

Price: ₹ 30

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE



MAY 2022

SUBSCRIPTIONS

INLAND

Single Copy: ₹ 30
Annual: ₹ 200
or (2 years: ₹ 400, 3 years: ₹ 600,
4 years ₹ 800, 5 years ₹ 1,000)
For 10 years: ₹ 1,800

OVERSEAS

(Air Mail)
Annual: \$70
For 10 years: \$700

All payments to be made in favour of MOTHER INDIA. Cheque should be sent by speed post only. For NEFT/bank transfers (from within India only) kindly inform us by email with full name and address. Our bank details are:

Beneficiary Name: SAAT A/C Mother India
Account Number: 0927101035721
Beneficiary Bank Name: Canara Bank
Beneficiary Branch Name: Pondicherry Muthialpet
IFSC code: CNRB0000927

For Money Orders please send to:

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002

All cheques and correspondence to be addressed to:

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India
Phone: (0413) 2233642
E-mail: motherindia@sriurobindoashram.org.in

For all subscriptions correspondents should give their full address in BLOCK letters, with the correct PIN code along with their email ID or telephone number. Current or past subscribers are requested to mention their subscription number in case of any inquiry.

Owner: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Publisher: Manoj Das Gupta

Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Printer: Swadhin Chatterjee

Published from: Publication Department, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002

Printed from: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press,
No. 38, Goubert Avenue, Pondicherry - 605 001, India

Editor: S. Ravi

Founding Editor: K. D. SETHNA (AMAL KIRAN)

Associate Editors: HEMANT KAPOOR & RANGANATH RAGHAVAN

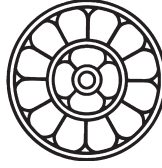
Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers for India: RNI No. 8667/63

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

MAY 2022

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
PONDICHERRY
INDIA



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.



All Rights Reserved. No matter appearing in this journal or part thereof may be reproduced or translated without written permission from the publishers except for short extracts as quotations.

The views expressed by the authors are not necessarily those of the journal.

All correspondence to be addressed to:

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605002, India

Phone: (0413) 2233642

e-mail: motherindia@sriarobindoashram.org.in

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXXVII

No. 5

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

Sri Aurobindo

‘A VOICE ILL-HEARD SHALL SPEAK, THE SOUL OBEY’	...	7
THE DECISIVE ORDEAL OF THIS YOGA	...	8
THE LAW OF THE WAY	...	13
THE GRACE OF THE DIVINE MOTHER	...	15

The Mother

‘BREAK EVERY LIMIT, SHATTER EVERY CHAIN . . .’	...	16
A CONVERSATION OF 19 APRIL 1951	...	17
CORRESPONDENCE WITH DILIP KUMAR ROY	...	23

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)

“ELIXIR VITAE” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO	...	35
--	-----	----

P. Counouma

A TALK IN THE ASHRAM SCHOOL ON 26 JANUARY 1974	...	37
--	-----	----

Gautam Malaker

“LIFE OF PREPARATION AT BARODA” —		
SRI AUROBINDO, THE PERFECT GENTLEMAN (PART 25)	...	47
Section 3: A Quiet and Humble Disposition		

Clarifications

1. On page 54 of the March 2022 issue, Swarnaprabha narrates that Datta's first meeting with the Mother took place in Japan, in a garden full of cherry blossom trees.

For the record, some biographers say that Datta (Dorothy Hodgson) accompanied the Mother from Paris to Japan.

2. In the April 2022 issue, the introductory note on p. 24 states that Dilip Kumar Roy was in the Ashram for 33 years. The figure should be 22.

— Ed.

‘A VOICE ILL-HEARD SHALL SPEAK, THE SOUL OBEY’

When darkness deepens strangling the earth’s breast
And man’s corporeal mind is the only lamp,
As a thief’s in the night shall be the covert tread
Of one who steps unseen into his house.
A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,
A Power into mind’s inner chamber steal,
A charm and sweetness open life’s closed doors
And beauty conquer the resisting world,
The Truth-Light capture Nature by surprise,
A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss
And earth grow unexpectedly divine.
In Matter shall be lit the spirit’s glow,
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,
The days become a happy pilgrim march,
Our will a force of the Eternal’s power,
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.
A few shall see what none yet understands;
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;
For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 55)



THE DECISIVE ORDEAL OF THIS YOGA

The cardinal defect, that which has been always standing in the way and is now isolated in an extreme prominence, is seated or at least is at present concentrated in the lower vital being. I mean that part of the vital-physical nature with its petty and obstinate egoism which actuates the external human personality, — that which supports its surface thoughts and dominates its habitual ways of feeling, character and action. I am not concerned here with the other parts of the being and I do not speak of anything in the higher mind, the psychic self or the higher and larger vital nature; for when the lower vital rises, these are pushed into the background, if not covered over for the time, by this lower vital being and this external personality. Whatever there may be in these higher parts, aspiration to the Truth, devotion or will to conquer the obstacles and the hostile forces, it cannot become integral, it cannot remain unmixed or unspoiled or continue to be effective so long as the lower vital and the external personality have not accepted the Light and consented to change.

It was inevitable that in the course of the sadhana these inferior parts of the nature should be brought forward in order that like the rest of the being they may make the crucial choice and either accept or refuse transformation. My whole work depends upon this movement; it is the decisive ordeal of this Yoga. For the physical consciousness and the material life cannot change if this does not change. Nothing that may have been done before, no inner illumination, experience, power or Ananda, is of any eventual value if this is not done. If the little external personality is to persist in retaining its obscure and limited, its petty and ignoble, its selfish and false and stupid human consciousness, this amounts to a flat negation of the work and the Sadhana. I have no intention of giving my sanction to a new edition of the old fiasco, a partial and transient spiritual opening within with no true and radical change in the law of the external nature. If, then, any sadhaka refuses in practice to admit this change, or if he refuses even to admit the necessity for any change of his lower vital being and his habitual external personality, I am entitled to conclude that, whatever his professions, he has not accepted either myself or my Yoga.

I am well aware that this change is not easy; the dynamic will towards it does not come at once and is difficult to fix and, even afterwards, the sadhaka often feels helpless against the force of habit. Knowing this, the Mother and myself have shown and are still showing sufficient patience in giving time for the true spirit to come up and form and act effectively in the external being of those around us. But if in anyone this part not only becomes obstinate, self-assertive or aggressive, but is supported and justified by the mind and will and tries to spread itself in the atmosphere, then it is a different and very serious matter.

The difficulty in the lower vital being is that it is still wedded to its old self

and in revolt against the Light; it has not only not surrendered either to a greater Truth or to myself and the Mother, but it has up to now no such will and hardly any idea even of what true surrender is. When the lower vital assumes this attitude, it takes its stand upon a constant affirmation of the old personality and the past forms of the lower nature. Every time they are discouraged, it supports and brings them back and asserts its right to freedom — the freedom to affirm and follow its own crude and egoistic ideas, desires, fancies, impulses or convenience whenever it chooses. It claims, secretly or in so many words, the right to follow its nature, — its average unregenerate human nature, the right to be itself, — its natural, original, unchanged self with all the falsehood, ignorance and incoherence proper to this part of the being. And it claims or, if it does not claim in theory, it asserts in practice the right to express all this impure and inferior stuff in speech and act and behaviour. It defends, glosses over, paints in specious colours and tries to prolong indefinitely the past habitual ways of thinking, speaking and feeling and to eternise what is distorted and misformed in the character. This it does sometimes by open self-assertion and revolt, branding all that is done or said against it as error or oppression or injustice, sometimes behind a cover of self-deception or a mask of dissimulation, professing one thing and practising another. Often it tries to persuade itself and to convince others that these things are the only right reason and right way of acting for itself or for all or even that they are part of the true movement of the Yoga.

When this lower vital being is allowed to influence the action, as happens when the sadhaka in any way endorses its suggestions, its attitude, whether masked to himself or coming to the surface, dictates a considerable part of his speech and action and against it he makes no serious resistance. If he is frank with himself and straightforward to the Mother, he will begin to recognise the source and nature of the obstacle and will soon be on the direct road to correct and change it. But this, when under the adverse influence, he persistently refuses to be; he prefers to hide up these movements under any kind of concealment, denial, justification or excuse or other shelter.

In the nature the resistance takes certain characteristic forms which add to the confusion and to the difficulty of transformation. It is necessary to outline some of these forms because they are sufficiently common, in some in a less, in others in a greater degree, to demand a clear and strong exposure.

1. A certain vanity and arrogance and self-assertive rajasic vehemence which in this smaller vital being are, for those who have a pronounced strength in these parts, the deformation of the vital force and habit of leading and domination that certain qualities in the higher vital gave them. This is accompanied by an excessive *amour-propre* which creates the necessity of making a figure, maintaining by any means position and prestige, even of posturing before others, influencing, controlling or “helping” them, claiming the part of a superior sadhaka, one with greater knowledge and with occult powers. The larger vital being itself has to give up its powers and

capacities to the Divine Shakti from whom they come and must use them only as the Mother's instrument and according to her directions; if it intervenes with the claim of its ego and puts itself between her and the work or between her and other sadhakas, then whatever its natural power, it deviates from the true way, spoils the work, brings in adverse forces and wrong movements and does harm to those whom it imagines it is helping. When these things are transferred to the smallness of the lower vital nature and the external personality and take lower and pettier forms, they become still more false to the Truth, incongruous, grotesque, and at the same time can be viciously harmful, though in a smaller groove. There is no better way of calling in hostile forces into the general work or of vitiating and exposing to their influence one's own sadhana. On a smaller scale these defects of vanity, arrogance and rajasic violence are present in most human natures. They take other forms, but are then also a great obstacle to any true spiritual change.

2. Disobedience and indiscipline. This lower part of the being is always random, wayward, self-assertive and unwilling to accept the imposition on it of any order and discipline other than its own idea or impulse. Its defects even from the beginning stand in the way of the efforts of the higher vital to impose on the nature a truly regenerating tapasya. This habit of disobedience and disregard of discipline is so strong that it does not always need to be deliberate; the response to it seems to be immediate, irresistible and instinctive. Thus obedience to the Mother is repeatedly promised or professed, but the action done or the course followed is frequently the very opposite of the profession or promise. This constant indiscipline is a radical obstacle to the sadhana and the worst possible example to others.

3. Dissimulation and falsity of speech. This is an exceedingly injurious habit of the lower nature. Those who are not straightforward cannot profit by the Mother's help, for they themselves turn it away. Unless they change, they cannot hope for the descent of the supramental Light and Truth into the lower vital and physical nature; they remain stuck in their own self-created mud and cannot progress. Often it is not mere exaggeration or a false use of the imagination embroidering on the actual truth that is marked in the sadhaka, but also a positive denial and distortion as well as a falsifying concealment of facts. This he does sometimes to cover up his disobedience or wrong or doubtful course of action, sometimes to keep up his position, at others to get his own way or indulge his preferred habits and desires. Very often, when one has this kind of vital habit, he clouds his own consciousness and does not altogether realise the falsity of what he is saying or doing; but in much that he says and does, it is quite impossible to extend to him even this inadequate excuse.

4. A dangerous habit of constant self-justification. When this becomes strong in the sadhaka, it is impossible to turn him in this part of his being to the right consciousness and action because at each step his whole preoccupation is to justify himself. His mind rushes at once to maintain his own idea, his own position or his own course of action. This he is ready to do by any kind of argument, sometimes the

most clumsy and foolish or inconsistent with what he has been protesting the moment before, by any kind of misstatement or any kind of device. This is a common misuse, but none the less a misuse of the thinking mind; but it takes in him exaggerated proportions and so long as he keeps to it, it will be impossible for him to see or live the Truth.

Whatever the difficulties of the nature, however long and painful the process of dealing with them, they cannot stand to the end against the Truth, if there is or if there comes in these parts the true spirit, attitude and endeavour. But if a sadhaka continues out of self-esteem and self-will or out of tamasic inertia to shut his eyes or harden his heart against the Light, so long as he does that, no one can help him. The consent of all the being is necessary for the divine change, and it is the completeness and fullness of the consent that constitutes the integral surrender. But the consent of the lower vital must not be only a mental profession or a passing emotional adhesion; it must translate itself into an abiding attitude and a persistent and consistent action.

This Yoga can only be done to the end by those who are in total earnest about it and ready to abolish their little human ego and its demands in order to find themselves in the Divine. It cannot be done in a spirit of levity or laxity; the work is too high and difficult, the adverse powers in the lower Nature too ready to take advantage of the least sanction or the smallest opening, the aspiration and tapasya needed too constant and intense. It cannot be done if there is a petulant self-assertion of the ideas of the human mind or wilful indulgence of the demands and instincts and pretensions of the lowest part of the being, commonly justified under the name of human nature. It cannot be done if you insist on identifying these lowest things of the Ignorance with the divine Truth or even the lesser truth permissible on the way. It cannot be done if you cling to your past self and its old mental, vital and physical formations and habits; one has continually to leave behind his past selves and to see, act and live from an always higher and higher conscious level. It cannot be done if you insist on "freedom" for your human mind and vital ego. All the parts of the human being are entitled to express and satisfy themselves in their own way at their own risk and peril, if he so chooses, as long as he leads the ordinary life. But to enter into a path of Yoga whose whole object is to substitute for these human things the law and power of a greater Truth and the whole heart of whose method is surrender to the Divine Shakti, and yet to go on claiming this so-called freedom which is no more than a subjection to certain ignorant cosmic Forces, is to indulge in a blind contradiction and to claim the right to lead a double life.

Least of all can this Yoga be done if those who profess to be its sadhakas continue always to make themselves centres, instruments or spokesmen of the forces of the Ignorance which oppose, deny and ridicule its very principle and object. On one side there is the supramental realisation, the overshadowing and descending power of the supramental Divine, the light and force of a far greater Truth than any yet realised on the earth, something therefore beyond what the little human mind and

its logic regard as the only permanent realities, something whose nature and way and process of development here it cannot conceive or perceive by its own inadequate instruments or judge by its puerile standards; in spite of all opposition this is pressing down for manifestation in the physical consciousness and the material life. On the other side is this lower vital nature with all its pretentious arrogance, ignorance, obscurity, dullness or incompetent turbulence, standing for its own prolongation, standing against the descent, refusing to believe in any real reality or real possibility of a supramental or suprahuman consciousness and creation or, still more absurd, demanding, if it exists at all, that it should conform to its own little standards, seizing greedily upon everything that seems to disprove it, denying the presence of the Divine — for it knows that without that presence the work is impossible, — affirming loudly its own thoughts, judgments, desires, instincts, and, if these are contradicted, avenging itself by casting abroad doubt, denial, disparaging criticism, revolt and disorder. These are the two things now in presence between which every one will have to choose.

For this opposition, this sterile obstruction and blockade against the descent of the divine Truth cannot last for ever. Every one must come down finally on one side or the other, on the side of the Truth or against it. The supramental realisation cannot coexist with the persistence of the lower Ignorance; it is incompatible with continued satisfaction in a double nature.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Letters on Yoga – IV, CWSA, Vol. 31, pp. 150-56)



THE LAW OF THE WAY

First be sure of the call and of thy soul's answer. For if the call is not true, not the touch of God's powers or the voice of his messengers, but the lure of thy ego, the end of thy endeavour will be a poor spiritual fiasco or else a deep disaster.

And if not the soul's fervour, but only the mind's assent or interest replies to the divine summons or only the lower life's desire clutches at some side attraction of the fruits of Yoga-power or Yoga-pleasure or only a transient emotion leaps like an unsteady flame moved by the intensity of the Voice or its sweetness or grandeur, then too there can be little surety for thee in the difficult path of Yoga.

The outer instruments of mortal man have no force to carry him through the severe ardours of this spiritual journey and Titanic inner battle or to meet its terrible or obstinate ordeals or nerve him to face and overcome its subtle and formidable dangers. Only his spirit's august and steadfast will and the quenchless fire of his soul's invincible ardour are sufficient for this difficult transformation and this high improbable endeavour.

