

Price: ₹ 30

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE



OCTOBER 2023

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

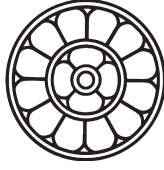
Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers for India: RNI No. 8667/63

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

OCTOBER 2023

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. LXXVI

No. 10

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

Sri Aurobindo

SARASWATI WITH THE LOTUS (<i>Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Obiit 1894</i>)	...	7
THE EAST AND THE WEST	...	8
THE UTILITY OF IDEALS	...	12
BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJI	...	13

The Mother

‘INTO THIS CONSCIOUSNESS THOU HAST PUT THE CERTITUDE OF VICTORY’	...	21
--	-----	----

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)

“ANTICIPATION” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO	...	22
--	-----	----

Sahana

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO — XII	...	28
---	-----	----

Raman Reddy

THE CANCELLATION OF THE OVERMENTAL CREATION	...	38
THE BRIGHTEST PERIOD IN THE HISTORY OF THE ASHRAM	...	42

Dyuman

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER	...	58
--------------------------------	-----	----

Gautam Malaker

“LIFE OF PREPARATION AT BARODA” —		
SRI AUROBINDO, THE PERFECT GENTLEMAN (PART 39)	...	76
Section 4: Forthrightness with the Maharaja		

SARASWATI WITH THE LOTUS

(Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Obiit 1894)

Thy tears fall fast, O mother, on its bloom,
O white-armed mother, like honey fall thy tears;
Yet even their sweetness can no more relume
The golden light, the fragrance heaven rears,
The fragrance and the light for ever shed
Upon his lips immortal who is dead.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 22)



THE EAST AND THE WEST

A MISUNDERSTANDING OF CONTINENTS

The peculiar and striking opposition of thought, temperament, culture and manners between Asia and Europe has been a commonplace of observation and criticism since the times when Herodotus noted in his history the objection of both men and women to be seen naked as a curious and amusing trait of Asiatic barbarism. Much water has flown under the bridges since Herodotus wrote and in this respect Asia seems not only to have infected Europe with this “barbaric” trait of manners, but to have been far outstripped by her pupil in the development of sartorial superfluities. Excessive wealth and gorgeous splendour was also quoted as a characteristic of Asiatic barbarism from the time of the classical poets. Europe has seen to it that this charge shall only apply now in a very minimum quantity to the eastern continent. Asia now stands, not only by choice of her ascetics, but by economic compulsion for the simple life, and the ostentation of wealth which was once depreciated as a sign of oriental barbarism now parades itself, much vulgarised, at least to our barbaric eastern notion of aesthetics as the splendid face of occidental civilisation. But if circumstances have changed, the essential opposition abides; East is still East in its soul and West is still West and the misunderstanding of continents still flourishes, not only in the minds of politicians and “statesmen”, — where one would naturally expect to find it, since it is there that vulgar prejudices, half-truths, whole untruths and unintelligent commonplaces assume their most solemn and sententious form, coin themselves into glittering phrases or flow in rhetorical periods, — but in the minds too of critics, poets and leading intellectuals. Faced with this continued misunderstanding, one is obliged to ask whether it is really incurable, an antinomy on which Nature is resolved to insist until the end of this cycle.

Some of us, temerarious idealists, have thought that the misconception, the want of understanding is not only curable, but that to cure it as soon as may be is essential to the future interests of humanity. For my part I hold that all antinomies and opposed powers in this world of contradictions would be much better for an attempt to understand each other’s souls and find their meeting point, would find something helpful not only to tone down their own exaggerations, but to fill in and round themselves without losing what is essential to their own spirit. Recently there has been a distinct widening in many minds, a nearer approach to understanding, almost to fusion. A little while ago in the first lyrical enthusiasm of the war and its “sacred unions” one imagined that a decisive step had been taken and the peoples themselves would now be ready for sympathy and understanding. But it seems it is not quite so yet[.]

TOWARDS UNIFICATION

The progress of distance-bridging inventions, our modern facility for the multiplication of books and their copies and the increase of human curiosity are rapidly converting humanity into a single intellectual unit with a common fund of knowledge and ideas and a unified culture. The process is far from complete, but the broad lines of the plan laid down by the great Artificer of things already begin to appear. For a time this unification was applied to Europe only. Asia had its own triune civilisation, predominatingly spiritual, complex and meditative in India, predominatingly vital, emotional, active and simplistic in the regions of the Hindu Kush and Mesopotamia, predominatingly intellectual, mechanical and organised in the Mongolian empires. East, West and South had their widely separate spirit and traditions, but one basis of spirituality, common tendencies and such commerce of art, ideas and information as the difficulties of communication allowed, preserved the fundamental unity of Asia. East & West only met at their portals, in war oftener than in peace and through that shock and contact influenced but did not mingle with each other. It was the discovery of Indian philosophy and poetry which broke down the barrier. For the first time Europe discovered something in the East which she could study not only with the curiosity which she gave to Semitic and Mongolian ideas and origins, but with sympathy and even with some feeling of identity. This metaphysics, these epics and dramas, this formulated jurisprudence and complex society had methods and a form which, in spite of their diversity from her own, yet presented strong points of contact; she could recognise them, to a certain extent she thought she could understand. The speculativeness of the German, the lucidity of the Gaul, the imagination and aesthetic emotionalism of the British Celt found something to interest them, something even to assist. In the teachings of Buddha, the speculation of Shankara, the poetry of Kalidasa their souls could find pasture and refreshment. The alien form and spirit of Japanese and Arabian poetry and of Chinese philosophy which prevented such an approximation with the rest of Asia, was not here to interfere with the comprehension of the human soul & substance. There was indeed a single exception which remarkably illustrates the difficulty of which I speak. The art of India contradicted European notions too vitally to be admitted into the European consciousness; its charm and power were concealed by the uncouthness to Western eyes of its form and the strangeness of its motives and it is only now, after the greatest of living art-critics in England had published sympathetic appreciations of Indian art and energetic propagandists like Mr. Havell had persevered in their labour, that the European vision is opening to the secret of Indian painting & sculpture. But the art of Japan presented certain outward characteristics on which the European could readily seize. Japanese painting had already begun to make its way into Europe even before the victories of Japan and its acceptance of much of the outward circumstances of European civilisation opened a broad door into Europe for all in Japan that Europe can receive without unease

or the feeling of an incompatible strangeness. Japanese painting, Japanese dress, Japanese decoration are not only accepted as a part of Western life by the select few and the cultured classes but known and allowed, without being adopted, by the millions. Asiatic civilisation has entered into Europe as definitely though not so victoriously as European civilisation into Asia. It is only the beginning, but so was it only the beginning when a few scholars alone rejoiced in the clarity of Buddhistic Nihilism, Schopenhauer rested his soul on the Upanishads and Emerson steeped himself in the Gita. No one could have imagined then that a Hindu monk would make converts in London and Chicago or that a Vedantic temple would be built in San Francisco and Anglo-Saxon Islamites erect a Musulman mosque in Liverpool. It appears from a recent inquiry that the only reading, omitting works of fiction, which commands wide and general interest among public library readers is either scientific works or books replete with Asiatic mysticism. How significant is this fact when we remember that these are the two powers, Europe & Asia, the victorious intellect and the insurgent spirit, which are rising at this moment to do battle for the mastery of the unified world. Nevertheless it is not the public library reader, that man in the street of the literary world, but the increasing circle of men of culture and a various curiosity through whom the Orient & the Occident must first meet in a common humanity and the day dawn when some knowledge of the substance of [the] Upanishads will be as necessary to an universal culture as a knowledge of the substance of the Bible, Shankara's theories as familiar as the speculations of Teutonic thinkers and Kalidasa, Valmekie & Vyasa as near and common to the subject matter of the European critical intellect as Dante or Homer.

It is the difficulties of presentation that prevent a more rapid and complete commingling.

CHINA, JAPAN AND INDIA

It is significant of the tendencies of the twentieth century that all its great and typical events should have occurred no longer as in the last few centuries in Europe, but in Asia. The Russo-Japanese war, the Chinese Revolution, the constitutional changes in Turkey & Persia and last but not most momentous the revival however indeterminate as yet of the soul of India, are the really significant events of the young century. In Europe except in its one Asiatic corner there has been no event of corresponding magnitude & importance. The abortive orgy of revolutionary fury in Russia, the growth of enormous strikes, the failure of the peace movement, the increase of legislation stamped with the pressure of a materialistic Socialism, although they may hold in themselves germs of greater things, are so far mere indistinct material symptoms of disorganisation & a disease vainly doctored with palliatives, not events

of a definite movement of new birth & regeneration. The importance of this new tendency lies in the fact that great events in Europe, even when they are outwardly spiritual, have usually an intellectual or social trend & significance, but great events in Asia have even when they are outwardly intellectual, social or political a spiritual significance. Therefore when Asia once more becomes the theatre of the world's chief events, it is a sure sign that some great spiritual revolution, perhaps a great age of spirituality is preparing for humanity.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Essays Divine and Human, CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 389-94)



THE UTILITY OF IDEALS

We notice that a correspondent of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, finding himself out of his depth at the Federation Ground Meeting, rather plaintively asks Bipin Babu to come down from the heights of philosophy and talk to the people of Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education. The correspondent seems to us at fault as to the bearings of the present situation. If Bipin Chandra were an ordinary political leader and the present time an ordinary political epoch, his complaint would have been justified. But we are in the first stages of a great revolution having its root in ideas, a revolution at least as far-reaching in its consequences as that which ushered in the nineteenth century, and of that revolution Bipin Chandra is a prophet. To ask such a man to confine himself to particular measures and questions of immediate political interest is as if one were to have asked Mazzini to forget his great teachings which revived Italy, and confine himself to the questions of the day in Rome or Sardinia. Swadeshi, Boycott, National Education are merely aspects, phases, expressions of the great ideas which Bipin Chandra preaches. There is nothing new to be said about them, they have simply to be carried out. But the ideas which underlie them, the ideas of Indian resurgence, of the spiritualisation of the world through India, of the great awakening of the East and its ideals are of an infinite application like the ideas of fraternity, liberty, equality which were preached in the French Revolution until every man had them on his lips and in his heart. The prophet of the movement must repeat these ideas and popularise them until they are on the lips and in the heart of every man, so that they may act with the same dynamical force as the ideas of the eighteenth century acted in France. To say that such teachings are too visionary for the average Indian mind is to forget that this is the country of Vedanta where the most ignorant have some idea of abstract truths which the European mind is too weak to cope with. If the movement is to be vitalised, it will not be by preoccupation with details but by the execution of details in the light of the living truths for which they merely seek to provide suitable conditions of fulfilment.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Bande Mataram*, CWSA, Vol. 7, pp. 1000-01)

BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJI

I

His Youth and College Life

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, the creator and king of Bengali prose, was a high-caste Brahman and the son of a distinguished official in Lower Bengal. Born at Kantalpara on the 27th June 1838, dead at Calcutta on the 8th April 1894, his fifty-six years of laborious life were a parcel of the most splendid epoch in Bengali history; yet among its many noble names, his is the noblest. His life shows us three faces, his academical career, his official labours and his literary greatness; it will be here my endeavour to give some description of each and all. The first picture we have of his childhood is his mastering the alphabet at a single reading; and this is not only the initial picture but an image and prophecy of the rest. Even thus early men saw in him the three natural possessions of the cultured Bengali, a boundless intellect, a frail constitution and a temper mild to the point of passivity. And indeed Bankim was not only our greatest; he was also our type and magnified pattern. He was the image of all that is most finely characteristic in the Bengali race. At Midnapur, the home of his childhood, the magnificence of his intellect came so early into view, that his name grew into a proverb. “You will soon be another Bankim,” — for a master to say that was the hyperbole of praise, and the best reward of industry. He ascended the school by leaps and bounds; so abnormal indeed was his swiftness that it put his masters in fear for him. They grew nervous lest they should spoil by over-instruction the delicate fibre of his originality, and with a wise caution they obstructed his entrance into the highest class. Bankim had always an extraordinary luck. Just as at school his fine promise was saved by the prudence of its guardians from the altar of High Education, the Moloch to whom we stupidly sacrifice India’s most hopeful sons, so it was saved at Hugly College by his own distaste for hard work. At Hugly College quite as much as at Midnapur he had the reputation of an intellectual miracle. And indeed his ease and quickness in study were hardly human. Prizes and distinctions cost him no effort in the attaining. He won his honours with a magical carelessness and as if by accident while others toiled and failed. But while unconquerably remiss in his duties, he bestowed wonderful pains on his caprices. He conceived at this time a passion for Sanskrit and read with great perseverance at a Pandit’s tol. In a single year he had gone through the Mugdhabodh, Raghuvansa, Bhatti and the Meghaduta. Advancing at this pace he managed in something under four years to get a sense of mastery in the ancient tongue and a feeling for its literary secrets which gave him immense leverage in his work of creating a new prose. Not

