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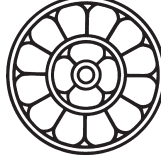
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXXII

No. 7

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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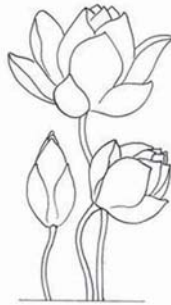


## A POETIC FRAGMENT

Who says our Mother is a beggar-woman, the whole universe is her foothold,  
Her sons are the armies of Sikhs, Jats and Rajputs.  
The song of Vande Mataram infuses strength into Bengal.  
Even till today the glory of Shivaji is awake in Maharashtra.  
Each mountain-rib of hers embodies millions of her invincible sons,  
The band of the Bhils, Gonds and Kharwar and free Nepal,  
Malias and Khesias and Garos — how to enumerate all —  
The Mughals, Pathans and Nagas — the sands of the beach.  
There is no end to the treasure that is Mother's children.  
Sindhu and Ganges and their sisters — the Mother clad in paddy green.  
Even today Riks and Samas resound in the Vindhya and Himalayas,  
Till this day our Mother remains unreachable to us in the high hills and  
spring-heads.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Sri Aurobindo's original is in Bengali. Translated by Nolini Kanta Gupta.  
Published in the journal *Sri Aurobindo — Archives and Research*,  
Volume 5, Number 1, April 1981)



## PERFECT THY MOTION

Perfect thy motion ever within me,  
Master of mind.  
Grey of the brain, flash of the lightning,  
Brilliant and blind,  
These thou linkest, the world to mould,  
Writing the thought in a scroll of gold  
Violet lined.

Tablet of brain thou hast made for thy writing,  
Master divine.  
Calmly thou writest or full of thy grandeur  
Flushed as with wine.  
Then with a laugh thou erasest the scroll,  
Bringing another, like waves that roll  
And sink supine.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 285)*

**Perfect thy motion.** No title in the manuscript. Circa 1909. The single manuscript text of this poem is found in a notebook that Sri Aurobindo used for the dramatic version of “The Birth of Sin” and for the dialogue that follows. All these poems are in the handwriting of the 1909-10 period.

## BEAUTY IN THE REAL

I had ridden down by Shelsford thro' the glittering lustre of an afternoon in March and as I was returning somewhat cold and tired, saw at a distance the pink hat and heavy black curls of Keshav Ganesh and with him Broome Wilson and Prince Paradox. As I trotted up Prince Paradox hailed me. "Come round and have tea with me" he said "we are speculating at large on the primitive roots and origin of the universe, and I know your love for light subjects." "I shall be a delighted listener" I said, and was genuine in the assurance, for I had many a while listened with subtle delight to the beautiful and imaginative talk of Keshav Ganesh. I rode to the stables and returned to the College and quickly changing my apparel repaired to Chetwynd Court, but found them already drinking tea with the liberality of artists. "A cup of nectar" I cried "ere the bowl be empty!" "It seems that Pegasus is blind" said Wilson "or he would not see the drink of Gods in the brown tincture of tea-leaves and the chased bowls of Hephaestus in a common set of China." "If not the drink of Gods" I replied "it is the nectar of poets and women." "And that is a more splendid title" put in Prince Paradox. "You are right" said Keshav "poets and women are the efflorescence of being and the crowning rapture of creation, and if poets are roses in their delicate texture and have the crimson luxury and the heavy fragrance and the petalled sublimity of a blowing rose, women are moulded of as fine material but are flowers perpetually in the bud and are only seen in a glint of peeping splendour and not in the consummated outburst of glory, which is only fostered by the living waters of culture and the nurturing warmth of independence." Broome interposed. "No more of that" he said "if you escape into a byway, Keshav, you will never be wooed back into the high-road." "But what is the high-road?" I inquired. Broome Wilson, who was gifted with a retentive memory undertook to inform me. "I understand" I said when he had finished "and am pleased to see my own ideas garbed in the beautiful dialect of poetical analogy; but have you not finished or is there more wine to be pressed from the cluster?" "There is more to be pressed" he answered. Then began an amusing scene, for Broome baited his hook for the argument and kept throwing the line repeatedly, but Keshav was the wariest fish that ever cheated an angler and if he ever appeared to bite, was seen, as the line went flying up, to dart away into some fine thought or voluptuous image. At last when we least expected it, he plunged into the argument.

"And so on the gnarled brow of Pishgah we stand and look down on a land flowing with milk and honey. Now whether is it wiser to descend and take the kingdom of heaven by violence or to linger here and feel on our temples the breath of the winds wafting us hints of the beauty we relinquish? Below there are truculent peoples to conquer and strong cities to storm and giants, the sons of Anak, to

slaughter, but above the stainless heavens and the sweet, fresh morning and one lingering star.”

“Let us go down” I said “and enjoy the full meaning of the beauty below us.”

“Yes” added Broome eagerly “leave hints to the spiritually indolent.”

Treneth threw in a paradox.

“I love the pleasure of anticipation better than the pain of enjoyment.”

“We are very far from the enjoyment” said Keshav “for we have yet to make the descent of Pisgah.”

“But what is Pisgah?” I asked.

“In thought, the knowledge of virtue, and, in action, the purpose of evolving the inborn qualities and powers native to our personality.”

“Shall I let you off, Keshav,” said Broome “or are you ready to answer my inquiries?”

“Pray do not” he said “for like Gorgias I profess to answer any question and not be at a loss however strange the inquiry.”

“I am glad to hear it, and I hope you will answer and tell me why you have ignored the qualities that are native neither to our human nature nor to our personality but to a more subtle part of us.”

“I see;” he replied with a smile “you shy at the spectre of heredity. Well, we will lay the spectre.”

“And a spectre it is, or rather a scarecrow;” put in Prince Paradox “for it seems to me neither beautiful as an idea nor sound as a theory but merely the last resource of bad psychologists.”

“I see the lovers of the past are as iconoclastic from regret as the lovers of the future from aspiration. We are then agreed that our first step will be to reject or accept heredity?”

We all assented.

“And now, Prince Paradox” he said “will you tell me that you do not believe in race?”

“God forbid.”

“And you agree with me that an Aryan is various from a non-Aryan, and a Teuton from a Celt and a Celt from a Hindu, and a Rajput from a Mahratta, and that this is fine as an idea and sound as a theory and consonant with Nature, which is fond of sphering harmony within harmony?”

“Yes, I agree with all that.”

“And by origin the Saxon varies from the Celt, and is meant for the drudgery of Life and not for its beauty and splendour, just as by origin the thistle varies from the rose and is not glorious nor wonderful but simply decent and useful and good diet for donkeys?”

“That is true.”

“Then if race divergences result from origin, and origin is heredity, is it not?, is



not heredity real and not a sciolism?"

"Yes, in broad masses, but not in the individual. What is sauce for the goose abstract is not sauce for the positive gander."

"It would take a positive goose to deny that. But synthesis is the secret of Philosophy and not analysis, and we err widely when we work from without rather than from within. Let us rectify our methods or we shall arrive at incomplete results. I trust none of you are proficient in text-book Psychology?"

We all disclaimed the text-book.

"That is fortunate, for I can now make ridiculous mistakes without fear of ridicule. This is the theory of race as I conceive it. Temperament is the basis or substratum of character, and the character built on anything other than temperament is an edifice rooted in the sea-waves which in a moment will foam away into nothing or tumble grovelling under the feet of fresh conquerors. Indeed it would be more apt to call temperament the root of character, and the character itself the growing or perfect tree with its hundred branches and myriads of leaves. And temperament is largely due to race, or, in another phrasing, varies with the blood, and if the blood is quick and fiery the temperament is subtle and sensitive and responds as promptly to social influences and personal culture as a flower to sunlight and rain, and shoots up into multitudinous leaves and branches, but if the blood is slow and lukewarm, the temperament is dull and phlegmatic and will not answer to the most earnest wooing, but grows up stunted and withered in aspect and bald of foliage and miserly of branches and altogether unbeautiful. On the blood depends the sensitiveness of the nerves to impressions and the quick action of the brains and the heat of the passions, and all that goes to the composition of a character, which if they are absent, leave only the heavy sediment and dregs of human individuality. Hence the wide gulf between the Celt and the Saxon."

"You are the dupe of your own metaphors, Keshav" said Broome "the quick nature is the mushroom, but the slow is the gradual and majestic oak."

"If the Athenians were mushrooms and the Lowland Scotch are oaks, the mushroom is preferable. To be slow and solid is the pride of the Saxon and the ox, but to be quick and songful and gracile is the pride of the Celt and the bird. There is no virtue in inertia, but only absence of virtue; for without growth there is no development, and the essence of growth and the imperative need of the spirit is movement, which if you lose, you lose all that separates the human from the brute."

Broome avowed that on our theory of virtue the remark was convincing.

"And do we all recognize" said he "blood as the seed of temperament and temperament as the root of character?"

We all signified assent.

"Then, Prince Paradox, does it not follow that if our ancestors had quick blood, we shall have quick blood and a quick temperament, and if they had slow blood, we shall have slow blood and a slow temperament, and if they had some of both

characters, we shall have the elements of either temperament, and either they will amalgamate, one predominant and the other subordinate or driven under, or they will pervert our souls into a perpetual field of battle?"

"Obviously" he assented.

"Then here we have heredity in the individual as in the broad masses."

"But only a racial heredity and to that I do not object, but what I loath is to be told that my virtues are mere bequests and that I am not an original work but a kind of anthology of ancestral qualities."

"But if I called you a poem, in which peculiar words and cadences have been introduced and assimilated and blended in a new and beautiful manner, would you loath to be told that?"

"Dear me, no: it quite reconciles me to the idea."

"And it is the more accurate comparison. Nature does not go to work like a mere imitator of herself, as modern poets do, but transplants the secrets of her old poems and blends them with new secrets, so as to enrich the beauty of her new poem, and however she may seem to grow grapes from thistles, is really too wise and good, to do anything so discordant, and only by her involved and serpentine manner gives an air of caprice and anarchy to what is really apt and harmonious. She often leaves the ground fallow for a generation and the world is surprised when it sees spring from Sir Timothy Shelley, Baronet and orthodox, Percy Bysshe Shelley, poet and pioneer of free-thought, but learns in a little while that Percy Shelley had a grandfather, and marvels no longer. Could we trace the descent of Goethe and Shakespeare we should find the root of the Italian in the one and the Celt in the other — but the world did not then and does not now appreciate the value of genealogies to philosophy. We are vexed and are sceptical of harmony in nature, when we find Endymion a Londoner, but look back a step and learn that his parents were Devonshire Celts and recover our faith in the Cosmos. And why should we exclaim at the Julian emperors as strange products for stoical virtue-ridden Rome, when we know that Tiberius was a Clausus, one of the great Italian houses renowned for its licence, cruelty, pride and genius, and Caligula the son and Nero the grandson of Germanicus, who drew his blood from Mark Antony. Science is right in its materialist data, though not always in the inferences it draws from them and when she tells us that nothing proceeds from nothingness and that for every effect there is a cause and for every growth a seed, we must remember that her truths apply as much to the spiritual as to the material world. Mommsen has said rightly that without passion there is no genius. We shall not gather beauty from ugliness, nor intellect from a slow temperament, nor fiery passion from disciplined apathy, but in all things shall reap as we sow, and must sow the wind before we can reap the whirlwind."

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Early Cultural Writings*, CWSA, Vol. 1, pp. 78-83)

## STRAY THOUGHTS

Flowers and trees are the poetry of Nature; the gardener is a romantic poet who has added richness, complexity of effect and symmetry to a language otherwise distinguished merely by facility, by directness and by simplicity of colour and charm.

\*

Sound is more essential to poetry than sense. Swinburne who often conveys no meaning to the intellect, yet fills his verse with lovely & suggestive melodies, can put more poetry into one such line than Pope into a hundred couplets of accurate sense and barren music. A noble thought framed in a well-rounded sentence, will always charm by virtue of its satisfying completeness, but will never convey that exquisite agony of rapture which a line of perfect melody conveys to the sensitive soul.

\*

The melody of words has this advantage over the melody of mere sounds that it needs only a soul to understand poetry but to comprehend music a technical education as well.

\*

To govern life by fixed laws and a pocket-hand-book.

\*

Beware of heavy touches above all in tragedy: comedy heavily stressed becomes the grotesque, which has its value in Art: tragedy heavily stressed becomes melodrama, which has no value anywhere.

\*

One step beyond the sublime & you are in the grotesque.

\*

The Greek mythology was evolved by poets and sculptors; therefore it is beautiful. The Hindu mythology fell into the hands of priests and moralists; therefore it has become hideous.

\*

Art holds the mirror up to Nature that Nature may see her own image beside that of Art and realise her own deformity and imperfections.

\*

It was Meredith who taught me that the epigram is the soul of style, and Plato who whispered that rhythm is its body. Words are the texture of the flesh and sentences the system of hard matter that gives it consistency: the texture of the flesh may be coarse or delicate, and as you design so you shall build.

\*

Just as Socrates was nothing without his *daemon*, so the artist is helpless if he has not his daemon at his elbow. And who is the artist's daemon?

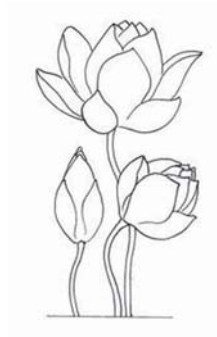
The artistic conscience.

\*

Inspiration means that the papyrus of your imagination is held to the fire of memory and reveals characters written in Indian ink by unseen compositors.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Early Cultural Writings*, CWSA, Vol. 1, pp. 84-85)



## MATERIALISM

Many hard things have been said about materialism by those who have preferred to look at life from above rather than below or who claim to live in the more luminous atmosphere of the idealistic mind or ether of the spiritual existence. Materialism has been credited with the creation of great evils, viewed even as the archimage of a detestable transformation or the misleader guiding mankind to an appalling catastrophe. Those whose temperament and imagination dally lovingly with an idealised past, accuse it for the cultural, social, political changes which they abhor, regarding them as a disturbance, happily, they believe, temporary, of eternal moral values and divinely ordained hierarchies. Those, more numerous, who look beyond to the hope of a larger idealism and higher spirituality, proclaim in its decline and passing away a fortunate deliverance for the human spirit. World-wide strife and competition have been, it is said, its fruits, war and the holocaust of terrible sacrifice in which mankind has been squandering its strength, blood, treasure, — though these are no new calamities, nor would it be safe to hope that they are the last of their kind, — are pointed to as its nemesis or regarded as a funeral pyre it has lighted for itself in whose cruel flame the errors and impurities it brought into existence are being burned to ashes. Science has been declared suspect as a guide or instructor of mankind and bidden to remain parked within her proper limits, because she was for long the ally of the material view of existence, a suggester of atheism and agnosticism, a victory-bringer of materialism and scepticism, the throne of their reign or pillar of their stability. Reason has been challenged because rationalism and free-thought were appropriated as synonyms of materialistic thinking.

All this wealth of accusation may have and much of it has its truth. But most things that the human mind thus alternately trumpets and bans, are a double skein. They come to us with opposite faces, their good side and their bad, a dark aspect of error and a bright of truth; and it is as we look upon one or the other visage that we swing to our extremes of opinion or else oscillate between them. Materialism may not be quite as dead as most would declare it to be; still held by a considerable number of scientific workers, perhaps a majority, — and scientific opinion is always a force both by its power of well-ascertained truth and its continued service to humanity, — it constitutes even now the larger part of the real temper of action and life even where it is rejected as a set opinion. The strong impressions of the past are not so easily erased out of our human mentality. But it is a fast receding force; other ideas and standpoints are crowding in and thrust it out from its remaining points of vantage. It will be useful before we say farewell to it, and can now be done with safety, to see what it was that gave to it its strength, what it has left permanently behind it, and to adjust our new viewpoints to whatever stuff of truth may have lain

within it and lent it its force of applicability. Even we can look at it with an impartial sympathy, though only as a primary but lesser truth of our actual being, — for it is all that, but no more than that, — and try to admit and fix its just claims and values. We can now see too how it was bound to escape from itself by the widening of the very frame of knowledge it has itself constructed.