Imagine not the way is easy; the way is long, arduous, dangerous, difficult. At every step is an ambush, at every turn a pitfall. A thousand seen or unseen enemies will start up against thee, terrible in subtlety against thy ignorance, formidable in power against thy weakness. And when with pain thou hast destroyed them, other thousands will surge up to take their place. Hell will vomit its hordes to oppose thee and enring and wound and menace; Heaven will meet thee with its pitiless tests and its cold luminous denials. Thou shalt find thyself alone in thy anguish, the demons furious in thy path, the Gods unwilling above thee. Ancient and powerful, cruel, unvanquished and close and innumerable are the dark and dreadful Powers that profit by the reign of Night and Ignorance and would have no change and are hostile. Aloof, slow to arrive, far-off and few and brief in their visits are the Bright Ones who are willing or permitted to succour. Each step forward is a battle. There are precipitous descents, there are unending ascensions and ever higher peaks upon peaks to conquer. Each plateau climbed is but a stage on the way and reveals endless heights beyond it. Each victory thou thinkest the last triumphant struggle proves to be but the prelude to a hundred fierce and perilous battles . . . But thou sayest God's hand will be with me and the Divine Mother near with her gracious smile of succour? And thou knowest not then that God's grace is more difficult to have or to keep than the nectar of the Immortals or Kuvera's priceless treasures? Ask of His chosen and they will tell thee how often the Eternal has covered his face from them, how often he has withdrawn from them behind his mysterious veil and they have found themselves alone in the grip of Hell, solitary in the horror of the darkness, naked and defenceless in the anguish of the battle. And if his presence is felt behind the veil, yet

is it like the winter sun behind clouds and saves not from the rain and snow and the calamitous storm and the harsh wind and the bitter cold and the grey of a sorrowful atmosphere and the dun weary dullness. Doubtless the help is there even when it seems to be withdrawn, but still is there the appearance of total night with no sun to come and no star of hope to pierce the blackness. Beautiful is the face of the Divine Mother, but she too can be hard and terrible. Nay, then, is immortality a plaything to be given lightly to a child or the divine life a prize without effort or the crown for a weakling? Strive rightly and thou shalt have; trust and thy trust shall in the end be justified; but the dread Law of the Way is there and none can abrogate it.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Essays Divine and Human, CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 155-56)

[The editorial note in CWSA, Vol. 12, mentions that this short piece was written by Sri Aurobindo after his arrival in Pondicherry in 1910 but not published before his passing.

The date is circa 1927.

The manuscript is untitled; the editors have used a phrase from the last sentence as heading.]



THE GRACE OF THE DIVINE MOTHER

To walk through life armoured against all fear, peril and disaster, only two things are needed, two that go always together — the Grace of the Divine Mother and on your side an inner state made up of faith, sincerity and surrender. Let your faith be pure, candid and perfect. An egoistic faith in the mental and vital being tainted by ambition, pride, vanity, mental arrogance, vital self-will, personal demand, desire for the petty satisfactions of the lower nature is a low and smoke-obscured flame that cannot burn upwards to heaven. Regard your life as given you only for the divine work and to help in the divine manifestation. Desire nothing but the purity, force, light, wideness, calm, Ananda of the divine consciousness and its insistence to transform and perfect your mind, life and body. Ask for nothing but the divine, spiritual and supramental Truth, its realisation on earth and in you and in all who are called and chosen and the conditions needed for its creation and its victory over all opposing forces.

Let your sincerity and surrender be genuine and entire. When you give yourself, give completely, without demand, without condition, without reservation so that all in you shall belong to the Divine Mother and nothing be left to the ego or given to any other power.

The more complete your faith, sincerity and surrender, the more will grace and protection be with you. And when the grace and protection of the Divine Mother are with you, what is there that can touch you or whom need you fear? A little of it even will carry you through all difficulties, obstacles and dangers; surrounded by its full presence you can go securely on your way because it is hers, careless of all menace, unaffected by any hostility however powerful, whether from this world or from worlds invisible. Its touch can turn difficulties into opportunities, failure into success and weakness into unfaltering strength. For the grace of the Divine Mother is the sanction of the Supreme and now or tomorrow its effect is sure, a thing decreed, inevitable and irresistible.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Mother with Letters on the Mother, CWSA, Vol. 32, pp. 8-9)

‘BREAK EVERY LIMIT, SHATTER EVERY CHAIN...’

July 23, 1914

Lord, Thou art all-powerful: become the fighter, gain the victory. May Thy Love be the sovereign Master of our hearts and Thy Knowledge never leave our thoughts. . . . Do not abandon us to impotence and darkness; break every limit, shatter every chain, dispel every illusion.

Our aspiration rises to Thee in ardent prayer.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 209)



A CONVERSATION OF 19 APRIL 1951

This Yoga can only be done to the end by those who are in total earnest about it and ready to abolish their little human ego and its demands in order to find themselves in the Divine. It cannot be done in a spirit of levity or laxity; the work is too high and difficult, the adverse powers in the lower Nature too ready to take advantage of the least sanction or the smallest opening, the aspiration and tapasya needed too constant and intense. It cannot be done if there is a petulant self-assertion of the ideas of the human mind or wilful indulgence of the demands and instincts and pretensions of the lowest part of the being, commonly justified under the name of human nature.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga – IV, CWSA Vol. 31, pp. 154-55)¹

Everybody knows this; those who do not want to change their way of doing things or their way of being always say, “Oh! What do you expect, it is human nature.” This is what is called a “wilful indulgence”. That is to say, instead of becoming conscious that these are weaknesses and difficulties on the way, one justifies these things, saying, “Oh! It can’t be helped, it is human nature.” One wants to continue to do what one is doing, without changing, one is full of a wilful indulgence of one’s demands. For the lower nature of man always demands things; it says, “These are necessities, these are needs, I can’t do without them.” Then, the instincts — a sort of instinct for one’s own satisfaction — and pretensions: the lower being claims that it has a considerable importance and must be given what is necessary for it, otherwise it won’t be able to live; it asserts that it alone is important, and so on. It is all this which creates obstacles, all these obscure, ignorant movements, all these justifications of the old ways of being: those who fly into a temper and say, “What do you expect, it can’t be helped”, and everything one does saying, “Oh! It is human nature”, everything one justifies saying, “What can be done, people are like that, there is nothing to be done about it.” It is the old idea that we are born with a particular nature and must get adjusted to it, for we cannot change it.

So Sri Aurobindo tells us that if one cannot change the nature it is not worth the trouble of doing yoga, for yoga is done precisely in order to change the nature, otherwise it has no meaning.

When the little ego is abolished, can’t one “find oneself in the Divine” directly?

1. The quoted passage and the reference in CWM, were from an earlier edition. These have been replaced by the more recent CWSA edition. — MI Ed.

But one can find oneself in the Divine even before having completely abolished one's little ego, for, to abolish one's little ego is not a small matter!

But how is it to be done?

How is it to be done? How to abolish the ego? — First of all, you must want to do it, and there are very few people who want to. And that is exactly what they say, it is this justification of their way of being, “That is the way I am made, I can't do otherwise. And then, if I change this, if I change that or if I do without this thing or if I get rid of that other, I shall no longer exist!” And if one doesn't say this openly, one thinks it. And all these little desires, these little satisfactions, these little reactions, all these small ways of being, one clings to them, clings hard — one sticks to them, one doesn't want to let them go. I have seen hundreds of cases where someone's difficulty had been removed (with a particular power a certain difficulty had been removed), but after a few days he brought it back with enthusiasm. He said, “But without that I do not exist any longer!” I have known people who had been given mental silence almost spontaneously and who, after a day or two, came back frightened: “Have I become an idiot?” — for the mental machine was not working all the time. . . . You cannot imagine it, you don't know how very difficult it is to separate oneself from this little ego; how much it gets into the way though it is so small. It takes up so much room while being so microscopic. It is very difficult. One pushes it away in certain very obvious things; for example, if there is something good and someone rushes forward to make sure of having it first, even jostling his neighbour (this happens very frequently in ordinary life), then here one becomes quite aware that this is not very, very elegant, so one begins to suppress these crudities, one makes a big effort — and one becomes highly self-satisfied: “I am not selfish, I give what is good to others, I don't keep it for myself”, and one begins to get puffed up. And so one is filled with a moral egoism which is much worse than physical egoism, for it is conscious of its superiority. And then there are those who have left everything, given up everything, who have left their families, distributed their belongings, gone into solitude, who live an ascetic life, and who are terribly conscious of their superiority, who look down at poor humanity from the height of their spiritual grandeur — and they have, these people, such a formidable ego that unless it is broken into small bits, never, never will they see the Divine. So it is not such an easy task. It takes a lot of time. And I must tell you that even when the work is done, it must always be begun again.

Physically, we depend upon food to live — unfortunately. For with food, we daily and constantly take in a formidable amount of inconscience, of *tamas*, heaviness, stupidity. One can't do otherwise — unless constantly, without a break, we remain completely aware and, as soon as an element is introduced into our body, we immediately work upon it to extract from it only the light and reject all that may darken our consciousness. This is the origin and rational explanation of the religious

practice of consecrating one's food to God before taking it. When eating one aspires that this food may not be taken for the little human ego but as an offering to the divine consciousness within oneself. In all yogas, all religions, this is encouraged. This is the origin of that practice, of contacting the consciousness behind, precisely to diminish as much as possible the absorption of an inconscience which increases daily, constantly, without one's being aware of it.

Vitally, it is the same thing. You live vitally in the vital world with all the currents of vital force entering, going out, joining and opposing each other, quarrelling and intermingling in your consciousness, and even if you have made a personal effort to purify your vital consciousness, to master in it the desire-being and the little human ego, you are constantly under a sort of obligation to absorb all the contrary vibrations which come from those with whom you live. One can't shut oneself up in an ivory tower, it is yet more difficult vitally than physically, and one takes in all sorts of things; and unless one is constantly wide awake, constantly on one's guard, and has quite an efficient control over all that enters, so as not to admit in one's consciousness unwanted elements, one catches the constant contagion of all desires, all the lower movements, all the small obscure reactions, all the unwanted vibrations which come to us from those around us.

Mentally, it is still worse. The human mind is a public place open on all sides, and in this public place, things come, go, cross from all directions; and some settle there and these are not always the best. And there, to obtain control over that multitude is the most difficult of all controls. Try to control the thought coming into your mind, you will see. Simply, you will see to what a degree you have to be watchful, like a sentinel, with the eyes of the mind wide open, and then keep an extremely clear vision of the ideas which conform to your aspirations and those which do not. And you must police at every minute that public place where roads from all sides meet, so that all passers-by do not rush in. It is a big job. Then, don't forget that even if you make sincere efforts, it is not in a day, not in a month, not in a year that you will reach the end of all these difficulties. When one begins, one must begin with an unshakable patience. One must say, "Even if it takes fifty years, even if it takes a hundred years, even if it takes several lives, what I want to accomplish, I shall accomplish."

Once you have decided upon this, once you are quite conscious that it is so and that the goal is worth the trouble of a constant and sustained effort, you may begin. Otherwise, after a time you will fall flat; you will get discouraged, you will tell yourself, "Oh! It is very difficult — I do it and then it is undone, I do it again and it is once again undone, and then I do it again and it is perpetually undone. . . . Then what? When will I get there?" One must have plenty of patience. The work may be undone a hundred times, you will do it again a hundred and one times; it may be undone a thousand times, you will re-do it a thousand and one times, until finally it is no longer undone. And finally it is no longer undone.

Only, you see, if one were made all of a piece, it would be very easy, but one

is made of many pieces. Then, there is one piece which is ahead, which has worked hard, is very conscious, altogether awake, and when it is there, all goes well, one does not allow anything to enter, one is on one's guard, and then . . . one goes to sleep and the next day when one gets up it is another part which is there and one tells oneself, "But where then is all the work I had done? . . ." And one must begin all over again. Begin all over again until all the parts, one after another, enter the field of consciousness and each one can be changed. And when you reach your limit, there is a change, you have made progress — afterwards, you must make another, but still that one is made. But it is completely made only when all the pieces of the being are brought like that, one after another, to the front, and upon all without exception you have applied the consciousness, the light, the will and the goal, in such a way that everything changes.

This is not to discourage you, but to warn you. I do not want you to say afterwards, "Oh! If I had known it was so difficult, I would not have started." You must know that it is excessively difficult and begin with great firmness and continue to the end, even if the end is a very long way off — there are many things to do. Now, I may tell you that if you do it sincerely, with application and care, it is extremely interesting. Even those whose life is quite monotonous, without interest (there are, you know, poor people who have to do utterly uninteresting work and always the same thing, and always in the same conditions, and whose mind is not sufficiently awakened to be able to find an interest in anything whatever), even those people, if they begin to do this little work upon themselves, of control, of elimination, that is to say, if each element which comes with its ignorance, its unconsciousness, its egoism, is put before the will to change and one remains awake, compares, observes, studies and slowly acts, that becomes infinitely interesting, one makes marvellous and quite unexpected discoveries. One finds in oneself lots of small hidden folds, little things one had not seen at the beginning; one undertakes a sort of inner chase, goes hunting into small dark corners and tells oneself: "What, I was like that! This was there in me, I am harbouring this little thing!" — sometimes so sordid, so mean, so nasty. And once it has been discovered, how wonderful! One puts the light upon it and it disappears and you no longer have those reactions which made you so sad before, when you used to say, "Oh! I shall never get there." For instance, you take a very simple resolution (apparently very simple): "I shall never tell a lie again." And suddenly, without your knowing why or how, the lie springs up all by itself and you notice it after you have uttered it: "But this is not correct — what I have just said; it was something else I meant to say." So you search, search. . . . "How did it happen? How did I think like that and speak like that? Who spoke in me, who pushed me? . . ." You may give yourself quite a satisfactory explanation and say, "It came from outside" or "It was a moment of unconsciousness", and not think any longer about it. And the next time, it begins again. Instead of that, you search: "What can be the motive of one who tells lies? . . ." and you push — you push and all of a

sudden you discover in a little corner something which wants to justify itself, thrust itself forward or assert its own way of seeing (no matter what, there are a number of reasons), show itself a little different from what it is so that people may have a good opinion of you and think you someone very remarkable. . . . It was that which spoke in you — not your active consciousness, but what was there and pushed the consciousness from behind. When you were not quite on your guard, it made use of your mouth, your tongue, and then there you were! The lie came out. I am giving you this example — there are a million others. And it is extremely interesting. And to the extent one discovers this within oneself and says sincerely, “It must change”, one finds that one acquires a sort of inner clear-sightedness, one gradually becomes aware of what goes on in others, and instead of getting angry when they are not quite what one would like them to be, one begins to understand how things happen, how it is that one is “like this”, how reactions are produced. . . . Then, with the indulgence of knowledge, one smiles. One no longer judges severely, one offers the difficulty in oneself or in others, whatever may be its centre of manifestation, to the divine Consciousness, asking for its transformation.

[On June 8, 1966, at the time of the publication of this talk, Mother spoke about the same question in terms of her present experience which forms the basis of the “yoga of the body”.]

Precisely this is what I have been doing for the last two days. The last two days I have spent all my time seeing all this accumulation, oh! heaps of little sordid things which one lives constantly, very tiny sordid things. And so there is only one way — there is only one way, always the same: to offer.

It is almost as though this Supreme Consciousness were putting you in touch with things long forgotten, which belong to the past, which even are or were or seemed to be completely effaced, with which you no longer have any contact, all sorts of little circumstances, which yet are seen in the new consciousness, in their true place, and make such a poor, miserable, mean, sordid whole of the entire life, the entire general human life. And so, it is a luminous joy of offering all this for transformation, for transfiguration.

Now it has become the very movement of the cellular consciousness. All weaknesses, all responses to adverse suggestions (I mean the smallest things of every minute in the cells), are taken in the same movement of offering (and these come sometimes in waves, to such an extent that the body feels it will swoon before this assault), and then comes a light, so warm, so deep, so powerful, which puts everything back in order, in its place, and opens the way to transformation.

These periods are very difficult periods of the bodily life; one feels that there is now only one thing which decides, the Supreme Will. There is no longer any support — any support, from the support of habit to the support of knowledge and of will, all

the supports have vanished — there is only the Supreme.

(Silence)

Aspiration in the cellular consciousness for perfect sincerity of consecration.

And the lived experience — lived intensely — that it is only this absolute sincerity of consecration which allows existence.

The least pretension is an alliance with the forces of dissolution and of death.

Well, it is like a song of the cells — but they must not even have the insincerity of watching themselves do it — the song of the cells: “Thy Will, O Lord, Thy Will.”

And the great habit of depending upon the will of others, the consciousness of others, the reactions of others (of others and of all things), this kind of universal comedy which all play with all and everything plays to everything, ought to be replaced by an absolute, spontaneous sincerity of consecration.