that there is the least touch of pedantry in his Bengali style: rather it was he and Madhu Sudan Dutt who broke the tyranny of the Sanskrit tradition: but one feels how immensely his labour was simplified by a fine and original use of his Sanskrit knowledge. At the age of seventeen, being then a student of five years' standing, he cut short his attendance at Hugly College. He left behind him a striking reputation, to which, except Dwarkanath Mitra, no student has ever come near. Yet he had done positively nothing in the way of application or hard work. As with most geniuses his intellectual habits were irregular. His spirit needed larger bounds than a school routine could give it, and refused, as every free mind does, to cripple itself and lose its natural suppleness. It was his constant habit, a habit which grew on him with the lapse of time, to hide himself in a nook of the College Library and indulge his wandering appetite in all sorts of reading. At the eleventh hour and with an examination impending, he would catch up his prescribed books, hurry through them at a canter, win a few prizes, and go back to his lotus-eating. I believe this is a not uncommon habit with brilliant young men in all countries and it saves them from the sterilizing effects of over instruction; but it hardly strikes one as a safe policy for slower minds. At the Presidency College, his next seat of instruction, he shaped his versatile intellect to the study of law. He had then some project of qualifying as a High Court Pleader, but at the right moment for literature the Calcutta University came into being and Bankim took literary honours instead of legal. The Courts lost a distinguished pleader and India gained a great man. Bankim, however, seems to have had some hankering after Law; for he subsequently snatched time from hard official drudgery and larger literary toil to appear with his usual distinguished success for the B.L. But his chief pretension to academical originality is perhaps that he was, together with Jodunath Bose, our first B.A., even in this detail leading the way for his countrymen. His official appointment followed close on the heels of his degree. At the age of twenty he was sent as Deputy Magistrate to Jessore.

I have drawn out in a manner as little perfunctory as I could manage, this skeleton of Bankim's academical life. In any account of an eminent Hindu a dry sketch of this sort is a form that must be gone through; for we are a scholastic people and in our life examinations and degrees fill up half the book. But examinations and degrees are a minor episode in the history of a mind. An European writer has acutely observed that nothing which is worth knowing can be taught. That is a truth which Dr. Bhandarkar, when he can spare time from his Carlyle, might ponder over with profit. Not what a man learns, but what he observes for himself in life and literature is the formative agency in his existence, and the actual shape it will take is much determined by the sort of social air he happens to breathe at that critical moment when the mind is choosing its road. All else is mere dead material useless without the breath of a vivifying culture. If examinations and degrees are the skeleton of university life, these are its soul and life-blood, and where they exist poorly or not at all, education, except for the one or two self-sufficing intellects, becomes mere wind

and dust. Among what sort of men did the student Bankim move? From what social surroundings did his adolescent personality take its colour? These are questions of a nearer interest than the examinations he passed or the degrees he took; and to them I shall give a larger answer.

II

The Bengal He Lived In

The society by which Bankim was formed, was the young Bengal of the fifties, the most extraordinary perhaps that India has yet seen, — a society electric with thought and loaded to the brim with passion. Bengal was at that time the theatre of a great intellectual awakening. A sort of miniature Renaissance was in process. An ardent and imaginative race, long bound down in the fetters of a single tradition, had suddenly put into its hands the key to a new world thronged with the beautiful or profound creations of Art and Learning. From this meeting of a foreign Art and civilisation with a temperament differing from the temperament which created them, there issued, as there usually does issue from such meetings, an original Art and an original civilisation. Originality does not lie in rejecting outside influences but in accepting them as a new mould into which our own individuality may run. This is what happened and may yet happen in Bengal. The first impulse was gigantic in its proportions and produced men of an almost gigantic originality. Rammohan Ray arose with a new religion in his hand, which was developed on original lines by men almost greater one thinks than he, by Rajnarain Bose and Debendranath Tagore. The two Dutts, Okhay Kumar and Michael Madhu Sudan, began a new Prose and a new Poetry. Vidyasagara, scholar, sage and intellectual dictator, laboured hugely like the Titan he was, to create a new Bengali language and a new Bengali society, while in vast and original learning Rajendra Lal Mitra has not met his match. Around these arose a class of men who formed a sort of seed-bed for the creative geniuses, men of fine critical ability and appreciative temper, scholarly, accomplished, learned in music and the arts, men in short not only of culture, but of original culture. Of these perhaps the most finished patterns were Madhu Sudan's friends, Gourdas Byshak, and that scholarly patron of letters, Rajah Jyotindra Mohun Tagore. At the same time there arose, as in other parts of India, a new social spirit and a new political spirit, but these on a somewhat servilely English model. Of all its channels the released energies of the Bengali mind ran most violently into the channel of literature. And this was only natural; for although the Bengali has by centuries of Brahmanic training acquired a religious temper, a taste for law and a taste for learning, yet his peculiar sphere is language. Another circumstance must not be forgotten. Our renaissance was marked like its European prototype, though not to so startling an extent, by a thawing of old moral custom. The calm, docile, pious, dutiful Hindu ideal was pushed aside with

impatient energy, and the Bengali, released from the iron restraint which had lain like a frost on his warm blood and sensuous feeling, escaped joyously into the open air of an almost Pagan freedom. The ancient Hindu cherished a profound sense of the nothingness and vanity of life; the young Bengali felt vividly its joy, warmth and sensuousness. This is usually the moral note of a Renaissance, a burning desire for Life, Life in her warm human beauty arrayed gloriously like a bride. It was the note of the sixteenth century, it is the note of the astonishing return to Greek Paganism, which is now beginning in England and France; and it was in a slighter and less intellectual way the note of the new age in Bengal. Everything done by the men of that day and their intellectual children is marked by an unbounded energy and passion. Their reading was enormous and ran often quite out of the usual track. Madhu Sudan Dutt, besides English, Bengali and Sanskrit, studied Greek, Latin, Italian and French, and wrote the last naturally and with ease. Toru Dutt, that unhappy and immature genius, who unfortunately wasted herself on a foreign language and perished while yet little more than a girl, had, I have been told, a knowledge of Greek. At any rate she could write English with perfect grace and correctness and French with energy and power. Her novels gained the ear of the French public and her songs breathed fire into the hearts of Frenchmen in their fearful struggle with Germany. And as was their reading so was their life. They were giants and did everything gigantically. They read hugely, wrote hugely, thought hugely, and drank hugely.

Bankim's student days did not happen among that circle of original geniuses; his time fell between the heroes of the Renaissance and the feeble Epigoni of our day. But he had contemporary with him men of extraordinary talent, men like Dinabandhu Mitra and Dwarkanath Mitra, men so to speak of the second tier. Bankim was the last of the original geniuses. Since then the great impulse towards originality has gone backward like a receding wave. After Bankim came the Epigoni, Hemchandra Banerji, Nobin Sen, Robindranath Tagore, men of surprising talent, nay, of unmistakable genius, but too obviously influenced by Shelley and the English poets. And last of all came the generation formed in the schools of Keshab Chandra Sen and Kristo Das Pal, with its religious shallowness, its literary sterility and its madness in social reform. Servile imitators of the English, politicians without wisdom and scholars without learning, they have no pretensions to greatness or originality. Before they came the first mighty impulse had spent itself and Bengal lay fallow for a new. It rests with the new generation, the generation that will soon be sitting in the high places and judging the land, whether there shall be scope for any new impulse to work itself out. Two years ago it looked as if this mighty awakening would lose itself, as the English sixteenth century lost itself, in Puritanism and middle-class politics.

But when Bankim was a student, the traditions of the Hindu college were yet powerful, the Hindu college, that nursery of geniuses, where the brain of the New Age had worked most powerfully and the heart of the New Age had beat with the mightiest

vehemence. The men around Bankim were calmer, sedater, more temperate; but they walked in the same ways and followed the same ideals. To that life of hard thinking and hard drinking Bankim was drawn not merely, as some were, by the power of youthful imitateness, but by sympathy of temperament. He had the novelist's catholicity of taste and keen sense for life, and the artist's repugnance to gloom and dreariness. Even when the thoughts turned to old faith, the clear sanity of the man showed itself in his refusal to admit asceticism among the essentials of religion. He never indulged in that habit of frightful and inveterate riot which has killed one or two of our second-rate talents, but it cannot quite be said that he never overstepped the limits or always observed the principle of "nothing in excess," which is the only sure rule for a man's conduct. Some would like to see in this sensuous exuberance the secret of his early decay. It may be so; but speculation on this subject will remain a solemn farce, until it is taken up in a disinterested spirit. At present all our wise disquisitions proceed from unchastened sentiment. Dr. Bhandarkar is a violent social reformer and wants to throw odium upon Hindu society; Mr. Ranade's hobby is a Conservative Radicalism and the spirit moves him to churn the ocean of statistics in a sense more agreeable to his own turn of mind; a third authority, prejudiced against Western Culture, traces all premature deaths to pleasure and wine-bibbing. Each starts from his own sensations, each builds his web of argument in the spirit of a sophist. To this Dr. Bhandarkar brings his moral ardour and grave eloquence, Mr. Ranade his trained reason and distinguished talent, the religionist his prejudices and cold precepts. Widely as they differ, they have this in common that they have not for their aim to speak usefully: they are simply trying to find reasons for their own likes and dislikes. Dealing with subjects of scientific interest in a spirit of this sort is only to invite confusion and exclude light. We in Bengal with our tendency to the sins of the blood are perhaps more apt than others to call to our aid the gloomy moralities of the Puritan; in censuring Bankim we are secretly fortifying ourselves against ourselves; but in this instance it is a false caution. The cultured Bengali begins life with a physical temperament already delicate and high-strung. He has the literary constitution with its femineity and acute nervousness. Subject this to a cruel strain when it is tenderest and needs the most careful rearing, to the wicked and wantonly cruel strain of instruction through a foreign tongue; put it under the very worst system of training; add enormous academical labour, immense official drudgery in an unhealthy climate and constant mental application; crown all with the nervous expense of thought and fever of composition plus the unfailing exhaustion that comes after; and we need not go to the momentary excesses of a generous blood to find the explanation of broken health and an early decline. The miracle of it is not that the victims die prematurely but that they live so long. Perhaps we might begin to enquire into the causes of that phenomenon for a change.

One thing however is certain that whatever else Bankim lost, he gained from his youthful surroundings much emotional experience and great flexibility of mind.

There too he got his initial stimulus. Like Telang, and perhaps even more than Telang, Bankim was blessed or cursed with an universal talent. Everything he touched, shaped itself to his hand. It would have been easy for him to make disastrous mistakes, to miss his vocation, waste himself in English and at the end to leave no enduring monument of his personality behind. What saved him? It was the initial stimulus and the cultured environment; it was that he lived among men who could distinguish a talent when they saw it and once distinguished were bent on realizing it; among men in fact who had some instinct for finding their way. With a limited creature like man, the power of the environment is immense. Genius it is true exists independently of environment and by much reading and observation may attain to self-expression but it is environment that makes self-expression easy and natural; that provides sureness, verve, stimulus. Here lies the importance to the mind in its early stage of self-culture of fine social surroundings; — that sort of surroundings which our Universities do nothing and ought to have done everything to create.

III

His Official Career

Thus equipped, thus trained Bankim began his human journey, began in the radiance of joy and strength and genius the life which was to close in suffering and mortal pain. The drudgery of existence met him in the doorway, when his youth was still young. His twenty-first year found him at Jessore, his fifty-third was the last of his long official labour. Here too however his inveterate habit of success went always with him. The outward history of his manhood reads more brilliantly even than that of his youth, and if he did not climb to the highest posts, it was only because these are shut to indigenous talent. From start to finish, his ability, delicacy of judgment and careful work were recognised as something unusual: yet it would not be easy to find a more careful or cleverer set of administrators than the Hindu civilians of Bengal. At Jessore his life was chequered by a great boon and a great sorrow. It was here that he made fast his friendship with the dramatist Dinabandhu Mitra, which remained close-soldered to the end, and it was here that his young wife died. At Kanthi, the next stage of his official wanderings, he married again and more fortunately. Khulna, the third step in the ladder, was also the theatre of his most ambitious exploits. Entangled in the Sundarban, that rude and unhealthy tract of marsh and jungle, the zillah was labouring under two morbid ailments, for which none of its official doctors had found an efficient panacea, — the smallpox of piracy and the greater pox of Indigoism. Ruffians from Europe were in hot competition with the native breed which should deserve best the Government Scholarship for lawlessness and brutality; and as they had a racial gift for these things and a wider field it might have been safely awarded to them. Unluckily Bankim stepped into their

happy hunting-grounds and spoiled the game. But to the unhappy ryots, the battle-field for these rival rascalities, he came as a champion and a deliverer. At Khulna this mild, thoughtful Bengali wears the strange appearance of a Hercules weeding out monsters, clearing auguean stables, putting a term to pests. His tranquil energy quite broke the back of the Indigo tyrants. Their master-criminals and chief indigocrats fled to Anam and Brindaban, but they were overtaken by Bankim's warrant and persuaded to come back. Fine and imprisonment meted out with a healthy severity, shattered their prestige and oppressed their brutal spirit. Khulna then saw the last of government by organised ruffianism. No less terse and incisive were Bankim's dealings with the water-thieves who lurking in creek and brushwood dominated to the perpetual alarm and molestation of travellers the hundred waters of the Sundarban. The out-laws were hunted down and imprisoned and their principal spirits relegated where there was less room for their genius to find self-expression. The hydra of the waters had been crushed as effectually as the indigo pest; and since the era of Bankim's magistracy one may travel the length and breadth of Khulna without peril except from malaria and ague. By a little quiet decisiveness he had broken the back of two formidable tyrannies and given an object-lesson in what a Government can do when it heartily intends the good of the people.