Admit, — for it is true, — that this age of which materialism was the portentous offspring and in which it had figured first as petulant rebel and aggressive thinker, then as a grave and strenuous preceptor of mankind, has been by no means a period of mere error, calamity and degeneration, but rather a most powerful creative epoch of humanity. Examine impartially its results. Not only has it immensely widened and filled in the knowledge of the race and accustomed it to a great patience of research, scrupulosity, accuracy, — if it has done that only in one large sphere of inquiry, it has still prepared for the extension of the same curiosity, intellectual rectitude, power for knowledge to other and higher fields, — not only has it with an unexampled force and richness of invention brought and put into our hands, for much evil, but also for much good, discoveries, instruments, practical powers, conquests, conveniences which, however we may declare their insufficiency for our highest interests, yet few of us would care to relinquish, but it has also, paradoxical as that might at first seem, strengthened man's idealism. On the whole, it has given him a kindlier hope and humanised his nature. Tolerance is greater, liberty has increased, charity is more a matter of course, peace, if not yet practicable, is growing at least imaginable. Latterly the thought of the eighteenth century which promulgated secularism has been much scouted and belittled, that of the nineteenth which developed it, riddled with adverse criticism and overpassed. Still they worshipped no mean godheads. Reason, science, progress, freedom, humanity were their ideals, and which of these idols, if idols they are, would we like or ought we, if we are wise, to cast down into the mire or leave as poor unworshipped relics on the wayside? If there are other and yet greater godheads or if the visible forms adored were only clay or stone images or the rites void of the inmost knowledge, yet has their cult been for us a preliminary initiation and the long material sacrifice has prepared us for a greater religion.

Reason is not the supreme light, but yet is it always a necessary light-bringer and until it has been given its rights and allowed to judge and purify our first infra-rational instincts, impulses, rash fervours, crude beliefs and blind prejudgments, we are not altogether ready for the full unveiling of a greater inner luminary. Science is a right knowledge, in the end only of processes, but still the knowledge of processes too is part of a total wisdom and essential to a wide and a clear approach towards the deeper Truth behind. If it has laboured mainly in the physical field, if it has limited itself and bordered or overshadowed its light with a certain cloud of wilful ignorance, still one had to begin this method somewhere and the physical field is the first, the nearest, the easiest for the kind and manner of inquiry undertaken. Ignorance of

one side of Truth or the choice of a partial ignorance or ignoring for better concentration on another side is often a necessity of our imperfect mental nature. It is unfortunate if ignorance becomes dogmatic and denies what it has refused to examine, but still no permanent harm need have been done if this willed self-limitation is compelled to disappear when the occasion of its utility is exhausted. Now that we have founded rigorously our knowledge of the physical, we can go forward with a much firmer step to a more open, secure and luminous repossession of mental and psychic knowledge. Even spiritual truths are likely to gain from it, not a loftier or more penetrating, — that is with difficulty possible, — but an ampler light and fuller self-expression.

Progress is the very heart of the significance of human life, for it means our evolution into greater and richer being; and these ages by insisting on it, by forcing us to recognise it as our aim and our necessity, by making impossible hereafter the attempt to subsist in the dullness or the gross beatitude of a stationary self-content, have done a priceless service to the earth-life and cleared the ways of heaven. Outward progress was the greater part of its aim and the inward is the more essential? but the inward too is not complete if the outward is left out of account. Even if the insistence of our progress fall for a time too exclusively on growth in one field, still all movement forward is helpful and must end by giving a greater force and a larger meaning to our need of growth in deeper and higher provinces of our being. Freedom is a godhead whose greatness only the narrowly limited mind, the State-worshipper or the crank of reaction can now deny. No doubt, again, the essential is an inner freedom; but if without the inner realisation the outer attempt at liberty may prove at last a vain thing, yet to pursue an inner liberty and perpetuate an outer slavery or to rejoice in an isolated release and leave mankind to its chains was also an anomaly that had to be exploded, a confined and too self-centred ideal. Humanity is not the highest godhead; God is more than humanity; but in humanity too we have to find and to serve him. The cult of humanity means an increasing kindness, tolerance, charity, helpfulness, solidarity, universality, unity, fullness of individual and collective growth, and towards these things we are advancing much more rapidly than was possible in any previous age, if still with sadly stumbling footsteps and some fierce relapses. The cult of our other human selves within the cult of the Divine comes closer to us as our large ideal. To have brought even one of these things a step nearer, to have helped to settle them with whatever imperfect expression and formula in our minds, to have accelerated our movement towards them are strong achievements, noble services.

Objection can at once be made that all these great things have no connection with materialism. The impulse towards them was of old standing and long active in the human mind; the very principle of the humanitarianism which has been one of the striking developments of modern sentiment, was first brought out from our nature and made prominent by religion, compassion and the love of man first



intimately and powerfully enforced by Christianity and Buddhism; if they have now a little developed, it is the natural expanding from seeds that had long been sown. Materialism was rather calculated to encourage opposite instincts; and the good it favoured it limited, made arid, mechanised. If all these nobler things have grown and are breaking the bounds set to them, it is because man is fortunately inconsistent and after a certain stage of our development cannot be really and wholly materialistic; he needs ideals, ethical expansion, a closer emotional fulfilment, and these needs he has tacked on to his development of materialistic opinion and corrected its natural results by them. But the ideals themselves were taken from an anterior opinion and culture.

This is the truth, but not the whole truth. The old religious cultures were often admirable in the ensemble and always in some of their parts, but if they had not been defective, they could neither have been so easily breached, nor would there have been the need of a secularist age to bring out the results the religions had sown. Their faults were those of a certain narrowness and exclusive vision. Concentrated, intense in their ideal and intensive in their effect, their expansive influence on the human mind was small. They isolated too much their action in the individual, limited too narrowly the working of their ideals in the social order, tolerated for instance and even utilised for the ends of church and creed an immense amount of cruelty and barbarism which were contrary to the spirit and truth from which they had started. What they discouraged in the soul of the individual, they yet maintained in the action and the frame of society, seemed hardly to conceive of a human order delivered from these blots. The depth and fervour of their aspiration had for its shadow a want of intellectual clarity, an obscurity which confused their working and balked the expansion of their spiritual elements. They nourished too a core of asceticism and hardly cared to believe in the definite amelioration of the earth life, despised by them as a downfall or a dolorous descent or imperfection of the human spirit, or whatever earthly hope they admitted saw itself postponed to the millennial end of things. A belief in the vanity of human life or of existence itself suited better the preoccupation with an aim beyond earth. Perfection, ethical growth, liberation became individual ideals and figured too much as an isolated preparation of the soul for the beyond. The social effect of the religious temperament, however potentially considerable, was cramped by excessive other-worldliness and distrust in the intellect accentuated to obscurantism.

The secularist centuries weighed the balance down very much in the opposite direction. They turned the mind of the race wholly earthwards and manwards, but by insisting on intellectual clarity, reason, justice, freedom, tolerance, humanity, by putting these forward and putting the progress of the race and its perfectibility as an immediate rule for the earthly life to be constantly pressed towards and not shunting off the social ideal to doomsday to be miraculously effected by some last divine intervention and judgment, they cleared the way for a collective advance. For they



made these nobler possibilities of mankind more imperative to the practical intelligence. If they lost sight of heaven or missed the spiritual sense of the ideals they took over from earlier ages, yet by this rational and practical insistence on them they drove them home to the thinking mind. Even their too mechanical turn developed from a legitimate desire to find some means for making the effective working of these ideals a condition of the very structure of society. Materialism was only the extreme intellectual result of this earthward and human turn of the race mind. It was an intellectual machinery used by the Time-spirit to secure for a good space the firm fixing of that exclusive turn of thought and endeavour, a strong rivet of opinion to hold the mind of man to it for as long as it might be needed. Man does need to develop firmly in all his earthly parts, to fortify and perfect his body, his life, his outward-going mind, to take full possession of the earth his dwelling-place, to know and utilise physical Nature, enrich his environment and satisfy by the aid of a generalised intelligence his evolving mental, vital and physical being. That is not all his need, but it is a great and initial part of it and of human perfection. Its full meaning appears afterwards; for only in the beginning and in the appearance an impulse of his life, in the end and really it will be seen to have been a need of his soul, a preparing of fit instruments and the creating of a fit environment for a diviner life. He has been set here to serve God's ways upon earth and fulfil the Godhead in man and he must not despise earth or reject the basis given for the first powers and potentialities of the Godhead. When his thought and aim have persisted too far in that direction, he need not complain if he is swung back for a time towards the other extreme, to a negative or a positive, a covert or an open materialism. It is Nature's violent way of setting right her own excess in him.

But the intellectual force of materialism comes from its response to a universal truth of existence. Our dominant opinions have always two forces behind them, a need of our nature and a truth of universal existence from which the need arises. We have the material and vital need because life in Matter is our actual basis, the earthward turn of our minds because earth is and was intended to be the foundation here for the workings of the Spirit. When indeed we scan with a scrupulous intelligence the face that universal existence presents to us or study where we are one with it or what in it all seems most universal and permanent, the first answer we get is not spiritual but material. The seers of the Upanishads saw this with their penetrating vision and when they gave this expression of our first apparently complete, eventually insufficient view of Being, "Matter is the Brahman, from Matter all things are born, by Matter they exist, to Matter they return," they fixed the formula of universal truth of which all materialistic thought and physical science are a recognition, an investigation, a filling in of its significant details, elucidations, justifying phenomena and revelatory processes, the large universal comment of Nature upon a single text.

Mark that it is the first fact of experience from which we start and up to a certain point an undeniable universal truth of being. Matter surely is here our basis,

the one thing that is and persists, while life, mind, soul and all else appear in it as a secondary phenomenon, seem somehow to arise out of it, subsist by feeding upon it, — therefore the word used in the Upanishads for Matter is *annam*, food, — and collapse from our view when it disappears. Apparently the existence of Matter is necessary to them, their existence does not appear to be one whit necessary to Matter. The Being does present himself at first with this face, inexorably, as if claiming to be that and nothing else, insisting that his material base and its need shall first be satisfied and, until that is done, grimly persistent with little or with no regard for our idealistic susceptibilities and caring nothing if he breaks through the delicate net of our moral, our aesthetic and our other finer perceptions. They have the hope of their reign, but meanwhile this is the first visage of universal existence and we have not to hide our face from it any more than could Arjuna from the terrible figure of the Divine on the battle-field of Kurukshetra, or attempt to escape and evade it as Shiva, when there rose around him the many stupendous forms of the original Energy, fled from the vision of it to this and that quarter, forgetful of his own godhead. We must look existence in the face in whatever aspect it confronts us and be strong to find within as well as behind it the Divine.

Materialistic science had the courage to look at this universal truth with level eyes, to accept it calmly as a starting-point and to inquire whether it was not after all the whole formula of universal being. Physical science must necessarily to its own first view be materialistic, because so long as it deals with the physical, it has for its own truth's sake to be physical both in its standpoint and method; it must interpret the material universe first in the language and tokens of the material Brahman, because these are its primary and its general terms and all others come second, subsequently, are a special syllabary. To follow a self-indulgent course from the beginning would lead at once towards fancies and falsities. Initially, science is justified in resenting any call on it to indulge in another kind of imagination and intuition. Anything that draws it out of the circle of the phenomena of objects, as they are represented to the senses and their instrumental prolongations, and away from the dealings of the reason with them by a rigorous testing of experience and experimentation, must distract it from its task and is inadmissible. It cannot allow the bringing in of the human view of things; it has to interpret man in the terms of the cosmos, not the cosmos in the terms of man. The too facile conclusion of the idealist that since things only exist as known to consciousness, they can exist only by consciousness and must be creations of the mind, has no meaning for it; it first has to inquire what consciousness is, whether it is not a result rather than a cause of Matter, coming into being, as it seems to do, only in the frame of a material inconscient universe and apparently able to exist only on the condition that that has been previously established. Starting from Matter, science has to be at least hypothetically materialistic.

When the action of the material principle, the first to organise itself, has been to some extent well understood, then can this science go on to consider what claim

to be quite other terms of our being, — life and mind. But first it is forced to ask itself whether both mind and life are not, as they seem to be, special consequences of the material evolution, themselves powers and movements of Matter. After and if this explanation has failed to cover and to elucidate the facts, it can be more freely investigated whether they are not quite other principles of being. Many philosophical questions arise, as, whether they have entered into Matter and whence or were always in it, and if so, whether they are for ever less and subordinate in action or are in their essential power greater, whether they are contained in it only or really contain it, whether they are subsequent and dependent on its previous appearance or only that in their apparent organisation here but in real being and power anterior to it and Matter itself dependent on the essential pre-existence of life and mind. A greater question comes, whether mind itself is the last term or there is something beyond, whether soul is only an apparent result and phenomenon of the interaction of mind, life and body or we have here an independent term of our being and of all being, greater, anterior, ultimate, all matter containing and contained in a secret spiritual consciousness, spirit the first, last and eternal, the Alpha and the Omega, the OM. For experiential philosophy either Matter, Mind, Life or Spirit may be the Being, but none of these higher principles can be made securely the basis of our thought against all intellectual questioning until the materialistic hypothesis has first been given a chance and tested. That may in the end turn out to have been the use of the materialistic investigation of the universe and its inquiry the greatest possible service to the finality of the spiritual explanation of existence. In any case materialistic science and philosophy have been after all a great and austere attempt to know dispassionately and to see impersonally. They have denied much that is being reaffirmed, but the denial was the condition of a severer effort of knowledge and it may be said of them, as the Upanishad says of Bhrigu the son of Varuna, *sa tapas taptvā annam brahmeti vyajānāt*. “He having practised austerity discovered that Matter was the Brahman.”

The gates of escape by which a knowledge starting from materialism can get away from its own self-immuring limitations, can here only be casually indicated. I may take another occasion to show how the possibility must become in eventual fact a necessity. Physical science has before its eye two eternal factors of existence, Matter and Energy, and no others at all are needed in the account of its operations. Mind dealing with the facts and relations of Matter and Energy as they are arranged to the senses in experience and continuative experiment and are analysed by the reason, would be a sufficient definition of physical science. Its first regard is on Matter as the one principle of being and on Energy only as a phenomenon of Matter; but in the end one questions whether it is not the other way round, all things the action of Energy and Matter only the field, body and instrument of her workings. The first view is quantitative and purely mechanical, the second lets in a qualitative and a more spiritual element. We do not at once leap out of the materialistic circle,

but we see an opening in it which may widen into an outlet when, stirred by this suggestion, we look at life and mind not merely as phenomenon in Matter but as energies and see that they are quite other energies than the material with their own peculiar qualities, powers and workings. If indeed all action of life and mind could be reduced, as it was once hoped, to none but material, quantitative and mechanical, to mathematical, physiological and chemical terms, the opening would cease to be an outlet; it would be choked. That attempt has failed and there is no sign of its ever being successful. Only a limited range of the phenomena of life and mind could be satisfied by a purely bio-physical, psycho-physical or biopsychical explanation, and even if more could be dealt with by these data, still they would only have been accounted for on one side of their mystery, the lower end. Life and Mind, like the Vedic Agni, have their two extremities hidden in a secrecy, and we should by this way only have hold of the tail-end: the head would still be mystic and secret. To know more we must have studied not only the actual or possible action of body and matter on mind and life, but explored all the possible action of mind too on life and body; that opens undreamed vistas. And there is always the vast field of the action of mind in itself and on itself, which needs for its elucidation another, a mental, a psychic science.

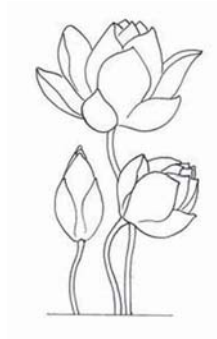
Having examined and explained Matter by physical methods and in the language of the material Brahman, — it is not really explained, but let that pass, — having failed to carry that way of knowledge into other fields beyond a narrow limit, we must then at least consent to scrutinise life and mind by methods appropriate to them and explain their facts in the language and tokens of the vital and mental Brahman. We may discover then where and how these tongues of the one existence render the same truth and throw light on each other's phrases, and discover too perhaps another, high, brilliant and revealing speech which may shine out as the definitive all-explaining word. That can only be if we pursue these other sciences too in the same spirit as the physical, with a scrutiny, not only of their obvious and first actual phenomena, but of all the countless untested potentialities of mental and psychic energy, and with a free unlimited experimentation. We shall find out that their ranges of the unknown are immense. We shall perceive that until the possibilities of mind and spirit are better explored and their truths better known, we cannot yet pronounce the last all-ensphering formula of universal existence. Very early in this process the materialistic circle will be seen opening up on all its sides until it rapidly breaks up and disappears. Adhering still to the essential rigorous method of science, though not to its purely physical instrumentation, scrutinising, experimenting, holding nothing for established which cannot be scrupulously and universally verified, we shall still arrive at supraphysical certitudes. There are other means, there are greater approaches, but this line of access too can lead to the one universal truth.