It is evident that this perfection of sincerity is possible only in the most material part of the consciousness.

It is there that one can succeed in being, existing, doing, without watching oneself being, watching oneself existing, watching oneself doing, with an absolute sincerity.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1950-1951, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 4, pp. 331-39)



CORRESPONDENCE WITH DILIP KUMAR ROY

(Continued from the issue of April 2022)

Dilip,

Nobody sees Sri Aurobindo except the doctors and those who come for personal work and attendance. If you have heard to the contrary it is quite false, so you must put away from your mind the idea you built on it that Sri Aurobindo has no longer any love for you, nor allow these things or any sense of isolation from us created by them to make you go.

Your dream is also part of the same unreal building.

If you decide to go to A's place to get some relief, we have no objection.

We shall certainly welcome you back whenever you wish to come — the sooner the better.

Love and blessings

20 January 1939

*

To Dilip

With my best wishes for your birthday and my affectionate blessings

Love and blessings from Sri Aurobindo

22 January 1939

*

Dilip,

I have just read your three letters to Sri Aurobindo. He is glad to see that you are beginning to recover from this attack. He is very glad that you have seen how unfounded is the doubt of our love for you and that the ideas of death and suicide are not at all called for. We hope you will never allow this doubt and these ideas to take hold of your mind again.

As to the advice you ask for regarding the best course for you to take, the perception expressed in your third letter seems to us the best. To keep yourself occupied with music and writing is always good; for your nature finds there its inborn occupation and that helps to maintain the vital energy and keep the balance.

About sadhana I should like to ask you why not do sadhana through your music? Surely meditation is not the only way of doing sadhana. Through your music bhakti and aspiration can grow and prepare the nature for realisation.

If moments of meditation and concentration come of themselves then it is all right; but there is no need to force it.

I hope you will soon recover your full energy and poise and the clouds pass from you.

Be always sure of our love and help and blessings present with you.

23 January 1939

*

Dilip,

We quite agree to your going to A for a short time and you can go with our free consent and blessings.

24 January 1939

*

Dilip,

I read your letter to Sri Aurobindo and he has seen your poems. The translation of "The Soul" especially is fine.

We give our blessings to the poet and to A's wife and to S.

For M blessings are only possible when she has undergone a sincere repentance.

Love and blessings

9 February 1939

*

Dilip,

I was glad to read B's letter; it is beautiful as all his letters are. I have also received one letter from him today.

Certainly you can sing tomorrow and my love and blessings will be with you.

22 February 1939

*

Dilip,

Sri Aurobindo thinks that it is not possible for us to intervene by a wire in a political matter of this kind. At most you might write to him (S) your private opinion about the best course for him to take in these painful and difficult circumstances. With love and blessings

24 February 1939

*

Dilip,

It is only tomorrow (Monday) that I can read your letter to Sri Aurobindo and then we shall answer.

This is only to tell you that we will surely not ask you to go.

Our love and blessings

12 March 1939

*

Dilip,

We were very glad indeed to read your letter. We shall certainly give you all the help possible to carry out your resolution and the aspiration behind it. I feel sure that with an earnest and sustained effort you will conquer and effect the opening for which you have been striving and preparing so long.

Our blessings are with you in your aspiration and endeavour.

With our love

13 March 1939

*

Dilip,

Here is A's letter. Once more we assure you that we shall have no objection to your going to Hyderabad for a short time if you decide to do so.

Our love and blessings

18 March 1939

*

Dilip,

The Rs. 10 are quite welcomed . . .

Glad that your work is going on nicely.

Our love and blessings are with you.

2 April 1939

*

Dilip

The translation of Mirabai's song is good. The "with" is possible but perhaps "for" would be better.

Blessings are given for the two objects for which you ask them.

"It is strange" will do very well for the title.

You can, of course, come tomorrow after the meditation, for blessings.
With our love and blessings

27 April 1939

*

Dilip,

I have only this to say about the matter. From the point of view of the sadhana it is much more dangerous to go to Tiruvannamalai than to go to Sylhet for giving evidence . . .

Our love and blessings

P.S. You can show this letter to B.

10 November 1939

*

Dilip,

Our help and force are with you for the new year of your life.

I am sure that with persevering and sincere aspiration the barrier you feel and the internal difficulties will melt away.

With our love and blessings

P.S. Here are a few candies from France.

22 January 1940

*

Dilip,

What is this strange rumour about our stopping darshan? There is no truth at all in it. We have no intention of vanishing as we do not believe that it can bring in “peace and light” . . .

As for your sadhana you had developed a true bhakti and an opening of psychic perception. Keep that and it will bring you what is necessary. Meditation is difficult for you still because there is not yet a sufficient quietude in the mind substance. But that too can come in time.

Don't let these opposite things come in; keep your mental state bright and clear, which is the best condition for experience.

Our love and blessings

P.S. Sending back the papers with our force.

6 February 1940

*

Dilip,

I am quite ready to shower my grace on this A, but I do not consider it advisable for him that he should come here. I don't believe half-a-minute "darshan" can change these habits. We have had bitter experience about them already, that they resist even a psychic opening . . . He must first have the sincere will to change.

I intend to give an interview to C if he remains sufficiently long after the "Darshan".

Our love and blessings

16 February 1940

*

Dilip,

Our love and special blessings will be with you for the singing tonight and the "darshan" on the 24th.

22 April 1940

*

Dilip

I am not aware of being "better pleased" if you did not go to Madras for the records. I quite approve of your going.

For this S the difficulty is always the same, accommodation; if she can stay in the same room as R she can come.

For K there is no difficulty as he is going to stay in a hotel.

The poem is very good.

Don't worry about Hitler. No asuric force can stand eternally against the divine force and the hour of his defeat is bound to come.

With our love and blessings

27 May 1940

*

Dilip,

Yes, you can come this afternoon on the staircase at 5.45 for pranam and to sign the cheque.

I shall give you then some flowers for H and U.

I have felt all this time your loyalty and faithfulness and have deeply appreciated your feelings and your attitude.

Our love and blessings are always with you.

18 June 1940

*

Dilip,

You are sure to get back the poise, for the progress you have made remains and will come uppermost again.

In these days when lots of people come from outside, there is always some restlessness and disturbance brought into the atmosphere and some disturbance of the poise may easily take place — but it will come back.

Our force will be with you and our help and protection.

With our love and blessings

20 August 1940

*

Dilip,

Of course you can come up after meditation tonight for pranam and signing the cheque.

It is certainly not at all true that I don't care for the sadhaks and their sadhana. Why should the world conditions being bad make me cease to care! It would be rather a reason for insisting more on a quick spiritual realisation as the only way out of the impasse. You should not believe in what you hear from people; such constantly nasty and disturbing things are being said which are quite untrue. You are not so empty of the inner surrender as you now think. Cast away your doubts; you had a very long period without them which gives a certainty that you can get rid of them altogether.

All our help and force will be with you

And our love and blessings.

8 October 1940

*

Dilip,

I will speak to B about the repair of the cane chairs. There will be no difficulty.

Don't let yourself be worried by people and their ways. You may be sure that our love, blessings and help are always with you.

10 November 1940

*

Dilip,

We were very glad to read your letter of this morning and to hear of this fine experience — for there can be no finer experience than this state of true bhakti. It is a real and great progress that you have made.

As for Colonel P and his wife I gather that they have not as yet asked to come. It might be better to let the wish to come rise in them of itself.

3 January 1941

*

Dilip,

Your programme is all right. We will remember your prayer on your birthday. When you are informed of the time of your broadcast do not forget to let us know; we wish to listen to it here.

With our love and blessings

c. January 1941

*

Dilip,

With my best wishes for your birthday and my blessings

22 January 1941

*

Dilip,

Yes you can go after the “darshan” and we approve your programme and our blessings will go with you.

You can send our blessings to H.

Love and blessings

c. February 1941

*

Dilip,

We read your letter only today as yesterday there was too much hurry of the first.

I am sending the three flowers with blessings.

Glad to hear of your good experience in the dream as also of the experience of descent you had the other day. The inner being is evidently awake.

With our love and blessings

2 April 1941

*

Dilip,

Certainly you can come tonight after meditation.

I am sending a flower for U with the enclosed written blessings. As for the dream she must not rely upon that, as it is likely to be a mental formation. My force and help are with her but these wordings cannot be from me.

Who is this L? If it is B's wife I cannot send her a flower as it is sure to be misinterpreted. If it is the niece then also it is not prudent to send a flower as I don't want her to come here.

With our love and blessings

Until this evening!

Sri Aurobindo is keeping U's letter to read it.

8 April 1941

*

Dilip

Evidently this world is a bad one but change is its law and as it can hardly be worse than it is now, we may hope that it will soon become better. Old movements obstinately recur and make the sadhana difficult but you have made more progress than you allow yourself to believe and the attainment may be nearer than you think.

Our help is with you and our love and blessings.

I am sending four flowers with blessings.

8 May 1941

*

Dilip,

Yes, it was altogether right. This experience and the result it brought are a great step towards spiritual freedom. Every rejection of desire and attraction brings one nearer to the Divine.

With our love and blessings

18 May 1941

*

Dilip,

I am sending herewith the four flowers with blessings for S and his daughter, for H and for R.

Music follows the rule of all things on earth — unless they are turned to the Divine they cannot be divine.

With our love and blessings

25 May 1941

*

Dilip,

We do not think it is necessary for you to go to Calcutta for these records; it is much trouble and effort for what is now a very small return. If at any time you feel like going then you can certainly go with our full blessings.

Don't worry about the difficulty in the meditation. In the end you will come out of it with the consciousness of a spiritual progress made.

With our love and blessings

2 December 1941

*

Dilip,

You should make it a rule never to listen to this voice or accept the suggestions that come with it. It is clear from where it comes; it is a voice of untruth, the voice of the adversary which comes to almost everybody who follows the way of yoga, suggesting doubt and denial and incapacity and defeat. You must meet it always as you did this time. You should also reject such suggestions as those about your being a hindrance and going away for that reason; it comes from the same source and has no truth and indeed no substantial meaning that we can discover. Also you should not attach much value to what you hear — as “we want people to stand on their legs” and therefore cannot help. Certainly we want people to have strength and courage to go through, but we know that they need our support.

The special help you asked for in your other letter will be with you.

Our love and blessings

17 December 1941

*

Dilip,

Don't allow your mind to worry you too much about the difficulty of surrender, and don't conclude from it that your nature is unfit; surrender is always difficult for everybody, especially surrender of the mind. Keep a quiet will for it and it will come in time.

On the eve of your birthday let the blue light of hope always burn in your heart.

With our love and blessings

18 January 1942

*

To Dilip.

With love and special blessings on the occasion of his birthday.

“A few consecrate all of themselves and all they have — soul, life, work, wealth; these are the true children of God.”

To one of them.

22 January 1942

*

My dear child,

You can always be confident of our love and sympathy through everything and in all circumstances. Be sure that we understand fully your difficulties and your will to overcome. Your sincere effort is bound to prevail and, I hope, soon. Believe that when trouble does come our reaction will be sympathy and support and nothing else.

Our love and blessings

30 May 1942

*

My dear child,

I must say that I did not expect such a letter from you. I cannot make out what is the ground of your complaint. Is it because for the last week or so having a bad cold I was obliged to keep a little aloof in order not to pass it on to others? Is it because, very hard pressed by increasing work and equally increasing people, I have not been able to give as much time to each one as I used to before? But surely that does not mean that my love and care for each one has diminished or changed. Why do you make a personal case out of a state of things that applies equally to all? I have no intention of making you suffer at all and in fact I do not see *why* you suffer at all — for indeed there is no true basis for such a suffering.

Sincerely hope you will realise the childishness of your reaction and soon get once more in contact with my love and blessings that never fail you.

P.S. As for the work you can do as you feel, best remembering that when work is concerned no special likings or disliking for people must interfere in the accomplishment of one's duties.

1 June 1946

*

My dear child,

I see no good reason why you should leave this place which, after all, has been your home for such a long time . . . You speak of a “house-problem” but as I have no intention of giving your house to anybody else, I do not see how your departure can ease the problem. . . . As for helping you in all circumstances, of that you can be sure and it is only your receptivity that can put a limit to this help.

With my love and blessings

9 April 1947

*

Dilip,

Read carefully your letter and understand quite well your point. But I do not see how I can replace you so far as Indira is concerned. She needs *you* and you alone can give her the help she needs. Of course I am always with you and will still more be with you — of that you can be quite certain.

With my love and blessings for you and for her

P.S. I can add that I am quite sure you will always do the right thing in connection with her.

27 December 1950

*

My dear child

You must not be depressed or sad. You know that Sri Aurobindo has not left us and that he will be here tomorrow as usual.

With my love and blessings

20 February 1951

*

To Dilip with blessings

Let the divine Grace do the work through you and the work will be thoroughly done.

My love

16 March 1951

*

Dilip,

Sri Aurobindo has made our realisation independent from all world circumstances, and he always considered you as part of the realisation; so there is no true ground for depression.

I expect you to shake it off, with the help of my love and blessings.

28 April 1951

*

My dear child,

Here is what I have just heard from our Lord for you:

“No fears, no anxiety, no doubts, *I am here.*”

With my blessings

27 June 1951

(Concluded)

THE MOTHER

(New Correspondences of the Mother, pp. 212-26)



**“ELIXIR VITAE” —
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO**

Sri Aurobindo —

I have just finished writing these curious lines: they attempt to fuse symbols mystic with symbols magic, evoking the legend among the old alchemists that the discovery of the elixir vitae would be proved by the form of a vaguely luminous rose floating up in the mixture. Perhaps I have made a hotch-potch. May I, please, have your impression in full?

ELIXIR VITAE

The swift soliloquy of a waterfall —
The passionate wide communion of seas —
Twilight’s cool rain-blur heralding dark peace —
A lake’s half-audible wind-quiver — all
Sound-flows of earth, immense or delicate,
I merge in a bowl of dream and, hushful, wait
Perfumes of Spirit borne upon world-voice . . .

Glimmer, O Deep, a mystic petal-poise
Within my clouded crucible: O breath
Of God’s calm rapture rooted beyond death,
Love’s word that from the unknowable Silence came,
Upsurge in me: break through my hush thy flame,
O perfect Rose of the eternal Name!

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

I think it is successful. Certainly the language and rhythm are to the full. I don’t know whether the symbol you speak of comes out with perfect clearness, but I am inclined to think that the suggestion of it is sufficient.

18 February 1936

(Version from *The Secret Splendour* —
Collected Poems of K. D. Sethna [Amal Kiran], 1993, p. 492)

ELIXIR VITAE

The swift soliloquy of a waterfall —
 The passionate wide communion of seas —
 Twilight’s cool rain-blur heralding dark peace —
 A lake’s half-audible wind-quiver — all
 Sound-flows of earth, immense or delicate,
 I merge in a bowl of dream and, hushful, wait
 Perfumes of Spirit borne upon world-voice . . .

Glimmer, O Deep, a mystic petal-poise
 Within my clouded crucible: O breath
 Of God’s calm rapture rooted beyond death,
 Love’s word that from the unknowable Silence came,
 Upsurge in me: break through my hush your flame,
 O perfect Rose of the eternal Name!

AMAL KIRAN
 (K. D. SETHNA)

A TALK IN THE ASHRAM SCHOOL ON 26 JANUARY 1974*

Well, you will excuse me starting [*my talk*] sitting because, seeing here so many of my old students, I feel the atmosphere of a class. Well, when I entered this hall, I did not know whether I should speak in English or in French. But the Registrar has ordered me that I should speak in English and in French, and as I am still on the staff of the School, as I am still a teacher, I have to follow the instructions. And all the more, the Registrar has appealed to sentiments by saying that the Mother would have liked me to speak in French. So it is final. I will switch over to French.

In the programme Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's ideas about the independence of India have been pointed out to you. Well, regarding Sri Aurobindo's ideas and his political struggle, I don't have anything to say that you don't already know. All that has been published and several lectures have been delivered even here by persons much more competent than me. And my excellent friend, the late Rishabchand, has published the biography of Sri Aurobindo in the *Bulletin* where he has given all the details that you would like to know. So I will restrict myself to speaking on certain things concerning the Mother and her political ideas and her connection with political activities with regard to the independence of India. I have chosen this mainly because I think I would be able to tell you certain things that you do not know.