Baruipur, consecrated a place in the calendar of literature, was next put into his hands. The event of his residence here was his appointment vice Mr. Justice Princep to the chair of an Official Emoluments Commission then sitting. The Government intended this to look like an extraordinary distinction, and had not the genius of the man raised him unmeasurably above any Englishman in the country, we might have regarded it as such. Barhampur was the next step in his journey, and after Barhampur Maldeh, and after Maldeh the important Suburban district of Hugly. He was now nearing his high-water mark and his official existence which had been till then more than ordinarily smooth, began to be ploughed up by unaccustomed storms. The Government wanted to give some inadequate expression to its sense of his extraordinary merits and could think of nothing better than a place in the Secretariat. It was here that he came into collision with the spirit of bureaucracy. His superior was a certain Macaulay, a hard working official, whose brains were tied together with red tape. The diligent mediocrity of this man was goaded to extra hours by flickering visions of a Lieutenant-Governorship, but Bankim, having no such high incentive, was careful to close his work at the strict office-hour. For this Macaulay took him severely to task. "It is natural enough" replied Bankim, forgetting unfortunately that he was talking to a piece of red tape "it is natural enough for you to work hard. You are of the ruling caste and may rise, who knows? to be Lieutenant-Governor. But why should I be subservient to your example? Here is the bourne and goal of my promotion. Beyond it what prospect have I? No, I have no idea of sweating myself to death over extraordinary work." When independence and red tape come into collision, it is usually independence that gets tripped up. Bankim was sent back in a

hurry to Magistrate's work, this time at Alipur. But his ill-luck followed him. He was shipwrecked again in a collision with Anglo-Indianism. Walking in Eden Garden he chanced across Munro, the Presidency Commissioner, a farouche bureaucrat with the manners of an Englishman and the temper of a badly-educated hyena. Bankim examined the queer curiosity, as one might any queer curiosity, with a certain lazy interest, but no signal of respect. He was unaware at this time that to Salaam any stray European you may meet is the highest privilege of a Hindu and the whole duty of a Deputy Magistrate. But he was soon to receive instruction: for His Hyenaship was off in a rage to the Government and by a little private roaring easily got Bankim transferred to Jahajpur in Orissa. Bankim was considerably taken aback and not a little angry. "Have I then committed some grave fault?" he enquired of the Chief Secretary "or is it that the Government has found out a new way to pay its old debts? Resolve me, for I am in doubt." The gibe told. He had hardly set foot in Orissa, when he was gazetted back to Hugly. After a lapse of time, — Munro, I believe, had in the mean time been struck by his own astonishing likeness to the founder of Christianity and was away to spread the light of the Gospel among the heathen — after a lapse of time Bankim was allowed to come back to Alipur. But this was the last stage of that thankless drudgery in which he had wasted so much precious force. His term of service was drawing to a close, and he was weary of it all: he wished to devote his remnant of life to literature. But the days that remained to him were few and evil. One or two years clouded with sickness, sorrow and suffering stood between him and the end.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Early Cultural Writings, CWSA, Vol. 1, pp. 90-102)



**‘INTO THIS CONSCIOUSNESS
THOU HAST PUT THE CERTITUDE OF VICTORY!’**

August 17, 1914

All errors, all prejudices, all misunderstandings must vanish in this whirlwind of destruction that is carrying away the past. . . . The light must become perfectly pure, free from all limitation, so that Thou canst manifest Thyself fully within it. Lord, Thou hast the Power and Thou wilt realise this supreme miracle. . . .

Into this consciousness Thou hast put the certitude of victory!

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 224)



“ANTICIPATION” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

I hope these lines written today morning are not mere “virtuosity”. But do they have a sentimental goody-goody ring?

If they are rude and coarse,
never
I do not wish black doom on ruthless wings
To visit them; I only pray
Their mouths may flower, breathing beautiful things.
I am not hurt because
They fail to understand or cherish me —
But they forget each mouth can be a rose
Deep-rooted in the soul’s divinity.

I am afraid there is something of both; they are not successful.

11 November 1934

* * *

Sri Aurobindo —

How do you find this poem? I have used here the conclusion, modified a little, of those unsuccessful lines sent you the other day.

ANTICIPATION

Surely in future ages some
Thinker will brood upon a theory
That my strange poet-passion of love has come
To worship an august philosophy
Whose intellectual rays
Of truth have woven all this dream of hair
Streaming in beauty from an angel face:
Else how could man give such ideal praise?
Was ever woman chaste¹ enough to bear
A mirrored paradise
Within the changeful glory of her eyes?

Poor sage! whose bloodless kin denied
Lips to the smile that Dante sighed
Through hollow years to see again —
Will you with your unpassioned abstract brain
Make clear how the august philosophy
Which² I was song-allured to speak
By symbol of a white brow's majesty
Had one dark mole upon its rapturous cheek? . . .
That enigma³ you never shall explain, ?
For incorruptible truth has beckoned me
Not through a drudging wisdom but because⁴
A woman's mouth breathed like a perfect rose
Deep-rooted in her soul's eternity!⁵
the divinity!

1. pure?

2. That?

“Which” is better.

3. [Sri Aurobindo underlined *enigma* and put a question mark at the end of the line, adding at the bottom of the sheet:]

Surely *enigma* has not yet shifted its accent to the first syllable?

4. Is it necessary to write something like “cold drudging” or “long drudging” to avoid the indefinite article in this line?

5. Is “eternity” avoidable?

[*Sri Aurobindo crossed out “eternity”.*]

If “a” is kept in the third line from below, should I write “one” in the penultimate: “one perfect rose” — though “one” has occurred already in the line with the plusieurs points.

“one perfect rose” would never do.

This is successful.

13 November 1934

* * *

Sri Aurobindo —

I am thinking whether in the line (towards the close):

For incorruptible truth has beckoned me

the words “has beckoned” made my meaning clear enough in connection with “because” in the next. I meant that it was because “A woman’s mouth breathed like a perfect rose” etc etc that I have been drawn to Truth, and not through “a drudging wisdom” — not the latter but the former was the reason why truth could attract or has attracted me.

It seems to me perfectly clear.

Do you prefer:

For I have known truth’s spell of ecstasy?

No, I don’t.

P.S.: I suppose the poem is not a perfect success.

13 November 1934

* * *

Sri Aurobindo —

I have given a copy of yesterday’s poem to the library; but I am visited by a doubt. Was it a perfect success? If not, I should like to withdraw it. I have no ambition to swell the number of my poems if I can’t maintain a high level of quality. So please let me know where it stands.

(I have changed “enigma” to “miracle”.)

P.S.: By the way, will you kindly tell me if the following two ideas of mine are correct?

1) Your comments on the compositions sent you by anybody here are based on a fundamental aesthetic standard, whatever consideration you may include from the spiritual standpoint: that is to say, you would not give praise unless the spiritual substance has been finely expressed, nor, to take an extreme case, would you withhold praise if even a non-spiritual substance came to be finely expressed, though you might add that such poetry was not our aim here. Of course you would commend more highly something which is not

only perfect in expression but very deep also in spiritual substance, than what is equally perfect but not so deep; still, you would not say “very good” unless the form was flawless; nor pronounce a composition “successful” just to encourage something that might help one’s sadhana, no matter if the form was hopeless. Naik wrote something in Sanscrit which Kapali considered “hopeless”, but you thought “successful”. Was Kapali judging from a pedantic hide-bound antiquated criterion or was he right, your remark having been meant to help Naik’s sadhana?

2) Your judgment is according to a fixed qualitative criterion where the form is concerned: it does not differ with different writers, provided you do not add any qualifying phrase. Thus, a poem, say, by Shailen would be aesthetically on a par with one of Harin’s or Arjava’s, if simply the remark “very good” was won by them all. It is possible that sometimes you would give a restrained comment, but privately you judge by an unvarying aesthetic standard — don’t you? (By “unvarying” I don’t mean a partiality for a particular kind of style: I am referring to level of excellence.)

14 November 1934

You seem to demand a very rigid and academic fixity of meaning for my hastily penned comments on the poetry sent to me. I have no unvarying aesthetic standard or fixed qualitative criterion, — not only so but I hold any such thing to be impossible with regard to so subtle and unintellectual an essence as poetry. It is only physical things that can be subjected to fixed measures and unvarying criteria. Appreciation of poetry is a question of feeling, of intuitive perception, of a certain aesthetic sense, it is not the result of an intellectual judgment.

My judgment does differ with different writers and also with different kinds of writing. If I put very good on a poem of Shailen’s, it does *not* mean that it is on a par with Harin’s or Arjava’s or yours. It means that it is very good Shailen, but not that it is very good Harin or very good Arjava. “If ‘very good’ was *won* by them all,” you write! But, good heavens, you write that as if I were a master giving marks in a class. I may write “good” or “very good” on the work of a novice if I see that it has succeeded in being poetry and not mere verse however correct or well rhymed — but if Harin or if Arjava or you were to produce work like that, I would not say “very good” at all. There are poems of yours which I have slashed and pronounced unsatisfactory, but if certain others were to send me that, I would say, “Well, you have been remarkably successful this time.” I am not giving comparative marks according to a fixed scale. I am using words flexibly according to the occasion and the individual. It would be the same with different kinds of writing. If I write “very good” or “excellent” on some verses of Dara about his chair, I am not giving it a certificate of equality with some poem of yours similarly appreciated — I am only

saying that as humorous easy verse in the lightest vein it is very successful, an entertaining piece of work. Applied to your poem it would mean something different altogether.

Coming from your huge P.S. to the tiny body of your letter, what do you mean by a *perfect success*? I meant that pitched in a certain key and style it had worked itself out very well in that key and style in a very satisfying way from the point of view of thought, expression and rhythm. From that standpoint it is a perfect success. If you ask whether it is at your highest possible pitch of inspiration, I would say no, but it is nowhere weak or inadequate and it says something poetically well worth saying and says it well. One cannot always be writing at the highest pitch of one's possibility, but that is no reason why work of very good quality in itself should be rejected.

15 November 1934

ANTICIPATION

Surely in future ages some
 Thinker will brood upon a theory
 That my strange poet-passion of love has come
 To worship an august philosophy
 Whose intellectual rays
 Of truth have woven all this dream of hair
 Streaming in beauty from an angel face:
 Else how could man give such ideal praise?
 Was ever woman pure enough to bear
 A mirrored paradise
 Within the changeful glory of her eyes?

Poor sage! whose bloodless kin denied
 Lips to the smile that Dante sighed
 Through hollow years to see again —
 Will you with your unpassioned abstract brain
 Make clear how the august philosophy
 Which I was song-allured to speak
 By symbol of a white brow's majesty
 Had one dark mole upon its rapturous cheek? . . .
 That miracle you never shall explain,
 For incorruptible truth has beckoned me

Not through a drudging wisdom but because
A woman's mouth breathed like a perfect rose
Deep-rooted in her soul's divinity!

