13</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's other elder brother, Manmohan, was an interesting person; he was imaginative and sensitive. Let us briefly give a picture of him and how he encouraged Sri Aurobindo to be a poet. He arrived in India on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1894 and before long, in 1895, found himself a job as Professor of English Literature at Patna College. Subsequently he was transferred to Dacca, where he was professor for about five years and “soon became a living legend.” He was promoted as Inspector of Schools in 1902, and transferred to Purulia in the Chota Nagpur District. At Purulia his duty often obliged him to travel by ox-cart in the forested areas of Chota Nagpur district, a region teeming with wildlife, including tigers! Amusingly, when in 1902 Manmohan stopped sending an allowance to their mother, Sri Aurobindo, in a letter to his uncle, humorously referred to Manmohan's wife as “the Goddess of Purulia.”<sup>14</sup>

10. See K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2006, pp. 32-33.

11. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 625.

12. Sourced from papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

13. Charu Chandra Dutt, ‘My Friend and my Master’, *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, 1952, p. 123.

14. See CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 138.



Finally, in October 1902, Manmohan was appointed Professor of English at Presidency College, Calcutta. “He was very painstaking,” recalled Sri Aurobindo, “most of the professors don’t work so hard. I saw that his books used to be interleaved and marked and full of notes.”<sup>15</sup> At college Manmohan carved out a niche for himself and on occasions students from other colleges would steal into his class to hear his melodious rhythmic recitations. Rabindranath Tagore commented: “With his wonderful poetic gifts and power of imagination Manmohan could take his pupils to the inner soul of poetry and make them enjoy its beauty.”<sup>16</sup>

Manmohan was a poet in his own right. He was a litterateur at a young age, a promising scholar who received a scholarship at the famed Christ Church College at Oxford. He was a close and life-long friend of the English poet and dramatist Laurence Binyon and his cousin, the poet and dramatist, Stephen Phillips (1864-1915). All three together published from Oxford their poems in a collection entitled *Primavera*. When a disciple asked if Manmohan had already become a poet while in England, Sri Aurobindo replied, “Yes, he, Laurence Binyon, Stephen Phillips were all poets. But he did not come to very much, though he brought out a book — *Primavera* — in conjunction with others like Binyon and it was well spoken of.”<sup>17</sup> Sri Aurobindo also said that Oscar Wilde, too, was Manmohan’s intimate friend. “Manmohan used to visit him very often in the evenings and he used to describe Manmohan in his Wildish way: ‘a young Indian panther in evening brown!’”<sup>18</sup> remarked Sri Aurobindo. Referring to a tailor who would solicit orders for clothes and suits from him and Manmohan, Sri Aurobindo said: “Manmohan went in for a velvet suit, not staring red but aesthetic, and used to visit Oscar Wilde in that suit”.<sup>19</sup> Sri Aurobindo has considered Wilde’s ‘Ballad of the Reading Gaol’ one of the best things written in English.<sup>20</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has succinctly assessed Manmohan as a poet and briefly touched upon Laurence Binyon and Stephen Phillips:

I have not read much of my brother’s poetry except what he wrote in England and in the early years in India before we ceased to meet. That was very cultured poetry and good in form, but it seemed to me to lack the inner force and elemental drive which makes for successful creation. I don’t know whether his later work had it. My brother was very intimate with Oscar Wilde, but, if I remember right, none of the singing birds except Phillips and Binyon went very far. But I think Manmohan published very little in his lifetime — nothing ever came my way.<sup>21</sup>

15. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 209.

16. See Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, pp. 63-64.

17. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 241.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, p. 624.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 765.

21. CWSA, Vol. 27, p. 448.

In another letter Sri Aurobindo writes:

About Manmohan I said that I knew very little of his later work. As for his earlier work it had qualities which evoked the praise of Wilde. I do not know what Binyon has written, but he is a fine poet and an admirable critic, not likely to praise work that has not quality. (Wilde and Binyon were both intimate friends of my brother, — at a time Manmohan was almost Wilde's disciple. If I were inclined to be Wildely malicious I might say that even Oscar's worst enemies never accused him of sincerity of speech, so if he liked someone very much he would not scruple to overpraise his poetry; but I think he considered my brother's poems to carry in them a fine promise. Binyon and Manmohan had almost the relations of Wordsworth and Southey in the first days, strongly admiring and stimulating each other.) Let me say then that my opinion was a personal one, perhaps born of brotherly intimacy — for if familiarity breeds contempt, fraternity may easily breed criticism — and based on insufficient data. I liked Manmohan's poetry well enough, but I never thought it to be great. He was a conscientious artist of word and rhyme almost painfully careful about technique.<sup>22</sup>

Manmohan was a romantic; the emotional and economic deprivations — due to no direct parental contact and irregular remittances from home that finally stopped — that were faced in England affected him more than his brothers. Manmohan once revealed to his poet friend Laurence Binyon (1869-1943): "I had no mother. . . . You may judge the horror of this, how I strove to snatch a fearful love, but only succeeded in hating and loathing, and at last becoming cold. Crying for bread I was given a stone. My father was kind but stern, and I never saw much of him. Thus from childhood I was subject to fits of gloom and despondence which grew with my age."<sup>23</sup> "He used to play the poet: he had poetical illness and used to moan out his verses in deep tones," remarked Sri Aurobindo, "his poet-playing dropped after he came to India."<sup>24</sup>

Sri Aurobindo acknowledged that Manmohan had some influence in his life when he said: "But I dare say my brother stimulated me to write poetry."<sup>25</sup> In a letter written in 1899 Sri Aurobindo expresses his gratitude to Manmohan for encouraging him to be a poet. The letter also reveals the closeness the brothers shared. We reproduce an extract of this rather touching letter:

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 448-49.

23. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 25.

24. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 625.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

But the value of a gift depends on the spirit of the giver rather than on its own suitability to the recipient. Will you accept this poem [*‘Love and Death’*] as part-payment of a deep intellectual debt I have been long owing to you? Unknown to yourself, you taught and encouraged me from my childhood to be a poet. From your sun my farthing rush-light was kindled, and it was in your path that I long strove to guide my uncertain and faltering footsteps. If I have now in the inevitable development of an independent temperament in independent surroundings departed from your guidance and entered into a path, perhaps thornier and more rugged, but my own, it does not lessen the obligation of that first light and example. It is my hope that in the enduring fame which your calmer and more luminous genius must one day bring you, on a distant verge of the skies and lower plane of planetary existence, some ray of my name may survive and it be thought no injury to your memory that the first considerable effort of my powers was dedicated to you.<sup>26</sup>

In 1895 several poems written by Sri Aurobindo were published at Bombay, as *Songs to Myrtilla and Other Poems*, and circulated privately. “All the poems in the book were written in England except five later ones which were written after his return to India.”<sup>27</sup> It carried the inscription, “To my brother Manmohan Ghose these poems are dedicated.”<sup>28</sup>

The Mother has spoken highly about the two attributes of compassion and gratitude:

Compassion and gratitude are essentially psychic virtues. They appear in the consciousness only when the psychic being takes part in active life. . . .

When the mind awakens to the awareness of the first psychic movements, it distorts them in its ignorance and changes compassion into pity or at best into charity, and gratitude into the wish to repay, followed, little by little, by the capacity to recognise and admire.