Coming to the spiritual and the political ideas of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, one can never separate Sri Aurobindo's political ideas from his spirituality. As far as Sri Aurobindo is concerned, do you know what Sri Aurobindo replied when someone spoke about democracy? Democracy means counting the heads, and it is the votes that matter in a democracy, and the vote of your Registrar and that of the last rickshawallah have the same value. These are things which Sri Aurobindo never approved. He always said that the State should be governed by people like Janaka with the advice of great Rishis — this was the spiritual conception of Sri Aurobindo. And as you know Mother and Sri Aurobindo were never divided on any idea, one has to consider that it was also Mother's idea. But in any case, both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had practical ideas on politics. And there perhaps, we can bring them down to our level, to the ordinary domain of politics as far as practical ideas are concerned. And here, when I am limiting myself to Mother, I will tell you about her political ideas, her ordinary political ideas like everyone else. With regard to her spiritual ideas, there are persons much more qualified than me to speak about them. I will tell you what she thought, from the most practical point of view.

* Except for the opening paragraph, the talk was in French. The 'programme' in the 2nd para refers to the previous speakers on the occasion of the Republic Day.

Before coming to India, all her connections were with the leaders of the young Socialist Party, which at that time, at the beginning of the century, was born in France. Socialism started in France towards 1906, and the great leader of the Socialist Party in France was Jean Jaurès who was killed by a revolver shot two days before the First War, in 1914. He was a great journalist — the general secretary of the Socialist Party who, in order to avert the War, was going round all the cities of France. He was trying to prevent the first War of 1914. And it was Jean Jaurès who started Socialism in France, and Mother before coming here was in contact with this group.

Jean Jaurès had with him at that time a young lieutenant called Léon Blum, who organised the Socialist Party in 1936 and formed a Socialist government in France. He was very young at that time, and it was this group of Jaurès that the Mother had the benefit of visiting frequently. So much so that when she arrived in India for the first time in 1914 (perhaps many people don't know about it), the first letter which announced her arrival in India was written by one of the leaders of the Socialist Party to a gentleman in Pondicherry called de Zir,¹ and de Zir's son still has the letter which announced the Mother's arrival. It is written in this letter that a certain person will come to India that year (because it was a letter of 1914), and there is a sentence which says, "Will you have the kindness to inform Sri Aurobindo about it?" And this person is de Zir. To know who Mr. de Zir is, it is sufficient to tell you that he is the proprietor of Madhav [Pandit]'s house. His son, the son of the old de Zir, who is at present the proprietor, whenever he has to renew the lease and get the rent increased, he tries to prove me with this letter the relation his father had with the Ashram and the Mother! All this to tell you that the Mother was fully associated with the Socialist group from the political point of view.

And de Zir himself was closely linked with the group in Bengal, for all the members from Chandernagore who came here until 1940 stayed with de Zir. De Zir was an important person here, a member of the Conseil Privé, but who was a revolutionary at heart and connected with all the leaders in Bengal. So the members of the Conseil Général in Chandernagore came and stayed with de Zir. And this tradition continued till 1940, and this tradition of staying with de Zir was broken when they had the good fortune in 1946 to stay in a house belonging to Mother. It was then that that they stopped frequenting de Zir. All this to say that de Zir was a politician, who on one side was respected by the French, and on the other side was very well regarded by all the revolutionaries of Bengal. And it is also to de Zir that a letter came earlier from Chandernagore announcing the arrival of Sri Aurobindo. All

1. De Zir Naidu was one of the five signatories who gave a "good conduct" certificate to Sri Aurobindo and his companions so that they could register themselves under the Aliens Act and continue to stay in Pondicherry. The names of the others are Rassendren, Le Beau, Shanker Chettiar and Murugesh Chettiar. The names of these five good men, writes Nolini Kanta Gupta in his *Reminiscences*, should be engraved in letters of gold for showing "truly remarkable courage and magnanimity" on this occasion. (K. R. Srinivas Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo, A Biography and a History*, 2006, p. 382; Nolini Kanta Gupta, *Reminiscences*, 1969, p. 55)

this to tell you about the kind of Socialism that was there in Mother's ideas.

Even today in India one talks a lot about Socialism. In 1955² the Congress at Avadi decided on "The Socialistic Pattern of Society". This changed in 1971³ when it became pure Socialism. But it was not at all Mother's Socialism. Mother's Socialism, even from a practical point of view, is entirely different. She had said one day that she could not believe in a person who kept his money in the bank and lived on its interest. She said that is what is called capitalism — living on the interest or even living on the wealth that the father has left his son. Mother said that for her capitalism means to profit from the wealth amassed by a parent and live on it or live on its interest. These were two things that she never approved. She used to say that for her in Socialism everyone should work for himself and money should not produce money. This is the advice Mother gave André when young André left her to join the military service, and this is the advice she repeated to people saying, "This is the advice I gave to my son. Do not try to accumulate money. Do not try to live on the wealth of your father. You have to work in order to live." And all this is not spiritual but altogether practical advice for the ordinary life as she thought.

Now why was she connected with the Socialist Party? Because in France during the colonial rule [*French empire*] . . . you know that in France from the 18th century there was what is called the colonial rule during which they had established many colonies which were under French imperialism. And this colonial rule was approved in France by the most liberal people! They thought during this period, in the 18th and even in the 19th century, that colonialism was an altogether normal regime, and no one condemned it in France. But at the beginning of the 20th century people started condemning colonial rule and they started to think; Jean Jaurès and his group thought that the colonies should get autonomy. One did not think of independence at that time. One did not speak of independence, but one spoke of a certain autonomy — the freedom of the colonies to manage their own finance, govern their country as they wanted under the French tutelage. This is what they thought in France at the beginning of the 20th century. This was a very liberal conception and it was only people with very broad minds who thought like that. That is why, among the political groups, it was with them that Mother was connected.

I cannot talk to you about Mother without mentioning Sri Aurobindo, because Mother does not exist without Sri Aurobindo just as Sri Aurobindo does not exist without Mother. So when she arrived in India, when she discussed spiritual matters with Sri Aurobindo, she said that Sri Aurobindo was preoccupied with the question

2. The Socialistic Pattern of Society was adopted as the objective of the Indian National Congress at its Avadi session on 21 January 1955. <https://inc.in/brief-history-of-congress/1945-1955>; Bipanchandra, *India After Independence*, p. 197)

3. Counouma is referring here to the socialistic policies adopted by Indira Gandhi in order to eradicate poverty in India which made her win the general elections with a clear majority in March 1971. <https://inc.in/brief-history-of-congress/1965-1975>

of the independence of India. Sri Aurobindo told her that, well, in his Yoga, there was this issue that troubled him — India was not yet free. And for him India had to be free not for its ordinary independence, but to bring the spiritual light to the world. A slave country cannot bring spiritual light, and so Sri Aurobindo was very much preoccupied with this question. You know what Mother replied to him in 1914 when she was here, “But what are you telling me? India is already independent!” Because, in her vision in 1914, India was already free on a plane other than the one we know. Practically, for the independence to come here it took from 1914 to 1947, it took 33 years more. But for Mother, India was already free in her vision, and she told this to Sri Aurobindo in 1914.

Sri Aurobindo at that time was so preoccupied with the question of the independence of his country that in 1914, 15, 16, till the end of the First War, till 1919, the leaders of India thought that Sri Aurobindo would return to take up politics again in India. But they thought it was the troubled times of the War, during which people cannot go out, that kept him here. And it was after 1919, after the War, when there was no arrest warrant, nothing against anybody and people were free, even after 1919 they saw that Sri Aurobindo stayed here for spirituality. Until that time everybody thought he would return to guide the independence movement, and the big leaders of India came several times to consult him. And it was after the War in 1919 and, especially after the Mother’s arrival in 1920, that the big leaders of India understood that they had to renounce forever meeting Sri Aurobindo again in the ordinary political field. He had his own interest, the spiritual field, where he had always contributed and, whether the world accepts it or not, we think he continued doing this work with his Yoga, but in another way. So much so that everybody thought till 1919 that the political centre was Sri Aurobindo here. So much so that (there was no Ashram at that time) the people of Pondicherry knew the Ashramites as Swadeshis — Swadeshi means nationalist. Now they take us for something else, but Pondicherry called all the members of the Ashram as Swadeshis. All this to say that for Pondicherry and for India, nationalism was represented by Sri Aurobindo.

Coming to the Mother’s activities when she arrived here, she immediately put herself in touch with the young revolutionaries here. Pondicherry and Chandernagore have a very important place in the history of the revolution in India, in the history of the independence movement of India. The young don’t know about it, but Pondicherry and Chandernagore played a very big role. The bombs and revolvers which killed the opponents in Bengal went from Chandernagore and here. The revolver that killed an Indian Collector in South India went from Pondicherry because there were a few old revolutionaries who had assembled in Pondicherry and Chandernagore. Among others, you would have surely heard about Savarkar who was abroad for a long time and was in the Hindu Mahasabha during his last years. He was a great revolutionary who along with others went to Europe, took refuge in Germany, England or France, and they worked from there. What did they learn? They learnt how to make bombs.

And these bombs had to be distributed in India, these revolvers and bombs. How could they do it? One had to make them pass through Pondicherry and Chandernagore, and so many of the revolutionaries were here. For example, the first deputy, the first lieutenant of Savarkar was V.V.S. Iyer, who arrived in Pondicherry. Savarkar had sent him here and it was from here that they prepared the bombs and sent them all over India for the revolutionary movements. And this affair of the revolvers and bombs stopped, I think, in 1920, 1925, and then it was the affair of the revolvers that came mainly from France, which came here to Pondicherry, and from Pondicherry they went all over India through Chandernagore and Bengal. So there were many revolutionaries in Chandernagore and Pondicherry, and this business of revolvers continued in India till 1935.

I remember one incident which I can tell you today, because there is no risk of my being arrested today. In 1935 some friends received a big box of revolvers from France. The sailors used to bring them in commercial ships. They brought them with other materials, with other luggage. And the revolvers that were destined for the revolutionaries in 1935 were delivered by chance to the Government pharmacy. At the Government pharmacy somebody opened the box, and the revolutionaries received medicines at their place. At the Government pharmacy they opened the box and said there were revolvers. Fortunately, the two persons, even the worker who opened the box and the clerk who was taking down the list, were nationalists in their heart, and they knew for whom the revolvers were destined. So they took the revolvers to their receiver and immediately took back the box of medicines. This is what I call the Grace, the Grace that some people have known before they met the Mother. If this Grace were not there, I would not have been here today speaking to you in this hall. I might have been perhaps in New Caledonia or what they call the West Indies, in the penitentiary colonies of France.

And all these revolutionaries were here, and Mother came close to these revolutionaries. In 1914 she went to Karaikal because she knew that there was a young group of revolutionaries in Karaikal who were committed to the independence of India, who did not sleep, did not eat, and thought only of the independence of India. She spent two days and one night at Karaikal in a native house under terrible conditions, where she spent one night without a mosquito net, but all the while talking to these young men. And these young men, she remembered them till 1965 — Mother spoke to me about these young men till 1965. And among these young men were the advocate Xavéry, Le Vaillant de Pajanour about whom Mother used to say, “He is indeed the valiant.” And there was another who was very young at the time when Mother came to know him. He was only 16 years old and Mother used to mention him as “The little Saint-Jean”. And all three formed a revolutionary nucleus in Karaikal. Mother met them, and Mother spoke to them all night telling them to form a group — she wanted to form the Socialist Party. And we had the occasion to meet this group later, after about 18, 20 years. We did politics together, and it was

this group that was with Mother. And in Pondicherry there were also a few young men who were absolutely for the independence of India, of whom later the main person was David, who often went to see Mother who saw him in 1914. And so these young men always formed a group supporting the independence and Mother was always in contact with them.

Her contact with this group, with these people, the revolutionaries, the politicians, continued for a long time, and most of them (I must say some of them), were attracted in the beginning to Sri Aurobindo mainly because of their admiration for the leaders of independence. Even later, among those who first settled down in the beginning with Sri Aurobindo (naturally there were those who came for sadhana), there were a few young men who in their hearts were more advanced in political ideas than Yogic ones. They all got refuge near the Mother who encouraged them in their ideas. She was very much for the independence of India. Someone who was totally devoted to her, . . . someone who is at present here, someone who had met Sri Aurobindo in 1907 at the Surat Congress, and this young man who had come close to Mother and Sri Aurobindo due to his patriotism, he asked Mother whom he loved, “Sometimes I ask myself this question. In spite of everything, you are French!” And so Mother replied to him, “That is the skin and colour, but I am Indian.” And that calmed him down, that calmed down everyone. She said, “I am Indian, my soul is Indian, my heart is Indian, my brain is Indian. What you see is the colour of the skin.” And all those who led a political life were satisfied. And when she came back in 1920 (she came for Yoga and Sri Aurobindo), her interaction with these young politicians continued.

Later there was a group in France which wanted to give some autonomy to India. But Pondicherry being French territory was under the domination of a certain European family⁴ which lived on Pondicherry and almost founded a dynasty for 25 years, about whom I can speak now — I would not have spoken about it six months back. Today I can speak because the last member of the family is no more. So this dynasty was dominating in Pondicherry. And so at that time the young man who represented India was David, who later got corrupt with power. But he was a nationalist at heart. All the strangers found shelter with David, he was always surrounded by secret agents, and Mother was always in contact with him. And this contact helped the politicians a lot because of Mother’s connections in France. When there was a difficulty, one could always address her and she sent a small letter to a friend in France, to a Socialist, and things got resolved.

And here, when the young men of Pondicherry tried to change the regime and

4. The Gaebelé family dominated Pondicherry politics from 1908 until its candidate Angoulvant was defeated in the Deputy elections of April 1928 by Jean Coponat who enjoyed the support of the Franco-Hindu party led by David and Sellane Naicker. (*Pondicherry Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, p. 243; Jacques Weber, *Pondichéry et les Comptoirs de l’Inde après Duplex*, pp. 330-31; see also declaration of results of the election in the *Journal Officiel* of 5 May 1928, p. 394)

establish a nationalist government, they said, “We cannot wage war with France. What we can do is to find a government that is favourable.” So during an election there arrived from France a young intellectual by the name of Coponat who wanted to be member of the French Assembly representing Pondicherry. He was a young man, educated, intelligent, but he was for the people, he was for the independence of India and was fighting against the imperialist family. He was a candidate in an election and the young revolutionaries of Pondicherry absolutely wanted Mother to meet Coponat and give him instructions. What could you do under a French regime, under an Indian regime, when the Ashram was always being watched? Secret agents were sitting at the gate of the Ashram and noting down our names every day in their diaries. One had to tell them, “Why are you noting down our names when we are coming every day?” And these secret agents were removed from the gates of the Ashram when Rajagopalachari formed the first government in Madras in 1937.

So Mother wanted to meet Coponat to give him political instructions. There were difficulties in meeting him. They found a way. Mother went to meet Coponat at the Lake. One evening Mother went on a drive to the Lake, and Coponat was there. Coponat’s secretary was the old Balasoubramaniam who died in 1954. But at that time he was a young, a very young advocate who was Coponat’s secretary. So Mother spoke about all her liberal ideas to Coponat. Mother told him what India wanted, what had to be done for India, and the young Balasoubramaniam, his secretary, was present during the conversation. And later on in 1946, when Balasoubramaniam became an important person, the president of the National Assembly and first advocate of Pondicherry, when he was taken to Mother, he asked her, “Do you remember meeting me at the Lake with Coponat?” Mother said, “Yes, I remember there was a young man. But I do not know that it was you.” Thus Mother had always this idea of politics and independence, and Coponat kept in touch with her. Unfortunately he was defeated in the elections,⁵ and he could not do anything for India.

But the youth continued the fight for independence and Mother was always a support for all those who had a liberal mind. Mother was always a support for all those who wanted the independence of their country, to such an extent that later on . . .

I will speak to you now of the arrival of Coponat and David in 1928. In 1934 and 1935, when a young group tried to overthrow David and form a new group of revolutionaries for the independence of India, Mother backed the new group.⁶ From 1934 to around 1953 when the new group was in politics, Mother always supported

5. There seems to be some confusion here because Jean Coponat did win the Deputy elections of April 1928 with the support of the Franco-Hindu party (see footnote 4). Counouma also mentions “the arrival of Coponat and David in 1928” in the very next paragraph, which shows that he knew about it. In which elections then was Coponat defeated? One can only speculate that Counouma was either referring to another election or that, despite winning the election for the French National Assembly, Coponat could not do much for Pondicherry.