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

The inmost seeing must bring out of itself to be poetically effective the inmost word and sound, must find out a luminous purity of its steps or a profound depth of its movement, must be said in the inmost way. Rhythm is the most potent, founding element of poetic expression, and though most modern poets depend or at least lean more heavily on force of thought and substance than on the greater musical suggestions of rhythm, — Shelley, Swinburne, Yeats are exceptions, — there must always be a change in this basis of the poet's art when there is a substantial change of the constituting spirit and motive. Especially when there is this more subtle spiritual aim, the rhythmical movement becomes of a new importance.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Future Poetry, CWSA, Vol. 26, p. 177)

SAHANA'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO — XII¹

(Continued from the issue of September 2023)

There seem to be two elements in the physical difficulty that is weighing on you. The first is the liver trouble which weakens and must weaken still more if it leads you to diminish your food below what the body needs for maintaining sufficient strength to react — also probably the nervous tendency to insomnia with its consequences. The second is an inertia of the lower vital and physical consciousness which prevents it from throwing off the lassitude, from reacting against the attacks and from opening steadily to the Force which would remove these things. All that is due to the breakdown of the poise that you had for so long, the vital trouble that caused it and the reaction of the lower vital to the insistence on throwing out the causes of the trouble. This reaction seems to have been a listlessness at losing the things to which it was still holding — such a reaction always brings the inertia of the physical consciousness, while the right reaction in the lower vital brings on the contrary a sense of peace, release, quietude which definitely opens the lowest physical parts to the higher consciousness and force. If you can get over this and get back the old poise, then all these things can be made to disappear.

Nirod was of course right from the medical point of view in recommending exercise — both for the liver and as a tonic to the body it is helpful. So if you are not going to the Aroumé more than once or twice some walking may be advisable. Care should be taken of the body certainly, the care that is needed for its good condition, rest, sleep, proper food, sufficient exercise; what is not good is too much preoccupation with it, anxiety, despondency in illness etc., for these things only favour the prolongation of ill-health or weakness. For such things as the liver attacks treatment can always be taken when necessary.

But it is always the right inner poise, quietude inward and outward, faith, the opening of the body consciousness to the Mother and her Force that are the true means of recovery — other things can only be minor aids and devices. (7.3.37)

*

It is the right resolution and all our help will be with you to carry it out and bring it to fruition. The mechanical activity of the vital mind of which you speak ought not to be

1. Readers will remember that Part X was published in the September issue and Part XI in the July issue because of an oversight. — Ed.

too difficult to dispel — we shall send you force for that and for recovering the sleep. I am glad to hear that the energy is coming back — with the restoration of the upward connection between the physical and the Above it was bound to do so. (13.3.37)

*

I suppose the proposal came as a touch to see how far the old things could revive and how far the new psychic life within would cancel this vibration. That often happens when there is a forward drive from within. We shall certainly aid you towards their removal. For the ego, however insistent it may be, one has only to keep one's eye on it and say no to all its suggestions so that each position it takes up proves to be a fruitless move. Treated in that way it becomes ready for the moment when the psychic has only to give a slight push for it to fall away in each field of its activity from its loosened roots. Persevere steadily in the present movement and it cannot fail to be effective. (21.3.37)

*

The difficulty is probably somewhere in the external physical vital or else comes up by habit from the subconscient. But if the vital itself supports the new movement, these obstacles are bound to disappear. One has to persevere quietly and steadily with as much vigilance as possible. I hope the headache etc. will soon disappear. For all that you have written about we will try to give you the necessary support of our force always. (28.3.37)

*

It is quite natural that there should be much mixture in the attitude till all is clear — the ordinary nature clings to the action and the transformation in its completeness cannot be sudden. What is necessary is that the basic consciousness should become firmly established in the Divine, then the mixture and the rest can be seen and steadily weeded out. To have this outwardly as well as inwardly is a great progress. (24.4.37)

*

What has to be done is not to struggle with this state, but get a conscious control. That is to say, if it comes at a time when other things have to be done, then instead of fighting it (which gave you the headache) you must concentrate quietly within for a short time, but concentrate with the will to come out of it in a short time. If the thing comes at a time when you can sit for long and are not likely to be disturbed, then you need not resist it even in that way, but still in going in aspire to be conscious and

master of the trance movement so that you can go in at will and come out at will. It is probably a rush of the consciousness to go inside deep into the inner being or to go up above the mind; but the more consciously this is done the better. (21.5.37)

*

Your suggestion that I am telling you things that are untrue in order to encourage you is the usual stupidity of the physical mind — if it were so, it is not you who would be unfit for the Yoga, but myself who would be unfit to be in the search for the Divine Truth anybody's guide. For one can lead through lesser to greater Truth, but not through falsehood to Truth. As for your fitness or unfitness for the Yoga, it is not a question on which your physical mind can be an unerring judge — it judges by the immediate appearance of things and has no knowledge of the laws that govern consciousness or the powers that act in Yoga. In fact the question is not of fitness or unfitness but of the acceptance of Grace. There is no human being whose physical outer consciousness — the part of yourself in which you are now living — is fit for the Yoga. It is by grace and enlightenment from above that it can become capable and for that the necessity is to be persevering and open it to the Light. Everybody when he enters the physical consciousness has the same difficulty and feels as if he were unfit, obscure and nothing done, nothing changed in him since he began the Yoga; he is apt to forget then all that has happened before or to feel as if he had lost it or as if it had all been unreal or untrue.

I suppose that is why you object to my phrase about your having gone so far. I meant that you had had openings in your thinking mind, heart and higher vital and experiences also and had seen very lucidly the condition of your own being and nature and had by that got so far that these parts were ready for the spiritual change — what remains is the physical and outer consciousness which has to be compelled to accept the necessity of change. That is no doubt the most difficult part of the work to be done, but it is also the part which, if once done, makes possible the total change of the being and nature. I therefore said that having gone so far it would be absurd to turn back now and give up because this resists — it always resists in everybody and very obstinately too. That is no reason for giving up the endeavour.

It is this consciousness that has expressed itself in your letter — or the obscure part of it which clings to its old attitude. It does not want to fulfil the sadhana unless it can get by it the things it wanted. It wants the satisfaction of the ego, self-fulfilment, appreciation, the granting of its desires. It measures the Divine Love by the outward favours showered upon it and looks jealously to see who gets more of these favours than itself, then says that the Divine has no love for it and assigns reasons which are either derogatory to the Divine or, as in your letter, self-depreciatory and a cause for despair. It is not in you alone that this part feels and acts like that, it is in almost everybody. If that were the only thing in you or the others, then indeed there would

be no possibility of Yoga. But though it is strong, it is not the whole — there is a psychic being and a mind and heart influenced and enlightened by it which has other feelings and another vision of things and aim in sadhana. These are now covered in you by the upsurge of this part which has to change. It is tamasic and does not want to change, does not want to believe unless it can be done by reassuring the vital ego. But there is nothing new in all that — it is part of human nature and has always been there, hampering and limiting the sadhana. Its existence is no reason for despair — everyone has it and the sadhana has to be done in spite of it, in spite of the mixture it brings till the time comes when it has to be definitely converted or rejected. It is difficult to do it, but perfectly possible. These things I know and realise and it is therefore that I insist on your persevering and encourage you to go on; it is not my statement of the position that is untrue, it is the view of it taken by this obscure part of your being that is unsound and an error. (29.7.37)

*

I never heard of anyone getting genius by effort. One can increase one's talent by training and labour, but genius is a gift of Nature. By sadhana it is different, one can do it; but that is not the fruit of effort, but either of an inflow or by an opening or liberation of some impersonal power or manifestation of unmanifested power. No rule can be made in such things; it depends on persons and circumstances how far the manifestation of genius by Yoga will go or what shape it will take or to what degree or height it will rise. (28.7.38)

*

The Mother certainly would not give you money for going away, for she could not approve of or sanction such a step which has no real ground and for which the only reasons you allege are a quite unreasonable despondency and a pique (abhimān) which is also without true cause. The Mother has not in the least changed towards you — she has neither withdrawn her affection nor felt nor expressed any disappointment about your sadhana; her support has not been withdrawn either from your singing. The only thing we can make out in this connection is that the impression was created in your vital by her having discouraged a movement of ego in you, pressed on the removal of some defects which you yourself had admitted and wished to overcome, put aside some suggestions with regard to one occasion for your music which did not seem to her suitable. But these things she has done before and you used to be very pleased at her pointing out or letting you understand where you had to change. You yourself wanted to get rid of ego and change the resistant part and also had taken steps towards it; it would not have been helpful for your purpose that the Mother should support or indulge any movements coming from there. I can only gather from your

recent letters that the resisting part has revolted against the pressure you yourself had put on it and thrown up the impression that it would not change, that the demand on it was more than it could face and it would rather go and that in your depression you have identified yourself with its feeling and misinterpreted the Mother's motives and her attitude — a thing that in your clearer consciousness you would either not have done or else soon corrected the mistake. I hope that this clearer part of you which is the larger part will quickly reassert itself and give you back your former right vision and attitude. I shall do and do always what I can to help towards that and towards the psychic victory in you and your spiritual progress. Your departure and renunciation of sadhana is a thing which nothing in us accepts for a moment. (No date)

*

I do not see why you make such a big difference between the quarrels and jealousy over other women and quarrels and jealousy over other attractions not of a sexual character. They both spring from the same primary impulse, the possessive instinct which is at the base of ordinary vital love. In the latter case, as often sexual jealousy is not possible, the mind supports itself on other motives which seem to it quite reasonable and justifiable — it may not be conscious that it is being pushed by the vital, but the quarrel and the vivacity of the disagreement are there all the same. Whether you had or had not both forms of it, is not very material and does not make things better or worse. It is the getting rid of the instinct itself that matters, whether from the psychological point of view or from that of a spiritual change.

The one thing that is of any importance is the fact that the old personality which you were throwing out has reasserted itself for the moment, as you yourself see. It has confused your mind, otherwise you would not ask the question whether it is there still and how that agrees with my description of your aspiration and glimpse of turning entirely to the Mother as true and real. Of course, they were true and real and sincere and they are still there even if for a moment clouded over. You know well enough by this time that the whole being is not one block so that if one part changes all changes miraculously at the same time. Something of the old things may be there submerged and rise up again if the pressure and fixed resolution to get rid of them slackens. I do not know to what you refer when you speak of the statement that — “Light and Darkness, Truth and falsehood cannot dwell together,” — but certainly it can only mean that in the spiritual endeavour one cannot allow them to dwell together, — the Light, the Truth must be kept, the Darkness, the Falsehood or error pushed out altogether. It certainly did not mean that in a human being there can be either only all light or only all darkness and whoever has any weakness in him has no light and no sincere aspiration and no truth in his nature. If that were so, Yoga would be impossible. All the sadhaks in this Asram would be convicted of insincerity and of having no true sadhana — for who is there in whom there is no obscurity and no

movement of ignorance?

If you have fallen down from the consciousness you had, it is because instead of dismissing the dispute with K as a moment's movement, you begin to brood on it and prolong the wrong turn it gave. It is no use persisting in the feelings that it creates in you. You have only to do what I have been trying to tell you: Draw back from them and, having seen what is lingering in the nature, dismiss them quietly and turn back again to the true consciousness opening yourself to receive once more the Truth that is creating you anew and let it come down into all your nature. (No date)

*

By will I meant this that there is something in the body that accepts the illness and has certain reactions that make this acceptance effective — so there must always be a contrary will in the conscious parts of the being to get rid of this most physical acceptance. (No date)

*

You say after several years you have not changed your nature. I only wish the external nature were so easy to transform that it could be done in a few years. You forget also that the real problem — to get rid of the pervading ego in this nature is a task you have seriously tackled only a short time ago. And it is not in a few months that that can be done. Even the best sadhaks find after many experiences and large changes on the higher planes that much remains to be done. How do you expect to get rid of it at once unlike everybody else? A Yoga like this needs patience, because it means a change both of the radical motives and of each part and detail of the nature. It will not do to say "Yesterday I determined this time to give myself entirely to the Mother, and look it is not done, on the contrary all the old opposite things turn up once more; so there is nothing to do but to proclaim myself unfit and give up the Yoga." Of course when you come to the point, make a resolution of that kind, immediately all that stands in the way does rise up — it invariably happens. The thing to be done is to stand back, observe and reject, not to allow these things to get hold of you, to keep your central will separate from them and call on the Mother's Force to meet them. If one does get involved as often happens, then to get disinvolved as soon as possible and go forward again. That is what everybody, every Yogi does — to be depressed because one cannot do everything in a rush is quite contrary to the truth of the matter. A stumble does not mean that one is unfit, nor does prolonged difficulty mean that for oneself the thing is impossible.