It is only when the psychic consciousness is all-powerful in the being that compassion for all that needs help, in whatever domain, and gratitude for all that manifests the divine presence and grace, in whatever form, are expressed in all their original and luminous purity, without mixing compassion with any trace of condescension or gratitude with any sense of inferiority.<sup>29</sup>

26. CWSA, Vol. 36, pp. 137-38.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

28. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2006, p. 39; also papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

29. CWM, Vol. 15, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., p. 277.

Manmohan's affection for his younger brother is unmistakable when on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1894 he wrote to Rabindranath Tagore:

Aurobindo is anxious to know what you think of his book of verses, but I have explained to him how busy you are just now, and that you will write later when you have little more leisure to do justice to his book. I myself think that he is possessed of considerable powers of language and a real literary gift, — but he is lacking in stuff and matter, perhaps in warmth of temperament. But these pieces on Parnell consisting of fine philosophic reflection, show, I think, that he might do great things. Unfortunately he has directed (or rather misdirected) all his energies to writing Bengali poetry. He is at present engaged on an epic (inspired I believe by Michael Madhusudan) on the subject of Usha and Aniruddha.<sup>30</sup>

Then on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1898 Manmohan wrote to Rabindranath: "My brother is just now at Baidyanath (he has just published a volume of poems at Baroda) and perhaps I may persuade him to come down to Calcutta to make your acquaintance and also to see some other delightful people in Calcutta."<sup>31</sup>

Curiously, Dinendra Kumar Roy writes:

"During my stay at Baroda, I had correspondence with revered Sri Rabindranath Tagore. At that time I was contributing essays etc. to the *Sadhana* and the *Bharati*. Sri Rabindranath would enquire of me about Aurobindo in his letters, but he did not know him personally. The poem, 'Aurobindo, Rabindranath's Salute to Thee' was composed long after this incident, at a time when Bengal, having learnt of his talent and sacrifice, became enamoured of Aurobindo. But it seems that the world-poet was already familiar with his talent, otherwise why should he be eagerly enquiring after Aurobindo in almost every letter?"<sup>32</sup>

Sarla Devi, a niece of Rabindranath Tagore and a dynamic and courageous educationist-cum-social reformer far ahead of her time, wrote:

One day Jatin Banerjee, coming from Baroda, met me with a letter from Aurobindo Ghose. Aurobindo's elder brother, the Oxford-famed poet Manmohan Ghose, had become a dear friend of mine. My cabinet teemed with his charming letters steeped in poetry. Both the brothers were visionaries by

30. Letter from Manmohan Ghose to Rabindranath Tagore; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

31. Letter of 17<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1898 from Manmohan to Rabindranath Tagore; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

32. See Dinendra Kumar Roy, 'Reminiscences of the Days of Yore' (Translated from the Bengali article 'Sekaler Smriti'); papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

nature. While one's vision remained confined in poetry, the other translated his into action.<sup>33</sup>

Manmohan saw a poetic genius in Sri Aurobindo and in 1906-07 frantically tried to dissuade him from joining politics. The noted historian Dr Radha Kumud Mookerji (1884-1964), a colleague of Sri Aurobindo at the Bengal National College, recounts:

One evening his elder brother Poet Manomohan Ghose came rushing to the evening club at Raja Subodh Chandra Mullick's in great excitement to warn Sri Aurobindo: "Aurobindo, you forget that you are a born poet and must not drift into politics. Politics is not your mission in life. Your mission is poetry." Sri Aurobindo smiled at the anxiety of his brother for his future.<sup>34</sup>

Later, however, Manmohan acknowledged that Sri Aurobindo became a politician par excellence. Sri Aurobindo mentioned:

He [Manmohan] was very proud of our political career. He used to say: "There are two and a half men in India — my brothers Aurobindo and Barin, two, and half is Tilak!"<sup>35</sup>

Ever since their days in England, Manmohan was always concerned about his brilliant brother Aurobindo. He not only encouraged him to write poetry but also spoke of his brother's promising talent to his poet friend Laurence Binyon. When Sri Aurobindo was seventeen he translated a passage from Greek into English verse. This piece, 'Hecuba', was so liked by Binyon that he encouraged Sri Aurobindo to write more poetry.<sup>36</sup> When Sri Aurobindo deliberately disqualified himself for the I.C.S. by not being present at the riding test he came back home and informed Benoybhusan, who took it philosophically. They then started playing cards. Later when Manmohan appeared, Sri Aurobindo remarks that he, "on hearing about my being chucked began to shout at our playing cards when such a calamity had befallen us".<sup>37</sup>

After Benoybhusan and Manmohan returned to India, Sri Aurobindo hardly had much external contact with Benoybhusan though a letter reveals that when Sri Aurobindo was going to spend his vacations at Deoghar in January and February

33. Manoj Das, 'Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi', *Mother India*, April 2013, p. 322.

34. Dr Radha Kumud Mookerji, 'Some Reminiscences of Sri Aurobindo', *Mother India*, December 1963, p. 21.

35. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 625.

36. See K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo — a biography and a history*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2006, p. 32.

37. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 31.

1894 he was intending to stop *en route* at Ajmer to meet Benoybhusan.<sup>38</sup> However, the close inner bond that the brothers shared since the hard times that they had faced in England remained intact. Both Benoybhusan and Manmohan visited their maternal relations in Deoghar. Just before Benoybhusan and Manmohan returned from England Sri Aurobindo warned Sarojini about their erratic epistolary habits:

I dare say Beno may write to you three or four days before he leaves England. But you must think yourself lucky if he does as much as that. Most likely the first you hear of him, will be a telegram from Calcutta. Certainly he has not written to me. I never expected and should be afraid to get a letter. It would be such a shocking surprise that I should certainly be able to do nothing but roll on the floor and gasp for breath for the next two or three hours. No, the favours of the Gods are too awful to be coveted. I dare say he will have energy enough to hand over your letter to Mano as they must be seeing each other almost daily. You must give Mano a little time before he answers you. He too is Beno's brother.<sup>39</sup>

As regards Sri Aurobindo's epistolary habits, Dinendra Kumar Roy writes:

From time to time Aurobindo wrote to his maternal uncle, his brothers, his sister, his cousins and his aunt (the wife of Krishnakumar Mitra, editor of *Sanjivani*), among others; but he almost never wrote to his paternal relatives. He rarely wrote to his brothers either. He was not in the habit of writing a lot of letters, and rarely finished a letter in a single day. On small sheets of "Grey Granite" stationery he would write ten lines of one letter, twenty of another and then abandon both. He would finish them later when he had the time or the inclination, and send them off. Some letters never ever reached the post office — they were buried in the pad!<sup>40</sup>

In another article Dinendra Kumar Roy wrote that Sri Aurobindo rarely wrote letters to his relatives. Writing poems came more naturally to him than letter writing. He could do the onerous task of writing four to five pages of poems a day, but when he began writing a letter to anyone he could not manage to finish it even in three or four days. His letters were not too long. He usually wrote to Sarojini and his maternal uncle Jogendra as well as to his maternal aunt, Lilabati and her daughter Basanti Mitra.<sup>41</sup>

38. See *Ibid.*, p. 122.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-24.

40. Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, pp. 12-13.