Three things will remain from the labour of the secularist centuries; truth of the physical world and its importance, the scientific method of knowledge, — which is

to induce Nature and Being to reveal their own way of being and proceeding, not hastening to put upon them our own impositions of idea and imagination, *adhyāropa*, — and last, though very far from least, the truth and importance of the earth life and the human endeavour, its evolutionary meaning. They will remain, but will turn to another sense and disclose greater issues. Surer of our hope and our labour, we shall see them all transformed into light of a vaster and more intimate world-knowledge and self-knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 184-95)



## ‘GIVE US THE FAITH WHICH WE LACK . . . ’

**June 23, 1914**

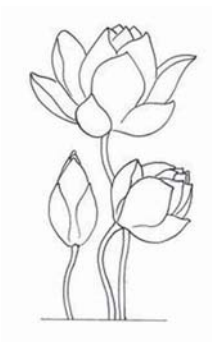
Thou art the sovereign power of transformation, why shouldst Thou not act on all who are brought into contact with Thee through our mediation? We lack faith in Thy power: always we think that men should in their conscious thought want this integral transformation for it to come about; we forget that it is Thou who willest in them and that Thou canst will in such a way that all their being is illumined by it. . . . We doubt Thy power, O Lord, and thus become bad intermediaries for it and veil the major part of its transforming force.

Oh, give us the faith which we lack; give us the certitude of detail which is wanting in us. Deliver us from the ordinary way of thinking and judging; grant that we may live in the consciousness of Thy infinite love and see it at work at every moment and that by our consciousness of it we may bring it into touch with the most material states of being. . . .

O Lord, deliver us from all ignorance, give us true faith.

THE MOTHER

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 1, p. 182)*



## A CONVERSATION OF 10 FEBRUARY 1951

*“You must be able, if you are ready to follow the Divine order, to take up whatever work you are given, even a stupendous work, and leave it the next day with the same quietness with which you took it up and not feel that the responsibility is yours. There should be no attachment — to any object or any mode of life. You must be absolutely free.”*

*Questions and Answers 1929 (14 April)*

I would like someone to tell me what he understands by “be absolutely free”, for it is a very important question. I shall tell you why.

Most people confuse liberty with licence. For the ordinary mind, to be free is to have the chance of committing every stupidity that one likes, without anybody intervening. I say one must be “absolutely free”, but it is a very dangerous advice unless one understands the meaning of the words. Free from what? — free from attachments, evidently. It is exactly that. It is the story of the Buddha<sup>1</sup> who answers the young man expert in all the arts, “I am an expert in the art of self-control. If men congratulate me or praise me, it leaves me tranquil and indifferent. If they blame me, that leaves me equally tranquil and indifferent.”

Try then to question yourself to see to what extent you are above all blame and praise. Not that you must feel so superior to others that what they say seems to you of no importance, it is not that. It is that you have become aware of the general state of ignorance, including yours, and when others believe that something is good, you know “It is not so good as that”, and when they believe it is bad you can say, “It is not so bad as that.” Everything is completely mixed up and finally nobody can judge anybody. Therefore you are completely indifferent to all praise and all blame. And the conclusion would be: so long as the divine consciousness in me or in one whom I have chosen as my Guru does not tell me “This is to be done”, “This is not to be done”, I am indifferent to what others may tell me. For I think that the divine presence in the one in whom I have put my trust is capable of knowing what is good and what is bad, what is to be done and what is not to be done.

And that is the best way of being free. Let your surrender to the Divine be entire and you will become completely free.

The only way of being truly free is to make your surrender to the Divine entire, without reservation, because then all that binds you, ties you down, chains you, falls away naturally from you and has no longer any importance. If someone comes and blames you, you may say, “On what authority does he blame me, does he know

1. “Self-Control”, *Words of Long Ago*.



the supreme will?" And the same thing when you are congratulated. This is not to advise you not to profit by what comes to you from others — I have learnt throughout my life that even a little child can give you a lesson. Not that he is less ignorant than you but he is like a mirror which reflects the image of what you are; he may tell you something which is not true but also may show you something that you did not know. You can hence profit a great deal by it if you receive the lesson without any undesirable reaction.

Every hour of my life I have learnt that one can learn something; but I have never felt bound by the opinion of others, for I consider that there is only one truth in the world which can know something, and this is the Supreme Truth. Then one is quite free. And it is this freedom that I want of you — free from all attachment, all ignorance, all reaction; free from everything except a total surrender to the Divine. This is the way out from all responsibility towards the world. The Divine alone is responsible.

*It is not possible, is it, for the surrender to be total from the very beginning?*

Generally, no. It needs time. But there are instantaneous conversions; to explain all that to you in detail would take too much time. You know perhaps that in all schools of initiation it used to be said that it takes thirty-five years to change one's character! So you must not expect the thing to be done in a minute.

*If one is to be indifferent to everything, why are prizes given to the children?*

You do not expect a schoolboy to be a yogi, do you? I have just said that it takes thirty-five years to attain that and to change one's character.

You see, individual, human authority, like the authority of a father of the family, of a teacher, of the head of a state, is a symbolic thing. They have no real authority but authority is given to them to enable them to fulfil a role in social life as it now is, that is to say, a social life founded upon falsehood and not at all on truth, for truth means unity and society is founded on division. There are people who work out their role, their function, their symbol more or less well — nobody is faultless, all is mixed in this world. But he who takes his role seriously, tries to fill it as honestly as possible, may receive inspirations which enable him to play his part a little more truly than an ordinary man. If the teacher who gives marks kept in mind that he was the representative of the divine truth, if he constantly took sufficient trouble to be in tune with the divine Will as much as this is possible for him, well, that could be very useful; for the ordinary teacher acts according to his personal preferences — what he does not like, what he likes, etc. — and he belongs to the general falsehood, but if at the time of giving marks, the teacher tries sincerely to put himself in harmony with a truth deeper than his small narrow consciousness, he may serve as an



intermediary of this truth and, as such, help his students to become conscious of this truth within themselves.

This is precisely one of the things that I wanted to tell you. Education is a sacerdotalism, teaching is a sacerdotalism, and to be at the head of a State is a sacerdotalism. Then, if the person who fulfils this role aspires to fulfil it in the highest and the most true way, the general condition of the world can become much better. Unfortunately, most people never think about this at all, they fill their role somehow — not to speak of the innumerable people who work only to earn money, but in this case their activity is altogether rotten, naturally. That was my very first basis in forming the Ashram: that the work done here be an offering to the Divine.

Instead of letting oneself go in the stream of one's nature, of one's mood, one must constantly keep in mind this kind of feeling that one is a representative of the Supreme Knowledge, the Supreme Truth, the Supreme Law, and that one must apply it in the most honest, the most sincere way one can; then one makes great progress oneself and can make others also progress. And besides, one will be respected, there will be no more indiscipline in the class, for there is in every human being something that recognises and bows down before true greatness; even the worst criminals are capable of admiring a noble and disinterested act. Therefore when children feel in a teacher, in a school master, this deep aspiration to act according to the truth, they listen to you with an obedience which you would not get if one day you were in a good mood and the next day you were not, which is disastrous for everybody.

*If one needs thirty-five years to change one's character, how can one make, from now, a total surrender to the Divine?*

It may go quicker, you know! All depends on the way that one follows.

You remember, we spoke once of the attitude of the baby cat and that of the baby monkey.<sup>2</sup> If you agree to be like a docile baby cat (there are also baby cats which are very undisciplined, I have seen them), like a docile little child, this may go very fast. Note that it is very easy to say, "Choose the attitude of the baby cat", but it is not so easy to do. You must not believe that adopting the attitude of the baby cat lets you off from all personal effort. Because you are not a baby cat, human beings are not baby cats! There are in you innumerable elements which are accustomed to trusting only themselves, which want to do their own work, and it is much more difficult to control all these elements than to let oneself go in all circumstances. It is very difficult. First of all, there is always that wonderful work of

2. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that a disciple can choose one of two attitudes: the passive trust of the baby cat which lets itself be carried by its mother (this is the way of surrender, the surest) and the active attitude of the baby monkey which clings to its mother (the way of personal effort).

the mind which likes so very much to observe, criticise, analyse, doubt, try to solve the problem, say, “Is it good thus?”, “Would it not be better like that?”, and so on. So that goes on and on, and where is the baby cat? . . . For the baby cat does not think! It is free from all this and hence it is much easier for it!

Whatever be the way you follow, personal effort is always necessary till the moment of identification. At that moment all effort drops from you like a worn-out robe, you are another person: what was impossible for you becomes not only possible but indispensable, you cannot do otherwise.

You must be attentive, silent, must await the inner inspiration, not do anything from external reactions, you must be moved by the light that comes from above, constantly, regularly, must act only under the inspiration of that light and nothing else. Never to think, never to question, never to ask “Should I do this or that?”, but to know, to see, to hear. To act with an inner certitude without questioning and without doubting, because the decision does not come from you, it comes from above. Well, this may come very soon or one may have to wait perhaps a long time — that depends upon one’s previous preparation, upon many things. Till then you must will and will with persistence, and above all never lose patience or courage. If necessary, repeat the same thing a thousand times, knowing that perhaps the thousandth time you will realise the result.

You are not all of a single piece. Your present body is often an accident. If you have within you a conscious soul which has influenced the formation of your body, you are infinitely better prepared than someone, a soul, which falls headfirst into a body without knowing where it is going; in this latter case much hard work is needed to lift up the consciousness which has thus fallen into obscurity. The inner preparation may come from previous lives or from the present life; or you have reached a turning-point in your integral growth and are in just the right relation with the circumstances necessary for the last step to be taken. But this does not mean that you have not lived a thousand times before reaching this turning-point.

THE MOTHER

*(Questions and Answers 1950-1951, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 4, pp. 90-95)*

## “BEATITUDE” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

Just eight lines, almost wondering whether they have anything to do with Helicon. (Is the philosophy of the first stanza too difficult?)

### BEATITUDE

In her virginity there is no pain  
Of solitude: she is the single-hearted  
                  ~~earth — within her love's arcane~~  
Heaven and earth, within whose love-arcane  
                  ~~Time and eternity~~ have never parted.  
Eternity and time

No self-control aches voidly through her gaze.  
Around her spirit, clay has put no bars:  
The<sup>1</sup> body's gloom is but a midnight space  
Unfolding calm infinitudes of stars.  
                  ~~cool infinities~~

*(Amal's question:)*

1. Is “Her” necessary instead of “The”?

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

1. Yes — it is not clear without “Her”.

The philosophy is clear enough. I don't know why you want to bar Helicon to these eight lines — they are very good indeed — the first four lines especially, as they put the idea with much originality and power — but the second stanza also reaches a high level.

8 October 1934

## BEATITUDE

In her virginity there is no pain  
 Of solitude: she is the single-hearted  
 Heaven and earth, within whose love-arcane  
 Eternity and time have never parted.

No self-control aches voidly through her gaze.  
 Around her spirit, clay has put no bars:  
 Her body's gloom is but a midnight space  
 Unfolding calm infinitudes of stars.

AMAL KIRAN  
 (K. D SETHNA)

### Note:

Helicon [L f. Gk *Helikon* a mountain in Boeotia, Greece, formerly sacred to the Muses, often confused by 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century writers with the springs of Aganippe and Hippocrene which rose in it]: A source, region, etc. of poetic inspiration.

Helicon, Mount: A mountain in Boeotia, central Greece, to the north of the Gulf of Corinth, rising to 1,750 m (5741 ft). It was believed by the ancient Greeks to be the home of the Muses.

*Life differs from the mechanical order of the physical universe with which the reason has been able to deal victoriously just because it is mechanical and runs immutably in the groove of fixed cosmic habits. Life, on the contrary, is a mobile, progressive and evolving force, — a force that is the increasing expression of an infinite soul in creatures and, as it progresses, becomes more and more aware of its own subtle variations, needs, diversities.*

Sri Aurobindo

(*The Human Cycle*, CWSA, Vol. 25, p. 213)

# THE INDIAN SPIRIT AND THE WORLD'S FUTURE

## PREFACE

The essays collected here are cullings, retouched in a few places, from the editorial contributions, either openly avowed or under the pen-name “Libra”, to the fortnightly review — recently converted into a monthly — *Mother India*. The opening words of the manifesto in the first number ran: “We are here to answer a grave need of the times. This country has gained independence, but it has not found its proper line of life. There is a welter of ideologies and our minds are divided. A host of parties has sprung up, each with a different aim. In the clash of parties the right destiny of India is forgotten.” For nearly five years *Mother India* has carried on its work of throwing light on the true Indian spirit and its role in the creation of a new world. From the material standpoint the work has been one of unique tenacity, for *Mother India* is the only contemporary journal which has intellectually and spiritually gone from strength to strength over a long period of time without practically any advertisement-revenue! And this record achievement is due to the idealism inspired by the greatest intellectual and spiritual figure of our age, Sri Aurobindo, whose many-sided world-vision was sought to be reflected in various ways in *Mother India*. Symbolic of that inspiration was the launching of this periodical as near as possible to February 21 in 1949, the seventy-first birthday of Sri Aurobindo’s co-worker for the regeneration of mankind, the radiant personality who is known in the Pondicherry Ashram as the Mother.

Originally the publication did not intend to stand aloof from political controversies, as it does now after Sri Aurobindo’s passing. But its attitude to politics — both national and international — was an uncommon one. “In the hubbub of political slogans,” said the manifesto, “we bring a standard that is non-political. Though we shall never stop touching politics as also we shall never stop touching all that constitutes man’s many-faceted life, we are not a political party. And our standard of judgment, by being essentially non-political and above all parties, will conduce to an impartiality, a freedom, a wideness, a depth of vision.”

What this standard of judgment was and how it was organically connected with the national genius that we termed Mother India will be made clear in the course of the essays in this volume, though purely political problems form no part of their subject-matter. In general it may be summed up by saying that in every field of activity the aim was to criticise whatever militated against humanity’s instinct of an evolving divinity within itself and to give the utmost constructive help to all that encouraged this instinct. To quote the manifesto again: “The Godhead secret within man is the truth of man and most keenly the truth of the Indian nation, the truth that

has to be lived out as much as possible. Not for any lesser ideal do we launch our paper and only this highest ideal we have in mind when we take as our motto the ancient cry: 'Great is Truth and it shall prevail.'"

Did this mean that we must be religious zealots, fanatics of a creed? Certainly not. That would have gone against the national genius itself of India, the home of a widely synthesising spirituality. Perhaps an indication of what was meant can be most tellingly, even though indirectly, given by citing some passages from an editorial not included in the present collection, which discussed the issue of choosing between Stalin and Truman:

"The world at present is broadly divided between those who support Stalinism and those who do not. Over against Stalinism there is no particular 'ism' built round an individual. America is, of course, the biggest power outside Russia; but the anti-Stalinists cannot be labelled as Trumanists, except by way of a highly significant pun which would distinguish between 'True Man' and 'False Man'.

"Opposed to Stalinism are various democracies, each with its own kind of constitution. America and England and France cannot be said to have exactly the same type of government. Nor can they be said to have the same sort of national mind . . . But all of them are bound together by their recognition that Stalinism puts the False Man against the True Man, an obstruction in the path of the deepest nature *homo sapiens* tends to evolve and manifest.