The fact that you have to give up your ordinary work when you get depressed does not mean that you have not gained a steadiness — it only means that the steadiness you have gained is not a personal virtue but depends on your keeping the

contact with the Mother — for it is her force that is behind it and behind all progress you can make. Learn to rely on that Force more, to open to it more completely and to seek spiritual progress even not for your own sake but for the sake of the Divine — then you will go on more smoothly. Get the psychic opening in the most external physical consciousness. That and not despondency is the lesson you ought to draw from your present adverse experience. (No date)

*

Your nature like that of almost everybody has been largely ego-centric and the first stages of the sadhana are with almost everybody ego-centric. The main idea in it is always one's own sadhana, one's own endeavour, one's own development, perfection, siddhi. It is inevitable for most, for without that personal endeavour there would not be sufficient will or push to bring about the first necessary changes. But none of these things — development, perfection or siddhi — can really come in any degree of completeness or unmixed finality until this ego-centric attitude changes into the God-centric, until it becomes the development, perfection, siddhi of the Divine Consciousness, its will and its instrument in this body — and that can only be when these things become secondary, and bhakti for the Divine, love for the Divine, oneness with the Divine in consciousness, will, heart and body, become the sole aim — the rest is then only the fulfilment of the Divine Will by the Divine Power. This attitude is never difficult for the psychic, it is its natural position and feeling, and whenever your psychic was in front, you had it in your central consciousness. But there were the outer mind, vital and physical that brought in their mixture of desire and ego and there could be no effective liberation in life and action till these were liberated. The thinking mind and higher vital can accept without too much difficulty, but the difficulty is with the lower vital and physical and especially with the most external parts of them; for these are entirely creatures of habit, recurring movement, an obstinate repetition of the same movement always. This habit is so blind and obstinate and persistent as to seem almost invincible, especially when it is used at a juncture like this by the Forces of Ignorance as their last refuge or point of attack. But the apparent invincibility is not true. The most ego-centric can change and do change by the psychic principle becoming established in the external nature. That it can be done only by the Divine Grace and Power is true (that is true of all spiritual change) — but with the full consent of the being. As it was done in the inner being, so it can be done in the outer; give the adhesion of your full will and faith and, whatever the difficulty, it will be done. (No date)

*

That is good progress. As for the resisting part, there is for a long time a resistance from some layer of the physical — one layer opens, another beneath remains obscure. But if the pressure from above is continuous, the resistance gets exhausted at last.

The stillness of which you speak in the meditation is a very good sign. It comes usually in that pervading way when there has been sufficient purification to make it possible. On the other side, it is itself the beginning of the laying of the foundations of the higher spiritual consciousness.

I think you are right about the change coming in many. Still chequered by remnants and returns of the old nature, it is proceeding. (No date)

*

All that you write in your letter is perfectly sound and true. The very object of Yoga is a change of consciousness — it is by getting a new consciousness or by unveiling the hidden consciousness of the true being within and progressively manifesting and perfecting it that one gets first the contact and then the union with the Divine. Ananda and bhakti are part of that deeper consciousness, and it is only when one lives in it and grows in it that ananda and bhakti can be permanent. Till then, one can only get experiences of ananda and bhakti, but not the constant and permanent state. But the state of bhakti and constantly growing surrender does not come to all at an early stage of the sadhana; many, most indeed, have a long journey of purification and tapasya to go through before it opens, and experiences of this kind, at first rare and interspaced, afterwards frequent, are the landmarks of their progress. It depends on certain conditions, which have nothing to do with superior or inferior Yoga capacity, but rather with a predisposition in the heart to open, as you say, to the Sun of the divine Influence. (No date)

*

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

*

I am closing the chapter of Sri Aurobindo's letters to me with these last three letters. I am adding them with a view to demonstrate how Sri Aurobindo used to write in detail even on trivial things in spite of his shortage of time. On the one hand he was busy with composing his great epic Savitri, while on the other he was writing these letters with such care and affection. Among these three letters, the first one needs special mention. The two ladies referred to in it were our relatives and had come to visit the Ashram for the first time, they were not residents. Sri Aurobindo has here given precise instructions even for trifling things like getting milk for them. He used to write many such letters to various sadhaks and sadhikas, from which we get glimpses of his personality as well as that of the Mother and catch hints of what they truly were.

— Sahana

For today we told Dyuman to supply the milk for Nolina; but in future it is better to get it from Amrita direct from the Dairy. The simplest thing would be for one of Maya's servants to take the milk for both at 5 o'clock or thereabouts and leave Nolina's at her place on the way to Maya's. We are informing Amrita. (10.2.33)

*

This book, returned herewith, is not in my opinion suitable for the purpose. The author wanted to make it look like a translation of a romance in Sanskrit and he has therefore made the spirit and even partly the form of the language more Indian than English. It is not therefore useful for getting into the spirit of the English language. Indians have naturally in writing English a tendency to be too coloured, sometimes flowery, sometimes rhetorical and a book like this would increase the tendency. One ought to have in writing English a style which is at its base capable of going to the point, saying with a simple and energetic straightforwardness what one means to say so that one can add grace of language without disturbing this basis. Arnold is a very good model for this purpose. Emerson less, but his book will also do.

It is surely better to write your own thoughts. The exercise of writing in your own words what another has said or written is a good exercise or test for accuracy, clear understanding of ideas, an observant intelligence; but your object is, I suppose, to be able to understand English and express *yourself* in good English. (16.5.32)

*

Why do you walk about on your bad foot? Keep it at rest; bathe it in hot water with the salts Mother is sending you. You must keep it 20 minutes in the water. A full tablespoon of salt in a full basin of water, the whole part paining must be bathed twice a day. It remains hot each time for 15 to 20 minutes. (No date)

(Concluded)

SAHANA

(At the Feet of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo,
translated by Nirodbaran from the original Bengali)

The first necessity of preparation is the purifying of all the members of our being; especially, for the path of knowledge, the purification of the understanding, the key that shall open the door of Truth; and a purified understanding is hardly possible without the purification of the other members. An unpurified heart, an unpurified sense, an unpurified life confuse the understanding, disturb its data, distort its conclusions, darken its seeing, misapply its knowledge; an unpurified physical system clogs or chokes up its action. There must be an integral purity. Here also there is an interdependence; for the purification of each member of our being profits by the clarifying of every other, the progressive tranquillisation of the emotional heart helping for instance the purification of the understanding while equally a purified understanding imposes calm and light on the turbid and darkened workings of the yet impure emotions.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Synthesis of Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 309)

THE CANCELLATION OF THE OVERMENTAL CREATION

In 1926, I had begun a sort of overmental creation, that is, I had brought the *Overmind* down into matter, here on earth (miracles and all kinds of things were beginning to happen). I asked all these gods to incarnate, to identify themselves with a body (some of them absolutely refused). Well, with my very own eyes I saw Krishna, who had always been in rapport with Sri Aurobindo, consent to come down into his body. It was on November 24th, and it was the beginning of ‘Mother’.

Yes, in fact I wanted to ask you what this realisation of 1926 was.

It was this: Krishna consented to descend into Sri Aurobindo’s body — to be *fixed* there; there is a great difference, you understand, between incarnating, being fixed in a body, and simply acting as an influence that comes and goes and moves about. The gods are always moving about, and it’s plain that we ourselves, in our inner beings, come and go and act in a hundred or a thousand places at once. There is a difference between just coming occasionally and accepting to be permanently tied to a body — between a permanent influence and a permanent presence.

These things have to be experienced.

But in what sense did this realisation mark a turning point in Sri Aurobindo’s sadhana?

No, the phenomenon was important *for the creation*; he himself was rather indifferent to it. But I did tell him about it.

It was at that time that he decided to stop dealing with people and retire to his room. So he called everyone together for one last meeting. Before then, he used to go out on the verandah every day to meet and talk with all who came to see him . . . I was living in the inner rooms and seeing no one; he was going out onto the verandah, seeing everyone, receiving people, speaking, discussing — I saw him only when he came back inside.

After a while, I too began having meditations with people. I had begun a sort of ‘overmental creation’, to make each god descend into a being — there was an extraordinary upward curve! Well, I was in contact with these beings and I told Krishna (because I was always seeing him around Sri Aurobindo), “This is all very fine, but what I want now is a creation on earth — you must incarnate.” He said, “Yes.” Then I saw him — I saw him with my own eyes (inner eyes, of course), join himself to Sri Aurobindo.

Then I went into Sri Aurobindo's room and told him, "Here's what I have seen." "Yes, I know!" he replied. (*Mother laughs*) "That's fine; I have decided to retire to my room, and you will take charge of the people. You take charge." (There were about thirty people at the time.) Then he called everyone together for one last meeting. He sat down, had me sit next to him, and said, "I called you here to tell you that, as of today, I am withdrawing for purposes of sadhana, and Mother will now take charge of everyone; you should address yourselves to her; she will represent me and she will do all the work." (He hadn't mentioned this to me!) — (*Mother bursts into laughter*)

These people had always been very intimate with Sri Aurobindo, so they asked: "Why, why, why?" He replied, "It will be explained to you." I had no intention of explaining anything, and I left the room with him, but Datta began speaking. (She was an English woman who had left Europe with me; she stayed here until her death — a person who received 'inspirations'.) She said she felt Sri Aurobindo speaking through her and she explained everything: that Krishna had incarnated and that Sri Aurobindo was now going to do an intensive sadhana for the descent of the Supermind; that it meant Krishna's adherence to the Supramental Descent upon earth and that, as Sri Aurobindo would now be too occupied to deal with people, he had put me in charge and I would be doing all the work.

This was in 1926.

(*The Mother's conversation with a disciple on 2 August 1961*)

*

And so, when I saw all this, I remembered something that had happened. . . . I think I remember rightly, in 1926. Sri Aurobindo had given me charge of the outer work because he wanted to withdraw into concentration in order to hasten the manifestation of the supramental consciousness and he had announced to the few people who were there that he was entrusting to me the work of helping and guiding them, that I would remain in contact with him, naturally, and that through me he would do the work. Suddenly, immediately, things took a certain shape: a very brilliant creation was worked out in extraordinary detail, with marvellous experiences, contacts with divine beings, and all kinds of manifestations which are considered miraculous. Experiences followed one upon another, and, well, things were unfolding altogether brilliantly and . . . I must say, in an extremely interesting way.

One day, I went as usual to relate to Sri Aurobindo what had been happening — we had come to something really very interesting, and perhaps I showed a little enthusiasm in my account of what had taken place — then Sri Aurobindo looked at me . . . and said: "Yes, this is an Overmind creation. It is very interesting, very well done. You will perform miracles which will make you famous throughout the world, you will be able to turn all events on earth topsy-turvy, indeed . . ." and then

he smiled and said: “It will be a *great* success. But it is an Overmind creation. And it is not success that we want; we want to establish the Supermind on earth. One must know how to renounce immediate success in order to create the new world, the supramental world in its integrality.”

With my inner consciousness I understood immediately: a few hours later the creation was gone . . . and from that moment we started anew on other bases.

(10 July 1957, CWM, Vol. 9, pp. 148-49)

*

In the end, Sri Aurobindo told me it was an overmental creation, not the Truth. These were his very words: “Yes, it’s an overmental creation, but that’s not the truth we’re seeking; it’s not the truth, *the highest truth*,” he said.

I made no reply, not a word: in half an hour I had undone everything — I undid it all, really everything, cut the connection between the gods and the people here, demolished absolutely everything. Because you see, I knew it was so attractive for people (they were constantly seeing the most astonishing things) that the obvious temptation was to hang on to it and say, “We’ll improve on it” — which was impossible. So I sat down quietly for half an hour, and I undid it all.

We had to start over again with something else.

But I said nothing, I told no one about it except Sri Aurobindo. At the time I let no one know, because they would have been completely discouraged.

(*The Mother’s conversation with a disciple on 22 December 1962*)

*

I remember the day when Sri Aurobindo told me (we were still in the other house), he told me, “Yes, you are doing an overmental work, a creation of the Overmind, you will work heaps of miracles and the whole world will admire you! . . . But that is not the Truth we want.” I told you the story. Well, this memory very often comes to my aid. I said, “That’s right, we don’t care for the fanfare of popular victory!”

(*The Mother’s conversation with a disciple on 14 October 1964*)

*

Disciple: “You spoke about the brilliant period of the Ashram.”

Sri Aurobindo: “Yes, it was when Sadhana was going on in the vital and when it is that, everything is joy, peace, etc. and if we had stopped there, we could have started

a big religion, or something like it. But the real work would have been left undone.”

(*Purani*, Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo, 10.12.38, 2007 Ed., p. 539)

Compiler's Notes

The passages quoted above refer to a turning point in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's sadhana and work of transformation — the cancellation of the Overmind creation in order to attain the Supermind. In the talk of 2 August 1961, the Mother narrates the sequence of physical and occult events that occurred around the Siddhi Day (24 November 1926) when Sri Aurobindo realised the Overmental consciousness. In the talk of 10 July 1957, the Mother explains why the Overmind creation had become “outdated” after the descent of the Supermind on 29 March 1956. Hence her emphasis is on the birth of “the new world” — the supramental creation, as opposed to the “the old world” — the overmental creation which until now had been the highest achievement of mankind and given birth to all the religions. In both the talks, she speaks about the short and brilliant phase of sadhana in the Ashram around the Siddhi Day, when an overmental creation was manifesting under her close supervision. During this period, she says, the sadhaks had “marvellous experiences, contacts with divine beings and all kinds of manifestations which are considered miraculous”. Sri Aurobindo later termed this phase of sadhana as “the brightest period in the history of the Ashram”, though he advised the Mother to abandon it in order to “create the new world” based on the Supermind. He said that the Overmind creation would have brought great popular success and started “a big religion”, but would have left the real work of transformation undone.