41. See Dinendra Kumar Roy, 'Reminiscences of the Days of Yore'. (Translated from Bengali article 'Sekaler Smriti'); papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

Sri Aurobindo had once told his father-in-law that his defect of seldom writing letters was perhaps inherited from his father.

Sri Aurobindo's cousin sister, Basanti Mitra, writes of all the three England-educated brothers:

Benoyda became the tutor of the children of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar and then was appointed the Maharaja's private secretary. Manoda acquired repute as a professor of English at Presidency College. Later Auroda became a professor at the Baroda College. The Maharaja Gaekwar respected and loved him very much; in his letters he always addressed him as "my dear friend".

After their return from Europe, both Manoda and Auroda often came and stayed with their mashima [maternal aunt], my mother, at our house (6, College Square). My mother loved them like her own sons. Benoyda too often came to visit us whenever he was in Calcutta.<sup>42</sup>

Sri Aurobindo was a very quiet and deep person; he never outwardly expressed strong emotions. His younger brother Barin Kumar Ghose stated: "Aurobindo is and has always been generous and loving, only his restrained movements seldom make it visible except to a keen observer."<sup>43</sup> Sri Aurobindo was affectionate and protective towards his younger siblings, Sarojini and Barin. Besides giving them monies, both stayed with Sri Aurobindo for considerable lengths of time.

Barin did his schooling in Deoghar and then passed his Matriculation from Patna University in 1900, following which he commenced his college studies at Dacca. His *Mejda* [second eldest brother] Manmohan, who was then professor at Dacca University, offered him hospitality. Barin then tried to study agriculture but this attempt was aborted due to no monetary support. He then gave up his studies to run a tea shop in Patna, but soon after, the business failed. Aware of Sri Aurobindo's kind and understanding nature, Barin felt the time had now come to make good use of Sri Aurobindo's goodness. So he decided to take a long train journey of almost 2000 kms to Baroda, in the hope of getting some money from his *Sejda* [third eldest brother], Sri Aurobindo.<sup>44</sup>

He arrived, in 1901, unannounced, after a four-day train journey, at Sri Aurobindo's Baroda residence in the shabbiest of appearances and the filthiest of clothes. The housekeeper who opened the door was aghast to learn that this scruffy-looking man was the brother of the erudite and dignified Sri Aurobindo. On learning of his brother's unexpected arrival Sri Aurobindo hurried down the stairs and quickly whisked him away before anybody could see him. A scrubbing bath with ample

42. Basanti Chakravarty (*née* Mitra), 'Our Aurodada', *Srinwantu*, April/August 1984, pp. 83-84.

43. Manoj Das, 'Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi', *Mother India*, May 2012, p. 348.

44. See Sujata Nahar, *Mother's Chronicles*, Book V, pp. 238-39.



amounts of soap helped him remove the coating of coal and dust from his skin that had accumulated during his four-day train journey.<sup>45</sup> Barin then narrates: “Then after donning *Sejda*’s shirt and clean dhoti, and my long hair combed in Rabindric style, when I came out everybody heaved a sigh of relief.” Here ‘everybody’ refers to Sarojini and the just married Mrinalini Devi who were then staying with Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo’s accommodating and kind nature ignored the potential embarrassment that Barin’s scruffiness may have caused when he first appeared especially since he himself was a guest of Khaserao Jadhav, an influential and respected man in Baroda. Barin continues: “By and by I met the Jadhav brothers in the dining room. ‘Well, young man!’ and with such other European greetings, Khaserao heartily patted me on the back and welcomed me. Madhavrao, a lieutenant in the army, was dark; with his calm grace and quick smile, he became my friend at first sight.” Amusingly Barin calls Khaserao “the wittiest tormenter in Baroda society.”<sup>46</sup>

Barin adds: “Madhavrao Jadav, Khaserao’s younger brother, a lieutenant in the army, was just then getting ready to go to Japan for his military education.”<sup>47</sup> We don’t know if Sri Aurobindo monetarily helped this venture but we know that Sri Aurobindo certainly financed Madhavrao’s trip to Europe for military training in 1905.<sup>48</sup>

When Barin arrived at Baroda, Mrinalini Devi and Sarojini were already staying with Sri Aurobindo at Khaserao Jadhav’s house. Barin writes, “Khaserao’s house was a sweet nest of repose and culture after my arduous and sordid life at B. Ghose’s tea stall near the College gate, which I had started in Patna along with a small stationery shop.”<sup>49</sup> Barin mentions about the family gatherings that occurred everyday:

Aurobindo was a late riser, waking up at nine in the morning. He used to sit down to his study after a cup of tea and toast. My room downstairs, nestling in the remote corner of the lawn, was the rendezvous of the family for gossip and merry talk. There used to come at noon my sister with her austere, silent face, Sri Aurobindo with his far-off detached look and absent-minded smile and his wife Mrinalini with her timid eyes and shy half-veiled face.<sup>50</sup>

Barin wanted to start a business enterprise and hinted at some financial assistance but Sri Aurobindo kept quiet. Barin surmised: “My brother had never

45. See A.B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 49; p. 348. See Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, p. 239. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, May 2012.

46. See Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, pp. 239-40.

47. *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., p. 11.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

50. *Ibid.*



any attachment to money. But he was not prepared to pour out for an enterprise he did not like.”<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless Barin did not fail to make good use of Sri Aurobindo’s hospitality and he whiled away his time in Baroda leading a carefree life of reading, writing poetry, gardening, planchette writing and hunting. Sri Aurobindo’s friend Madhavrao had given Barin a small sporting rifle and a breech-loading gun which he used for his day-long hunting expeditions, bringing back wild fowl to be cooked for dinner. During the Puja vacations the three siblings and Mrinalini went to Deoghar with Barin towing the guns along with him.<sup>52</sup> Obviously all the expenses for Barin’s and Sarojini’s stay at Baroda and their journey to Deoghar were being borne by Sri Aurobindo. About this vacation Sri Aurobindo remarked:

When my brother Barin and I were at Baidyanath, we used to go out with guns to shoot at birds, obviously with the idea of practising. My auntie saw us and said, “These two boys will be hanged.” The prophecy almost came true, for Barin got a death-sentence.<sup>53</sup>

After Sri Aurobindo arrived in India, he used to inculcate the revolutionary spirit in Barin whenever he visited Deoghar. When Barin came to Baroda it was an opportunity to prepare him for the revolutionary work.<sup>54</sup>

In 1902 Barin went to Bengal to commence his political activity. But after one year he returned to Baroda and yet again it was Sri Aurobindo who uncomplainingly provided him shelter.

Sri Aurobindo never used his good offices with the Maharaja to curry any favours but out of concern for his younger brother he made an exception, and in 1905 secured employment for Barin at the Baroda State Service. However Barin was unable to take up the appointment as he soon returned to Bengal.

In a letter to Mrinalini Devi dated 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1905 Sri Aurobindo expresses his concern about Barin:

Bari is here. He is in an exceedingly bad state of health. His fever is often accompanied by complications but with all its ailments, his energy never flags. He never sits quiet. As soon as he gets a little better, he goes out in the service of his country. He will never take up service.<sup>55</sup>

Sri Aurobindo was always there to help Barin. In December 1905 Sri Aurobindo writes to Mrinalini: “Bari is in Deoghar. He is always getting fever. If I do not get

51. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, May 2012, p. 349.