"The key-importance of the creative individual in the evolutionary process, the presence of a secret Godhead who can inspire and enlighten the consciousness of the individual — these two beliefs or intuitions are the authentic stamp of *homo sapiens*. On the basis of them the perfect world is to be built. Stalinism is relentlessly pitted against these intuitions. The Communist sociology is an instrument of the False Man because it is imbued with a rigid negation of them and not because it is a campaign to fight Capitalism. Of course, there have been atheistic movements outside the Communist camp, but they were mostly initiated by the desire to break down sectarian bigotry, cramping mechanical orthodoxy, superstitions and authoritarian obscurantism: in short, they were an extremist recoil from a too narrow and self-interested form of the religious and spiritual sense and from a refusal to combine religion and spirituality with the sense of that individual freedom which is implicit in the belief that the individual has a key-importance in evolution. Such atheistic movements were a sort of paradoxical help to *homo sapiens*' true trend and always served ultimately to stress the need of the race to live by its instinct of a more luminous and more potent Consciousness than the limited human reason which is inclined to cut up Reality into bits and stiffen into what Edmond Taylor calls 'Nothing-but-ism'. They were not like the Stalinist denial of the Divine and would have been fiercely opposed to the Totalitarian State."

A large liberality and a love of freedom were integral part of the ideal served by *Mother India*. And yet there was no leaning towards a doctrine of stark indivi-

dualism: the divinity within, which was the truth to be served, would at the same time that it allowed diverse development provide the uniting and harmonising status and dynamis rendering such a leaning impossible, for it would stand for the manifestation of the one infinite Self of selves, the single all-integrating Mother-power to which the cosmos owes its life and its evolutionary *élan*. Egoistic fissiparousness was never to be encouraged; the quest for the organised whole, for the collective existence, was deemed indispensable. But what was envisaged in the quest was a unity without uniformity, a concord without monotony and always the movement was towards the inner as the foundation of the outer.

Here an important point must be made explicit. *Mother India* has striven to drive it home again and again. Though the inner is to be the foundation of the outer, the latter is not to be conceived as a superstructure of poor materials and paltry dimensions. Whatever leads to a conception of this kind is not completely in keeping with the instinct of divinity. Among the forces that today work to dim this instinct, perhaps the most dangerous is the idea assiduously spread that it is unworldly and impoverishes earth-life. We have to admit that there has been a spiritual trend in India and elsewhere to look too much beyond the world and renounce earth-life. But it is not the only trend, and spirituality can be dynamic as so often spirituality has been in India as well as elsewhere. In fact, to make it dynamic as never before, with the help of a new principle and power of consciousness, is the whole effort of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The full flowering, the full richness of life on earth is their objective.

The world at the present moment is in no less need than the world when our Cultural Review started its career, of some concrete hold on profound spiritual realities, strengthened and directed by masters of mysticism and Yoga who do not merely argue about them but cultivate the vision and experience of them in the widest manner and put the vision and experience into relation with all issues and, in particular, cultural ones — that is to say, issues basic to the human situation. The recognition of this need has led readers of *Mother India* to ask for republication in book-form of editorial articles dealing in the main, directly or indirectly, with the bearing of the Aurobindonian vision and experience on such issues — and centrally on those aspects of them that are burning matter in the life of the country in which God-lovers and God-knowers have been most abundant but which today is passing through a dangerous cultural crisis whose right resolution is of the utmost importance to the world's future.

1953

K. D. SETHNA

*Keeping in mind these words that encapsulate the aims and ideals of this journal, we invite authors to send us their articles, poems, reviews, creative expressions for consideration for publication in Mother India.*



## INDIAN NATIONALISM AT ITS TRUEST

The word “Nationalism” is very much in the air of an awakened and resurgent Asia. But, apart from opposition to colonial rule by the West as well as to the spread of Moscow-dictated Communism, what light exactly may be considered as thrown by India on this important word? We need to ask ourselves what Indian Nationalism is. For, on the answer will depend our own future and the role we shall play in world-history.

Indian Nationalism is not a simple phenomenon: it has many meanings and directions. All who have fired the Indian heart and fought for the independence of our country have contributed some special colour to this Nationalism. But if we wish to drive to its truest significance we must pick out the figure owing to whom the national awakening first took place in its most marked and conscious form.

Nationalism, to be the truest, must be not only a movement against a foreign rule but also an expression of a nation’s authentic temperament. At times the authentic temperament is seen best when everything touched by foreign influences is cut away and the typical power of the nation’s consciousness is found in its stark nakedness. It is in the nineteenth century that India began slowly to arise out of the decline into which she had fallen — the decline whose one result was her defeat at the hands of foreign invaders and another the strong stamp put on her by the culture of those who held her in subjection. But the stir of the native consciousness was neither complete nor sufficiently dynamic. There were many imitative elements, apings of the West, and a general tendency to believe that a westernised India alone could be India resurgent and India competent to cope with the shackles imposed by imperialist England. Denuded altogether of westernisation the only Indian feature seemed the superstition-ridden illiteracy of the common peasant or at the best the stagnant though not uncultured religious conventionalism of the common pundit. Surely here was not any creative source: everything else seemed a cross between India and England, with the latter herself providing by her home tradition of democratic humanism the directive energy for the former’s fight against her colonial policy.

### *The Country’s Very Soul in Pure Power*

Then a strange thing occurred. Out of a temple in which the Goddess Kali was worshipped by stagnant though not uncultured religious conventionalism there came a man who had all the outer look of representing superstition-ridden illiteracy. And yet he was as little the common peasant as he was the common pundit. He came with a religious message but it was something the pundit was utterly incapable of.

He came with an absolute lack of education but it was something quite unlike the ignorance of the peasant. Here was one altogether innocent of western formulas, one who seemed akin at the same time to the two specimens thought possible of sheer Indianness and who still was entirely different from them and carried a tremendous conquering creativity. Before him bowed down the finest flower of educated Bengal. In him the westernised Indians saw authentic India stand up, clear of every colour of the West, clear even of every tinge of what typical India appeared to be in that age — a representative was he of some hidden essence of the national being, the country's very soul in pure power. At one stroke the emergent Nationalism was made to recognise its central meaning and direction. The attractive veil of westernisation fell from the eyes, the feebleness of the country's decadence went out of the limbs and India knew what she was and grasped the essential energy of her own self.

Ramakrishna, the illiterate man from the temple of conventional Kali-worship, was a veritable colossus of mystical experience: in him direct and immediate realisation of the Divine Being reached an intensity and variety which made him a marvellous summing-up of the whole spiritual history of India, with a face carrying the first gleam of a new age of the human soul. He could neither read nor write English: not even a word of English could he understand. Bengali itself he could only speak: he had no schooling at all. All that he had was God: he could unite himself with the Supreme Omniscience, his heart's home was the Infinite, he lived constantly in the Eternal. The Divine Being and the Divine Force that he called the Mother were a presence with him at all times — from deep within him, from near and far around him, from some absolute transcendence high above. His feelings were not of the ordinary emotional kind but radiant with the true spontaneous psyche which is an everlasting spark of the Supreme, a child of the World-Mother. His thoughts were not of the brain-mind but luminous with an intuitive perception which was in contact with the inward as well as the outward. Apparently ignorant but wise beyond measure, frail and helpless to an initial view yet a power-house that could move the world, poor and ascetic yet holding the thrill of the Beauty that is immortal, he sat day after day at Dakshineswar with the most educated men of Calcutta about him together with simple village folk. And from his strange spiritual personality the true Indian Nationalism was born. For the first time came the awareness of what it was that had to be resurrected and put against the shallow vitalism from the West that was keeping India in chains or, at its most benevolent, bringing her up to be an artificially galvanised part of its own glittering scheme.

Of course, the Indian genius is not confined to spirituality pure and simple, not even to a many-sided spirituality to the exclusion of all other modes of being. The very fact that Ramakrishna's chosen instrument for world-work was Vivekananda, a complex, passionate, analytic mind, a highly cultured master of system and organisation, a richly endowed physical nature, shows that India moves instinctively

to grip earth no less than heaven. At least the intention of Ramakrishna was to reshape through Vivekananda the whole of the country's life in the light of God-realisation. But by embodying in his own figure a stark spirituality, as it were, he performed the catharsis that was most needed in the country's consciousness if accretions and superfluities, illusions and delusions, waste matter and foreign matter were to be swept off and prevented from obscuring and obstructing the growth of Indian Nationalism. The central *conditio sine qua non* stood out the most vividly and acted the most puissantly by getting thus isolated.

### ***The Four Types of Nationalism in India***

If it was the shock of sheer spirituality in the figure of Ramakrishna that gave birth to Indian Nationalism by kindling in the nation a consciousness of its own typical genius, we should do well to guard against satisfaction with any lesser type of nationalist aspiration. The type truly in consonance with the cathartic shock from Ramakrishna is summed up in the famous cry of Bankim's song, *Bande Mataram* — "I bow to you, O Mother." The movement is basically religious, it is towards the Divine — the country is viewed as a Goddess who is not only its collective soul but also a face and form of the World-Mother, the creatrix of the universe. When the innate turn of the nation is mystical, even the patriotic fervour can be directed only to the Divine Spirit, and unless the country is felt as that Spirit's emanation this fervour will never fulfil the national life: such is the philosophy behind *Bande Mataram*. And it was sought to be made country-wide by Sri Aurobindo in his political days. There is a second type of Nationalism which is not directly spiritual but charged with indigenous history. Since India's history cannot be separated from the spiritual quest, here also is a sense of the World-Mother just as in the first type indigenous history is ever alive, but the stress now falls less upon the Divine Presence than upon the particular face and form She assumes in the country's collective soul as felt in the traditional ideals and institutions, the characteristic customs and festivals, — in short, the whole historic consciousness. This Nationalism has the roots of its politics in the popular *dharma*. It is the one fostered by Balgangadhar Tilak. A third type is an ethical Nationalism in which certain moral doctrines are set up for the patriot's guidance, chiefly the doctrines of non-violence and ingenuousness. Its fosterer is Mahatma Gandhi. Patriotism which, for the second type, stands in need of no defence and aims first and foremost at the country's freedom and the expression of the country's historic nature and does not bind itself to rigid dogmas of method, patriotism which says "Swaraj is my birthright" and will not fight shy of violent revolution and effective secret strategy, is not acceptable. A particular brand of moral self-discipline deriving mainly from the Buddhist strand of our culture subsumes patriotism here, just as the mystic's *élan* takes it up in the *Bande Mataram* type; but there is a difference in that the latter has a wideness and a plasticity which

has a keen tact of the moment wedded to loyalty to ideals, and, besides, it looks for its inspiration towards a Light beyond the trenchant mind's temperamental ideals. Ethicism is surely not spurned by it, but there is little adherence to one or another fixed and exclusive dogma: a large nobility is sought after and the idealism is not averse to a variety in the means of action.

A fourth type that has developed both by sympathy with the third and by appreciation of the latter's effectiveness at certain junctures of the nationalist movement is one bringing a blend of the rationalistic mind which has had so much to say in the modern West. Its representative is Jawaharlal Nehru. It cuts the ethical completely off from the mystical. The third type is never without a religious bent, though the bent is towards serving God by serving men in a way the mind suggests rather than towards calling down a more than mental Power to guide one in work for that Power amongst men. The fourth type is non-religious, wholly secular. The country is no face and form of the Supreme Divine: it is not even a collective soul that can be addressed as Mother, except metaphorically. It is only an aggregate of individuals, a mass of human creatures, a large group of people with common traditions and a common territory. This Nationalism need not lack patriotic fervour or an upshot of noble deed. But, however noble the secular nationalist may be, he is bound to be uncomfortably haunted by a division in his own Indianness: on one side the historic pull of a country deeply religious, if not always God-lit, and on the other the doctrinaire drag of a rationalistic "realism". Also, the secular nationalist is bound to come upon a limit to his effectivity, for he will put himself at variance with the whole trend of India's development and he will have to make an attempt at jettisoning the most important part of the experience and thought embalmed in the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita, experience and thought which fundamentally make India Indian. The only advantage he brings is enfranchisement from superstitious orthodoxy, from narrow insularity of outlook — an openness to world-forces, a tendency to international vision. But this advantage is just as much compassed by a truly spiritual Nationalism: an inner largeness breaks through sectarianism as well as communalism, an intuitive capacity is there for seizing on the essentially progressive elements everywhere and assimilating the best of the Occident into the Orient. When it is the World-Mother that is worshipped, there can be no imprisonment in small formulas: the mind is wide open to the world. At the same time, no loss is suffered of the delightful *differentia* that constitutes nationhood, for the World-Mother is seen focussed as the single unifying soul of the motherland. It thus combines the quality of the second type of Nationalism with that of the fourth, while transcending both, and in that transcendence it resembles the third type but even beyond the latter it goes to the supra-ethical source of all ethics. Thus it combines the advantages of all the four types in a value higher than theirs.

This higher value not only answers most truly to the Indian genius and thereby promises to advance it the best but also makes a power that can carry India to a

future greater than any possible to other countries on the strength of their own Nationalism: it promises to place India in the van of the world as a leader in the evolution of consciousness from the human to the divine.

K. D. SETHNA

(Both, the preface and the article, taken from *The Indian Spirit and the World's Future* by K. D. Sethna. 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1953; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2004)

*There are two kinds of Asuras — one kind were divine in their origin but have fallen from their divinity by self-will and opposition to the intention of the Divine: they are spoken of in the Hindu scriptures as the former or earlier gods; these can be converted and their conversion is indeed necessary for the ultimate purposes of the universe. But the ordinary Asura is not of this character, is not an evolutionary but a typical being and represents a fixed principle of the creation which does not evolve or change and is not intended to do so. These Asuras, as also the other hostile beings, Rakshasas, Pishachas and others resemble the devils of the Christian tradition and oppose the divine intention and the evolutionary purpose in the human being; they don't change the purpose in them for which they exist which is evil, but have to be destroyed like the evil. The Asura has no soul, no psychic being which has to evolve to a higher state; he has only an ego and usually a very powerful ego; he has a mind, sometimes even a highly intellectualised mind; but the basis of his thinking and feeling is vital and not mental, at the service of his desire and not of truth. He is a formation assumed by the life-principle for a particular kind of work and not a divine formation or a soul.*

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Yoga – I*, CWSA, Vol. 28, p. 466)

## A STAINLESS STEEL FRAME

Corruption is the order of the day. In all walks of life, wherever we have to live and move, we come across the monster; we cannot pass him by, we have to accost him (even in the Shakespearean sense, that is) welcome him, woo him. It is like one of the demons of the Greek legends that come out of the unknown, the sea or the sky, to prey upon a helpless land and its people until a deliverer comes.

Corruption appears today with a twofold face, Janus-like: violence and falsehood. In private life, in the political field, in the business world, in social dealings, it is now an established practice, it has gained almost the force of a law of nature that success can be achieved only with these two comrades on your either side. A gentle, honest, peace-loving man is inevitably pushed back, he has to go to the wall; a straightforward truthful candid soul will get no hearing and make no living. From high diplomacy on the international level to village pettifoggery, from the blast of the atom bomb to the thrust of the dagger, we have all the degrees of the two cardinal virtues that make up the warp and woof of modern life.

In the old world — not so old however, for the landslide started in fact with the First World War — evil there was and abundantly in man and in man's society, but it was not accepted as virtue or even as an acceptable or inevitable thing. It was tolerated, suffered, and generally with a heavy heart. Indeed the heart was sound, it was the flesh only that was weak. There was an idealism, an aspiration and although one could not always live up to it, yet one did not deny it or spurn it; one endeavoured as best one could, even though in leisure hours, in the inner mind and consciousness at least, to obey and follow its dictates. It is the Nazi theory of life that brought to the very forefront and installed in the consciousness of man Evil as Good, Falsehood as Truth. That is pragmatism with a vengeance. Whatever leads to success, to worldly success, that is to say, brings you wealth, prosperity, power to rule over men and things, enriches you in your possession — *vittena*, as the Upanishad terms it — that is Good, that is Truth. All the rest are mental conceptions, notions, abstractions, day-dreams meant to delude you, take you away from the road to your fulfilment and achievement. That is how we have listened to the voice of Mephistopheles and sold away our soul.

The government of a country is, as we know, the steel frame that holds together the life of its people: it is that that gives the primary stability and security, scope and free play to all its activities. In India it was the pride of the British that they built up such a frame; and although that frame sometimes seemed almost to throttle the nation in its firm and rigid grip, still today we are constrained to recognise that it was indeed a great achievement: *Pax Britannica* was in fact a very efficient reality. The withdrawal of the power that was behind us has left the frame very shaky; and

our national government is trying hard to set it up again, strengthening, reinforcing, riveting wherever and however necessary. But the misfortune is that the steel has got rusted and worn out from inside.