6. The new party was the Mahajana Sabha led by Marie Savery, Dorairaj and Purushottama Reddiar. (Jacques Weber, *Pondichéry* . . . , pp. 335-36)

this new group, supported it so much that she even gave a place for the office of this political group, and this place is the house where Prapatti stays today. It was Mother who was paying the rent and it was Mother who chose all the paintings to decorate the place. And Mother kept track of these youngsters because she knew they were for the independence of India and she guided them, and the guidance continued till 1954.

And liberty, democracy and independence always go with the labour movement. Even the labour movement which was declared in Pondicherry from 1934, well, Mother always supported this labour movement. She fully supported it till 1942. In 1942 the labour movement was taken over by the Communists. Well, till 1942 Mother supported the labour movement, and there were some very important letters written by Mother on how the labour movement should be conceived, how the workers should be treated, and what should be done for their future. There were three very important letters which unfortunately were burnt one day (rather one night) when the one who had received the letters expected the police to visit his place. He did not want Mother's letters to fall into the hands of the police in a French regime, so the three letters were thrown into the fire because there was no one to protect them. And there Mother had explained all her views on the socialist labour movement and independence. It is a pity that these letters have been lost.

Mother had so much sympathy for the workers that in 1936 when there was a shooting in the mill⁷ . . . the workers were shot and the mills were closed, hundreds of workers had no work, and they were all weavers. A few thousands went to all the cities of India and 3 or 4 thousand workers of Pondicherry settled in Ahmedabad. There were a few hundred who remained in Pondicherry without any work, and so Mother organised the assistance for these workers. Mother said, "We will find something for them; they are weavers, let them continue their vocation and we will give them work," and Mother found work for a few of them. Golconde was not yet built, but Mother said, "Well, I have an idea. There are 54 rooms in Golconde, we need so many beds and mattresses, let the workers work with their hands and make the bedsheets and covers for the mattresses." And all this was ready before Golconde was built, and all this was Mother's help, it was Mother's direction. She made this symbolic gesture because she said, "Even if the mills are closed, the workers have to find some work, everyone has to do something." It was a symbolic gesture, and this concern for workers was always in her mind. Only when the Communists took over the movement in 1942 and it turned into something awful, well, she did not think of it anymore, because the workers also started giving her a lot of trouble, and the movement went entirely into the hands of the Communists. When it started, it was not like that.

7. An attempt to forcibly evict mill workers on strike led to the shooting of 12 workers in police firing. A labour representative was sent from France to tour the French colonies and submit a report on labour conditions, on the basis of which a new labour code was passed in French India in April 1937. (Ajit Neogy, *Decolonization of French India*, p. 6)

Her political interest and Sri Aurobindo's political interest for the young nationalists was such that Mother wanted absolutely that people who serve the nation should come to power. Many young men of Pondicherry would not have accepted power if Mother was not behind them, and this support was so much that one had a lot of difficulties at that time. The entire regime was French, all the officials were French, and one had to prepare a budget, a budget which was truly national. Nobody knew how to prepare it because the French were not collaborating, so Mother found something. Mother said, "Well, we will ask for Sri Aurobindo's help." And can you believe that Sri Aurobindo drew the broad lines of the budget of Pondicherry because the French did not want to collaborate!⁸ And at that time the budget was quite unequal because there was a group of officials who earned . . . a group of around 100 or perhaps 150 officials who earned as much as 2 or 3 thousand. So for the sake of justice, for democracy, for the national movement, the young men of Pondicherry had to be encouraged, the Indians had to be encouraged, and nobody had the courage to change the budget, to cut the payments of the French who earned enormously. Because at that time, a teacher in the European scale was getting 1,000 rupees whereas an Indian teacher with the same diploma but who was unfortunately in the Indian scale, got only 35 rupees. So one had to sacrifice the European budget and enhance the salaries of the Indians in order to have some parity, but nobody dared to do it. And if someone did it, it was with the support of the Mother. Mother said, "Now the Divine is behind you," and it succeeded and it remained thus — all this to tell you with what care she followed the nationalist movement. Without the support of the Mother, nobody would have thought of it, because all the Europeans, 150 European officials were against it. But then one had the courage that Sri Aurobindo was there to guide them and things would get resolved — all this to tell you what interest she had in nationalism.

As you know, even at that time Sri Aurobindo was not limited to one country. He had very broad conceptions, and the group that had Sri Aurobindo's protection was inspired by Sri Aurobindo and attempted at first a theory of double nationality. A pamphlet was drafted by these young nationalists on the subject of double nationality — it was something that is wonderful today. Why wonderful? Because the young men who wrote it are nowhere in it! It was entirely rewritten by Sri Aurobindo, and the theory of double nationality can be taken today as Sri Aurobindo's theory.⁹

8. The reduction of the salaries of the metropolitan cadre and the increase of the salaries of the Indian cadre was implemented by a decree dated 30 April 1948. (David Annoussamy, *L'intermède français en Inde*, pp. 143-45) The broad lines of the budget drawn by Sri Aurobindo himself must have been therefore around the same time.

9. The pamphlet which was entirely rewritten by Sri Aurobindo was published as the manifesto of the French India Socialist Party in June 1947. It proposed dual nationality for the people of Pondicherry – Indian and French. (CWSA, Vol. 36, pp. 481-91. To know its political background, read the article on it in the *Mother India* issues of May-July, 2020.)

And if France and India had accepted it, it would have been a first step towards internationalism — all this to tell you that Sri Aurobindo was not a stranger to any problem that concerned India. It was during this period, when we thought of double nationality, that Maurice Schumann came here, the great Maurice Schumann who later became very famous in foreign affairs. He came here to consult Sri Aurobindo on how to make this town a University Township, and if we had followed his advice, it would not have been a town belonging to so and so, but simply a University Township. What is even more curious is that Sri Aurobindo accepted to guide this University Township or rather this University from his chamber, and so it would have been a University with spiritual resources. Unfortunately events happened too fast and things could not be pursued further.

I am telling you all this to say that Mother was there in all the movements connected with India and the country, in the forefront, but not visible to others. All of you know, all of you here, the declaration that she made on the 15th of August 1954, about one or two months before the Merger.¹⁰ She said that she was Indian — she made this declaration of what she had felt in her heart since her childhood. It was not a declaration; it was an expression of what she was living from perhaps 50 years when she said that she was Indian. And after the Merger, you know, the march past¹¹ was in front of Mother India every day. You remember that Mother stood against the wall with the map behind her, and the map which was drawn by her is not what Sri Aurobindo described as “truncated India”; you remember the map — it is the great India. And it is not the great India from the point of view of only nationalism. What Mother wanted was this great India that is illumined by spiritual light and is the flaming torch in front of the world, the flame capable of transforming the entire world, because after all Mother and Sri Aurobindo came on earth for the transformation of the entire humanity.

P. COUNOUMA

(Transcribed and translated by Raman Reddy and Uttam Bharthare)

10. *CWM*, Volume 13, p. 43

11. The salute to the Mother by the members of the Ashram. She would stand in front of the Mother India map on the southern wall of the Playground.

“LIFE OF PREPARATION AT BARODA” — SRI AUROBINDO, THE PERFECT GENTLEMAN

(Part 25)

(Continued from the issue of April 2022)

Section 3: A QUIET AND HUMBLE DISPOSITION

While Sri Aurobindo was not a demonstrative person, he had a pleasant personality. Ill feelings like dislike, irritation, anger, grimness, sternness etc. were wholly non-existent in his nature. In a letter Sri Aurobindo charmingly explained his quiet and reserved temperament:

I do not know that I can say anything in defence of my unlovable marbleness — which is also unintentional, for I feel nothing like marble within me. But obviously I can lay no claims to the expansive charm and grace and lovability of a Gandhi or Tagore. For one thing I have never been able to establish a cheerful hail-fellow contact with the multitude, even when I was a public leader; I have been always reserved and silent except with the few with whom I was intimate or whom I could meet in private. But my reference to Nevinson and the Conference was only casual; I did not mean that I regard the Darshan as I would a political meeting or a public function. But all the same it is not in the nature of a private interview; I feel it is an occasion on which I am less a social person than a receptacle of a certain Power receiving those who come to me. I receive the sadhaks (not X or others) with a smile however unsatisfactory or invisible to you — but I suppose it becomes naturally a smile of the silence rather than a radiant substitute for cordial and bubbling laughter. . . .

All that I really wanted to say was that the inwardness and silence which you feel at the time of Darshan and dislike is not anything grim, stern, ferocious (Nrisinha) or even marble. It is absurd to describe it as such when there is nothing in me that has any correspondence with these epithets. What is there is a great quietude, wideness, light and universal or all-containing oneness. To speak of these things as if they were grim, stern, fierce and repellent or stiff and hard is to present not the fact of my nature but a caricature. I never heard before that peace was something grim, wideness repellent, light stern or fierce or oneness hard and stiff like marble. People have come from outside and felt these things, but they have felt not repelled but attracted. Even those who went out giddy with the onrush of light or fainted like Y, had no other wish but

to come back and they did not fly away in terror. Even casual visitors have sometimes felt a great peace and quiet in the atmosphere and wished that they could stay here. So even if the sadhaks feel only a terrifying grimness, I am entitled to suppose that my awareness of myself is not an isolated illusion of mine and to question whether grimness is my real character and a hard and cold greatness my fundamental nature.¹

At Baroda Sri Aurobindo had many acquaintances, several of whom visited him, but he had only a few intimate friends. Dinendra Kumar Roy states: “But the few friendships he had in Baroda had a sincerity that is rarely found in the world.”² Sri Aurobindo had a very interesting assortment of friends, most of whom were quite distinguished and accomplished. Let us explore some of these friendships that began from the Baroda period.

When Sri Aurobindo arrived in Baroda on 8 February, 1893, he met at the railway station, by some strange coincidence, a man whom he had known from his student days in England. His name was Bapubhai Mazumdar whom Sri Aurobindo described as his first friend in Baroda. Avantikaben, a great-granddaughter of Bapubhai Mazumdar, gives the following account:

Shri Bapubhai Mazumdar studied law in England and became a barrister. He knew Sri Aurobindo from his England days. He went to Baroda railway station for some work on 8th February and saw Sri Aurobindo alighting from the train. Surprised at his unexpected appearance, Shri Bapubhai asked Sri Aurobindo, “How is it that you are here in Baroda?” Sri Aurobindo informed him about his appointment in Baroda State service. Then Bapubhai asked him where he was going to be put up. Sri Aurobindo did not know where to go and there was no arrangement for his stay. He said so to Shri Bapubhai. Bapubhai invited him to his house and so Sri Aurobindo stayed for some days with Shri Bapubhai Mazumdar at his residence in Baroda till other arrangements were made for his stay.

Later Bapubhai’s son wrote to Sri Aurobindo . . . reminding him of his stay with his father at Baroda. Sri Aurobindo acknowledged remembering very well his stay at Bapubhai’s residence in Baroda and that Chandan Gauri, Bapubhai’s daughter, had taken very good care of him.³

Sometime around 1899 Bapubhai Mazumdar visited Baroda and stayed with Sri Aurobindo as a guest, although he had his meals elsewhere. Dinendra Kumar Roy recalls:

1. CWSA, Vol. 35, pp. 49-50.

2. Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1st Ed., 2006, p. 13 (Dinendra Kumar Roy, *Aurobindo Prasanga* – Translated from Bengali by Maurice Shukla).

3. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, January 2012, p. 19.

Handsome, witty and a good conversationalist, the man recounted to us many amusing stories. Even the serious-natured Aurobindo used to laugh loudly when he listened to Bapubhai’s stories! . . . His son was studying law in England. The father had come to Baroda to look into the possibility of a job in the Baroda State Service for his son when he returned from England. He wanted Aurobindo to pull strings for him.⁴

In one of the conversations with his attendants Sri Aurobindo asked A. B. Purani, “Do you know Bapubhai?” “I think I do. Once I saw him being stopped in the street by the police for breaking a traffic rule. He gave the policeman a long lecture in English, leaving the fellow flabbergasted,” he replied. Sri Aurobindo laughingly said: “That must be him. It is very characteristic of him. He was my first friend in Baroda. He took me to his house and I stayed there for some time. He was a nice man, but what people call volatile and mercurial.”⁵

In 1939 an attendant remarked that European women now go about in shorts without stockings; in response Sri Aurobindo narrated an amusing story:

At one time they used to cover the whole body except hands and face. I remember an incident in London. Bapubhai Mazumdar was coming down from the bathroom in his hotel with his feet bare. A lady who came out of her room suddenly saw him. She ran to the manager and complained that the gentleman was going about half naked in the hotel! The manager called Bapubhai and told him not to do so!⁶

Bapubhai Mazumdar was a disciple of Swami Brahmananda of Ganganath from whom Sri Aurobindo had taken blessings. When Sri Aurobindo wrote about Brahmananda’s longevity an excerpt read:

He never spoke of his age or of his past either except for an occasional almost accidental utterance. One of these was spoken to a disciple of his well known to me, a Baroda Sardar, Mazumdar . . . Mazumdar learned that he was suffering from a bad tooth and brought him a bottle of Floriline, a toothwash then much in vogue. The Yogi refused saying, “I never use medicines. My one medicine is Narmada water. . . .”⁷

After Sri Aurobindo relocated to Calcutta he visited Baroda in January 1908. As he had no warm clothing, Bapubhai gave Sri Aurobindo a pashmina shawl to

4. Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1st Ed., 2006, pp. 26-27.

5. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 204.

6. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 264.

7. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, p. 15.

protect him from the freezing Baroda winter. On the same visit Sri Aurobindo notes: “. . . it was on the top storey of his house by the way that I sat with Lele in Jan. 1908 and had a decisive experience of liberation and Nirvana.”⁸

In 1940 Sri Aurobindo mentioned two of his closest friends in Baroda. “One was Deshpande who was very intimate: he is dead. Madhavrao is another: he is also dead,” he said.⁹ Both, like Sri Aurobindo, were staunch Nationalists and shared with Sri Aurobindo a fiery ardour to secure India’s independence.

Lieutenant Madhavrao Jadhav was the younger brother of Keshavrao Jadhav, in whose house Sri Aurobindo lived for the major part of his Baroda stay. He trained at a military school in England and then joined the Baroda State army. Sri Aurobindo notes:

The most intimate friend at Baroda was Khaserao’s brother, Lieutenant Madhavrao Jadhav who was associated with him in his political ideas and projects and helped him whenever possible in his political work. He lived with M. in his house most of the time he was at Baroda.¹⁰

The aforesaid house belonged to Madhavrao’s elder brother, Khaserao Jadhav where Madhavrao also stayed. Lieutenant Madhavrao’s son, Govindrao M. Jadhav, writes: “Sri Aurobindo lived with my uncle Khaserao Jadhav and my father Madhavrao Jadhav at Baroda in Khaserao Jadhav’s bungalow.”¹¹ Govindrao had many happy memories of Sri Aurobindo and recalled that he was very kind to the Jadhav brothers’ children and they affectionately called him Uncle Aravinda. Govindrao was fascinated with the myriad range of subjects that were discussed between Sri Aurobindo, his father and his uncle during lunch and dinner.¹² It was on Sri Aurobindo’s recommendation that both Khaserao and Madhavrao decided to send Govindrao to Manchester Grammar School where Benoybhusan and Manmohan had studied in the early 1880s.¹³

About Sri Aurobindo’s relations with the Jadhav family, Dinendra Kumar Roy notes:

He had become very close to the Jadhav family of Baroda. Srijut Khaserao Jadhav, graduate of an Agricultural College in England, a close friend of the Maharaja and Suba or Magistrate of Baroda, looked on Sri Aurobindo as a brother.¹⁴

8. *Ibid.*

9. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, p. 453.

10. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, pp. 38-39.

11. Reminiscences of Govindrao M. Jadhav dated 17 December 1980; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1st Ed., 2006, p. 13.