52. See Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, pp. 243-44.

53. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 122.

54. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, pp. 49-50.

55. *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., pp. 66-67.

leave he may come back to Baroda.”<sup>56</sup>

Then when in June 1906 Barin fell ill, Sri Aurobindo wrote to his father-in-law requesting him to lodge his rather unpredictable younger brother in order to help him recuperate:

Barin has again fallen ill, and I have asked him to go out to some healthier place for a short visit. I was thinking he might go to Waltair, but he has set his heart on going to Shillong — I don't quite know why, unless it is to see a quite new place and at the same time make acquaintance with his sister-in-law's family. If he goes, I am sure you will take good care of him for the short time he may be there. You will find him, I am afraid, rather wilful & erratic, — the family failing. He is especially fond of knocking about by himself in a spasmodic and irregular fashion when he ought to be sitting at home and nursing his delicate health, but I have learnt not to interfere with him in this respect; if checked, he is likely to go off at a tangent & makes things worse. . . . I think a short stay at Shillong ought to give him another lease of health.<sup>57</sup>

Sri Aurobindo was also fond of his younger sister, Sarojini. After his first visit to Deoghar to meet his family Sri Aurobindo affectionately wrote to Sarojini on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1894 and also expresses his concern for Barin. We quote an extract:

It will be, I fear, quite impossible to come to you again so early as the Puja, though if I only could, I should start tomorrow. . . . Since my pleasant sojourn with you at Baidyanath, Baroda seems a hundred times more Baroda. . . .

You say in your letter “all here are quite well”; yet in the very next sentence I read “Bari has an attack of fever”. Do you mean then that Bari is nobody? Poor Bari! That he should be excluded from the list of human beings, is only right and proper; but it is a little hard that he should be denied existence altogether. I hope it is only a slight attack. I am quite well. I have brought a fund of health with me from Bengal, which, I hope it will take me some time to exhaust; but I have just passed my twenty-second milestone, August 15 last, since my birthday and am beginning to get dreadfully old.

I infer from your letter that you are making great progress in English. I hope you will learn very quickly; I can then write to you quite what I want to say and just in the way I want to say it. I feel some difficulty in doing that now and I don't know whether you will understand it.

With love,

Your affectionate brother,  
Auro<sup>58</sup>

56. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

57. CWSA, Vol. 36, pp. 147-48.

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-24.

Sarojini's education was very dear to Sri Aurobindo — as we can surmise from the last para of the letter — and he used to send remittances regularly to her to cover her educational and other miscellaneous expenses.<sup>59</sup> There were times that she stayed with Sri Aurobindo and even accompanied him for his vacation to Nainital.

In Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo stayed indoors and never went out of his house, yet as an exception he went to the railway station to welcome Sarojini, when she came to visit him in 1922. He later gave her the publishing rights of his book *War and Self-Determination* as a financial help.<sup>60</sup>

Sri Aurobindo was not prone to disclose his inner feelings, yet Dinendra Kumar Roy noticed Sri Aurobindo's loving nature: "He had a great deal of affection for his brothers and cousins, writing them letters, sending them money."<sup>61</sup> A letter, dated 20<sup>th</sup> August 1902, to Mrinalini Devi was one of the rare instances where Sri Aurobindo openly divulged his love and affection for his maternal relations: "I should like you to spend some time in Deoghur, if you do not mind . . . I should like you to form a closer intimacy with my relatives, at least those among them whom I especially love."<sup>62</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's cousin, Basanti Mitra, writes of Sri Aurobindo's endearing nature when she first met him in 1894:

I, of tender age, was in school and was curious about everything. Aurodada would arrive with two or three trunks. I wondered how many beautiful and costly suits and attractive items they contained. But what's this! Only a few pieces of clothes apart, they contained only books and books. O Lord, Aurodada loved reading so much! We would love to use the holidays for chatting and playing, but Aurodada would pass those sweet days with his books! How could he relish that? . . . But this did not mean that he never joined us in our chatting and laughter. His talks and letters were steeped in humour.<sup>63</sup>

Basanti Mitra's younger brother, Sukumar Mitra (1885-1973) revered Sri Aurobindo and revealed that a cousin of theirs, Usha — daughter of Sukumari, Rajnarayan's third daughter — was ill with fever for a prolonged period. When Sri Aurobindo went to Deoghar he heard that several medical men had treated her but to no avail. One doctor suggested a change of air but this was not acted upon. On hearing this "Aurobindo rented a house in Simultala and took her there. Within a

59. See K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2006, p. 49. See *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., pp. 62, 66-67.

60. See Nilima Das, 'Sri Aurobindo – The Soul of India', *Mother India*, March 2001, p. 216.

61. Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, p. 11.

62. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 146.

63. Manoj Das, 'Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi', *Mother India*, November 2012, p. 885.

fortnight she was cured of that long-standing malady.”<sup>64</sup> Even as late as 1905 Sri Aurobindo was helping Usha, as is revealed in a letter to Mrinalini Devi where he writes: “The money I give to Usha or to Sarojini causes me no regret.”<sup>65</sup>

Basanti Mitra writes: “He gave financial help to his mother, his only sister Sarojini and his grandmother who lived in Benaras. When one of our cousin’s health declined, he kept her with him in Simultala until she regained it.”<sup>66</sup> A letter to Boromama, Jogendranath Bose, dated 15<sup>th</sup> August 1902 reveals that Sri Aurobindo was sending money to his grandmother Kailashbasini and aunt Birajmohini at Benaras.<sup>67</sup>

In the same letter we learn that Sri Aurobindo was contributing a substantial sum of Rs 90 per month towards the Khaserao household when he was staying at his house. In those days this was a generous sum.<sup>68</sup>

A disciple working on Sri Aurobindo’s biography in the 1940s wanted to state that the responsibility of supporting the family fell on Sri Aurobindo immediately after his father’s demise — his father passed away in December 1892 when Sri Aurobindo was supposedly on a ship *en route* to India. Sri Aurobindo corrected this to, “There was no question of supporting the family at that time. That happened some time after going to India.”<sup>69</sup>

It appears that Sri Aurobindo financially supported his mother and sister for about ten years or more. Sukumar Mitra refers to a period after 1904, a time when he started the practice of *pranayama*:

In the morning he spent two to three hours on *pranayama*. . . . His mother lives at Rohini. Aurobindo used to support her. He used to spend nearly all his money for charitable purposes.<sup>70</sup>

(To be continued)

GAUTAM MALAKER

64. See Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, p. 145.

65. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 81. (Also in *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., p. 62).

66. Basanti Chakravarty (*née* Mitra), ‘Our Aurodada’, *Srinwantu*, April/August 1984, p. 86.

67. See Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, p. 133 (footnote);

68. See CWSA, Vol. 26, p. 140.

69. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 36.

70. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, January 2016, p. 38.

# THE GRACE

## (Some Reminiscences)

This is not a polemic or an abstraction on the reality of the Divine Grace which the materialist might frown upon or draw the devotee to wax into high-sounding eulogy. What I recount is factual without a grain of fiction. Yet these might seem impossibles. Why? Take for example the capacity for literary or musical creation I am supposed to possess. From where did I imbibe them — from my family? Good heavens! No. None in our past generations had either been a poet, a critic or a musician. They were hard-boiled materialists bent on the utilitarian pastime of earning and producing wealth. And yet I would be all these though I must confess if left on my own I could not turn out a single piece of music or a single line of poetry.