In other words, a diminution of public morality and collective honesty has set in, an ebbing of the individual consciousness too that made for rectitude and justice and equity and fair dealing. Men who are limbs of that frame, who by their position ensure the strength of that frame — the bolts and nuts, screws and hinges — have, on a large scale, allowed themselves to be uncertain and loose in their moral make-up. Along with the outer check, the inner check too has given way: hence the colossal disintegration, the general debacle in the life of the body politic and the body social.

How to stop this rot that is gaining ground every day, how to react against the inexorable chain reaction that is leading to a final explosion? It is not merely the laymen but the members of the very supporting frame itself, as I have said, that have fallen and gone over to the enemy. And the fact is true not only of the political frame, but the social frame too made up of the *élite*, the intelligentsia. The remedy that easily suggests itself and is being attempted and applied is something Catonian, that is to say, a greater stringency of external rules and regulations, enforcement of punishment, even of heavy punishment as a deterrent of crime.

The institution of punishment is no longer respected or appreciated in modern times to the same extent as in the past, even a century ago. When character goes awry, punishment is of no avail. Punishment does not cure or redeem the criminal; it often hardens, fixes the trait that is sought to be eradicated. Fear of punishment does not always prevent one from doing wrong things. Often danger has an irresistible fascination for a certain type of temperament, especially danger of the wrong kind — indeed the greater the wrong, the greater the danger and the greater the fascination. “To live dangerously” is the motto of the heroic soul, as well as of the lost soul. A strong penal system, a rigorous policing is of help no doubt to maintain “peace and order” of some kind in a society; but that is an external pressure which cannot last very long or be effective in the end.

So the ideal proposed is that of moral regeneration. But what is the kind of moral regeneration and how is it to be effected? All depends upon that. If you issue some moral rules and regulations, inscribe them on pillars, print them in pamphlets, preach them from the platform and the pulpit, these things have been done in the past and for ages, the result is not assured and the world goes its way as ever. Something more than mental and moral rules has to be discovered: some dynamic and irresistible element in man has to be touched, evoked and brought out, something that challenges the whole world and maintains its truth and the fiat of its truth. That is the inmost soul in man, the real being behind all the apparent forms of his personality, the divine element, the very Divine in him. It is the outer man, the marginal man, man in his inferior nature that lives and moves in normal circumstances;



instead, the central man, man in his higher and highest nature has to come out and take his place in the world.

What is needed then is an army of souls: individuals, either separately or in groups, who have contacted their inmost reality, their divinity, in some way or other — men with a new consciousness and aspiration, a new life and realisation. They will live in the midst of the general degeneration and disintegration, not aloof and immured in their privacy of purity, but take part in the normal activities of everyday life, still acting from the height and depth of the pure consciousness prove by their very living that one can be in the world and yet not of it, doing what is necessary for the maintenance and enhancement of life and yet not stooping to the questionable ways that are supposed to be necessary and inevitable. In other words, they will disprove that safety and success and prosperity in life can be had only if one follows the lead of Evil, if one sells one's soul. On the contrary, by living out one's divine essence one will have conquered the world — *ihaiva tairjitam*. At every moment, in all circumstances one follows the voice of the highest in oneself. If it is that and no other inferior echo, then one becomes fearless and immortal and all-conquering.

Such souls living and moving among men with little faith and in circumstances adverse and obscure will forge precisely the new steel frame, the stainless steel frame upon which the new society will be securely based.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(*Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 2, pp. 249-52)

*A modern society or people cannot have religion, that is to say creedal religion, as the basis of its organised collective life. It was mediaeval society and people that were organised on that line. Indeed mediaevalism means nothing more — and nothing less — than that.*

Nolini Kanta Gupta

(*The Coming Race and Other Essays*, CWNKG, Vol. 1, p. 51)



## THE WORLD IS ONE

We say not only that India is one and indivisible (and for that matter, Bengal too is one and indivisible, since we have to repeat axiomatic truths that have fallen on evil days and on evil tongues) but that also the whole world is one and indivisible. They who seek to drive in a wedge anywhere, who are busy laying some kind of *cordon sanitaire* across countries and nations or cultures and civilisations, in the name of a bigoted ideology, are, to say the least, doing a disservice to humanity, indeed they are inviting a disaster and catastrophe to the world and equally to themselves. For that is an attempt to stem the high tide of Nature's swell towards a global unity that shall brook no resistance.

The distinctions and differences that held good in other times and climes can have no sense or value in the world of today. Race or religion can divide man no longer; even nationhood has lost much of its original force and meaning. It is strange — perhaps it is inevitable in the secret process of Nature's working — that when everything in conditions and circumstances obviously demands and points to an obliteration of all frontiers of division and separation — economically and politically too — and all drives towards a closer co-operation and intermingling, it is precisely then that the contrary spirit and impulse raises its head and seems even to gather added strength and violence. The fact may have two explanations. First of all, it may mean a defence gesture in Nature, that is to say, certain forces or formations have a permanent place in Nature's economy and when they apprehend that they are being ousted and neglected, when there is a one-pointed drive for their exclusion, naturally they surge up and demand recognition with a vengeance: for things forgotten or left aside that form indissolubly part of Nature's fabric and pattern, one has to retrace one's steps in order to pick them up again. But also the phenomenon may mean a simple case of atavism: for we must know that there are certain old-world aboriginal habits and movements that have to go and have no place in the higher scheme of Nature and these too come up off and on, especially when the demand is there for their final liquidation. They have to be recognised as such and treated as such. Radical and religious (including ideological) egoisms seem to us to belong to this category.

In the higher scheme of Nature, the next evolutionary status that is being forged, it is unity, harmony that is insisted upon, for that is the very basis of the new creation: whatever militates against that, whatever creates division and disruption must be banned and ruthlessly eschewed. In the reality of things, in the actual life that man lives, it will be found that on the whole, things that separate are less numerous and insistent than those which unite, man and man and nation and nation, if each one simply lives and lets live: on the contrary, it is the points of concordance and

mutuality that abound. A certain knot or twist in the mind makes all the difference: it brings in the ignorance, selfishness, blind passion — a possession by the dark forces of atavism that makes the mischief.

We ask for freedom, liberty of the individual, self-determination — well and good. But that does not mean the licence to do as one pleases, impelled by one's irrational idiosyncrasies. The individual must be truly individual, not a fractional being, the self must be the real self, not a shadow or surface formulation in order to have the full right to unfettered movement. Liberty, yes; but that means liberty for all which means again the other two terms of the great trinity, equality and fraternity. Individuality, yes; that means every individuality, in other words, solidarity. The two sides of the equation must be given equal value and equal emphasis. If the stress upon one leads to Nazism, Fascism or Stalinism, steam-rollered uniformity or streamlined regimentation, the death of the individual, the other emphasis leads to disintegration and disruption, to the same end in a different way. But in the world of today, after the victory in the last war over the Nazi conception of humanity, it seems as though the spirit of disruption has gone abroad, human consciousness has been atom-bombed into flying fragments; so we have the spectacle of all manner of parochialism pullulating on the earth, regional and ideological — imperial blocs, nations, groups, parties have chequered *ad infinitum*, have balkanised human commonalty.

We badly needed a United Nations Organisation, but we are facing the utmost possible disunity. The lesson is that politics alone will not save us, nor even economics. The word has gone forth: what is required is a *change of heart*. The leaders of humanity must have a new heart grafted in place of the old. That is the surgical operation imperative at the moment. That heart will declare in its beats that the cosmos is not atomic but one and indivisible, *ekam sat, neha nānāsti kiñcana*.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(*Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 2, pp. 261-63)

*You must not stop, you must not cling in this way to your vertical progress and not want to move because it has brought you a revelation. You must know how to leave it in order to prepare for another.*

*The Mother*

(*Questions and Answers 1955*, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 7, p. 36)

## THE MATRIMANDIR NURSERY

*[An extract from a book by Amrit (Howard Iriyama), one of the early settlers in Auroville. This chapter deals with the beginnings of the Matrimandir Gardens and also about the Matrimandir itself.]*

### The Move

In early January 1970, I left Hope and moved to what was to be the Matrimandir Nursery. The ‘*keet*’ hut occupied was made of palm leaves, its base a ruined vestige fashioned in the form of the Nuclear Disarmament Semaphore Peace sign by its previous owner, an American named by The Mother, Constance. The day before physically moving into the hut, I had placed my steel trunk there, only coming to stay and sleep the next night. In the middle of my first night there, the sound of the trunk being dragged out of the house awakened me. My shouts of alarm startled the thief into dropping the trunk and fleeing in panic — as if he had seen a ghost — right through the front door, knocking it off its hinges. In these early years from 1968 to 1970, there were only a very few residents, mostly Americans, in the Centre area with the Banyan Tree its physical focus: Rod with a small school for local village kids, located in a simple ‘*keet*’ or coconut leaf hut, already gone by the time I arrived; Constance on whose former house foundation my own residence was built in the Nursery, also moved elsewhere in Auroville; Arindam and Francis, both at varying times the caretakers of the Pumphouse near the Nursery; Dawn, soon to be Arindam’s partner with their son Jules, also the daughter of Dietra later my most intimate friend; Gene living in a hut given the name “*Sincerity*” by The Mother; and Janet, a Canadian, in a place just outside the small area where the Nursery had its meagre beginnings. Concentrated only on the Nursery work, I had minimal, almost no contact with these other residents scattered in isolated hutments throughout this unadorned and empty space.

### Nursery Foundation The Beginnings

On the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1970, five of us, Narad (Richard), his wife Anne given the Egyptian name Anie by The Mother, Daniela the Frenchwoman staying with us in Hope, a Tamil boy called Ram Chander, and myself, began work planting around the Matrimandir Amphitheatre *Portulaca grandiflora*, a flower denoting “*Sri Aurobindo’s Compassion*” — one among many in the vast lexicon of flower significances described and discovered by The Mother. A few weeks later, on 21<sup>st</sup>

February 1970, The Mother's 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday, with Her Blessings, the Nursery was formally inaugurated as the first Matrimandir project.

The same day, on returning to my hut after work, I discovered my new bicycle missing, apparently stolen by one of the local villagers. Over the successive months, this was only the beginning of losses stripping me of everything except for bare essentials of clothes and underwear. Everything disappeared, even bread and the most insignificant of items, rendering a reality my wish to be an ascetic renunciate, bare of all possessions. Evidently wishes can be self-fulfilling prophecies. *Beware of what you wish for, it may come true!* This was a period of natural and primitive living: no running water, no electricity, our toilets the open fields surrounding the Nursery — a total and complete absence of the ordinary conveniences of life, simplicity to the extreme. The Nursery water tanks had to be filled from containers of water carried in by bullock cart or tractor from the nearby Pumphouse, and all essentials brought from Pondicherry, whether candles, kerosene, or cooking materials. Often, we would have to cycle the twelve km distance to Pondy and back to procure basics, or take the Land Rover, the only vehicle transport from the Auroville Centre into the town available two to three times a week. We were living in the middle of a near desert, a land laid waste by its former colonists, the British and French, in their greed for rosewood and teak — the timber wealth of the lush forests which once covered vast tracts of what had become the barren Auroville plateau. Denuded, the land was hot and inhospitable, subject to dust storms particularly during the 'Loo' — the scorching summer winds from the inland Western plains of India, parching everything in its path into panting submission. Particularly in May, the air brewed a pall of fine dust over everything and everyone, inescapable in its all-pervasiveness. And in this desolate wasteland, we planted flowers. Growing flowers rather than fruits and vegetables with at least some utility was considered by the local villagers an act of insanity. Yet to us, simple flowers blossoming in a barren desert signalled triumph over adversity, and an affirmation of faith in the future vision of a land rejuvenated and resurrected — the base for the thriving and living ideal that was to become the community of Auroville. Even in that immense emptiness, bare yet serene, an intimately warm presence suffused the land and air, hinting at promises of imminent realisations.

These were unique times, the beginning birth of hopes and aspirations. Like the tender first shoots of plants struggling for sunlight and air — like a child waiting to be born — we protected and nourished these initial dreams and yearnings. After a day of hard physical labour — my co-workers returning to either Promesse or Hope on the outskirts of Auroville — I remained in a vibrant and all-encompassing solitude haunted solely by the barren landscape, which indeed, I loved even more for its vast austerity.

Aloneness became addictive, and in the evening silence falling like a blanket over infinity, land, sky and the distant sea all seemed to merge into a limitless and

hushed felicity. Like the time in Tokyo amidst surging crowds — different in circumstance yet similar in inner mood — I revelled now in a solitude boundless and bare, yet somehow pregnant with expectant dreams on the verge of manifestation.

### **Promise of the Beggar Sage 'Pitchandi'**

The very first flower blooming in the Nursery — in fact in the entire Inner Circle area — was an orange Marigold, *Tagetes erecta*, called by The Mother “*Plasticity*”. This blossom was sent to Her as the initial seed and symbol of the verdant vegetation — the trees, shrubs and flowers — that would one day envelop Auroville in its green embrace, forever banishing the desert destitution.

There is an ancient legend told by the local people, of the sage called ‘*Pitcha Andi*’ or Beggar Sadhu. It seems long ago, there was a holy man who was served by a young girl as his devotee. One day, at a village festival, the young girl began to dance, her anklet falling off in the rapidity of her swirling movement. The sage rushed to fasten again her anklet, inviting the opprobrium of the villagers, since for a holy man to touch a young woman was forbidden by social custom.

The villagers mocked him, and in anger, this Beggar Sage cursed them, that their verdant forests and villages would become a barren wasteland, but after many years, people would come from distant lands to revivify their earth, restoring life and greenness. The Mother returned the Plasticity to us with Her Blessings. To this day, this flower — pressed and preserved — remains the cherished reminder of those days of struggle and grace, when we were privileged to be touched by the Presence pervading the land, vacant yet pregnant with the possibilities of a new world. This flower was the seed symbol of the Sage’s promise fulfilled.

### **Nursery Struggles**

This first period from January 1970 to 1971 was a battle with the elements and the incomprehension of the local people. Plants and flowers tended for months with a labour of love were destroyed in a few minutes by marauding goats and cows, sometimes deliberately herded into the Nursery compound by their errant owners. The villages had their own system to deal with such wanton destruction — village corrals employed to tether animals to be freed on payment of a few rupees fine. This scheme restricted excesses among the village people, but unfortunately did not seem to apply to outsiders like ourselves. In one instance, caught eating our plants, a goat was tied with the intention of bringing it to one such animal corral. The owner of the goat approached, threatening to beat me if the goat was not released. Steadfast in the face of his verbal assault, I informed him if he paid the fine, the goat would be freed from the village corral. The next day, since threats did not work,

thinking tears of a child would evoke a positive reaction, the owner sent his young son to plead for the release of the goat. To free the goat, I requested from the boy something in return, at least an egg. Immediately he brought an egg, and the goat was released. To my view, this was sufficient warning hopefully preventing further depredations.

We were in a quandary. Without the protection of a fence, the entire Nursery area was open to all people, animals and whatever elements that could undo in moments months of work. Since The Mother had established certain basic principles to guide the general development of Auroville, one of which was “No Fences in Auroville,” Narad asked me to write to The Mother requesting a solution to this problem. I wrote, “Mother, you said there were to be no fences in Auroville. The Matrimandir Nursery is having difficulty with animals eating and destroying the plants and work done with such care and effort. Please tell us what we should do.” Her answer was simple, direct and practical, “Put up a fence.” The Mother was never one to be bound by absolute and rigid principles and rules, always showing practical flexibility according to the demands of each unique situation.

In another problematical circumstance, since in the general area, the villagers were using heavy chemical insecticides and fertilisers on their crops and cashew nut trees — mostly dry farming — this drove the surviving insects into the Nursery, which was not at all using such chemicals, devastating our plants. I wrote to The Mother, “Mother, you said chemicals should not be used in Auroville, but we are having difficulties with insects devouring our plants. What is your recommendation?” She responded, “If people eat the plants, do not use chemicals, but if not, chemicals can be used.” Again, this demonstrated Her utterly pliant, plastic and practical attitude to all life situations. For all established rules, The Mother made innumerable exceptions. This is something I was to observe time and again in Her dealings with Ashramites and Aurovilians.