Compilation and Notes by RAMAN REDDY

Love is the crown of all being and its way of fulfilment, that by which it rises to all intensity and all fullness and the ecstasy of utter self-finding.

Sri Aurobindo

(*The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 24, p. 546)

THE BRIGHTEST PERIOD IN THE HISTORY OF THE ASHRAM

Sri Aurobindo's Letter to Rajani Palit

I have answered the actual points in your letter separately, on the letter itself. But there is besides one thing that you must understand clearly. Things are no longer what they were before, when you were last here. At that time the Mother was bringing down a rapid (collective as well as individual) transformation and creation into the mental, vital and physical planes from above, by the power of a supramental Light and Force acting through the higher illumined mind and the psychic being. For that purpose she was calling down beings of a higher plane (like the one of which you speak) as an indispensable aid in that process. All went on well enough so long as the work was on the mental, psychic and higher vital levels. But as soon as it began in the lower vital, it appeared at once that the lower vital and physical nature of human beings (at least of those here) was too small, obscure and full of rebellious impurities to admit of so great a working. One after another failed in the test and you were among the first to fall. The creation had to be postponed, the process changed, and, instead of doing all from above, it became necessary to come down into the lower vital and material nature for a long, slow, patient and difficult work of opening and change.

This is the sadhana that has been going on here. Are you prepared for this opening and change which needs an absolute sincerity and a work in which there is no room for pretence, self-deception or a half-hearted will? You are very evidently deep down in your lower vital and material self, "cooped up" there; but you seem to have been fairly content and self-satisfied in this dark and unswept lodging. Talk of surrender or a mere idea or tepid wish for integral consecration will not do; there must be the push for a radical and total change.

It is not by taking a mere mental attitude that this can be done or even by any number of inner experiences which leave the outer man as he was. It is this outer man who has to open, to surrender and to change. His every least movement, habit, action has to be surrendered, seen, held up and exposed to the divine Light, offered to the divine Force for its old forms and motives to be destroyed and the divine Truth and the action of the transforming consciousness of the Divine Mother to take their place.

If you want to make any progress while you are here, you will first have to realise how much time you have lost and how far you are from this. Afterwards, you will have to see whether you can light a fire of aspiration strong enough to burn up all that is unclean and obscure in you. Then only can you speak of transformation of your lower vital nature.

29 September 1929

(CWSA, Vol. 35, pp. 275-76)

Sri Aurobindo's Letter to Dilip Kumar Roy

When I wrote in my letter about the supermind and the obstinate resistance, I spoke of course of something I had already spoken of before. I did not mean that the resistance was of an unexpected character or had altered anything essential. But in its nature the descent is not something arbitrary and miraculous, but a rapid evolutionary process compressed into a few years which proceeds by taking up the present nature into its Light and pouring its Truth into the inferior planes. That cannot be done in the whole world at a time, but is done like all such processes first through selected Adharas and then on a wider scale. We have to do it through ourselves first and through the circle of sadhakas gathered around us in the terrestrial consciousness as typified here. If a few open, that is sufficient for the process to be possible. On the other hand if there is a general misunderstanding and resistance (not in all, but in many), that makes it difficult and the process more laborious, but it does not make it impossible. I was not suggesting that it has become impossible, but that if the circumstances are made unfavourable by our being unable to concentrate enough on this thing of capital importance and having too much work to do of an irrelevant kind, the descent was likely to take longer than it would do otherwise. Certainly, when the supramental does touch earth with a sufficient force to dig itself in into the earth consciousness, there will be no more chance of any success or survival for the Asuric Maya.

The rest that I spoke of about the human and the divine had to do with the intermediate period between before it is down. What I meant was that if the Mother were able to bring out the Divine Personalities and Powers into her body and physical being, as she was doing for several months without break some years ago, the brightest period in the history of the Asram, things would be much more easy and all these dangerous attacks that now take place would be dealt with rapidly and would in fact be impossible. In those days when the Mother was either receiving the sadhaks for meditation or otherwise working and concentrating all night and day without sleep and very irregular food, there was no ill-health and no fatigue in her and things were proceeding with a lightning swiftness. The power used was not that of the Supermind, but of the Overmind, but it was sufficient for what was being done. Afterwards because the lower vital and the physical of the sadhaks could not follow, the Mother had to push the Divine Personalities and Powers through which she was doing the action behind a veil and come down into the physical human level and act according to its conditions and that meant difficulty, struggle, illness, ignorance and inertia. All has been for long slow, difficult, almost sterile in appearance. Nevertheless our work was going on behind that appearance and now it is again becoming possible to go forward. But for the advance to be anything like general or swift in its process, the attitude of the sadhaks, not of a few only, must change. They must cling less to the conditions and feelings of the external physical consciousness and open themselves to the true consciousness of the Yogin and sadhaka. If they

did that, the inner eye would open and they would not be bewildered or alarmed if the Mother again manifested externally something of the Divine Personalities and Powers as she did before. They would not be asking her to be always on their level, but would be glad to be drawn swiftly or gradually up towards hers. The difficulties would be ten times less and a larger easier securer movement possible.

This was what I meant and, I suppose I manifested some impatience at the slowness of so many to realise what is after all a logical conclusion from the very principle of our Yoga which is that of a transformation, all that is disharmonious in human nature being enlightened out of existence, all that makes for harmony being changed into its divine equivalent, purer, greater, nobler, more beautiful and much being added which has been lacking to the human evolution. I meant that things could move more swiftly towards this if the sadhaks had a less ignorant attitude, but if they could not yet reach that, we had of course to go on anyhow until the supramental descent came down to the material level.

Finally, you must get rid of this gratuitous tendency to despair. The difficulty for you has been created by the indulgence given to this formation I speak of; that finally dismissed, the difficulty would disappear. Progress might be slow at first, but progress would come; it would quicken afterwards and, with the supramental force here, there would be for you as for others the full speed and certitude.

18 October 1934

(CWSA, Vol. 35, pp. 330-32)

Compiler's Notes

The above two letters of Sri Aurobindo refer to what he called “the brightest period in the history of the Asram”. The first letter dated 29 September 1929 was written to Rajani Palit who was in the Ashram during this occult phase of the sadhana, which began shortly before the Siddhi Day and ended a few months after it, in early 1927. Hence the letter was not written during “the brightest period” but much afterwards when Rajani Palit came back to Pondicherry and expressed his desire to resume his sadhana. Sri Aurobindo found him still unready and wrote how conditions had changed since his last departure. He had come to the Ashram in October 1926, stayed through the Siddhi Day and left for Calcutta in March 1927, unable to bear the pressure of yoga. Sri Aurobindo then gives the reasons why the Mother’s attempt to bring down “a rapid (collective as well as individual) transformation and creation into the mental, vital and physical planes from above” did not succeed during “the brightest period in the history of the Asram”.

All went on well enough so long as the work was on the mental, psychic and higher vital levels. But as soon as it began in the lower vital, it appeared at once that the lower vital and physical nature of human beings (at least of those here)

was too small, obscure and full of rebellious impurities to admit of so great a working. One after another failed in the test and you [*Rajani Palit*] were among the first to fall. The creation had to be postponed, the process changed, and, instead of doing all from above, it became necessary to come down into the lower vital and material nature for a long, slow, patient and difficult work of opening and change.

The same causes of failure have been stated in Sri Aurobindo's letter to Dilip Kumar Roy written on 18 October 1934. It was "because the lower vital and the physical of the sadhaks could not follow" that "the Mother had to push the Divine Personalities and Powers through which she was doing the action behind a veil and come down into the physical human level and act according to its conditions". There was thus a general descent of the sadhana from the vital to the physical consciousness both for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as well as for their disciples — for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, because they worked at a universal level and for the entire earth-consciousness; for the disciples, because their lower nature was not ready to receive the higher consciousness and force. In December of the same year, Sri Aurobindo wrote the following in a letter to Dr. Naik, a Gujarati disciple who left the Ashram in 1938:

It is a little difficult to say whether all have to come down totally into the physical. The Mother and I had to do it because the work could not be otherwise done. We had tried to do it from above through the mind and higher vital, but it could not be because the sadhaks were not ready to follow — their lower vital and physical refused to share in what was coming down or else misused it and became full of exaggerated and violent reactions. Since then the sadhana as a whole has come down along with us into the physical consciousness.¹

We now come to the interdependence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's sadhana with that of their disciples. On the one hand, their yoga was rendered difficult by "a general misunderstanding and resistance" in the circle of sadhaks around them. On the other hand, the greater the spiritual and transforming power they could embody and bring down into the earth-consciousness, the more possible it became for the sadhaks to receive it. The "brightest period" came to an abrupt end not only because the lower vital and physical nature of the sadhaks "was full of rebellious impurities" but because the power of the Overmind was also not sufficient to change human nature. The following passage is again from a letter written by Sri Aurobindo to Dr. Naik in November 1933:

1. CWSA Vol. 35, p. 335.

The true defect of Overmind, the limitation in it which gave rise to a world of Ignorance is seen fully only when one looks at it from the physical consciousness. . . . The difficulty comes when we deal with the vital and still more with the physical. Then it becomes imperative to face the difficulty and to make a sharp distinction between Overmind and Supermind — for it then becomes evident that the Overmind Power (in spite of its lights and splendours) is not sufficient to overcome the Ignorance because it is itself under the law of Division out of which came the Ignorance. One has to pass beyond and supramentalise Overmind so that mind and all the rest may undergo the final change.²

Thus Sri Aurobindo's sadhana was concentrated from 1927 onwards on what he called supramentalising the overmind until it culminated in the realisation of the Mind of Light about which he wrote in the *Bulletin* issues of August and November 1950. The higher the force he attained, the lower he could bring it down in order to transform, first the Subconscious and later the Inconscious Nature. After Sri Aurobindo's passing, the Mother took up the sadhana from the point where he left it,³ and the result was the Supramental Descent on 29 February 1956.



What does Sri Aurobindo mean by the Mother "calling down beings of a higher plane" in his letter to Rajani Palit? What are those "Divine Personalities and Powers" of the Mother (mentioned in his letter to Dilip), which she had to push behind a veil when the sadhaks could not follow her? The Siddhi Day is generally associated with only the descent of Krishna who represents the Overmind Godhead. But the descent of the Overmind during this period made possible the descent of other gods and goddesses too. The refusal of Shiva to descend "into the world as it is now" though he was ready to help, comes therefore as a pleasant shock to us.⁴ Likewise, Haradhan Bakshi's diary notation of 12 December 1926⁵ reports of the descent of "Indra in Sri Aurobindo's physical" and of Sachi Devi in the Mother. Pavitra also records the following conversation of the Mother on 12 October 1926 in which she speaks of the descent of the four aspects of the Divine Mother as described by Sri Aurobindo in the last chapter of his book *The Mother*:

Yesterday evening, he [Sri Aurobindo] spoke to you about the four aspects of the supermind, did you follow? Well, this white light comes from Maheshwari,

2. CWSA Vol. 35, pp. 145-46.

3. CWM, Vol. 13, p. 63.

4. Conversation with a disciple on 2 August 1961.

5. Unpublished Diary of Haradhan Bakshi.

it is a light of knowledge and purity. It is she who is the great preparer of the yoga. When that is ready generally an aspect of power (Mahakali) descends, which takes a personal form, whilst the force of Maheshwari is impersonal (at least here). I was expecting to see this descent. But the work of preparation was long — of assimilation and cutting off from the exterior; that took almost the whole time. At the same time a third ring separated you as though to cut you off from the world where you lived externally and also from your past. This force comes from Mahalakshmi.⁶

The sadhaks too came in touch with various godheads and cosmic powers corresponding to their higher and divine nature. Nolini Kanta Gupta writes,

The Mother's endeavour at that time was for a new creation, the creation here of a new inner world of the Divine Consciousness. She had brought down the Higher Forces, the Gods, into the earth atmosphere, into our inner being and consciousness. A central feature of that endeavour was that she had placed each of us in touch with his inner godhead. Every individual has what may be described as his line of spiritual descent and also ascent; for into each individual consciousness has come down from the supreme Maha Shakti an individual divine being, a particular godhead following a particular line of manifestation of divine power, vibhuti.⁷

Thus Haradhan Bakshi came in touch with Twashtri, the divine "Fashioner of things" or the "creator of perfect forms". Rajani Palit was told by the Mother that Kubera, the god of wealth, was descending in him and that he should surrender the power of wealth to the Divine. Nolini Kanta Gupta came in contact with Varuna who represents vastness and purity.⁸ During the collective meditations, Purushottam identified himself in a state of trance with "Sesha-naga, the primal energy that sustains the material world" and became an instrument for the spiritual purification of others in a rather unconventional way — he pummelled and kneaded Champaklal and pulled his hair out under the supervision of the Mother. Amrita knew himself as "the ancient Brihaspati who was later on Moses" and wrote a few prayers under the name of Hermes, the Greek god. The following note was written by him:

I am the supporting energetic force of Moses, as he is my director from the psychic and occult worlds. I am six-headed, the six fountains necessary for any creation. I possess twelve arms to wield, to direct, to solidify, to shape the

6. 'Conversations with Pavitra', *Bulletin*, August 1971, pp. 48-52.