Perhaps I am putting the cart before the horse.

From very early childhood I have a faint recollection of my parents meditating before some photographs all bedecked with flowers. I was strangely attracted by the perfume of flowers and incense. From that time I learned to associate incense, flowers and photographs with things sacred.

I came to the Ashram as a visitor in November 1929. But I was not allowed either to enter the Ashram or for pranam. But I had darshan of the Mother going out for a drive every day at 4 p.m. in the afternoons. Also she went every Thursday to Duraiswami's place on foot, passing in front of our house, when once I offered a box of chocolates to her and rushed back into the house. I felt so shy. That was my first contact with the Mother. This shyness I have never been able to overcome.

My most significant darshan and the turning point of my life came on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November. I went with my father and bowed down to the Master and the Mother. I came home in a daze. Later, my father and Barin-da asked me how I had liked the darshan. It was a casual question, more to humour a child than anything else. How could a child of nine feel the greatness of this stupendous spiritual personality which even to the adults was an enigma? Yes, neither my mind nor my heart was awakened enough, ready to seize the import. But I felt a great vastness, a height in Sri Aurobindo which to my childish mind seemed as great as the Himalayas.

There and then I made up my mind that I must stay on. What exactly attracted me, I cannot say, for there were no children (incidentally I was the first child admitted to the Ashram), no school, no games; only about a hundred men and women with serious faces moved about, met at pranams, meditations and withdrew to their homes. They were distant and uncommunicative, except for Purani whom I nicknamed the policeman and Barin-da.

My father was not prepared for this strange decision, for I was brought here

more or less on an experimental basis; for my mother had died three years earlier and I had none to look after me, my father being a touring government official had no fixed establishment. My father had hesitatingly put everything before the Master who replied to say that though children were not admitted in the Ashram he could bring his son. "Let us see what can be done," he added.

Again, my father wrote to the Master when I told him my resolve to stay on. Sri Aurobindo advised me to go back for a few months and return after learning some English "so that he could talk to the Mother". Accordingly, I left.

I returned in July 1930. My father stayed for a month and a half. But he did nothing to arrange for my stay. And what could be done? There were no "homes", no people eager to keep boys. But the Divine Grace intervened in a strange way.

The wife of one of the first disciples of Sri Aurobindo agreed to look after me, while I stayed in an adjoining room vacated by her husband Bijoy Nag. All this happened almost without the knowledge of my father.

And I stayed on, a favourite of all, almost a spoilt child. Then a change took place in the Ashram. The Mother retired for a while from us. The distribution of evening soup was stopped and so also the morning meditation and pranams.

About six months later the new year came and we had meditation and darshan of the Mother at midnight. It was a memorable experience. The Mother appeared to me like a Queen of Beauty in the semi-darkness of midnight.

Next day, the Mother led me to her little dining room and presented me with sweets and two large books in French, *Gedeon dans la forêt* and *Les animaux*. She talked to me in French whenever I met her.

At the beginning of 1932 I complained to the Mother about the lady who looked after me, over some trivial personal matter. Sri Aurobindo wrote to me that though I was growing and progressing, I could not judge people. However, he added, the Mother was making arrangements to change my room. It was a reprimand to a spoilt boy, undisciplined in habit, and erratic in temperament. Even this reprimand was a gesture of Grace, for the Mother or the Master scolded only those they loved and this was aimed to pinpoint the limitation and overcome it.

1<sup>st</sup> May I left 'Boulangerie' house; I was given accommodation in a room where the Mother, before 1932, used to sit for meditation and pranam.

In the same year I started reading Shakespeare with Nolini and writing small letters to the Mother. These letters were letters of a boy attempting to imitate the older persons who sent letters or notebooks to the Mother every day. Hence most of the letters were sheer trash. Only the Divine could tolerate such foolishness. They contained my first attempts at writing Bengali verse, important and unimportant, and happenings of the day. Once it was about my bed infested with bugs. (I was yet to learn of hygiene.) Sri Aurobindo wrote back humorously that a deputation headed by Amrita was being sent to investigate the state of affairs and exterminate the bugs. The Mother wrote to me to say that running in the street in the sun was not the way to cure a cold.

Once I wrote to Sri Aurobindo that at times I had a strange feeling. I seemed to regard myself as an alien and I questioned: “Is this myself?” Sri Aurobindo wrote back: “This is *viveka*.”

The changing of one’s name had a special attraction to me — Jenny Dobson became Chidanandini, Chadwick became Arjava. There was an old French couple who taught me Mathematics and Geography (Oh, God! how I hated those subjects!) — I forget their French family names — Sri Aurobindo gave them Suchi and Sarala as their names of the spiritual life. Madame Gaebelé, the mother of my French teacher, was renamed Suvrata.

Being childish and imitative by temperament, I asked for my name to be changed as well. The Master wrote that Rama — Indra — Ramendra was the name of Vishnu. It was a fine name.

Incidentally, it is the Mother who changed my name from Ramen to Romen much before I even dreamt of asking for a name.

The Mother gave me a message:

14.3.32

To Romen,

Always do with pleasure the work you have to do — *Le travail fait avec joie est un travail bien fait*.

This was written on my exercise book where I had done a rough sketch of a sunrise over the sea, which she had corrected with her own hand.

From time to time I sent to the Mother a picture which was, I must confess, abominable. On one picture she commented thus (this is one of the few letters she wrote to me in English):

Do you know what you have represented? The Christian Calvary, that is to say, the mountain on the top of which the Christ was put on the cross with the thieves. Is it a copy or the reminiscence of a picture seen? Or is it from your imagination? I would be interested to know.

Then in 1934, when I was fourteen, I had a definite and exceptional experience of the psychic being coming to the forefront in spite of all my unsteady nature, my moods and my constant depressions. This experience became the basis of existence and has been the support and aid in all my trials and tribulations. This was the Mother’s extended arm in my consciousness to rouse what was the most true, the most permanent in me. This altered all my life, my vision, and my valuation of things, persons, actions in general and my relation with the Mother in particular.

The Mother wrote to me that she was my mother who gave birth (meaning my spiritual rebirth) to me. On another occasion she wrote, “It is better that you do not



Speak to others what I speak or write to you; because they become jealous and their jealousy creates a bad atmosphere which falls on you and creates difficulties. . . .”

On another occasion: “. . . I am always with you, you are in my arms which are around you with love and protect you lovingly.”

Once she wrote:

If, as you say, one part in you is happy and contented, stick to this happiness to drive out the ugly things. Do not allow these to take possession of you. For that, do exactly what I tell you to do and live a well ordered regular life. I am always with you to help you to carry out this good will and to help you — Love of your mother.

It is apparent these letters were written to one vacillating between depression and happiness, between discipline and erratic tams. This state of affairs continued up to 1946.

The Mother wrote:

You are right to want a new life, and you can be sure I would help you the best I can for this. I am sure that perseverance in study and the acceptance of a discipline in work and in life would powerfully help you to change you.

All my love is with you to help and guide you.

She repeats:

I always take you in my bosom but what can I do if you fly away from there? . . . You must remain quiet in my arms if you want me to help you.