As another illustration of The Mother’s flexibility, the only specific rule for Auroville to which She gave her assent was, “No Drugs”. One day, Shyam Sunder, then the Administrator of Auroville, approached The Mother about George, a resident of the Greenbelt, who was evidently addicted not only to “grass”, but also to abnormal patterns of social behaviour, strange but usually harmless. Once, for example, I noticed George squatting to the side of a street in Pondicherry, washing his hands in the gutter. According to SS, since George, in his opinion, was breaking the one rule in Auroville against drugs, as well as contributing nothing in terms of work, he should be asked to leave. The Mother then asked if SS had already asked him to quit Auroville, to which SS responded, “No”. The Mother’s response, “If you have already asked him to go, he should leave, but if you have not yet asked, can he not be given another chance?” Such was Her tolerance and compassion.

The lack of water was an enduring difficulty in the Nursery, since every drop had to be brought in by bullock cart or tractor. As a solution to this problem, a water



line was laid from a well simply called the ‘Pumphouse’ about  $\frac{3}{4}$  km away between the Nursery and the village of Kottakarai nearby. This location for one of the first water wells to be drilled on the Auroville plateau was chosen by The Mother on a map, even before the Inauguration on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1968, and turned out to be the most abundant water source ever discovered in the Auroville area.

In triumphant anticipation, we started the pump at the Pumphouse, expecting to witness a stream of life-giving water gushing out from the other end into the Nursery. Instead, we heard the ominous crunching sound of the line, in turn collapsing temporarily our eager and expectant hopes and dreams. Apparently somehow a vacuum was created in the pipeline, destroying a large section. The damage was repaired, and after a short time, water began to flow, eventually turning the Nursery into a paradise of plants that were ultimately to spread and cover the entire area with verdant and vibrant greenery.

## Flowers & Their Significances

From 1970 to 1972, we made frequent trips to Bangalore, to collect all manner of plants, especially Hibiscus which were designated the main flower species for the Matrimandir Gardens to surround the main structure. Initially the Hibiscus selected by The Mother as the general symbolic Auroville flower was “*Cromwell*” called “*Godhead*”, a large cream flower with a light pink centre. Subsequently, The Mother changed this to a salmon-pink Hawaiian Hibiscus with a light pink centre. She named “*Beauty of Supramental Love*”, now considered both the flower and colour (salmon-pink) of Auroville.

Most of the twelve Matrimandir Gardens in turn were represented by separate Hibiscus flowers: for example, the first Garden of Existence by a single pink Hibiscus termed “*Psychic Power in Existence*”; the 2<sup>nd</sup> Garden of Consciousness by the double golden-yellow Hibiscus “*Daffodil*” named “*Supramental Consciousness*”; the 3<sup>rd</sup> Garden of Ananda by the small single cream-yellow Hibiscus with a pure white centre called “*Ananda*”, and so on.

In gathering many different varieties of Hawaiian Hibiscus, we sent the flowers as they bloomed to The Mother for identification of significance. It was during this period that all the Hibiscus bearing the general title “. . . of the New Creation” like “*Charm of the New Creation*” were identified. Generally, the Hawaiian Hibiscus tended to have difficulty in acclimatising to Indian conditions, resulting in many of the identified plants dying. This loss was in later years to incur problems in again recovering either the same or similar Hibiscus corresponding to the original varieties named by The Mother.

Aside from Hibiscus, Narad avidly procured plants and seeds from all possible sources — foreign and Indian donors, nurseries from all over India and overseas, and again particularly from Bangalore, which was the green city of plants and trees

in South India. In Bangalore, we scoured the nurseries for whatever shrubs and trees that might be introduced as suited to the Auroville environment. Eager and ardent in his pursuit of knowledge botanical and horticultural, Narad took us on tours of Bangalore's Lal Bagh Botanical Gardens.

Though not trained formally with a degree, in this way Narad satisfied his thirst for horticultural lore, formerly doing so through the practical school of his father's landscape business. Indefatigable and relentless, he displayed an admirable energy and commitment to his goal of building the Nursery as the seed project of the Matrimandir Gardens. Through his hard work and single-mindedness of purpose, Narad eventually built up the Nursery whose reputation rivalled the best in India, with extensive collections of shrubs, shade plants, orchids, climbers, bulbs, annuals and perennials, and specialty trees such as *Browneas* and *Champaks*. The Nursery *Plumeria* collection was second only to that in Hawaii, and definitively the best in India.

Plants and flowers play a central and significant role in the activity of the Mother Consciousness associated with both the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville. Termed "Shakti" or the Universal Energy calling all creation into evident expression, the Feminine Mother represents in Indian spiritual tradition the Creative Force of the "Purusha" or Ultimate Reality. "Purusha-Prakriti" and "Shiva-Shakti" — the impersonal and personal terms for the Two-in-One — describe the two poles of Indian cosmology: the transcendent, universal and immovable Self, and its Creation. Without this Creative Power of the Supreme Reality, there is no universe, no world, no manifestation — whose richness, variety and beauty would exist only in potential, forever asleep and unexpressed.

And of all elements of manifestation, flowers and plants most directly demonstrate the psychic force of the Shakti, the Mother of the worlds. Through their combinations of colours, forms and fragrances, flowers at once bring us into vivid contact with the underlying subtle reality flowing like a secret stream supporting the multifarious and lush outpourings of Nature. They carry in their essence the messages of Mother Nature, appealing to the soul of love and beauty in each human entity. Especially for the Mother Consciousness in her individual form, flowers are the means to bring blessings and to bestow grace upon the myriads of beings in her Creation. In this way, The Mother we call Mira liberally utilised flowers to communicate and convey to humanity Her Light, Force, Presence and Protection.

These first years in the Nursery were times of intensive work: physically, toiling in adverse conditions, turning and kneading the earth to restore life and consciousness to a land long devoid of vivifying care and concern; mentally, studying the basics of horticulture as well as the significances given by The Mother to a broad range of flowers; and spiritually, applying Her insights regarding flowers and plants to one's own inner life — in short, making strenuous efforts to enlarge knowledge, consciousness, awareness, and sensitivity particularly to the plant kingdom around.



One day, while walking past a bed of *Ocimum basilicum* or “Joy of Union with the Divine” planted next to my hut, I felt a strong pull, as if the plants were calling to be watered. The next day, both Narad and Anie related their simultaneous dreams at night, in which the basil came to them pleading for water. All of us rushed to water the plants.

In another instance, I dreamed of the Nursery as a vivid and vibrant subtle realm of which the actual physical manifestation was but a pale reflection. Intensely living and more real than reality, this prototypal Nursery — evidently existing in what can be termed the “subtle physical” — was inhabited by elfan beings dancing in joy around my hut, a cobra rhythmically swaying and blessing all. In this way did the psychic world of plants expose its secret wonders, expanding awareness and arousing awe of the beauties of nature. Barrenness slowly bloomed its hidden plenitudes into eloquent expression — allowing us glimpses of paradise.

### Significance of 4. 5. 67

Both Narad’s and Anie’s relationship with The Mother and the Ashram was intimate and ever-present, and in an interesting and intriguing episode regarding the aforementioned date 4. 5. 67, Narad had approached Nolini-da, and asked whether or not there would be a general destruction. His reply was strikingly similar, if not identical to Mukherjee’s response, “It has been partially decided.” Then as Narad began to leave his office, Nolini-da called him back, adding in explanation, “In the past, a general ‘pralaya’ or destruction has been necessary. This is the reason The Mother wants Auroville, because Auroville will contain the essence of this present civilisation.” Hinting at the possibility of a partial destruction, evidently Nolini-da was pointing to Auroville as the apt vehicle of a saving grace.

Like a jigsaw puzzle, everything began to fall into place: the initial sense of urgency exhibited by Mukherjee and Baba Sharadananda<sup>1</sup> regarding 4.5.67; the search for individuals who could be instrumental in averting a destruction; the statement by both Mukherjee and Nolini-da — with no apparent connection between them — that it was “partially decided”; the assertion by Sri Aurobindo himself that the “Supramental will enter a realising phase of activity” from this date; and finally the foundation of Auroville some months later on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1968, directly related to 4.5.67, giving credence to The Mother’s expectations of Auroville.

1. Sandeep Mukherjee, a former professor of English at Jaipur University, was a devotee of Swami Baba Sharadananda of Shaulmari Ashram in Cooch Behar, who was rumoured to be Subhash Chandra Bose. Both also considered themselves disciples of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and therefore were preoccupied with the imminently impending crucial date of 4/5/67, when the ‘Supramental will enter a realising phase of activity’ in the words of Sri Aurobindo. It is this event that led to the foundation of Auroville some months later on 28/02/1968.

Another fascinating sidelight is Sri Aurobindo's comment — noted by a disciple — about the prophecy that when the Jews enter Jerusalem, the New Age begins. In June of 1967, one month after the date 4.5.67, the Jews re-entered Jerusalem during the 6-day War with Egypt. And in this context of the Jews entering Jerusalem is the curious correspondence of Auroville to New Jerusalem in the prophetic "Revelations of St. John," referred to by Sri Aurobindo in his poem, *"In the Moonlight"*:

It comes at last, the day foreseen of old,  
What John in Patmos saw, what Shelley dreamed,  
Vision and vain imagination deemed,  
The City of Delight, the Age of Gold.

Indeed, The Mother named the Centre area of Auroville "Peace", a direct translation from Hebrew of Jerusalem meaning the "City of Peace". According to this striking analogy of subsequent events, can the date 4.5.67 be termed the beginning of the Age of Gold's "realising phase of activity", and its significant signpost, the foundation of Auroville. Many events began to disclose their hidden coherence — stretching back to the age of twelve, coincidentally after the Supramental Descent on 29<sup>th</sup> February 1956. It was after this decisive occurrence that the Force of The Mother commenced its inexorable activity, filling me with the plenitude of Her pure, dynamic White Light and immobilising Force — eventually bringing me to India and into Her Presence.

Simultaneously did the magnetic attraction to Akhnaton, Amenhotep IV, son of Queen Tiye, signal future possibilities, eventually finding fruition in a place half way around the world. Herself an incarnation of Queen Tiye, The Mother described in a vision that life in Egypt over 3,000 years ago when the City of the "Sun on the Horizon" Akhetaten was born — echoing down the millenniums to Auroville, the City of Dawn, same in name and similar in conception, and now my permanent abode.

And recently, whether the mysterious appearance of Baba Sharadananda in my life; or the experience of The Mother's assurance of 20<sup>th</sup> July 1968 about the "power of action" during my sojourn in Himalayan Ramgarh — the significance of all these was directly related to a subsequent dream-vision predicting future happenings connected with Auroville. The thread tying these experiences together in a tapestry of meaningful design came to be understood only much later.

## **Dream Vision**

### **Angel of the Way & The Matrimandir**

In this later dream-vision, a golden molten lava slowly and inexorably began to cover the entire earth. Fleeing this golden lava in panic and confusion was humanity in the form of small beings, all composed of black mud. Surrounded only by similarly

obscure entities, in fear and paranoia, each began to accuse the other of evil and darkness. War ensued with everyone turning on each other, all running from the golden lava.

This scene of conflict and confusion changed to what appeared to be a concentration camp surrounded by barbed wire, with looming and large unseen hostile beings bearing whips, beating and driving a group — among whom I seemed to be a member — round in circles, ensnaring and binding us to a sinister will. In agony, one in the group cried out an anguished plea for deliverance. As if in response, suddenly, there was a burst of a brilliant and radiant salmon-pink Light — the exact hue of the Auroville Hibiscus “Beauty of Supramental Love” — accompanied by an angelic chorus of celestial voices. From that luminosity descended an Angel with outspread wings, dressed in medieval armour, a spear in hand. This Angel imbued with an air of still and tranquil authority motioned to follow him. As we came to a ramp that sloped downwards, the Angel stopped and turned, placing his forefinger to his lips in a profound gesture of silence. We trailed the Angel down the slope until we reached a stairway leading upwards to an entrance, whose door quietly opened to allow us to enter. As one among our group was noisily dragging his feet, the door immediately closed as if in warning, then opened again, allowing the offender to proceed. There seemed to be a couple of levels through which we passed — when the Angel disappeared — after which we entered a large room, the previously monotonous grey suddenly transformed into vibrant colours. The room itself opened out onto large lush gardens with hills, plants and flowers, populated by female beings resembling Apsaras. And in this atmosphere of natural beauty, a highly refined, subtle and soft vibration from the heart permeated the air.

One day, on viewing the cross-section of a model of what was to be the Matrimandir, I recognised it as the structure in my dream-vision, with the sloping ramp, the upward staircase, the door, the several levels and the large room and gardens. And in a book on Egyptian symbolism, unexpectedly and fortuitously a page opened to view, which described Harpokrates (the Greek name for the Younger Horus) son of Osiris as a military knight in armour, holding a spear, whose sign is the index finger to his lips in the gesture of silence — the exact description of my Angel. Harpokrates in esoteric lore is considered the Guardian Angel of the Way who protects and initiates us into the mysteries of the spiritual ascent. In Indian tradition Harpokrates corresponds to Kartikeya, the warrior son of Lord Shiva and leader of the Divine Hordes, the male counterpart of the Goddess Durga — both forms of which were to play a major protective role in my life. In Christianity, Harpokrates is the Archangel Michael.

In later years, was the identity of this angelic being to be revealed, and the profoundly dramatic part he was to play both in my life and in the destiny of Auroville. And in time too was I to bear witness to the conflagration that was to engulf Auroville — indicated in the dream-vision by the warring beings of mud,

man's lower nature, trying to escape the transformative golden Light and Force flooding the earth. The destruction "partially decided" on 4.5.67 was symbolised by the golden lava provoking self-annihilation in the lower elements of humanity, also enslaved by darker and greater universal forces. Salvation is through higher spiritual entities, guiding us from these lower to higher states — a journey marked by attentiveness, silence and surrender.

## **Matrimandir Significant Symbolism**

According to this vision of the Angel, for us individually and universally, the greatest instrument, sign and symbol of this inward and upward travail of deliverance is the Matrimandir. Called the "Shrine of the Mother", the Matrimandir in its external structural form is a flattened sphere covered by golden discs and supported by four massive pillars, each representing one of the four aspects of the Supreme Mother Force — conceived in India as Maheshwari (Knowledge), Mahalakshmi (Love & Beauty), Mahakali (Power) and Mahasaraswati (Skill in Works). An icon of the resplendent and shimmering "Jewel in the Lotus" — OM MANI PADME HUM — the Matrimandir exists as the authentic and concrete living response to the enigmatic puzzle posed in my vision of the deathly Lady in White of the Silent Mind, embodying the "*koan*" of the Flower, the Jewel, and the Friendly Presence. Latent like a flower bud, slumbering and still, the future awaits its destined time to blossom and release its sweet fragrance of the heart onto our world of suffering and dis-ease. And in the softly radiant salmon-pink light of the Beauty of Supramental Love — the precise colour of both the inner skin of the Matrimandir and the light from which the Angel descended — are we liberated and transformed into our Psychic Selves, heralding the advent of a new stage of evolution. In this way do all events and experiences inner and outer bear resonance with each other, weaving into a single fabric of life all that exists inside the deep and secret recesses of our souls.

As a golden globe glistening in the sunlight, the Matrimandir sits a glimmering jewel in a twelve-petalled lotus — a replication of The Mother's Lotus Symbol — each petal a meditation chamber of different colours associated with equivalent psychic qualities — Aspiration, Receptivity, Progress, Courage, Goodness, Generosity, Equality, Peace, Sincerity, Humility, Gratitude, and Perseverance. And radiating out its formulating Force into concrete physical expression are the twelve Gardens of Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Light, Life, Power, Wealth, Utility, Progress, Youth, Harmony, and Perfection — characteristic flowers suffusing the meditative atmosphere of each Garden with its distinctive significance. What we are within, we become without in full plenitude — like the sequestered and secluded Presence of the Inner Chamber of the the Matrimandir efflorescing its Force of Ananda and Joy into the twelve Gardens, each representing an expressive universal principle of

existence. In this manner does the Matrimandir embody a spiritual Force and Presence manifesting on all levels, from its most hidden to its most material articulation.