7. 'November 24, 1926' by Nolini Kanta Gupta, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 204-06.

8. A copy of the first edition of Sri Aurobindo's book *The Mother* found in his papers is addressed "To Varuna" and dated 26 March 1928 with the Mother's signature below it.

gushing waters of the six fountains. Brihaspati shouts the divine Verb, the ever listening Moses passes it on to me, I plant it in the immortal forms of Michael Angelo — it is then the creation begins to breathe.

It was as if an esoteric and occult plane had suddenly opened up for the sadhaks of the Ashram during this period. Not only they became representative of various aspects of the Divine, but the material world itself became a symbolic representation of unseen truths and powers. Flowers, minerals, food, scents, shapes and numbers, all acquired an inner and spiritual significance. For example, Amrita jotted down the following in this rarefied state of consciousness:

1. Ruby — the power of Rudra — the power over Earth.
2. Emerald — the power of Pasupati — the power over Life.
3. Diamond — the power of Balakrishna — the power over soul.
4. Sapphire — the power of Vishnu — the power over all spaces.
5. Pearl — the power of Shiva — the power over waters (of creation) in eternal Shanti.
6. Gold — the power of Sri Krishna — the power over bliss churned out of the manifestations.

The spiritual symbolism of flowers which later became so much part of Ashram life originated during this period. The first list of significances given by the Mother to flowers is in Haradhan Bakshi's diary notation of 23 December 1926. A few flowers and their significances are given below.

I saw Mira with many flowers.

- | | | |
|---|------------|-----------------------|
| (1) The red Jaba (open wide variety and not Jhumka) | represents | dynamic power |
| (2) The yellowish red Jaba | represents | psychic fire |
| (3) The rosy white Jaba | represents | consciousness |
| (4) The faint yellow silk Jaba | represents | anandam |
| (5) Sthala padma | represents | victorious love |
| (6) Rose | represents | consecration |
| (7) White yellowish rose | represents | psychic consciousness |

The soup ceremony was also started by the Mother around this time and the earliest reference to it is noted by Champaklal on 18 November 1926.⁹ There were other physical means by which she imparted her spiritual power to the sadhaks, such as the consecration of food before they took their meals and the sipping of fruit juice

9. *Champaklal Speaks* (2002), p. 69.

before offering it to them. Other extraordinary phenomena include the memory of past lives and the faculty of identifying oneself with the consciousness of others. Amrita, for example, regained “the continuity that exists unbroken among the three times” and knew himself as Pythagoras and Michael Angelo in former lives. The Mother came to know while meditating with Haradhan that he had been an occultist who had misused his powers in a previous life, because of which he had a deep-rooted obstacle in the vital in his present life. Haradhan himself got the power of entering into the consciousness of his fellow sadhaks and work on them directly as an instrument of the Mother. On 22 December 1926, he wrote in his diary:

1.30 to 2.15. As understood between us, my Mother and me, I worked under Her power and saw that:

(1) Mme Doraiswami’s mind was all right with everything good and nothing bad. I entered into her mental consciousness and expanded it upwards.

(2) Her psychic being was all right, some force was put in it.

(3) Then the hold of some other power was unloosened, though it tried to come back again and again. I told her through my psychic being, “Mother wants you” and moved her being towards Your holy feet.

(4) Then I surrounded her with the fire of purification so that she might not be seized by any other force again.

(5) As for her husband, he has some line of Siva in him. When he bowed down after the meditation, white light and the power of purification came down on him. When she bowed down, the blue light came into her mind. My Mother was all along in my Psychic being.

No doubt Sri Aurobindo told the Mother that she would become “famous throughout the world” and “be able to turn all events on earth topsy-turvy” had she followed the Overmind creation to its culmination. This is perhaps why Sri Aurobindo referred to this short and intense spell of sadhana as “the brightest period in the history of the Asram” and the sadhaks (not only others who came later on but even the same sadhaks) never seem to have regained this highly occult knowledge that was freely available to them during this period. At any rate, the very movement and direction of the sadhana changed afterwards. The short-term prospect of a popular success and the founding of “a big religion” was abandoned in favour of the long-term goal of the supramental transformation. The immediate result was a fall into the physical consciousness which Nolini Kanta Gupta so poignantly describes in ‘A Review of Our Ashram Life’:

The Gods withdrew, we came down with a thud upon earth — down to earth, earth to earth. We are still there, crawling, forward I hope, as best as we can.¹⁰

Sri Aurobindo henceforth stressed on the preparation and transformation of the lower nature by “a triple labour of aspiration, rejection and surrender” with the indispensable aid of the psychic being. The Mother (not only the universal Divine Mother but also the embodied physical Mother) became the central figure of his Yoga. It is not merely a coincidence that the message distributed by Sri Aurobindo on the first birthday of the Mother (21 February 1927) after the Siddhi Day (24 November 1926) laid out the basic conditions that the sadhaks have to fulfil for the supreme Grace to act in them.

These are the conditions of the Light and Truth, the sole conditions under which the highest Force will descend; and it is only the very highest supramental Force descending from above and opening from below that can victoriously handle the physical Nature and annihilate its difficulties . . . There must be a total and sincere surrender; there must be an exclusive self-opening to the divine Power; there must be a constant and integral choice of the Truth that is descending, a constant and integral rejection of the falsehood of the mental, vital and physical Powers and Appearances that still rule the earth-Nature.¹¹

The message later became the first chapter of the book *The Mother*, the publication of which was then expedited by Sri Aurobindo and made to precede the publication of the *Essays on the Gita* which was already in the Press at that time in Calcutta. The booklet *The Mother* was then distributed by the Mother herself to the sadhaks on the 29th of March 1928 at soup time.¹² It remains till date one of the most important texts of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga to which the disciples turn for guidance and inspiration.

*

When did the Brightest Period end?

Last night during my meditation I saw a cat — probably one of the Mother’s cats, the one which sleeps on the staircase — come and enter the room where I was meditating. But I at once opened my eyes. Would you very kindly let me know the meaning of this cat and why I opened my eyes?

10. *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Volume 5, pp. 70-75.

11. CWSA Vol. 32, p. 3.

12. Date from an unpublished interview with Dyuman; Narayan Prasad, *Life in Sri Aurobindo Ashram*, 1965 edition, pp. 116-17. The copy of *The Mother* given to Nolini is dated 26.03.1928 by the Mother (see footnote 4).

If it is the cat Bushy, she has some strange connection with the siddhi in the physical consciousness. It was she who ushered us into our present house running before us into each room. The change to this house marked the change from the sadhana on the vital to the sadhana on the physical level.¹³

7 July 1936

Sri Aurobindo

When did “the brightest period in the history of the Asram” end? The above letter of Sri Aurobindo to Rajani Palit, though on a trivial subject, provides us a clue as to when it ended. Sri Aurobindo says, “The change to this house marked the change from the sadhana on the vital to the sadhana on the physical level.” The change of house is the shifting of Sri Aurobindo’s and Mother’s residence from the Library House to the Meditation House on 7 February 1927.¹⁴ Now we know that “the brightest period” ended with the cancellation of the Overmind creation which resulted in the descent of the sadhana to the physical level. We can therefore conclude that the “brightest period” ended around the same time Sri Aurobindo and the Mother moved to the Meditation House.

Haradhan Bakshi

There is corroborating evidence from Haradhan Bakshi’s diary. On 26 November 1926, two days after the Siddhi Day, he noted the following:

The gist of what Shri Aurobindo told Barinbabu to let us know is this:

- (1) The power has descended into the unconscious means that it has descended there but we will have to work out the thing in the unconscious by the help of that power.
- (2) Mirra is my Shakti. She has taken charge of the new creation. You will get everything from Her. I give consent to whatever She wants to do.

But on 17 February 1927, which is only ten days after 7 February 1927 (the date of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s change of residence), the Mother told him:

He [*Sri Aurobindo*] has stopped the new creation for some time saying that certain things are not yet ready. I had the promise of perfect realisation and, according to that, by 21st February 1927 money should have flown in for the buying up of all the houses. But now that the creation is stopped, I am no more responsible in any way for the business already started.

13. CWSA Vol. 35, p. 274.

14. Haradhan Bakshi’s diary notation – see page 24 of *The History of the Ashram Main Building* for a detailed discussion of this event.

Note the expression “new creation”¹⁵ which was used during this period to refer to the “overmental creation”. (The same expression was later used by the Mother to refer to the supramental creation in her talk of 10 July 1957. But that was in relation to the overmental creation which by then was considered the old world.) Three weeks later, on 5 March 1927, there is another reference to the “creation” in Haradhan’s diary, this time with regard to the Mother’s attitude towards him when he bowed down to her after meditation:

As I bowed down, She [*Mother*] did not put Her foot on my head in the same way. She seems to be a little strict or held back. It may also be that She is gradually withdrawing Herself from Her creation.

There is more supporting evidence from Haradhan Bakshi’s diary to mark the end of the brightest period. On 6 December 1926, the Mother asked him:

Mother: “Are you aware of some being descending in you? He is Twastri, the creator of perfect forms. (I said, “Yes. I saw that.”) I will ask Him [*Sri Aurobindo*] to give for you the reference from the Vedas.

The Mother encouraged Haradhan to be in contact with and have more knowledge of Twashtri, the Vedic god, who was descending in him. But three months later, on 6 March 1927, Haradhan noted that the Mother did not want to give him anymore the Vedic references to Twashtri, which she had said she would get from Sri Aurobindo. He felt that she was now discouraging him from further knowledge of the Vedic god:

These four months I had been asking from Mother the references from the Vedas about Twasta, but without any result. Two things She Herself said She would give and did not: first, Her notes while She was in Japan; second, these references about Twasta.

15. The same expression occurs in Anilbaran Roy’s diary notation of 11 December 1926 after he returned from Bengal:

After the afternoon meditation Sri Aurobindo saw me for a few minutes. A remarkable change has appeared in his personal appearance – to me he appeared thinner, taller and brighter. I expressed my regret that I was away from Pondicherry at this critical time. Sri Aurobindo said that the unpleasant experiences I had in Bengal were necessary for me and that my absence on the 24th November would not affect me. He gave me three instructions. 1. A new world is being created here into which I am entering and I must now make a definite choice to give up all old world relations and ideas. 2. I must now make a full surrender to Mirra Devi who has taken up the work of **new creation**. 3. Nothing of what is going on here should be given out to the outside world, as hostile forces, coming to know of these, may try to frustrate them. He explained to me the particular power that was to manifest in me. I have a particular work (which is God’s work) to do but not in the old way. Henceforth I must take all my instructions from Mirra Devi. [*emphasis added*]

Then there was a normalisation of the quantity of food taken daily by Haradhan. On 31 December 1926, he wrote of a movement in his sadhana “towards foodlessness” and the Mother gave him permission “to give up the morning milk and bread and the 4 o’clock tiffin”. But on 28 February 1927, the Mother asked him to resume his usual breakfast, lunch and soup in the evening as she found his daily intake insufficient for the hard manual labour he did every day. At this point of time, Haradhan was daily providing hot water for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s bath and cleaning their rooms. It is interesting to note that around the same time Sri Aurobindo observed in himself the same movement of “Giving up of food,”¹⁶ which shows the effect of his sadhana on his disciples.

Lastly, and perhaps the most convincing of all evidence indicative of the end of the brightest period is the sudden upsurge of the lower vital in Haradhan, which is first mentioned in his diary notation of 21 February 1927:

Indra and three other gods were to come and work out the transformation in the body. It was in the vital physical in dream. Indra came and worked on my body and infused some force in it. But the operation was misinterpreted by the surface movements there (of Kama) and so the three other Gods did not come.