It was not that the Mother was lavish with her love and help only inwardly. She was most generous even in her external bounty, e.g.

Whenever you want anything, you can always ask me and if it is possible for me to give, I would give it to you.

\*

My force is always with you. But in order to receive and utilise it, one must open to it with tranquillity and confidence.

This is repeated in another letter:

I want nothing more than you become my instrument, my true little child. But for that the first thing necessary is to be obedient. And so that you can become that, my help is always with you.

Between all these movements of divine aid and human retarding depression which was a recoil to the lower nature, my creative effort continued. The Mother graciously listened to my music once a fortnight or three weeks. She saw my crude paintings, commented and corrected them.

On one occasion she saw a vision while I was playing to her. As a rule, Mother opened her eyes after I had finished playing and smiled, giving her encouraging comment. This time she remained with eyes closed, a gentle smile outlining her lips. After a while she opened her eyes, smiled and said: "Do you know, child, what I saw? On the bank of a river, there was a platform and seated there, you were playing some instrument. So you see you are not a musician in this birth alone." I had a feeling that perhaps it was in ancient Egypt, who knows?

Once she saw a huge bird which, I reckon, must have been Garuda who stood behind me with outstretched wings in a gesture of protection. This was divine protection which had been with me unfailingly in the worst of trials or disasters all through.

I played different *rāgas* both on the sitar and surbahar. I played along with Sahana, Ardhendu and Lalita (Mrs. Daulat Panday). Mother presented me to notable persons who came to see her and asked me to play before them. Once a few Europeans had come, before whom the Mother asked me to play in Pavitra's room. The Mother herself was not present. But later on, I learnt she stood behind the door and listened to my playing, a typical gesture of a mother.

She liked my music, especially my extempore compositions which were strictly neither Western nor Indian.

I had a flair for drawing which she encouraged, so much so that she saw my pitiful attempts and lavished her praise. Even she arranged for a small exhibition of the works of Ashram artists and I had a place there. It was in 1937. A small house was there on the north-east corner of Golconde. (Golconde was yet to be built; this small building and other huts were later demolished to become the site for Golconde.) Here the paintings of Krishnalal, Anil Kumar, Sanjiban, Nishikanto and mine were exhibited. Some of my snow-pictures evoked good appreciation due to my young age and the unusualness of the motif.

Sri Aurobindo encouraged my writing of poetry from the very beginning. My first poems worth the name were written in 1935. There was a period when I sent up one poem everyday to the Master. I was not sure of the quality for by then I was developing a little sense of self-examination. So I asked A. to correct and send up these juvenile attempts. That was in 1937. There was a poem which was entitled by Sri Aurobindo 'O Night, great Night'. A. had sent two versions to the Master; one,

as I had written it; two, as he had corrected it. The Master in his own hand wrote out the whole poem making only slight changes for the sake of metre. This is what he wrote as comment: “It seems to me that with less alteration a few slight touches almost, it could be made into a very fine poem,” and at the end of the poem he wrote again:

The repetition of song and beauty is here intentional. The whole may be regarded as an invocation of the Night with all that is in it and behind it, the Mystic Fire, the invisible Beauty above which the stars flame, the ‘earthward Peace’ — I find the phrase very good . . . I find the last four lines remarkably fine even as they stand. I have altered only slightly for the sake of metre.”

On another poem he commented:

As usual the last lines are very fine. The whole has the substance of poetry, and once put into metrical form, succeeds by a very telling suggestion of atmosphere.

A few days later this was his comment on another of my poems:

A larger vocabulary, a freer choice of words will bring the necessary change, but even as it is, it is remarkable. The lines marked are superb — others are fine, but these would do credit to any poet.

Like this, I continued to write, the Master correcting my lines, even scanning them, showering his benedictions on me incessantly just as the Mother had done.

One day I had gone up to the Mother and was talking to her at random. The Mother was busy writing something and from moment to moment she looked up at me. I felt curious. After a few minutes she showed me the sketch she had made of me. It was done to show me the technique of light and shadow on a human face; she told me there was no line in nature — all lines were the result of light and shadow — this was of course the traditional European concept as opposed to the linear treatment by the Indian and the Japanese.

The Mother loved Japanese painting and the love of the Japanese for things beautiful. She told me how the Japanese built their homes which became harmonious parts of the surrounding landscape. Once she addressed others along with me about creating a tradition (in painting). To follow a tradition was easy but something was lost. But if, on the other hand, one needed to create a line of one’s own, it meant great work and patience. It was not easy.

Now I shall describe three important occasions of Ashram life.

Daily in the evening after the Mother had finished her talk with a few persons

in the central Prosperity hall, she would come down and sit in the Reception hall (near the gate). In front of her would be a pot of scalding soup. She would meditate for some time, then stretch out her hands and bless the soup. Then the pot would be shifted to her left. People sitting all around her in the hall would come one by one, bow down to her, receive the soup in a vessel, rise and go. Then she would rise herself when everyone had finished and pass the courtyard and the narrow passage (this has been demolished since) near the Samadhi and go upstairs. On two sides of her passage people would stand with flowers in their hands and offer them when the Mother passed by them. I too joined this irregular queue. Once I remember she gave me a moon-flower. This was the last darshan, after that all retired to their rooms.

The Darshan-days were then three times a year. I felt a great excitement as a boy which is but natural. But this joy had no external background. Why I felt so unspeakably happy, I cannot analyse or say. The previous night I could not sleep well. I often crept downstairs (when I was in 'Boulangerie' house) where J. and others were busy bedecking the ornate canopy of wood covered with beads, flowers and other ornaments. Under these the Mother and the Master were to sit for giving darshan to people. Early morning, I would reach the Meditation hall, now all covered with mats for people to sit on; a board with typed sheets stood at one corner. Here the names of persons going up for darshan was put up. And each followed his turn in the order mentioned in the list. There was no bustle, no crowding, no talk. It was an atmosphere of silence, aspiration and expectation.

The doors upstairs were opened at 8 o'clock. And one by one we would go, offer garlands and flowers to our Master and the Mother. After bowing to each of them in turn, some of us bowed at the throne, between them, when both of them would put their palms on our heads in benediction. The Mother was all smiles, queenly and indescribably sweet and we could feel that she was *the Mother* of whom the Master has spoken in his book. The Master was grand, Shiva and Krishna in one, the supreme Purusha whom the Mother has acclaimed as the Lord whose presence would transform our Night into Day.

In the afternoon, the Mother would distribute garlands (which we had offered to her in the morning). Sometimes she distributed messages as well. When I went for this garland distribution on my first visit, the Mother was distributing Sri Aurobindo's message: "The sadhak has no personal hopes . . ." When I went up to her, she handed me a garland and, waving her index finger, said with a smile, "No message for you."

The birthday was a very special occasion. Each one of us individually went to her in the same room where the three Darshans took place. There she would sit on a divan, while we sat on the carpet below. She would talk to us, meditate. Sometimes she would play on the organ, even sing — which was a special privilege — this music was a message to the person concerned.

Once she told me that if I had moods that would make me more unhappy, people would shun me. On another occasion she expressed that even if I wanted to take up the ordinary life I must not, on any account, marry. That was the worst possible slavery. Then she asked me if I knew what people did when people married. I nodded. I had only a faint inkling of the thing men call sex. But psychologically I was not mature enough to assess the full import of the problem.