This secret and subtle Presence in the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Matrimandir stands alone as the embodiment of a vision. Existent as if for all Eternity, in January of 1970, it materialised in its visionary form through The Mother. She saw the Inner Chamber as a pristine apparition — a pure white space exactly twenty-four metres in diameter, faceted geometrically with twelve high walls, enclosing twelve tall columns around a crystal placed on four intersecting golden triangular symbols of Sri Aurobindo, itself standing in the centre of the lotus sign of The Mother. And the most striking feature of this almost otherworldly and dreamlike manifestation in material form is a ray of sunlight entering through an aperture at the very top, illuminating the crystal — a glowing sphere of light receiving its luminosity from the source of all light in an otherwise dim and twilit space. A paradigm of the inner reality of life on this earth, the Crystal represents our Psychic Being, our soul, as the only true and direct receptor of the Supreme Light enlightening the darkness of our human condition — the ray of light a concrete representation of the process of the “Descent of the Force” in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. As this Force descends through the top of the head, it illuminates the Psychic Being seated in the heart — which then shines its transformative light onto all the dark corners of our lower nature.

These are the three major Chakras in the human body symbolised by the three basic structural rings at the top, centre and base of the Matrimandir edifice, termed the “Mula” or Root Chakras: the “*Sahasrara*” or 1,000-petalled lotus at the top of the head; the “*Anahata*” or Centre in the Heart; and the “*Muladhara*” or lowest Chakra at the base of the spine. The 4<sup>th</sup> remaining ring on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Level above the lowest 1<sup>st</sup> Level ring would represent the “*Manipura*” or Navel Chakra from which originates in Indian mythology the “Lotus of Vishnu” — coincidentally where in the structure is placed a large three-dimensional marble faced symbol of The Mother’s twelve-petalled lotus.

In the *Tantric Kundalini* system in India, the ray of sunlight would be the “*Sushumna Nadi*”, the central channel of Force, while the two spiral ramps to the Inner Chamber would correspond to the right and left *Nadis* on either side of the “*Sushumna*” — the “*Ida*” and “*Pingala*”, each a “*Nadi*” or channel of energy. All this was not planned symbolism, but a natural and spontaneous expression of a spiritual truth.

## **Matrimandir Invocation & Foundation**

On 15<sup>th</sup> August 1970, a day significant for Sri Aurobindo’s birthday in 1872 and India’s Independence in 1947, we in the Nursery participated in an “Invocation of

the Matrimandir” a collective prayer for the manifestation of what was to be the concrete psychic centre and soul of this new and struggling “City of Delight” foretelling “The Age of Gold”. Close to the Banyan Tree and a circular pond in which a beautiful collage painted by students of the Pondicherry Ashram brightly shimmered through placid waters, we meditated to the music of The Mother — all our hopes, prayers and yearnings rising through the desert vastness to touch and enliven the womb of yet dormant riches.

These were truly peerless times, when we dreamed and lived our dreams, as if on the cusp of events awe inspiring, wonderful and miraculous. We dreamed of the Matrimandir to be, shining into some distant future, surrounded by Gardens of unimaginable beauty and utter charm, their aroma of ecstasy and joy to pervade this nascent “City of the Dawn”. This was a time simple and shorn of all complication and conflict. We were again children, resting in the arms of our Mother, trusting and staring wide-eyed into a future pregnant with the plenitudes of a new creation.

Its Foundation Stone laid about six months later, on The Mother’s birthday 21<sup>st</sup> February 1971, from March 1971, the Matrimandir began its arduous journey of self-creation — its first step the excavation of the crater holding its foundational structure. While we continued our work in the Nursery, a handful of Auroville volunteers began what seemed the impossibly interminable labour of carving out — *mumpti* by *mumpti* (local short-handled shovels), *pandu* by *pandu* (round metal concave trays to carry soil) — this deep and cavernous crater that was to cradle the gem of our longings. Nonetheless, after about six months, this courageous endeavour by the comparatively tiny contingent of workers ended abruptly, spurred by two factors. One was notably practical — that with such a small number, however motivated, using primitive hand tools with no modern machinery, the task was undoubtedly difficult to the point of impracticality.

The other was purely my own personal perception. We were literally swimming in a sea of Force, bestowed by The Mother for the accomplishment of the work. Yet somehow whether because of lack of receptivity or attentiveness we were unable to absorb or utilise this energy for its proper purpose, dissipating it through random movements and scattered chatter. The Force was being visibly wasted. This was, in fact, a phenomenon to be observed countless times in the history of Auroville, when at crucial junctures, for reasons human or Divine, our common humanity seemed incapable of receptively assimilating the Grace granted to lift us beyond pettiness. And with the collapse of our Aurovilian effort, approximately four hundred paid workers from the local villages were summoned to complete the work in what could only be viewed as record time. Within six months the excavation was finished, and with dawn just beginning to illuminate the sky on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1972, another Foundation Stone inscribed with an “Om” symbol and The Mother’s blessings was installed into the first concreting at the base of the East Mahalakshmi Pillar. This ceremony, solemn and still — a sacred fire burning in the centre of the crater —



seemed a scene of some ancient Vedic ritual, eternally etched from India's hoary past. Filing in slow procession along the excavation, each of us offered a symbolic stone pebble into the concreting to commemorate this hallowed and historic occasion. It was as if we had reached the point of no return, now committed inescapably to the long and arduous labour of our lives — to an endeavour that was to lead us into adventures at once daunting and dangerous, yet whose rewards and riches, like Jason's Golden Fleece, were tantalisingly within reach.

AMRIT

(From *Children of Change — A Spiritual Journey* by Amrit,  
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*But on that which as yet we know not how shall we concentrate? And yet we cannot know the Divine unless we have achieved this concentration of our being upon him. A concentration which culminates in a living realisation and the constant sense of the presence of the One in ourselves and in all of which we are aware, is what we mean in Yoga by knowledge and the effort after knowledge. It is not enough to devote ourselves by the reading of Scriptures or by the stress of philosophic reasoning to an intellectual understanding of the Divine; for at the end of our long mental labour we might know all that has been said of the Eternal, possess all that can be thought about the Infinite and yet we might not know him at all. This intellectual preparation can indeed be the first stage in a powerful Yoga, but it is not indispensable: it is not a step which all need or can be called upon to take. Yoga would be impossible, except for a very few, if the intellectual figure of knowledge arrived at by the speculative or meditative Reason were its indispensable condition or a binding preliminary. All that the Light from above asks of us that it may begin its work is a call from the soul and a sufficient point of support in the mind. This support can be reached through an insistent idea of the Divine in the thought, a corresponding will in the dynamic parts, an aspiration, a faith, a need in the heart. Any one of these may lead or predominate, if all cannot move in unison or in an equal rhythm.*

Sri Aurobindo

(*The Synthesis of Yoga – I*, CWSA, Vol. 23, pp. 81-82)

## INDO-PAK FRIENDSHIP

The Partition of India marks a seminal event in her history. Not just the history of modern India, but the one that started with the Sindhu-Saraswati Civilisation, some 5000 years ago. A nation is a being, a living entity that grows with time. It is a soul with a body; a body that is a patch of earth. If the political leaders of India in 1947 had had the vision to see the soul of a nation that was re-asserting itself, after two hundred years of torpor, they would have seen what Sri Aurobindo and his nationalist peers had seen in the early 1900s. They had worshipped the nation as a Goddess, a mother, and were fired by the mantra of *Vande Mataram*, “Let us worship our mother”. When Sri Aurobindo came out of the jail transformed, he addressed the root cause that was hidden behind the surface political unrest. The forgetting of the national soul. The ignorance of the spiritual wealth of the nation. The *tamas* and fear, which is a greater subjugation than the political one. His advice was to uphold the Sanatan Dharma — that Eternal Law that moves people to be brave and help each other, and ultimately love all as representatives of the Supreme. That was his last message before Sri Aurobindo retired from the outer battlefield.

And when the sacrifice of a generation of brave freedom fighters concluded on August 15, 1947, Sri Aurobindo commented that India is free but has not achieved unity. Much before the Partition, political fires had created a rift in people’s minds, so that the spectre of the “other” was already taking shape. But that did not necessitate a Partition. Once it was declared, the massacres increased thousand-fold. Had it been the right solution to the problem, there would have been a quenching of the fire. Nature could not have spoken louder, but humans are slow to realise. And the adverse forces use these moments of weakness to seize control. The lessons of being divided and conquered were not learnt. But when we read history from a book, we have the advantage of a wider perspective. Who knows what we would have done had we been there.

Our Masters have said that India has a special gift for the world: her spiritual wisdom. But how do we define “India”? What countries does it include? Is it the map in the Ashram Playground, in front of which the Mother sat during meditations, and which she called the spiritual map of India? I believe the geographical contour is not the important thing. It is the conviction and realisation of its people that this entity is a living being, and not merely the sum of its parts. The many alliances amongst nations around the world point to one fact — that human unity is the need of the hour. As a consequence, national borders are dissolving. They were a construct of the past, and have been forever in flux throughout history. If we hang on to this past, mightier forces will warn us, and not too gently either. Sri Aurobindo had spoken of many dreams he had for India and the world on the day India regained



her independence. His wishes included Asian resurgence, world union and humanity taking the next step in evolution. In all of them he saw this being, the true India, playing an important role as spiritual leader and Elder. With India fragmented, her mission to be a spiritual leader in the world would remain a vain dream.

When colonised countries were becoming independent, many new countries were carved out of the old. Some of the borders were drawn quite arbitrarily. Using the word “arbitrary” may sound unfair towards the diplomats and geographers who tried to rationalise their task. But “arbitrary” is better than calling out hard facts, where some of these borders were drawn to profit the out-going powers. Such as creating a border along lines of natural resources like petroleum, to make it easy for the colonial power to continue holding on to them. Or gaining privileged statuses to operate naval bases, acquire company shares, hold on to land and factories. And how did the border affect the natives? Families, tribes and homogenous peoples were separated, like in Korea, Rwanda, India, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and other similar hot spots. Whatever the reason for the artificial demarcations, once they were made, they assumed a life of their own. The two groups on either side, once the same, pulled out an “other” from within themselves. This other looked so much like themselves, it was hard to sustain one’s own identity without portraying this other as demonic.

Border conflicts are not a new phenomenon. As soon as a national border was drawn, keeping some in and some out, it created a need to enforce it. When laws and the police were not enough, the army got involved. The many wars that were fought over territorial disputes between neighbours speak for themselves. Smaller nations are in danger of being swallowed up, like Tibet and Kuwait. Sharing of rivers can be a diplomatic nightmare. One of the reasons for the founding of the United Nations was to ensure territorial rights amongst nations. Its peacekeeping forces have ever since been busy applying band-aids.

Identity politics forces a group to define itself with respect to its constructed enemy. If the enemy is dissolved, then the group ceases to exist too. So, a lot of effort goes in keeping the enemy alive and at counterpoise to the group. It is a trick often played by politicians on their own people to keep them from focusing on internal issues. Such crimes against humanity can continue only so long as people don’t catch on to the game.

From the ethnic, social and historical perspectives, these artificial borders should not exist. Once the foreign power leaves, the fragmentation could continue, this time initiated by the same people who suffered the first partition. Within twenty-five years of its formation, Pakistan was further partitioned. African countries also re-drew their borders and the process continues around the world. Difference is forcefully imagined and maintained by violence. Even without a further split, countries with artificial borders are doubly weakened. Once by the initial division of power, and secondly because they concentrate their resources in fighting each other.

We have a seed of love within each of us. And a seed of hatred too, which is born of fear, of the instinct for self-preservation. The greater the insecurity, the higher the chances of our feeding this seed of hatred. We must engage with each other in forums where we can place our past pains in the centre of the circle for all to see. We must face the fury and the bitter words. But we must eventually rise above them, by seeing how both sides have suffered, and perhaps suffered enough. It is not as though one community hurt the other unilaterally, as a slave-owner against a slave. Both communities were hurt and took revenge. Fear stems from ignorance. We are ignorant of our history, our culture, our potential to love one another. Even if we are not ignorant we are controlled by those who profit by keeping us as separate entities. Using our freedom of speech and the technological tools to spread our views we can multiply cross-border group interactions. Gradually if more and more people realise what unites them, differences would diminish. There are many ways to dialogue, many forums at the grassroots and state level. Korea has had a Ministry of Unification for decades that is poised right now to unite the two Koreas. Already in international sports, they have combined teams. The method of Truth Commissions has worked in South Africa and Sri Lanka. Process Work is another way to dialoguing intimately with the “other”.

Process Oriented Psychology was conceived by psychologists Amy and Arnold Mindell, who started a Process Work Institute in Portland, Oregon, USA. They also travel around the world holding Open Forums in conflict zones. Open Forum is a group process where participants belong to one or more communities that need to resolve an issue or several issues. This technique is elaborated in Mindells’ books — *Sitting in the Fire*, *The Deep Democracy of Open Forums*, *The Leader as Martial Artist*, and others. Process Work has many success stories around the world, such as Northern Ireland, South Africa, Los Angeles, Israel. It is a kind of conflict resolution technique that welcomes people from every strata of society to interact face to face. Even if the participants cannot articulate their problems in words, there is space for other channels of communication, such as emotional, somatic, spiritual. Process Work creates a safe space where people are asked not to be afraid to raise issues they have repressed, or of which they feel ashamed, or angry, or vengeful, or despondent. Open Forum is a tool for Deep Democracy. It invites marginalised voices to speak up, and mainstream persons to practise deep listening. It even “embraces the terrorist”, who is often misunderstood, and unrepresented. Process Work is an invitation to “sit in the fire”, which means to face one’s worst fears, look the opponent in the eye, and discuss uncomfortable subjects. Because only then can true healing begin. There are other reasons a face to face encounter is more fruitful than any other kind of interaction. Time plays an important part in interactions. In an Open Forum, people don’t have the time to ponder over their answer and deliver it massaged. They will read others’ emotions real-time and speak from their guts, which is the authentic word. Sometimes the word is not spoken, but a person

involuntarily uses some other channel of communication, like a blush or shaking of a leg. This is a secondary process that needs to be brought forward and examined. Real-time exchanges create the field — an atmosphere made up of sensations, emotions, unspoken feelings. And the field brings up time spirits — roles that need to be represented.

The Indo-Pak conflict has been festering for more than seventy years now. The neighbouring countries are in a continuous state of war, have fought four wars, have miles of barbed-wire fences separating them, and thousands of soldiers on high alert on both sides of the border. Skirmishes claim lives of army personnel every year. A large piece of land is disputed territory, where infiltrators from one side harm the local population, incite political unrest and engage in armed conflict. Pakistan suppresses freedom of speech, the state is often ruled by the military, and Pakistanis hardly travel to India. As a result, the political feelings of the Pakistani people are seldom heard in India. To solve the issue of cross-border hostilities, I feel a heart to heart interaction between the people of Pakistan and India is necessary. At the political level, negotiations were tried many times, but every new military skirmish resulted in a setback. The grassroots now need to be given a chance.

The historical background of the problem is very important to know when trying to resolve the conflict. This topic of revising history should be brought up during Open Forums. If the participants don't bring it up themselves, facilitators need to. Another topic that needs attention at the start, is the psychology of "othering". It is a destructive stance — political and personal — and needs to be kept clearly in mind while dialoguing with the "perceived other". The Indian subcontinent was rich in precious metals; had many rivers and tropical plants producing ample food; had a large workforce, and a sound education system, complemented by a cultural heritage that stood the test of time. India was never politically united under one ruler. Pockets of princely states with ever-changing borders, and bigger empires like the Maratha and Moghul, fought one another for centuries. But amongst the people, there was a strong sense of being part of one culture with a common heritage. When the Afghans or Persians attacked, these disparate kingdoms within India recognised them as foreign powers, although the Moghul emperor shared the same religion as the attackers. Some of the attackers remained in India, formed their own kingdoms and built cities, armies and factories where they employed the native population. They became Indian. Sometimes foreigners came as asylum seekers, such as the Zoroastrians from Persia and Syrian Christians. They are now two big communities, and very much Indian.

In contrast, when the British came — first as merchants, backed by gunships, then as regents of the queen — they never considered the land as their new home. If they used the labour force, it was to work them aground in producing goods European markets would use or sell: such as indigo dye, cotton yarn and opium. If they laid railway tracks and built ships, it was to create a network to transport goods from the

interior and ship them to Europe. The British did not build houses to live in, but pleasure domes for their vacations. They suffered the tropics for a few years as diplomats and returned home with spoils. The frivolous Indian princes were allowed their little kingdoms by paying a handsome tribute to the British. The dangerous kings were eliminated. An Indian army was raised to fight in the many wars waged by England in its other colonies, such as South Africa, and in the World Wars. Indian workers were dispatched around the British colonies as bonded labourers. The Indian education system was altered to produce only good clerks and unquestioning servants. This was not any different from the way other European powers treated their colonies around the world. When the British left India, there was an overhauling of the legacies they left behind. It started with writing a new constitution, followed by revising the legal system, nativising the armed forces, attempting to introduce aspects of a more truly Indian system of education. But the legacy of the Partition could not be changed, and still hurts the most.