The Jadhavs were a noble and cultured family, loyal to the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad. There were three brothers. The eldest Jadhav brother was a Police Commissioner somewhere in the Baroda State. The middle, Khaserao Jadhav, was about the same age as the Maharaja, and a distant relation of his. At Baroda State he first served as a District Collector and then was posted to Baroda as Revenue Commissioner. For a while he looked after the education of the Maharaja’s grandson. In a letter to Mrinalini Devi, Sri Aurobindo writes: “. . . Khaserao & others whose social position is so strong that they may do almost anything they like.”¹⁵ The Gaekwad got a two-storey red brick house built especially for Khaserao.¹⁶ On completion of the house in 1896, Madhavrao and his family moved in — Khaserao was then serving in another district. Sri Aurobindo lived at his mansion — fittingly converted in 1971 into Sri Aurobindo Nivas — for a large part of his 13-year-stay in Baroda. Sri Aurobindo had a room on the first floor, and the big hall there served as his study. It was in this house that Sri Aurobindo, then on a visit to Baroda in 1908, first met Lele and conversed with him for half an hour.

Sri Aurobindo has noted that he “made the acquaintance of Khaserao two or three years after reaching Baroda.”¹⁷ Sri Aurobindo was about eight years younger to Khaserao but unlike his closeness to Madhavrao, he “was not so intimate” with Khaserao.¹⁸ Yet, Khaserao was close enough to visit Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry in 1916.¹⁹

Khaserao’s eldest son, Anandrao Jadhav, was a guest at the family house of Sri Aurobindo’s relatives at Deoghar in 1902. After they returned to Baroda Sri Aurobindo comically describes Anandrao’s travails to his uncle Jogendranath Bose:

I suppose you have got Anandrao’s letter; you ought to value it, for the time he took to write it is, I believe, unequalled in the history of epistolary creation. The writing of it occupied three weeks, fair-copying it another fortnight, writing the address seven days and posting it three days more. You will see from it that there is no need to be anxious about his stomach: it righted itself the moment he got into the train at Deoghur Station. In fact he was quite lively and warlike on the way home. At Jabalpur we were unwise enough not to spread out our bedding on the seats and when we got in again, some upcountry scoundrels had boned Anandrao’s berth. After some heated discussion I occupied half of it and put Anandrao on mine. Some Mahomedans, quite inoffensive people, sat at the edge of this, but Anandrao chose to confound them with the intruders and declared war on them. The style of war he adopted was a most characteristically

15. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 146.

16. See Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, p. 51.

17. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 37.

18. See Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 453.

19. See K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, p. 411.

Maratha style. He pretended to go to sleep and began kicking the Mahomedans, in his “sleep” of course, having specially gone to bed with his boots on for the purpose. I had at last to call him off and put him on my half-berth. Here, his legs being the other way, he could not kick; so he spent the night butting the upcountryman with his head; next day he boasted triumphantly to me that he had conquered a foot and half of territory from the intruder by his brilliant plan of campaign. When the Boers rise once more against England, I think we shall have to send them Anandrao as an useful assistant to Generals Botha and Delarey.²⁰

In October 1905 Sri Aurobindo writes to Mrinalini Devi of the robustious nature of Anandrao: “The other day I went to Khaserao’s. Anandrao has grown quite tall. He is going to be a big swindler,”²¹ and in June 1912 Sri Aurobindo wrote to Anandrao from Pondicherry asking for some financial assistance to “tide over the next month or two.”²²

Sometime in 1898 Sri Aurobindo, returning from his puja vacations in Deoghar, brought Dinendra Kumar Roy with him. Lt. Madhavrao was waiting at the railway station to take them to Khaserao Jadhav’s mansion. Sri Aurobindo boarded Madhavrao’s carriage and Roy followed in another carriage.²³ Dinendra Kumar Roy writes:

When we went to Baroda we stayed at first for a short time in Khaserao-saheb’s house. This was a large, red, double-storied mansion on the main road. It was quite beautiful. Rao-saheb’s family was not staying there at the time. He had been posted as the magistrate of Kadi or Amreli district of the Baroda state. His family lived there too. When he came back to Baroda as magistrate, we left that house and went to another locality where we stayed in a *waada* that belonged to a Muslim.²⁴

Around 1899 the plague broke out causing Sri Aurobindo and Dinendra Kumar Roy to shift to the outskirts of the town. It was due to Madhavrao’s influence that they not only got a bungalow there but also had to pay no rent. Even at this far-flung place Madhavrao visited Sri Aurobindo at least once a day.²⁵ Dinendra Kumar Roy notes:

20. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, pp. 143-44.

21. *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva, 1st Ed., p. 66.

22. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 174.

23. See Manoj Das, *Sri Aurobindo – Life and Times of the Mahayogi*, 1st Ed., 2020, p. 104.

24. Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1st Ed., 2006, pp. 13-14.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

Khaserao’s younger brother Lieutenant Madhavrao Jadhav was Aurobindo’s most intimate friend. Generally they spoke to one another in English; sometimes they also used Marathi. Aurobindo could understand Marathi quite well, though he could not speak it well.²⁶

In late 1901, Barin came to Baroda to stay with Sri Aurobindo at Khaserao’s house where Mrinalini Devi and Sarojini were already staying. He writes: “By and by I met the Jadhav brothers in the dining room. ‘Well, young man!’ and with such other European greetings. Khaserao heartily patted me on the back and welcomed me. Madhavrao, a lieutenant in the army, was dark; with his calm grace and quick smile, he became my friend at first sight.”²⁷ Madhavrao later gifted Barin a small sporting rifle and a breech-loading gun which he used for his day-long expeditions for hunting wild fowl.²⁸

Sri Aurobindo and Madhavrao were of the same age, and though Sri Aurobindo had a sober temperament, his solemnity would vanish completely when they talked together. In the right company Sri Aurobindo would be very cheerful and his conversations would be interspersed with humour. At all the houses Sri Aurobindo stayed at Baroda, Madhavrao visited him regularly, sometimes even in his army uniform. Their discussions would be endless, mingled intermittently with roars of laughter. Once after hearing their loud laughter, Dinendra Kumar Roy told Sri Aurobindo, “Both of you are dreadfully serious in nature as such, but the spectacular display of your laughter leaves me astounded.”²⁹ Madhavrao had nicknamed Dinendra Kumar Roy, ‘Novelist’.³⁰

Madhavrao accompanied Sri Aurobindo on several excursions undertaken by the Baroda State staff. He held Sri Aurobindo in high regard and lent a helping hand whenever needed. Sri Aurobindo once narrated:

Once in Baroda I had a nasty abscess on the knee. All treatment failed. Then Madhavrao Jadhav called in a Mohammedan who pricked the knee at a particular point and brought out a big drop of black blood and the abscess was cured soon afterwards! He must have known the spot to prick.³¹

Madhavrao also helped Sri Aurobindo get Jatindranath Banerji admitted into the Baroda State army. Dinendra Kumar Roy writes:

26. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

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

28. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

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

30. Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1st Ed., 2006, p. 33.

31. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 131.

Aurobindo was impressed by Jatindranath’s courage, ardour and ambition and he earnestly hoped that he would succeed in entering the army. To get around the fact that Bengalis could not enter the army, Jatindranath concealed his Bengali-ness, dressed up like an eastern Brahmin, dropped the “Bandyo” from “Bandyopadhyaya,” making it “Upadhyaya”, and presented himself before Aurobindo’s friend, Lieutenant Madhavrao Jadhav. He asked Madhavrao to enlist him as an ordinary foot soldier. Aurobindo commented that in an independent country if Jatindranath had been given the chance to join the army he would have distinguished himself for his heroism in due time.³²

Despite the covert nature of Jatindranath’s activities in Baroda the bureaucracy was aware of his association with Sri Aurobindo. An extract from a confidential report of the provincial Home department compiled mostly from intelligence reports and court records reads:

Swami Vivekananda, the revivalist of Vedantism and the founder of Rama-krishna Mission, died in 1902 at Belur near Calcutta. Apparently before that date Arabinda Ghose had attempted to influence the political life of Bengal. From Baroda he had sent Jatindranath Banerji, a soldier in Gaekwar’s army, and later, his brother Barindra Kumar Ghose to preach the cause of freedom in Bengal. They approached Babu Surendra Nath Banerji, some members of the Tagore family, Swami Vivekananda, Miss Saralabala Ghosal, Messrs P. Mitter, C. R. Das, Bijay Chatterji and many other barristers. It is not very clear what was the effect of this early propaganda, but it seems that about that time many small and independent samitis sprang up in the moffusil and in Calcutta which, though not ostensibly revolutionary, had for their ultimate aims freedom and independence and the subversion of the British Government. The samitis seem principally to take the *akharas* for physical culture. At the beginning of 1902 three distinct *akharas* existed in Calcutta respectively associated with the names of Jatindra Banerji, P. Mitter and Saralabala Ghosal. The second of these was later known as the Calcutta Anusilan Samiti and P. Mitter was its President and Satish Chandra Basu its Secretary.³³

Sri Aurobindo has remarked that “Madhavrao and I had revolutionary ideas. At that time we wanted to bring about an armed rebellion to drive out the British. It is good that someone raises a voice like that when efforts are being made to make non-violence a method of solving all problems.”³⁴

32. Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1st Ed., 2006, p. 53.

33. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, June 2013, p. 485.

34. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 637.

An I.C.S. examinations batchmate of Sri Aurobindo named Govind Dinanath Madgavkar, who studied at Balliol College, Oxford, possibly got some of his revolutionary zeal from the many speeches delivered by Sri Aurobindo at the Indian Majlis, Cambridge where he was a member and one-time secretary. Madgavkar became a judge of the Bombay High Court and later its acting Chief Justice. In December 1902, he put up for a time at the Taj Mahal Hotel where his room was the venue for a meeting of the secret society. Sri Aurobindo and Barin attended that meeting. Among other resolutions, a decision was taken to send Madhavrao to Japan for military training. The judge gave a thousand rupees and Sri Aurobindo regularly sent remittances for Madhavrao's expenses. Sri Aurobindo's effort in assisting the military training of Madhavrao and Jatindranath was one, amongst many, of his innumerable actions in his endeavour to secure India's independence.³⁵

Barin arrived in Baroda sometime in late 1901. He mentions: “Madhavrao Jadhav, Khaserao's younger brother, a lieutenant in the army, was just then getting ready to go to Japan for his military education.”³⁶

In an October 1905 letter to Mrinalini Devi, Sri Aurobindo states: “Madhavrao has been sent abroad for some special work. Much money has to be given for the Swadeshi movement . . .”³⁷ In fact, Sri Aurobindo, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and others raised some money and sent Madhavrao to England in July 1905 for military training. After a brief stay in London with Tilak's friend Shyamji Krishnavarma, the radical editor of *The Indian Sociologist*, Madhavrao got himself enrolled in the Swiss military academy in Bern. He passed the officers' examination at the end of 1906 and then spent a year studying the organisation and observing the manoeuvres of the Swiss army.³⁸

Govindrao M. Jadhav recalls Sri Aurobindo's deep concern and commitment in securing India's freedom:

My father, Madhavrao, and Sri Aurobindo used to talk about military education, naval education, defence problems, revolution. One morning, I think it was in 1905, during the partition of Bengal, Sri Aurobindo called me: “Govindrao, come here. I have to tell you something important.” As a rule Sri Aurobindo used to call me, Govind, when he said Govindrao I knew at once something serious was in store for me. He made me sit near him and began to talk about the defence of India. “Do you know where Ranchi is?” I answered it was in Bihar. “Ranchi is a good place for a military school. Do you promise

35. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, March 2013, pp. 227-28.

36. *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva, 1st Ed., p. 11.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

38. https://wiki.auroville.org.in/w/index.php?title=Madhavrao_Jadhav/13.1.2022

to study military problems and establish a military school at Ranchi?” I said I would do my best.³⁹

Sri Aurobindo and both his Baroda friends, Madhavrao and Deshpande, strongly disapproved of the submissive policies of the Congress Moderate leaders. Sri Aurobindo told his attendants:

When I came to Baroda from England I found out what the Congress was at that time and formed a contempt for it. Then I came in touch with Deshpande, Tilak, Madhavrao and others. . . .

Along with Tilak, Madhavrao, Deshmukh and Joshi (who became a moderate later), we were planning to work on more extreme lines than the Congress. We brought Jatin Banerji from Bengal and put him in the Baroda army. Our idea was to drive Moderates from the Congress and capture it.⁴⁰

In early 1905, Sri Aurobindo, Deshpande and Madhavrao Jadhav, visited Chandod — a pilgrimage town on the banks of Narmada — and then continued, a few miles away, to Swami Brahmananda’s Ashram at Ganganath where they discussed some spiritual matters with the late Swami’s disciple. After the trip both Sri Aurobindo and Deshpande started living a life of austerity. Of this time Rajaram Patkar writes:

I always found him alone in his own room in a contemplative mood or closeted with his friends Deshpande and Jadhav. One evening I saw Barindra going with the planchette into the room where all the three used to meet. Successively for three days they met in that very room, along with Barindra with the planchette. On the fourth day I met Barindra and asked him what all of them were doing. Without the least hesitation he told me that a message from the Goddess has been received with detailed directions, which after being put in a readable form will be printed and published in the form of a book. The book was out in a few days under the title of “Bhawani Mandir”, or The Message of the Goddess. It was for private circulation only.⁴¹

Sometime in 1905-06 Sri Aurobindo initiated Deshpande and Madhavrao in the Omkar Mantra, which they practised assiduously.⁴² That Deshpande and Madhavrao were close to Sri Aurobindo can also be discerned in a letter written to a certain Bhuban Babu from Nainital in June 1901, just after his marriage:

39. Reminiscences of Govindrao M. Jadhav dated 17 December 1980; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

40. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, pp. 568-69.

41. See A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 65.

42. See Charu Chandra Dutt, ‘My Friend and my Master’, *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, Eighth Number, 1952, p. 125.

I shall probably be going separately & may also reach on the 1st of July. If you like, you might go there a little before & put up with Deshpande. I have asked Madhavrao to get my new house furnished, but I don't know what he is doing in that direction.⁴³

Sri Aurobindo knew Keshav Ganesh Deshpande from his Cambridge days where they were members of the Indian Majlis and planned for revolution in their motherland. In *The Harmony of Virtue*, which he wrote while at Cambridge, Sri Aurobindo apparently named his chief character, Keshav Ganesh, after his university friend.⁴⁴ Sri Aurobindo's public activity began in 1893, soon after he returned to India when, at the request of K. G. Deshpande, he wrote articles in the *Indu Prakash* denouncing the servile and effete Congress policy. As the editor, Deshpande gave a glowing introduction to this then relatively unknown intrepid 21-year-old writer who could inspire and stir the soul of the nation. Writes K. G. Deshpande on the commencement of the series 'New Lamps for Old':

We promised our readers some time back a series on our present political progress by an extremely able and keen observer of the present times. . . . We have been long convinced that our efforts in political progress are not sustained, but are lacking in vigour. Hypocrisy has been the besetting sin of our political agitation. Oblique vision is the fashion. True, matter of fact, honest criticism is very badly needed. Our institutions have no strong foundation and are in hourly danger of falling down. . . . The questions at issue are momentous. It is the making or unmaking of a nation. We have, therefore secured a gentleman of great literary talents, of liberal culture and of considerable English experience, well-versed in the art of writing and willing, at great personal inconvenience and probable misrepresentation, to give out his views in no uncertain voice, and, . . . in a style and diction peculiarly his own. We . . . assure them [our readers] that they will find in those articles matter that will set them thinking and steel their patriotic souls.⁴⁵

Regarding his blistering attack on the Congress leaders in the *Indu Prakash*, Sri Aurobindo told his attendants:

Deshpande got me to write a series in the *Indu Prakash*. There I strongly criticised the Congress for its moderate policy. The articles were so fiery that M. G. Ranade, the great Maharashtrian leader, asked the proprietor of the paper (through Deshpande) not to allow such seditious things to appear in the paper,

43. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 153.

44. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 765 (editorial note).

45. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, p. 56.

otherwise he might be arrested and imprisoned. Deshpande approached me with the news and requested me to write something less violent. I then began to write about the philosophy of politics, leaving aside the practical part of politics. But I soon got disgusted with it.⁴⁶

Later, in 1898, Deshpande joined the Baroda State Service where Sri Aurobindo was already serving. Deshpande's young brother-in-law, Rajaram Patkar, occasionally assisted Sri Aurobindo in the house and later became his student. On several occasions Deshpande accompanied Sri Aurobindo or they travelled together. N. K. Dikshit, a student of Baroda College, mentions, “Mr. Arvind Ghose used to grace the Debating Society's meetings with his presence. Once or twice he was accompanied by Mr. K. G. Deshpande, B.A., Bar-at-law.”⁴⁷ When Sri Aurobindo was queried about a visit to Narmada he replied, “Visited, probably with Deshpande, one or two places on the banks of the Narmada”.⁴⁸ In early 1905, Sri Aurobindo, with his friends Deshpande and Madhavrao Jadhav, visited Chandod and the nearby Swami Brahmananda's Ashram at Ganganath. In June 1906, Sri Aurobindo and Deshpande visited Chandod and Ganganath for the last time and met Swami Brahmananda's successor, Swami Keshavananda. At Ganganath they also inspected Deshpande's new national school called “Bharati Vidyalaya”. Run by Swami Rakshananda, the boys in the school received spiritual as well as secular education; in addition there was stress on physical training like marching and attack-and-defence with bamboo sticks etc., all supervised by a retired Havildar.⁴⁹

Deshpande was a strong-minded person. Although interested in Yoga he treated “bowl in hand” Sannyasis with contempt. Sri Aurobindo told his attendants: “I remember when Deshpande returned from England some Sannyasis came to him. He drove them away, asking why able-bodied people should go about from door to door.”⁵⁰ Another interesting incident concerning Deshpande was narrated by Sri Aurobindo: “I remember once going to a station to see Deshpande off. In his carriage there were many Englishmen. He told us afterwards that as soon as he sat down, the Englishmen said, ‘We will beat you if you don't get out.’ He replied, ‘Come and try.’ And they didn't dare.”⁵¹

Sri Aurobindo and Deshpande were both interested in Yoga. Deshpande was doing Hatha Yoga and because of his proselytising tendency tried, rather unsuccessfully, to convince Sri Aurobindo to follow his path. Sri Aurobindo did not want to

46. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, pp. 568-69.

47. Sujata Nahar, *Mother's Chronicles*, Book V, p. 209.

48. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 108.

49. See K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, pp. 193-94; See A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, pp. 86-87.

50. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 2, 2013, p. 930.

51. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 121.

withdraw from life and instead sought yogic power to liberate his country. Rajaram N. Patkar observed that Sri Aurobindo’s yogic and patriotic propensities deepened in the year 1905. He writes:

Aravind Babu thought of nothing else than Mother India. This thought was uppermost in his mind. With the exception of few hours spent in his office work, he used to spend most of his spare time in meditation and prayers. He had given up his extensive reading of yore. He used to get up early in the morning and after having his bath, performed his worship of the Mata (Goddess) which took nearly three hours in the morning. When he came out of the worship room, his expression was very serene and thoughtful. In the evening when he returned from office, he used to meet very few people, and the only persons with whom he had a free talk were his old friends Messrs Deshpande and Jadhav, with whom he was seen often closeted for an hour or two in the evening. He did not take any cooked food in the evening but he used to take a couple of fruits, mostly plantains and a cup of milk. This kind of austere life which he had started almost from the beginning of the year (1905), continued right up to the day he left Baroda. One evening when he met as usual Mr. Deshpande in his room, he said: “Brother, do you know that Mata appeared before me in the worship-room this morning when I was in a trance, and said to me, ‘Be ready for the service of your country — there will be a big upheaval in Bengal shortly and therein you will have to play your part’ — she then disappeared. It appears something is brewing in Bengal and we will hear about it in a short time.” Mr. Deshpande stood amazed at what he heard.⁵²

On 5 September, 1906, Deshpande wrote to Sri Aurobindo at Calcutta about his political activity: “I shall be able to push on with the movement in the Baroda Territory for certain. I have found two good workers in Godhra.” In the letter, Deshpande addresses Sri Aurobindo not by his first name but as “My dear Ghose”.⁵³ Nolini Kanta Gupta states that at Bengal too Sri Aurobindo was addressed as Mr. Ghose.⁵⁴

After Sri Aurobindo retired from politics the British authorities wrote a “secret Internal” communication on Sri Aurobindo to the Secretary of State for India, Marquess of Crewe, where K. G. Deshpande prominently features along with the aforementioned school:

In 1902 (sic), Arabinda Ghose entered the Gaekwar’s service, for a time acted as His Highness’ Private Secretary (sic) and, subsequently, held an appointment

52. Reminiscences of Rajaram N. Patkar dated 30 September 1956; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

53. *Sri Aurobindo: His Political Life and Activities*, compiled and edited by Anurag Banerjee, p. 245.

54. See Nolini Kanta Gupta, *Reminiscences*, 1st Ed., 2015, p. 19.

as the Vice-Principal of the Baroda College, where his lectures on political subjects led eventually to his leaving Baroda (sic). There can be no question but that his employment in the State gave a great impetus to the anti-British movement. Several Baroda State officials were his close friends, notably one K. G. Deshpande, Assistant to the Sar-Subha of Baroda, who was the prime instigator of a movement to establish national schools. There is ample evidence that the teaching of one of these schools which was originally established at Ganganath on the borders of Baroda and British India and later removed to Baroda, is nationalist and anti-British in character, and that it is closely associated with the extremist party.⁵⁵

Sometime in 1911 the British government believed that K. G. Deshpande and Khaserao Jadhav were doing anti-British activities. Since they were known to be particularly friendly with Sri Aurobindo this was held as further incontrovertible proof. Finally the Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge, gave the Maharaja an ultimatum to dismiss them from service. Since both were senior officers and personally known to the Maharaja, he was in an unpleasant dilemma. Perforce, he transferred Deshpande from administrative to judicial duties. Deshpande, an upright officer, took offence that this transfer could be perceived as his unfitness to hold executive responsibilities. He promptly submitted his resignation thus unshackling the Maharaja from his predicament with the British authorities. As a goodwill gesture, the Maharaja, in recognition of Deshpande's uprightness and competence, gave him a parting gift of Rs 10,000 as a consolation. With regards to Khaserao Jadhav, a warning was administered along with a transfer to a less prestigious post and a temporary six month suspension of a special allowance. The British government representative in Baroda, Mr. Cobb, felt that both officials were let off lightly, and accordingly wrote a report to the Viceroy Hardinge. A few months later the Maharaja was to write: “An ignorant Resident exercised powers and vigilance in my absence. Some people in service were called extremists and an attempt was made to punish them. . . . I do not know whether the whole attempt was not to give the State a bad name.”⁵⁶

When A. B. Purani first visited Pondicherry in December 1918 to meet Sri Aurobindo, he conveyed the message of Deshpande that financial help could be arranged from Baroda, if necessary. Sri Aurobindo replied, “At present what is required comes from Bengal, especially from Chandernagore. So there is no need.”⁵⁷

In 1935 a Marathi biography titled *Yogi Aurobindo Ghose* by P. B. Kulkarni was published for which K. G. Deshpande wrote the preface. There were several corrections to be made in the book including some in the preface too.⁵⁸ A. B. Purani

55. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, October 2014, pp. 776-77.

56. See Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, *Sayajirao of Baroda, The Prince and the Man*, 1997, pp. 233-36.

57. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 18.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

mentioned that “Mr. Kulkarni has done his work very conscientiously.”⁵⁹

Another friend of Sri Aurobindo was Shashikumar Hesh, a fine Bengali painter. Interestingly Hesh, a Brahmo, was a school teacher in a village in Mymensingh district of Bengal but thanks to the patronage of the local Maharaja, who recognised his talent, he was sent to Europe to study painting. Hesh studied in Florence, Munich and stayed for a long time in Paris. Hesh’s resourcefulness, perseverance and talent transformed him into a brilliant artist. When he returned to India — he was no more than thirty — he came to meet the Maharaja of Gaekwad with recommendation letters from George Bardwood and Dadabhai Naoroji. For his entire stay at Baroda he stayed at the elegant guest house of the Maharaja as his honoured guest. He did oil portraits for several members of the royal family. He used to visit Sri Aurobindo daily in the fine horse-carriage provided by the Maharaja. Almost every day Dinendra Kumar Roy used to take a ride in this horse carriage and occasionally Sri Aurobindo came along. From the first meeting itself, both Sri Aurobindo and Dinendra Kumar Roy were enchanted by Hesh and felt close to him. Sri Aurobindo openly praised Hesh’s patriotism, love of literature and artistic genius. Unfortunately the Bengalis did not discover his artistic genius. Although Hesh did not speak fluent English he was familiar with French and Italian literature. In Paris he fell in love with a French lady and they married. When they returned to Calcutta, Jagdish Chandra Bose graciously solemnised their marriage in an attempt to neutralise the opposition they faced from several conservative Brahmos. Hesh admired Sri Aurobindo for his scholarly genius and even made him sit for two or three days at the guest house to create an oil painting of him. Sadly, the painting is untraceable. When in doubt or in conflict Hesh sought Sri Aurobindo’s counsel. Prior to his Baroda stay Hesh already knew Sri Aurobindo’s uncle K. K. Mitra, the editor of the magazine *Sanjivani*; the journal used to publish a letter from him almost every week when he was in Europe.⁶⁰

The first time that Charu Chandra Dutt saw Sri Aurobindo was at the Baroda railway station in 1900 while passing through Baroda by train. Sri Aurobindo, accompanied by Deshpande and Jatin Bannejee had come to see Hesh off. Hesh knew Dutt and when he saw him in the train, he introduced him to Sri Aurobindo.⁶¹

Dinendra Kumar Roy noted that Hesh’s face was quite uncommon and when he first met him in European clothes he did not guess he was a Bengali. He had a moustache and a beard and was unusually fair complexioned. Sri Aurobindo told Dinendra Kumar Roy that he could have passed as an Italian and also said that at the first glance itself it was easy to guess that Hesh was a painter.⁶² At Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo was told that his skin complexion has changed. He remarked: “But even an ordinary man, not a Yogi, can have a change of colour,” and recalled, “I know a

59. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 351.

60. See Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1st Ed., 2006, pp. 54-57.

61. See Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 498.

62. See Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1st Ed., 2006, p. 56.

dark lower-middle-class Bengali named Hesh who returned from Europe after some years. He looked almost like a European. He came to see me at Baroda but I couldn't recognise him. Then he said, 'Don't you recognise me?'"⁶³

At Baroda there was also a young Maratha Brahmin by the name of Mr. Phadke who was close to Sri Aurobindo. He was a patron of literature and had published a Marathi translation of Bankim Chandra's *Durgesh Nandini*. Sri Aurobindo sometimes studied Marathi with Phadke. Phadke was of a cheerful disposition and laughed constantly. His younger brother was a painter. He took a photo of Sri Aurobindo and Dinendra Kumar Roy while they were staying in Khaserao Jadhav's house.⁶⁴ Regrettably, the photo cannot be located.

When Sri Aurobindo relocated to Calcutta, Dr. Radha Kumud Mukherjee (1884-1963) came into close contact with him and became an ardent admirer and friend. He writes:

I happened perhaps to be one of the very few who had the rare good fortune of coming into direct touch with Sri Aurobindo as a youth in the full bloom of his life and power when he was pleased to take over the appointment of the Principalship of the Bengal National College at which I was appointed Professor of History directly working under him. I recall many personal anecdotes about his life and work in those stirring times when the country, especially Bengal, was thrown into a whirlwind agitation over the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon.⁶⁵

Radha Kumud Mukherjee also writes: "At home, in the domestic sphere, at the college, I had rare glimpses of his innate spirituality . . .".⁶⁶ That Radha Kumud Mukherjee was close to Sri Aurobindo can be ascertained from the fact that Sri Aurobindo had in February 1908 borrowed Rs 50/- from him to send to Mrinalini Devi.⁶⁷

Radha Kumud revered Sri Aurobindo; there were instances when Sri Aurobindo sought Radha Kumud's view. About one instance Radha Kumud writes:

I feel tempted to refer to another very singular event which happened before my very eyes.

One day Sri Aurobindo told me that he felt somewhat possessed by a spirit which revealed his name to Sri Aurobindo as Manick. The spirit was

63. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 104.

64. See Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1st Ed., 2006, pp. 32-34.

65. Dr. Radha Kumud Mukherjee, 'Some Reminiscences of Sri Aurobindo', *Mother India*, December 1963, p. 20.

66. *Ibid.*

67. See *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva, 1st Ed., p. 72.

very anxious to seize the pen of Sri Aurobindo so that he might write and give vent to his feelings in the other world. I told Sri Aurobindo that he might indulge him for a few minutes to see what he was anxious to write about. Then the spirit used Sri Aurobindo's hand to write a highly inflammatory article condemning British rule in a most intolerant manner. We agreed that we might use Manick's outburst as an editorial in the *Bande Mataram* by toning down some of its extremism so as to keep it within the bounds of law. The spirit's article appeared next morning in the *Bande Mataram*.⁶⁸

The other incident occurred prior to Sri Aurobindo's visit to Uttarpara on 30th May, 1909. Radha Kumud Mukherjee writes:

One day he asked me whether he should accede to the request of the people of Uttarpara to address there a meeting. I ventured to suggest to him that it was better that sometime he should appear before the public and deliver his message. He said he would agree if I would report his speech. That was the origin of Sri Aurobindo's famous speech at Uttarpara.⁶⁹

A propos the time Sri Aurobindo moved to Calcutta to assume responsibilities as Principal of Bengal National College, Radha Kumud Mukherjee writes:

At that time Sri Aurobindo took up the personal leadership of the Revolution which ushered in the nation's battle for freedom. Every day he would go from the Bengal National College to the evening gathering at the house of one of India's patriotic martyrs Raja Subodh Chandra Mullick in Wellington Square. The gathering, by its thought and inspiration, resembled that of the French encyclopaedists, the intellectuals who paved the way of the French Revolution. That was before Sri Aurobindo was prosecuted in the Alipore Bomb Case and before his historic "flight" to Pondicherry.⁷⁰

The gathering at Subodh Chandra Mullick's house included Charu Chandra Dutt, Bijoy Chandra Chatterjee, Hemendra Prasad Ghose and others. Suresh Chandra Deb observed:

Now and then I found him with friends . . . when he opened out; and still do I appear to hear the tinkling laughter that expressed the joy of his heart at the temporary release from the burden of thought and responsibility generally

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

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

felt by him. Now and then politics cropped up in these discussions and their handling in their daily Press, in his own articles. He generally spoke in English . . . And there were silences eloquent of the prevailing mood of all present. Now and then there was small talk, and Sri Aurobindo extracted the utmost pleasure from it. It is not easy to recall at this distance the nature of the discussions held on these occasions. But one stands out prominently where he and N. N. Ghosh, editor of the weekly *Indian Nation* and Principal of Metropolitan College, now known as the Vidyasagar College, were engaged in a controversy over the principles and practices of the New Party. N. N. Ghosh had a reputation for crisp, nervous English and Sri Aurobindo was Sri Aurobindo and the controversy between these two giants attained the character of an epic, neither giving quarter. The controversy and the words and phrases used in it became the talk of the politically-minded people of the day.⁷¹

Raja Subodh Chandra Mullick (1879-1920) was a close friend of Sri Aurobindo. Mullick was intelligent and had a mastery of the English language and always expressed his ideas in English. He could speak in his mother tongue, Bengali, but could not write it properly. He was well known in Calcutta's social life as a man of anglicised nature. His father left a lot of property for him. Mullick's palatial house at Wellington Square was frequented by several eminent personalities like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Rabindranath Tagore, Gaekwad of Baroda, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Aga Khan, Prince Count Okuma of Japan, W. C. Bonerjee, Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar and others. Tagore on many occasions had recited his poems and sung his song in the parties. He also sang the National Anthem in this house.⁷²

Sri Aurobindo first met Subodh Mullick in early 1905 at Thana at the house of Charu Chandra Dutt where he stayed for five or six days. Dutt narrates how they became close: “Another time, when Aurobindo came to us at Thana, my brother-in-law, Subodh Mullick, was staying with us. We had a great time together. Aurobindo and Subodh became very friendly during their stay in Thana, and this friendship of theirs ripened into close association, when Subodh entered into political life a year later. At his insistence, Aurobindo accepted the direction of the National College and of the newly started daily paper, ‘Bande Mataram’.”⁷³

A. B. Purani writes: “They found themselves in complete agreement in political ideology and programme. Subodh Mullick rendered great service to India and gave unstinted support to Sri Aurobindo in his political work.”⁷⁴ Sri Aurobindo has himself noted that Subodh Mullick was one of his collaborators in his secret action and afterwards also in Congress politics, and it was usually in his house that he lived

71. Suresh Chandra Deb, ‘Sri Aurobindo as I Knew Him’, *Mother India*, November 2002, pp. 946-47.

72. See website: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subodh_Chandra_Mallik/26.10.2021.

73. Charu Chandra Dutt, ‘My Friend and My Master’, *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, Eighth Number, 1952, p. 134.

74. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 84.

when he was in Calcutta.⁷⁵

From March 1906 to September 1907 Sri Aurobindo’s stay at Calcutta was largely in the mansion of Subodh Mullick. Sukumar Sen, a close friend of the Mullick family, notes: “The Mullicks regarded it as an honour for him to stay with them. Aurobindo often wanted to go and live by himself, but the Mullicks would not let him go.”⁷⁶ Charu Chandra Dutt writes: “During this period he lived mostly in Subodh’s Wellington Square house — not only as an honoured guest, but practically as a member of the family.”⁷⁷

In April 1906, the Barisal Conference, one of the watershed moments in the Swadeshi movement, took place. Sri Aurobindo has written: “Sri Aurobindo took part in the Barisal Conference and was in the front row of three persons in the procession which was dispersed by the police charge. After the breaking up of the Conference he accompanied Bepin Pal in a tour of East Bengal where enormous meetings were held . . .”⁷⁸ Subodh Chandra Mullick was also there at the Conference and the East Bengal tour. Suresh Chandra Deb writes:

The feeling all over India was electric; the Barisal episode laid the foundation of terrorism in Bengal. . . .

Delegates from East Bengal clustered round the leaders of the New Party for light and lead. And they arranged that some of the latter should tour their areas and help preach the new message. Three of them — Bipin Chandra Pal, Sri Aurobindo and Subodh Chandra Mullick agreed to this proposal. I had the privilege of accompanying them as one of the “volunteer” workers. Thus was I thrown into intimate relation with these leaders, and during about 45 days had occasion to observe matters and unconsciously imbibe the lessons of a new *Sadhana*, devoted work, in politics.⁷⁹

During the ground-breaking Congress Conference held at Calcutta in December 1906, where Tilak and Sri Aurobindo played the major role, Mullick’s palatial house was the venue for private meetings and consultations amongst the Nationalists under Tilak’s leadership.⁸⁰ When the Congress Conference in December 1907 took place at Surat, Subodh Mullick bore the expenses of all the delegates who attended from Bengal.⁸¹

Subodh Mullick had a deep regard for Sri Aurobindo, and from his side

75. See *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 54.

76. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, January 2016, p. 37.

77. Charu Chandra Dutt, ‘My Friend and My Master’, *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, Eighth Number, 1952, p. 134.

78. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, pp. 76-77.

79. Suresh Chandra Deb, ‘Sri Aurobindo as I Knew Him’, *Mother India*, November 2002, pp. 944-45.

80. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 91.

81. See website: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subodh_Chandra_Mullick/26.10.2021.

Sri Aurobindo has stated, “I mixed intimately with Mullick.”⁸² Inspired by Sri Aurobindo’s programme of National Education, Mullick declared at a mammoth meeting that he was donating a sum of Rs. one lakh towards founding of a National College. However, he made one condition: Sri Aurobindo must be requested to come down to Calcutta to direct the institution. Also this sum of money, Mullick insisted, was to be used by Sri Aurobindo as he deemed fit. Sri Aurobindo notes that Subodh Mullick “had given a lakh of rupees for this foundation and had stipulated that Sri Aurobindo should be given a post of professor in the college with a salary of Rs. 150; so he was now free to give his whole time to the service of the country.”⁸³ C. C. Dutt writes that it was at Subodh Mullick’s insistence that “Aurobindo accepted the direction of the National College and of the newly started daily paper, *Bande Mataram*.”⁸⁴ Sri Aurobindo notes:

I called a private meeting of the Nationalist leaders in Calcutta and they agreed to take up the *Bande Mataram* as their party paper with Subodh and Nirod Mullick as the principal financial supporters. A company was projected and formed, but the paper was financed and kept up meanwhile by Subodh.⁸⁵

Sri Aurobindo also told his attendants: “Tilak was coming to Calcutta as President of the Congress. We wanted to have a militant programme and our own organ. So I called a meeting of the extremist leaders — there we decided to have a paper and Subodh Mullick offered to finance it.”⁸⁶ When Sri Aurobindo was arrested in the *Bande Mataram* Sedition case in 1907 it was Subodh Mullick’s cousin, Nirod Mullick, along with Sri Aurobindo’s father-in-law’s friend, Prof. Girish Bose, who stood surety for his bail.⁸⁷ It was Subodh Mullick’s brother-in-law, Charu Chandra Dutt, who found in the *Bande Mataram* office a letter to some correspondent that stated that Sri Aurobindo was the editor. The letter was destroyed since it could have implicated Sri Aurobindo in the case.⁸⁸

Mr. Beachcroft, too, has referred to Sri Aurobindo’s friendship with Subodh Mullick in the Alipore Bomb Trial Judgment: “Arabindo’s association with Subodh is capable of a perfectly innocent explanation. He was much interested in national education, a scheme in which the prosecution admits there was nothing of itself harmful, and we find that Subodh contributed Rs. 1,00,000 to the establishment of the National College.”⁸⁹

82. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 453.

83. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 54.

84. Charu Chandra Dutt, ‘My Friend and My Master’, *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, Eighth Number, 1952, p. 134.

85. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 79.

86. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 451.

87. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, p. 243.

88. See Charu Chandra Dutt, ‘My Friend and My Master’, *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, Eighth Number, 1952, p. 137.

89. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, May 2016, p. 387.

In the Alipore Bomb Case Subodh Mullick's houses in Calcutta and Benaras were searched by the police. On 11 December, 1908, Minto issued orders for the arrest and deportation of Subodh Mullick, Krishna Kumar Mitra, Manoranjan Guhathakurta, Shyamsundar Chakravarti, Aswini Kumar Dutta and others.⁹⁰ Mullick was released on 10 February, 1910. Soon after his release he had a long discussion with Sri Aurobindo at his Wellington Square mansion. Sri Aurobindo thereafter went to Pondicherry and Mullick went to Darjeeling where he stayed till his death at the young age of 41 years.⁹¹

Even Subodh Chandra Mullick's father died at a young age. Subodh Mullick was then only nine years old and since then was largely brought up by his youngest paternal uncle, Hem Chandra Mullick — father of Nirod Chandra Mullick — who doted on him. Hem Chandra's daughters Lilavati and Mrinalini were very attached to Subodh. Charu Chandra Dutt, I.C.S., married Lilavati. Both, later in 1940, joined the Ashram. Subodh and Charu were known as right and left hand of Sri Aurobindo and the three of them were known as “Triumvirs”.⁹² In a letter dated 2 March, 1906, to Mrinalini Devi Sri Aurobindo writes: “12 Wellington Square was quite suitable for me, but Hem Mullick has just died, so I can't go there now. But I will receive letters addressed to me there.”⁹³ Thus when Sri Aurobindo arrived at Calcutta in early March he perhaps took temporary shelter for a few days at the *Yugantar* office before shifting to Subodh Mullick's residence.⁹⁴

Subodh Mullick's brother-in-law, Charu Chandra Dutt (1876-1952), was a close friend of Sri Aurobindo. They first met in 1900 at the Baroda railway station where Dutt introduced himself as friend of his eldest brother. Charu Chandra Dutt's father was the Dewan of Cooch Behar where Benoybhusan also served. Keen to learn the techniques of fighting so that he could use them against the British, he became an able rider and shooter. However, he was sent to England and obliged to enter the I.C.S. by his father. Sometime in early 1904 Sri Aurobindo came to Thana and asked Dutt if he wanted to join the Bhawani Mandir movement. “Needless to say I was beside myself with joy at having been chosen by such a great man,”⁹⁵ said Dutt. Although Dutt continued in the Civil Service his real interest lay in organising secret societies to educate and train revolutionaries wherever he was posted. The British authorities were aware of this but unable to dig out substantial proof to prosecute him.⁹⁶ In the Alipore Bomb Case senior officers in the Intelligence department were shocked to discover, through the approver Naren Gossain, that C. C. Dutt, holding

90. See K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, footnote, p. 333.

91. See website: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subodh_Chandra_Mallik/26.10.2021.

92. *Ibid.*

93. *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva, 1st Ed., pp. 68-69.

94. See K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, p. 219.

95. See *Sri Aurobindo: His Political Life and Activities*, compiled and edited by Anurag Banerjee, p. 418 (Article written by Charu Chandra Dutt, *Sunday Times*, 17 December 1950).

96. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, January 2013, p. 20.

a high post in the judiciary, was a collaborator of the revolutionaries.⁹⁷ Earlier, Dutt was the conspirator, using Prafulla Chaki as his instrument, in the failed assassination attempt of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir Andrew Fraser.⁹⁸

Once commenting on C. C. Dutt Sri Aurobindo said, “He was very courageous, spirited, powerful and frank. That’s the kind of man I like. He used to talk openly and frankly about his revolutionary ideas to Englishmen.” Regarding C. C. Dutt joining the revolutionary movement, Sri Aurobindo said, “Everybody knew of it and so he was called by the Europeans ‘the disloyal judge’.”⁹⁹

Despite Sri Aurobindo’s quiet and reserved disposition he was very open and easy-going with his friends. Charu Chandra Dutt relates how he, his wife Lilavati, and brother-in-law Raja Subodh Chandra Mullick immensely enjoyed Sri Aurobindo’s company:

It was an evening in my Thana bungalow, when both Aurobindo and Subodh were staying with us. My wife asked, “Will you people have melon ice?” Aurobindo replied with enthusiasm, “Excellent idea! But let us have plenty of it.” The *sherbet* was duly made and put into the freezer. As it was going to take a little time to be ready, Subodh proposed a game of cards to pass the time. Aurobindo said, “Most certainly, only I do not know any of the games you people play. I used to play whist a little in England, as a boy.” Subodh cried out, “All right, whist let it be.” We started to play — Subodh and I against Aurobindo and my wife. Aurobindo said to his partner, “We are going to beat them hollow, Lilavati. But you must explain things, a bit, to me.” He said, he remembered the names of the four suits and also that there were thirteen cards in each suit. That was about all. His partner told him that the objective was to take tricks and explained to him how this was to be done. Then began the game. It was very one-sided, for he managed to rope in most of the high cards and seemed to know, for certain, what cards each player held. Quite innocently, without an effort, he did all this and won game after game. After a while, I threw my cards down on the table saying, “How do you expect us to play, O Tyagarajan! If you take the best cards yourselves, the whole time”. . . . My wife said graciously, “All right, you quarrelsome people, we shall forego all we have won. Now, go and get ready for the ices.” Her partner said, “We have certainly won by superior skill, and we give away our winnings out of sheer generosity, Lilavati.”¹⁰⁰

97. *Ibid.*, November, 2015, p. 872.

98. *Ibid.*, November, 2014, p. 889.

99. See Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 96.

100. Charu Chandra Dutt, ‘My Friend and my Master’, *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, Eighth Number, 1952, p. 135.

Sri Aurobindo then said, “Well, I shall get through my Ahnik [daily practice of pranayama or meditation] and come back in fifteen minutes for my ices.” From C. C. Dutt’s continuing narrative we learn that Sri Aurobindo, even prior to having his Nirvana realisation, had an exceptional capacity for meditation:

But he did not return in fifteen minutes, nor even in half an hour. When about forty minutes had passed . . . I said to Subodh, “Come, let us call him.” We carried a couple of brass cups each and threw ourselves on his closed door. Subodh and I weighed full twenty seven stones, so my reader can imagine the racket we made. But it had no effect. We went back to my wife and reported that her guest must have fallen asleep. We had two fat helpings of that delicious melon ice. When we had finished, Aurobindo came along rubbing his eyes. We made profuse, but insincere, apologies for having taken our share of the ice before him. He smiled and said, “Greedy fellows! Never mind, Lilavati, give me my share. It has gone soft, you say? Well it could not have lost its sweetness.” Then I asked, “While you were meditating, were you not upset by some big noise?” He replied glibly, “Big noise! No. But something seemed to disturb me for a moment, then I went off again. But I have enjoyed this Sherbat immensely, Lilavati.” Rightly did I bestow the name of Tyagarajan on him, that evening!¹⁰¹

The above incident not only illustrates his calm and relaxed manner but also his powers of meditation, even prior to his Nirvana realisation. To a disciple Sri Aurobindo explained his calm demeanour:

I suppose people get a sense of calm and immobility from my appearance. But what is there terrifying in that? Up till now it used to be supposed that this was the usual Yogic poise and that it could soothe and tranquillise. Am I to understand that I have turned it into something fierce and Asuric which terrifies and is fierce, grim and repellent? I find it rather difficult to believe. Or is it that I live too much within and have too much that is unknown and incomprehensible? I have always lived within, and what else could be expected of me? There is something to be manifested and it is only within that it can be found — there is a world struggling to be born and it is only from within that one can find and release it.¹⁰²

(To be continued)

GAUTAM MALAKER

101. *Ibid.*

102. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, pp. 50-51.

PY/50/2021-23

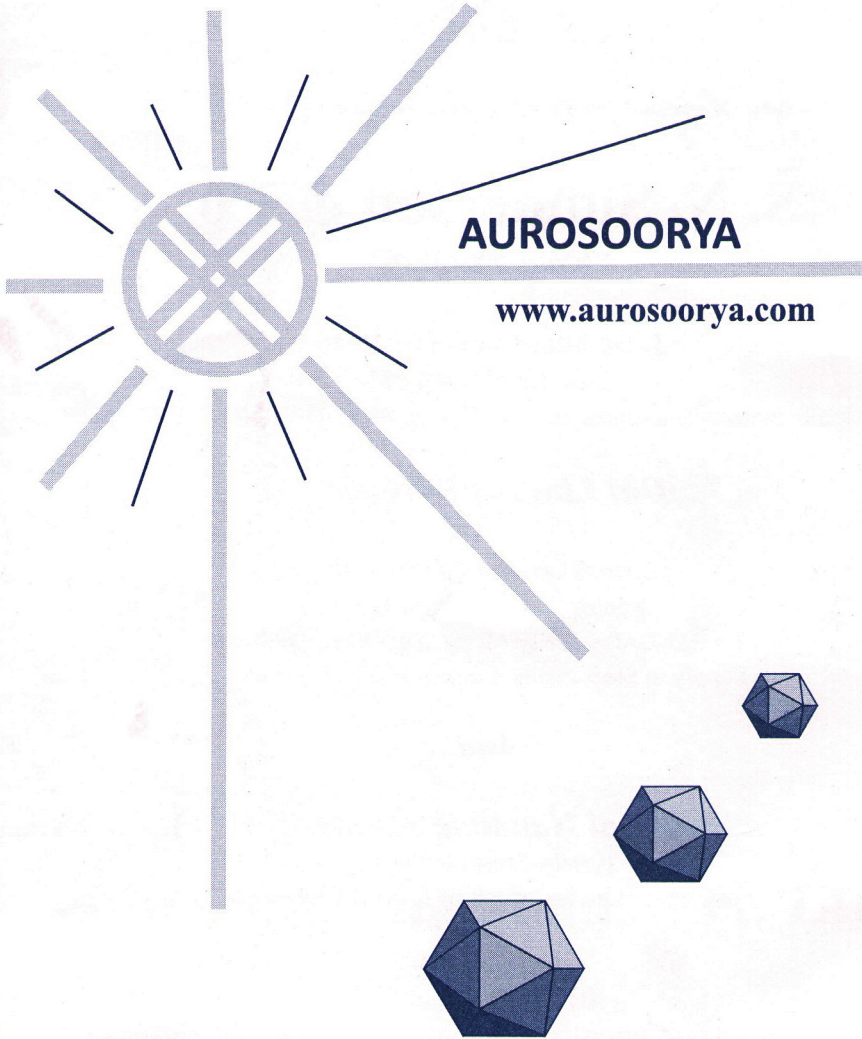
RNI 8667/63

Licensed to Post without Prepayment under

No. TN/PMG/(CCR)/WPP 80/21-23

Valid from 01.01.2021 to 31.12.2023

The Birth of Suns is the Dawn of Creativity...



Deep Order Technologies: Advanced
Analytics To Map and Change Deep Order

www.deepordertechnologies.com