I will narrate something which may surprise one. At that period physical education was a thing unknown. In 1932 a tract of land lay vacant which is now 'Lakshmibai' house and garden. I conceived the brilliant idea of having a badminton court. But the place was full of weeds and thorns. So I wrote to the Mother that I needed a servant urgently. The next day was the first day of the month and the Mother came down to pay the domestic servants. Suddenly the Mother turned to me and said, "You will get your 'urgent' servant." The place was cleaned and the few boys who were there plus one or two visiting boys gathered there to play. We had even an athletic competition where S. came first in high jump receiving an earthen dog which the Mother had sent as a prize for the event.

From my childhood, I had poor health. I had fits of headaches. The Mother made arrangements for special food to be given to me: butter, eggs, Ovaltine. But I was too lazy to take these. So she asked S. then Dr. N. to see that I partook of these three eatables. And every day after people had finished pranam, the Mother would meet me at the staircase and ask, "How was the food?" Then she would make me flex my arms; "You must become strong, my child," she would say.

But all these, after all, did not have any lasting effect. The headaches continued. So the Mother sent me to Madras with D. I was there for a week. The Mother wrote to me very affectionate letters, encouraging me. I felt terribly lonely: I had been so much in tune with the Mother and her presence that I felt like a fish out of water.

In 1937 I was restless and in November the Mother asked me to "go out and see the ordinary life". She wanted me to make a free and independent choice of life. She said that she did not want me to be like D. This person whom the Mother mentioned had begun to go out of the Ashram from 1936 and ended by leaving the Ashram altogether in 1953.

I went out. I was in Chittagong, then in Maharashtra, where the Mother sent me letters; sometimes the address too was written in her own hand. I returned two months later. The Mother enquired as to how I liked all these people and places. She had got my room freshly painted and distempered in my absence. She told me that she had got my room all cleaned and tidy. She was all smiles. I think she expected me to turn over a new leaf. But the lure of the external world was pulling me. And my father, in spite of being an old associate, added to this unnatural thirst, by tempting me with prospects of sending me to England to become a member of the Indian Civil Service. I could not gauge the full import, but it was a fascination indeed.

In the meantime, I left my studies and started working under Chandulal in the

newly-begun construction of Golconde, where I gave a good account of myself as a worker. The Mother was exceedingly pleased.

But this was not to last. The old depression, moods, the attraction of the external world returned, and I succumbed to them. On the first occasion, it was the Mother who almost sent me out. The second time I myself decided to go; that was in October 1938. The Mother was not at all pleased. It was but natural. She told me that perhaps I thought that I would be happy with my father. No, that was not true. She added that I could go but I must return with the determination not to go back to ordinary life.

It was to be a brief visit. But it proved to be a long one.

Before I go into the next phase of my life, I would like to digress. The Mother gave her categorical views on people, especially those with whom I could associate freely without any harm. Some like A. who taught me Bengali metre and had declared that “Many are called but a few are chosen — I was to be one of the few chosen ones” — well, about associating with him, the Mother was non-committal. But with another person, X, the Mother definitely forbade me to have any contact. That one she declared was a vampire. And it was true, for a few moments of association with this person used to make me feel dejected and tired. But there were people with whom the Mother encouraged me to mix with. Dr. N., S. etc.

The Mother was also very definite about books and journals. I remember she forbade me reading *Life* magazine which was, she said, definitely ugly.

Once she cursorily examined my palm. She said that I had a very good heart. Also, a strong determination; once I decided to do a thing, nothing could prevent me from doing it. Lastly, she prophesied that from my twenty-fifth year, there would be a change for the better, which would continue. How true and accurate! Yet those associated with me had the impression that I was a truant and erratic chap, especially when I was so restless. Some even thought that I would take up the ordinary life and forget all about spirituality.

In the ordinary life, which needs no mention, I passed through a bitter experience of what life consists of. The Mother, however, continued to write to me regularly up to 1939 when I was outside. She told me that she could not make up my mind for me and that it was I who had to do it. About the April Darshan, which began in 1939, she wrote that it was not a Darshan (in the old sense) and I could certainly come. I revisited the Ashram in 1943 and the Mother was the same affectionate mother though I had altered due to my long association with the outside world.

The Mother knew that a great change would come in my life and a blow fall on me. Therefore prior to my going away in 1938, she confided to me that she wept at all the troubles that visited me, my unstable condition vis-à-vis the spiritual potentiality I had. Of course, these were not physical tears, nor had the grief any human origin. She wanted me to be her true child, the child of Light; but conditions barred it. Her love for me had a much deeper origin than my growing, unsteady, adolescent mind

could even conceive. The fact, however, came back to me with great impact that she was not only the divine mother, she was my physical mother as well. There was a blending of the human and the divine, which far transcended the human relation of a mother for her offspring or a spiritual relation of a guru with the disciple.

A black curtain was drawn over my spiritual life for several years. But even in that total change the Mother's aid was there, her hand of succour saved me from complete disaster and ruin. The last letter she wrote to me was in 1942.

I returned in 1946, apparently a crushed individual but with an inner urge to rise. Here again the Force of the Mother was at work.

When I went up to her (1<sup>st</sup> April 1946) and bowed down to her, the Mother exclaimed "At last!" She gave me a carnation which signified "Obedience".

A new life opened for me. The ordinary life now had no lure, whereas this life held infinite possibilities.

Once I wrote to her that I felt tired while doing the work. The Mother wrote that it should not be so and that I must learn to take rest even while doing the work.

I met my companion and persons around began writing signed and anonymous letters to the Mother complaining of this new development. The Mother showed to me one such letter and asked, "Is this true?" I replied negatively. The Mother tore the letter and said, "I have trust in you."

I felt distressed nevertheless; I wrote to her of my conviction that everything would be well. The Mother sent back my letter with her answer on the margin. She had underlined my word and written that it was the voice of Truth and that I must cling to it.

Once she told me that it was not that any particular work was important. The importance was to do some work. This implied that it is not what we do that is of moment but how we do it, is of capital importance.

She had been to my room three times, each time in a new location. In 1947 I lived at the Press where she came. On entering the room, she spotted the sketch of me done by her a decade earlier. Turning to Chinmayee she remarked, "This sketch I did when Romen was a child."

Next, she came to 'Remplacent' House (now renamed by her as 'Ashish') on my birthday where she tasted the sweets we had prepared for her. She also listened to my music. That was in 1949.

In 1954 she came to my room in the band quarters in the Sports Ground.

After the Master left his body, I had a unique experience which opened a new way of literary expression. I was promised aid in my poetical venture. I read out some parts of the poem to the Mother. She remarked: "I have a very strong impression that Sri Aurobindo himself is behind this."

Some friends had remarked that the Mother did not like poetry like Sri Aurobindo. But I had my doubts. So I asked the Mother about it. She remained quiet for a while, then replied: "After all that Sri Aurobindo has done for Poetry,



how can I not like it?” Forthwith, she sent some poems which I had sent to her and got them published almost without my knowledge. Had I had any intention of publication, I would have edited the work.