Firstly, let the group in the Open Forum establish what is known from history, as accurately as possible. Although the Indian and Pakistani, key players of 1947, were partially responsible for the Partition, the British had the upper hand in the matter. The forces at play during that period were complicated, and even now under dispute, because not every piece of information is available, and I believe not every piece of information can ever be made available. A lot of it was at the level of imaginations, of human sentiments, perhaps even of the Time Spirit. Splitting hairs over history is not productive at this stage. Instead, going forward with what we have right now is: two nations with a baggage of history and a disturbing present, which, if continued, can lead to a worse future. One of the reasons the Indian subcontinent has never reached its zenith of pre-colonial riches and abundance is this fragmentation. Each country spends above 40% of its budget raising an army, navy and air force, and keeping them in a constant state of readiness. These nations that cannot feed their people, or provide clean water and housing, even good roads, forget education and medical services, are the top buyers of weapons, ships, submarines and aircraft in the world.

War is an excuse used by the political leadership in Pakistan to divert popular attention from internal problems. It is not so in India. But being Indian, I don't get unfiltered news about Pakistan from the Indian media. What I hear is that opportunities in India for education, jobs, free speech and creativity are much more than in Pakistan. But I can say without any doubt, if the resources that go in maintaining hostilities with Pakistan were diverted to internal development, India would have become one of the First World nations. As for the Pakistani people, they would also prosper if the military wealth were diverted towards their growth. The wealthiest and most powerful men in Pakistan are in the military: not the soldier, but the higher officials. This should give us a clue as to why the military in Pakistan would like to maintain status quo, and why they step in and topple a democratically elected government

every time it comes close to India. The Process Work I am proposing would confront this status quo, which is why I am apprehensive of trying it from within Pakistan. But I believe the people on both sides of the border would like to see hostilities end.

If I were to guess the forces at play at the essence level, I would say: on both sides, there is a political agenda that the common men are unaware of. This was one of the reasons that Pakistan was created in the first place. Since the Muslims and Hindus lived in the same neighbourhoods, when elections were allowed by the British — for local matters — the candidates who won were predominantly Hindus. The Muslim leaders then clamoured for separate electorates. This was granted to them and their candidates were asked to share power with the Hindu candidates. Here too the Hindu and Muslim candidates did not see eye to eye. As a result, there was frustration and they could get no work done in governing. History calls it the Divide and Rule policy employed by the colonists to keep the subjects contentedly dysfunctional. The Muslim leaders felt insecure of gaining any parliamentary seat once India would be free, because then surely separate electorates would be abandoned. They came up with the concept that Muslims and Hindus cannot co-exist, called it the Two-Nation Theory, and asked for Pakistan. In truth, for 800 years the people of the two religions have co-existed all over India, and their rulers were sometimes Muslim, sometimes Hindu.

The British were in a hurry to leave India in 1947, especially since they sensed civil war in the bickering of the Muslim and Hindu political aspirants. Interpersonal relations amongst Indian leaders of the two religions were not cordial; the truce broker — the British — were not trusted; but there was a date by which, come what may, the future of India had to be decided. The Muslim leadership insisted on a separate Muslim nation, and so Pakistan was granted. Then came the negotiations to grab the so-called Muslim-majority regions. Till the last date, the new international border was being finalised, and was not shared with the people of the nation, until after the fact. The people were not consulted before the decision was made to split their families and grab their land. When it did happen, they were forced to migrate because the *others* were claiming their property, or killing them if they protested. There was an immediate outbreak of mass hysteria. They lost not only all their savings, their house and land, but family members too; that is, if they were lucky to be alive. Those who could get hold of weapons — even sickles and swords — slit the throats of the people of the other religion. No one knew which community started the looting and killing and raping, but revenge begot more revenge and half a million were killed, and 14 million displaced. Many attacked first because they were afraid of being attacked. An entire train of migrating people was burned. In the refugee camps epidemics broke out. These stories of suffering and loss have been handed down the generations as family history. What else was left to them — those who were forcefully uprooted and their dignity stolen?

In an Open Forum where Indians meet Pakistanis face to face, I can imagine

these wounds will re-open. Ghost roles of leaders from the two communities and the British would be raised from the dead. Time-spirits of the past would be present, because some people still carry the fires of vengeance. Time-spirits of the future would need to be invited, because the aim of this process is to work together for a better future. The hardest part would be to sit in the fire: to revisit the atrocities that were committed, and in whose name fresh atrocities are still being committed. Healing will come only if both sides understand that they both suffered losses. Some other aspects of meeting the “other” would be to realise there is no real other, leave alone “enemy”. The cultural and historical affinities between the people of India and Pakistan are numerous — even now, with the two countries following very different public policies for two generations. When the people of the two nations get to talk face to face, the real issues will surface. Nuclear weapons can be discussed and the budget for the armed forces and concerns about sharing rivers. The issue of sending terrorists into India will be brought up, no doubt. Who sends them? Who are these radicalised people? What do they think they can achieve by killing innocents? Have they considered the larger consequences of their actions? Which strata of society do they come from, do they have families, were they ever shown love? Are some people fooling them and using them as cannon fodder?

This process work will uncover many myths that each party thinks about the other. My hope is that they will be demolished. And by word of mouth, those who were not in the process work, will also get to know about them. I can share some myths I grew up with, that may be refuted by Pakistanis, for which I would be happy. Do Pakistanis rejoice when there is a natural disaster in India? How about when it is a terrorist attack by Pakistan-trained militants? How are the 4.8 million Hindus treated in Pakistan? Why do they migrate to India at a steady rate? And Pakistanis may ask, do Indians rejoice when the Afghan civil war spills into Pakistan? How are Muslims treated in India? Do the 172 million Muslims in India regret being in India? Do they want to migrate to Pakistan? Many edges will come up, and many hot spots. Embracing the terrorist will be required. And the hardest part of all would be not to create a new enemy — of the leadership, for example, or of a Western interfering power.

As for the location of the Open Forums — it will not be straightforward. Currently, neither country gives tourist visas to citizens of the other country. There are other ways of getting visas, but paperwork is required for them; such as an invitation from an organisation for a conference, or a doctor’s appointment for medical treatment. Each applicant’s background is checked thoroughly. Once they are allowed to travel, they need to stick to their itinerary and cannot visit any city they had not declared during the application. They need to report to the local police within 24 hours of landing. People of Indian or Pakistani origin, naturalised in other countries, may find it easier to get a visa. Indo-Pak relations have passed through many phases. Regarding trade, borders are open for goods trucks, and business



visas are granted. There are two trains that run across the border which have been operational for 3 decades. One is from Delhi to Lahore, called the Samjhauta Express. Samjhauta means *peace, accord, understanding*, in Urdu and Hindi — the national languages of the two countries. The other is the Thar Link Express running from Jodhpur in Rajasthan, India to Karachi in Sindh, Pakistan. There is a bus service too, from Delhi to Lahore. A border in Punjab — between the villages of Attari in India and Wagah in Pakistan — is a ceremonial ground. Here tourists from both countries sit in their respective galleries, and watch soldiers parading and raising national flags. The metal grill gates then slam shut and open again for the next parade, some hours later.

Here are some ideas I propose to get the people of the two nations to talk face to face. The compartments in the two trains could be used as a space for Open Forums. The airconditioned compartments may be used as they are the quiet ones. The journey is daylong, so there is ample time for one or more Open Forums. It would be meaningful only if there are representatives from each country, and if possible, in equal number. The other place would be in group tours. Tourists travelling in sightseeing groups get visas, and so do pilgrims. When they visit India, Indian participants could meet them for the Open Forum in any Indian city they are visiting. They could even have a different group of Indians from every city. Army personnel can hold their Open Forums at the ceremonial border in Punjab. Here civilians do not see each other because of the wall, but if permission is granted, an Open Forum space could be made in no-man's land. Visas would not be needed, and the place is heavily secured. Other Open Forum spaces can be around the world, wherever Indian and Pakistani diaspora live close by. I know Indians and Pakistanis play cricket together, and find each other anywhere in the world. Using these as meeting grounds, heart to heart sessions can be organised, without the danger of the home countries raising security issues.

Ideally a group should have half the participants from each country. In addition, I am proposing these groups be specialised, to accommodate focused discussions. Some groups that come to mind are: young adults, women only groups, men only groups, Muslims only groups, Hindus and Sikhs only groups, mixed religion groups, families that have their ancestral origin in the other country. Some people are still alive who lived through the Partition. Their personal experiences would make a huge difference in the Open Forums. Even if events happened before our birth, family experiences, clan experiences, experiences of the entire populace are transmitted down the generations. These become cultural memes that lend identity to a people. I would like to have members of the armed forces talk in various focused groups and in mixed groups — army, navy, air force, engineers, spies — starting from the lowest to highest in rank. Here is where it gets murky regarding regulations, since the leadership may not allow defence personnel to speak to the *other*. Perhaps retired army personnel, or members off duty could participate.

The facilitators need to be from both countries, ideally. Besides, it's not just that one event, its aftershocks are still felt. In South Asia there is a history of intervention from third parties, especially Western powers, in trying to stop conflict in the region. But since both countries were born of a Western power's colony, and were used as pawns during the Cold War by some other Western Powers, a Western facilitator may be suspect. Moreover, the subject matter refers to a specific event, and its ramifications, which is a lived experience. To be authentic, a facilitator would need to be part of the equation. As the movement takes shape, the idea is to train more facilitators from both sides and from different strata of society. At a ripper stage, it would be interesting to include people from other cross-border conflict zones, such as Korea, the Balkans, former USSR nations, Israel.

Assuming the leadership in the two countries allow such Open Forums to happen at all, where will this lead us? Many film artistes in India have started the conversation, exercising their artistic freedom. This includes Muslim Indian film people too. They have been sending messages to Pakistan for some time, — sometimes hidden in comedy, sometimes indirectly dropping hints. But often using reason to make the common man understand the crux of the problem. Pakistan's censor board bans these films, but the underground channels supply them. If they were the people's wishes, surely Pakistani singers and film stars would be banned from singing and acting in Bollywood? During the Open Forum I would like to ask what Pakistanis think about the banned films. Do they agree? Are they offended? Which are the groups that agree, which are offended? Their responses will hint at the feasibility of the Open Forums. I would also like to ask an open question to people of both countries. Does anyone think that someday politicians from both sides will sit together for a heart to heart honest chat? That will be the beginning of the end of hostilities. Maybe they will plan cooperation projects like disarmament and joint military exercises. And in cultural and educational fields, music and sports meets, tours of each other's countries, student exchange programmes, joint archaeological surveys. How about greening the shared desert, cleaning the common rivers, exchanging technology, seeds, food, manpower, expertise?

I am not suggesting Pakistan should unite with India and become one country again. That train has left the station, I think. Unity comes in many shades, and the fruits of unity are more important than a stamp-paper unity. The last time there was an opportunity to annul the Partition was during the second Indo-Pak war in 1965. The Mother comments about it in her *Agenda*: "Besides, even quite outwardly, that fight between India and Pakistan was clearly . . . (how can I put it? . . . The words that come to me are English) *initiated and driven*, that is to say, set in motion by and under the impulsion of the forces of Truth that wanted to create a great 'Asian Federation'. It was a federation that, as a matter of fact, needed the return of Pakistan and all those regions, and which includes Nepal, Tibet, also Burma, and in the south, Ceylon. A great federation with each country having its autonomous develop-



ment, perfectly free, but which would be united in a common single aspiration for peace and fight against the invasion of forces of dissolution. That was very clear, it was willed — and it's the intervention of this United Nations that stopped everything.” Mother said this on September 21, 1966, exactly a year after the United Nations called both countries to cease fire.

What Mother had hoped for, a federation of nations united in their mission of peace and prosperity, did come to pass, although in a diminished fashion. From 1977, the smaller countries bordering India conceived of a zone of cooperation. Many alliances amongst nations were being created. The European Union was a model they dreamed of. After resistance from India and Pakistan, where both thought the alliance was a conspiracy to weaken them against the other, the alliance was formed in 1985. Right now, the SAARC — South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation — facilitates economic and cultural exchange. One day it may go a step further, and create a federation of South Asian countries. Meanwhile, we — Indians and Pakistanis — can contribute our bit to the process.

LOPAMUDRA MUKHERJEE

## SRI AUROBINDO'S EARLY POETRY ACCORDING TO RASAVĀDA

(Continued from the issue of June 2019)

### V

The second poem in this section is very different indeed from the first. In subject, form and tone it is totally different from the preceding one. A short poem, it has only two stanzas, of seven lines each. Yet, within these fourteen lines he packs a world of significance. It is entitled 'Perfect thy motion'. It is a poem which is instinct with reverence for the Almighty as the Creator as well as the destroyer and as such I feel humbled to nothingness, for I am a mere literary critic, not a devotee.

The rasa that informs the poem is Bhakti-rasa, established by Sri Rūpa Goswāmīn. The great vaiṣṇava devotee is of the opinion that bhakti-rasa or devotion is the only rasa and all the others are minor variations of it. He explains this theory at great length in his two books *Ujjwala-Nīlamanī* and *Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu*. In a skeletal form, his theory is:

Main Rasas:	Śānta Bhaktirasa	śānti sthāyi
	Prīta Bhaktirasa	prīti sthāyi
	Preyān Bhaktirasa	sakhya sthāyi
	Vatsala Bhaktirasa	vātsalya sthāyi
	Madhura Bhaktirasa	madhurā rati

Among the nine traditional rasas two (śānta and śṅgāra) have been accommodated above and the other seven have been called minor rasas, only he attaches the word bhaktirasa to each of them. He introduces two entirely new rasas, prīta and preyān.

Let us now take up the poem. Addressing the Creator the poet prays that He will make his mind the ground for perfection, taking each feature of it:

Perfect thy motion ever within me,  
Master of mind.  
Grey of the brain, flash of the lightning,  
Brilliant and blind.

The Creator will link these features "the world to mould".

This theme of creation is continued into the first four lines of the next stanza. Then comes a sudden reversal. The Creator is seen as the Destroyer:

Then with a laugh thou erasest the scroll,  
Bringing another, like waves that roll  
And sink supine.<sup>1</sup>

This is definitely bhakti-rasa, but of what variety? Since he addresses the Creator as his Master, I think the rasa is of prīta bhaktirasa variety in which the relationship is that of master and servant. Sri Rūpa describes it as being of two kinds, of which sambhrama variety will be relevant for us:

*Dāsābhimānānām kṛṣṇe syāt prīti sambhramottara*<sup>2</sup>

Those who regard themselves as his servant have reverent love for Kṛṣṇa.

The poet is talking about the creation, destruction and re-creation from age to age, from kalpa to kalpa and is overwhelmed by a sense of wonder at the contemplation of this action. Indeed it is something that the human mind cannot compass. Our ancient rishis had been able to do it, but we understand it theoretically, with the limited capacity of our puny brain. It is not to be wondered at that a young man, barely twenty, brought himself to think about it. But that is because this is not an ordinary young man. It is one who, within this mortal body, will one day embody the immortal.<sup>3</sup>

The poem is of fourteen lines and it also has a volte at the end, but it is not a Petrarchan sonnet. It is a lyric rich in diction and imagery and highly melodious. All that is necessary for a Petrarchan sonnet is there, but it is not a sonnet. Now why? Perhaps the poet felt lyrical, he did not feel like writing a sonnet which is more serious than his mood required at that moment. The very next poem, on the same page, is a sonnet of sorts, so we know that he could easily write one if he wanted to. Only he did not want to make this poem a sonnet. Well, let it be a lyric, who are we to cavil at it? We should be thankful enough as it is.

*(To be continued)*

RATRI RAY

1. *Collected Poems*, p. 7.

2. *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, p. 15, 487 Dum Dum Park, Cal. 55, 1396 (Beng).

3. The 1972 edition of *Collected Poems* included 'Perfect thy motion' as the second poem, but left it undated, placing it under 1890-1900. The CWSA edition places the poem around 1909-1910.



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