Once, on my birthday, she wrote to me: “Remember Sri Aurobindo’s promise, ‘One who chooses the Divine, has been chosen by the Divine’.” When I had written to the Mother once about her serious expression at the time of pranam, she replied that perhaps it was the Mahakali aspect of her.

She pointed out my habitual frivolousness and remarked that I must be serious and not light as I had been during the ‘Marching’ for example.

She always encouraged my studies, and, in spite of my being not of an age when people normally study, she permitted me to complete the Higher Course, once in 1955 taking English Literature, and again in 1959 taking Sri Aurobindo’s works. Though the students laughed behind my back, I knew I had the Mother’s blessings. I did not, and even now do not, consider myself to be old as the horizon of my mind, life and body are still expanding. This youth is the soul of the Mother in me urging me to move forward. That is why the Mother said with a smile to me on my fiftieth birthday, “Hello! you are not growing old!”

ROMEN PALIT

(Note: The letters quoted here were written in French and are translated by me. Perhaps a better translation could be made of the 200/300 letters received by me. I have quoted only from the most important ones and in most cases given a gist in my own words for brevity. It is possible some words or expressions are not absolutely accurate for which I may be pardoned.)

(From *Breath of Grace*, edited by Madhav Pandit, Dipti Publication, 1973. Lightly re-edited.)

*When we become one with the inner Godhead, we become one in depth with all, and it is through Her and by Her that we must come into contact with all beings. Then, free from all attraction and repulsion, all likes and dislikes, we are close to what is close to Her and far from what is far from Her.*

*The Mother*

(*Words of Long Ago*, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 2, p. 73)

## SRI AUROBINDO'S EARLY POETRY ACCORDING TO RASAVĀDA

(Continued from the issue of October 2019)

### VIII

The poem to be studied now is 'Love in Sorrow'. This too is like the foregoing one, based on the same rasas as the name proclaims. There are two ways in which this is different from it — (1) The poet is not lamenting his disappointment in love and, (2) The love presented here is totally different from the ordinary concept of *śṛṅgāra rasa*. Now let us look at it more closely.

The poet is disappointed, or rather disgusted with life:

For there was none who loved me, no, not one.  
Alas, what was there that a man should love?  
For I was misery's last and frailest son  
And even my mother bade me homeless rove.  
And I had wronged my youth and nobler powers  
By weak attempts, small failures, wasted hours.<sup>1</sup>

Thus we see that this sadness is not produced by disappointed love. This is definitely *śokakṛta karuṇa* with the speaker as the *āśraya* and his failure as the *uddīpana* and life itself as *ālambana*. But I cannot help feeling that more than *karuṇa* is involved here. The lines are too complex for *karuṇa*. I think another *rasa* is evoked here and that is *māyā rasa*. This had been posited and established by *ācārya* Bhānudatta (1415-1500). In his *Rasa-taraṅginī* he establishes several new rasas and *māyā* is one of them. He gives several points, of which two are relevant here:

1. *Pravṛtti* is the state of mind that generates *māyārasa* — *pravṛtttau māyārasa iti pratibhāti*.
2. Its *sthāyībhāva* is *mithyā-jñāna* — *mithyā-jñānamaya sthāyībhāvah*.  
Its *vibhāvas* are the sense of dharma and adharma.  
Its *anubhāvas* are children, wife, conquest, kingdom etc. — *vibhāvāh sāṅsārika-bhogārjaka dharmādharmāh anubhāvāh putra-kalatra-vijaya-sāmrājyādayah*.

1. *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 22.

This is surely a case of *māyā rasa*.

He voices his complaint, not knowing that he is being heard by anyone. But a girl, hidden among the willows, heard him. She came forward and said:

. . . “My brother, lift your forlorn eyes;  
I am your sister, more than you unblest.”<sup>2</sup>

She comforted him and after some time they parted. Her love was sisterly love but his was different:

. . . or that sweet new glow  
Failed in the light of bitter knowledge — rang  
A voice that said, “Behold the loves too pure  
To live, the joy that never shall endure.”<sup>3</sup>

There is this significant difference: the girl's love is sisterly love. Herein we come across a significant feature of *rasavāda*: *śṛṅgāra rasa* is concerned only with heterosexual love. There is provision for other kinds of love but other kinds of love are given the status of being different kinds of *rasas* — *vatsala*, *preyam*, *prīta* *rasas* are there to account for parental, friendly and servant-love. But sisterly love is not there. Probably because Rama and his brothers did not have sisters and neither did the five Pandavas too.

Even then, the poet's own attitude to this sisterly love is different, as in the lines just quoted. We can call it *nīlī śṛṅgāra*.

So, just as in the foregoing poem we have here *śokakṛta karuṇa* and *śṛṅgāra*. Everything that has been said about these *rasas* in the former poems is true of this one also.

‘The Island Grave’ too is a poem of the same type, with *śokakṛta karuṇa* and *śṛṅgāra* mixed inextricably. The next poem ‘Bankim Chandra Chatterji’ has *prakṛti* and *deśabhakti rasa* in it:

The cuckoo's daylong cry and moan of bees,  
Zephyrs and streams and softly-blossoming trees<sup>4</sup>

These and like lines give us a taste of *prakṛti rasa*. Let me mention in passing that he has translated the flower *gandha-rajā* in a felicitous phrase as “king-perfume”. Perhaps this was for the sake of the metre, we do not know, do we? We have *deśabhakti* when he talks about the powerful writing of Bankim Chandra:

2. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

. . . Subtly he knew  
The beauty and divinity in you.  
His nature kingly was and as a god<sup>5</sup>

These and the next few lines give us the *rasa* with *deśaprem* as its *sthāyi*, the poet as *āśraya* and the works of Bankim Chandra as the *ālambana*. The emotion generated by reading these books is *uddīpana*.

The next three poems, 'Saraswati with the Lotus', 'Goethe', and 'The Lost Deliverer' are all short poems (six lines each), but in each *śokakṛta karuṇa* is briefly evoked. It has to be granted, however, that the last poem loses much of its effect as we do not know whom the poem is about. 'Madhusudan Dutt' is a longer and therefore a far more effective poem. It is difficult to determine which *rasa* the poem generates. *Prakṛti* is definitely there, but this is not enough. One feels that some other *rasa* is there as well. Why, there is a love which by itself gives us ineffable taste of *rasa*:

Thou mad'st her godlike who was only fair.<sup>6</sup>

I very much think that this highly evocative line and much of the poem itself gives us the taste of the *rasa* that *ācārya* Bhānudatta calls *aupanāyika* or *kāvya rasa* which is produced by the pleasure given by poetry and drama. It is significantly two of the *rasas* that have posed problems for us. They are both established by Bhānudatta. As far as *aupanāyika* is concerned, first of all he divides *rasas* into two kinds, *laukika* and *alaukika*. Within *alaukika* he gives three *rasas* and *aupanāyika* is the third of them. It is a *rasa* one tastes in the delight given us by poetry or drama.

The next poem, 'Envoi' is a curious one for though there are many *bhāvas* flitting in and out of it, I do not even have the feeling one gets when *bhāva* intensifies into *rasa*. Never do I have any feeling that approaches what can be called *Brahma-svada-sahodara*. It is rich in *sancārī bhavas*, no doubt, but it would be a tedious job listing them so I am not even going to attempt it.

(To be continued)

RATRI RAY

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, p. 27.



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