Haradhan’s difficulties increased in spite of the Mother trying her best to purify him and, in the months that followed, he practically turned hostile towards her. On 21 May 1927, he vehemently argued with her about his work and the Mother had to tell him that she would request Sri Aurobindo to write directly to him. We don’t know whether Sri Aurobindo wrote to him or not, but later in March 1929 he was given a stern warning by him and stopped from working in the rooms upstairs.

Rajani Palit

We now come to an autobiographical account written by Rajani Palit, who arrived in Pondicherry on 31 October 1926¹⁷ after the death of his wife and elder son. In the beginning, he was so eager to plunge himself into Yoga that he wanted to resign from his lucrative job as a Postmaster in the Bengal Govt. service. Sri Aurobindo however persuaded him to keep the decision pending and take long leave instead. But soon Rajani Palit found the Yoga too hard to endure. His vital being felt strained and suffocated and his lower vital craved for the normal satisfactions of life. Unable to bear the pressure of the intense atmosphere of the Ashram, he left Pondicherry in March 1927. The date of his departure is important because Sri Aurobindo connects it, though indirectly, with the end of the brightest period in his letter of 29 September 1929 to Rajani Palit:

16. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, pp. 1345-46.

17. Had visited the Ashram earlier, in 1923 and in 1925.

One after another failed in the test and you [*Rajani Palit*] were among the first to fall. The creation had to be postponed, the process changed, and, instead of doing all from above, it became necessary to come down into the lower vital and material nature for a long, slow, patient and difficult work of opening and change.¹⁸

Rajani Palit was “among the first to fall” after which “the creation had to be postponed” and “the process changed”. We already know that the word “creation” (or “new creation”) was being used by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother during this period to refer to the overmental creation. We can thus assume that the cancellation of the Overmind creation and the consequent descent of the sadhana into the physical happened around the same time as Rajani Palit left the Ashram. Unfortunately, we don’t have the exact date of Rajani Palit’s departure, but we know from his account that he left the Ashram between “a few days after” the 1st of March 1927 (the last date in his diary notes written at Pondicherry) and 21 March 1927, the date of his first letter written from Deoghar to Anilbaran Roy in the Ashram. As he went first to Calcutta and, after a short stay there, proceeded to Deoghar, the date of his departure from Pondicherry is likely to be closer to 1 March 1927 than 23 March 1927. In any case, he left about a month after 7 February 1927, a date that we have already associated with the end of the brightest period.

Anilbaran Roy

We end with Anilbaran Roy’s diary notation¹⁹ describing the ups and downs of his sadhana during the same period. Anilbaran Roy came to Pondicherry on 24 May 1926 and left for Bengal on 1 October 1926 at the sudden news of his wife’s death. When he came back to Pondicherry on 10 December 1926, he found to his great surprise that Sri Aurobindo had retired and the Mother had “taken charge of creating a new world”. But Sri Aurobindo made an exception in his case by seeing him for a few minutes and instructing him to henceforth surrender himself to the Mother. Anilbaran did so without any reservations and there followed a period of intense sadhana under her guidance. On 14 December 1927, he explained to her his programme of sadhana that consisted of concentrating for a few days on each of the four aspects of the Yoga — Faith, Surrender, Peace and Aspiration. The Mother agreed to it and suggested that he should give four days to each aspect. Anilbaran took exactly 16 days to successfully complete his programme, although he fell ill during the last four days. On 30 December 1926, after finishing his yogic programme, he noted down the following in his diary:

18. CWSA Vol. 35, p. 275.

19. *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, 1976, pp. 39-48.

I explained to Mother how it seemed to me that the four days' course my fever took came in the course of my system of sadhana for four days for every realisation. Thus the four days' fever was a four days' course of purification, though in a way it intermingled with my course of aspiration (by which, in fact, it was brought down), beginning a day late and enduring a day late.

Today I had no fever.

But the same Anilbaran, who was proceeding so rapidly in his sadhana, felt impatient "at the slow rate of progress" on 6 March 1927. When he asked the Mother about it, she smiled and said that she had asked Sri Aurobindo the same question and he had answered:

Transformation may take many years, though some work may be done in the meantime.²⁰

Obviously there had been a change in the movement of the collective sadhana. The stress was no more on pulling at the higher force, but on the preparation of the being and "the attitude of surrender and calmness". Note that the date of Anilbaran's diary notation (6 March 1927) is very near to the dates of the other examples given above, which I repeat below for the sake of clarity.

Summary

On 5 March 1927, Haradhan Bakshi noted that the Mother did not bless him in the usual way, as if she was "gradually withdrawing Herself from Her creation". On 6 March 1927, he was disappointed at not being given the Vedic references to the god Twashtri, who was descending in him during this period. We also noted that the date of Rajani Palit's departure from the Ashram (indicating the failure in his sadhana) was towards the beginning of March 1927. We can thus place the end of the brightest period between these two dates: (1) **7 February 1927** — the date of the change of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's house with which Sri Aurobindo associated in retrospect²¹ the descent of the sadhana from the vital to the physical level; (2) **the first week or the beginning of March 1927**, as noted in the diaries of Haradhan Bakshi, Anilbaran Roy and Rajani Palit. We can expect a further waning out of the brightest period after March 1927, and by the time Dyuman Patel came to the Ashram on 11 May 1927, it was all over and he only heard stories about it.²²

20. Unpublished Diary of Anilbaran Roy.

21. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter to Rajani Palit on 7 July 1936.

22. From an interview with Dyuman-bhai.

When did the Brightest Period begin?

When did the “brightest period in the history of the Asram” begin? The sadhaks started having “contacts with divine beings” a few days before the Siddhi Day. **On 13 November 1926**, Pavitra meditated with the Mother and became aware of the emanation presiding over his life.²³ **On 18 November 1926** the Mother saw in her meditation with Haradhan Bakshi that in one of his past lives he was an occultist who had misused his powers, due to which he had an obstacle in the vital in the present life. **On 20 November 1926**, Champaklal was told by Mother that the Being which wanted to manifest in him demanded complete surrender from him.²⁴ **Between 6 and 22 November 1926**, the Mother saw Kubera, the God of Wealth, descending in Rajani Palit, and she asked him to become the representative of the power of wealth in order to surrender it to the Divine. Thus we can trace the beginning of “the brightest period” to around two to three weeks before the Siddhi Day when the atmosphere of the Ashram was intense with the impending descent of the Overmind.

But prior to it the Mother had already started guiding the disciples and conducting individual and collective meditations for them. This happened spontaneously with the disciples asking Sri Aurobindo for her help and Sri Aurobindo sending them one by one to the Mother, as in the case of Champaklal, Rajani Palit and Haradhan Bakshi. In the case of Pavitra (a French disciple), who was more used to the idea of the impersonal Divine and thought that there was no need of intermediaries between the Divine and himself, Sri Aurobindo suggested to him with great discretion the spiritual benefit of Mother’s contact. Pavitra soon realised the necessity of a spiritual guide and found his meditations with her “infinitely valuable”.

Chronologically, the Mother came to the forefront of Ashram life from the **15th of August 1926** and took the full spiritual charge of the disciples after Sri Aurobindo’s retirement on the Siddhi Day, **24th of November 1926**. This is confirmed by the following reply of Sri Aurobindo to a disciple:

On what date in 1926 did Mother take up the work of the sadhana?

Mother does not at all remember the exact date. It may have been a few days after 15th August. She took up the work completely when I retired.²⁵

This can be corroborated by the diary entries of Anilbaran Roy and Haradhan Bakshi. **On 15 August 1926**, Anilbaran Roy offered his pranams to Sri Aurobindo on his birthday and then “for the first time entered into Sri Aurobindo’s room”²⁶ in the

23. ‘Conversations with Pavitra’, *Bulletin*, November 1972, pp. 36-40.

24. *Champaklal Speaks* (2002), pp. 69-70.

25. CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 29.

26. Sri Aurobindo’s room referred to here is presently occupied by the Stamps and Philately Department. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were still in the Library House at this point of time.

Library House where the Mother was sitting, and bowed down to her and meditated at her feet.²⁷ On the same occasion Haradhan Bakshi bowed down to the Mother and became aware that “there was something psychic working in and through his mind.” He later wrote that “the preparation was going on in a concentrated process from the day of the **15th of August 1926**”.²⁸

The growing regard for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother made the disciples call them or refer to them in their letters and diaries with more reverence and devotion. “A.G.” as he was referred to earlier (the initials of “Aurobindo Ghose”) became “Sri Aurobindo”, and “Mirra” became “Mother” in their diary notations. The change in the name happened first for Sri Aurobindo in September-October 1926 as indicated in the original and unedited notes of Purani and Haradhan Bakshi, while the name “Mirra” went through a longer phase of transition during which she was called or referred to as “Mirra Devi” or “Shri Mira Devi” until she became “Mother” towards the **beginning of 1927**.²⁹ There were of course exceptions such as Anilbaran Roy who immediately started calling “Mirra Devi” as “Mother” after his return from Bengal on **10 December 1926**.

The full manifestation of the Overmind creation resulting in “the brightest period in the history of the Ashram” however became possible only after the descent of the Overmind on **the Siddhi Day (24 November 1926)**. It seems to have reached its peak in the next two months, that is, **December-January 1926**, before being cancelled by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in **February-March 1927**. When the Yoga descended from the vital to the physical level, a few disciples such as Rajani Palit and Jaya Devi left the Ashram unable to cope with it, while the others such as Nolini Kanta Gupta, Champaklal and Amrita adjusted themselves to the new demands of the sadhana and continued to tread the long and arduous path of the transformation of the lower nature.

(To be continued)

Compilation and Notes by RAMAN REDDY

27. *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, 1982, p. 40.

28. *Mother India*, September 2005, p. 813.

29. For more details, read the article “The Mother Takes Charge of the Ashram” in the *Mother India* issues of September and October 2005.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

[Born on 19 June 1903, the Gujarati disciple Dyuman (Chunibhai Desaibhai Patel) joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram on 11 July 1927 at the age of twenty-four. From the beginning he worked in the Dining Room, serving rice and purchasing food. In 1930 the Mother placed him in charge of the Dining Room, a position he held for more than sixty years. He also started Gloria Land, one of the largest Ashram farms. When the Ashram Trust was formed in 1954, the Mother appointed him as one of the five trustees; later he became the managing trustee of the Ashram. Active till the end, Dyuman passed away on 19 August 1992 at the age of eighty-nine.]

Dyuman's correspondence deals largely with the management of the Dining Room from 1929 to 1937.]

Mother,

I had no intention of violating Your orders. The wiping was already finished by the time I received Your last order at 5 p.m. or so. Mother, I am at Your feet for any punishment for violating Your orders even unconsciously.

Why punishment, my child?

I never thought of such a thing! I never thought even that you had violated any rules. The whole thing is a misunderstanding.

You must know that I trust you and have full confidence in your earnestness and your goodwill. It is on that ground that we are working together and also that I let you know whenever there is something that has to be corrected.

Never doubt my love.

12 June 1929

*

Dyuman,

I quite appreciate the spirit in which you have made your proposals.

But there is one thing you have not quite grasped. And this you must get clear and keep in mind. The organisation of the Ashram is certainly not a fixed mental construction. It has been left plastic so that it may be a growing and progressive creation expressing more and more of the Truth.

But in this growth and progression every detail is fixed by my will; it is not chance or a fortuitous arrangement.

28 March 1930

*

Mother,

A lady sadhika is working with me. How should I behave towards her? Let me know in words, if You please. I have often put before You how I behave and work and You know all about me. When we work together, we forget all except the work for You and how to do it in the best way.

It is well understood that you must meet only for the work and at the time of work. If while working you forgot everything except the work it is all right. But always be careful to avoid all vital interchange.

5 July 1930

*

Mother,

I attended the French classes, junior and senior both. Now the question comes to me: Why not read Vedic hymns rather than French lessons? Whenever I go to the library, I do not find any books to read except Sri Aurobindo's and from them I read only on the Vedic hymns and The Secret of the Veda. No doubt I have taken other books, but hardly a few pages I have gone through.

I would like to know which is more near and akin to me, and I shall follow You.

Do not narrow your mind. You can find help not only in the "Veda" but in all the writings of Sri Aurobindo.

Why not learn French if you feel inclined?

1930

*

Dyuman,

The more you treat R like an invalid, the more he will become an invalid. He must not take all his fancies for needs and I do not see why he should not be submitted to the same discipline as the others.

He can get his meals earlier if he requires but he must not enter the dining room at will.

1930

*

Dyuman,

Don't starve yourself. You are working hard and need food. By not eating enough you would lose your strength and the work would suffer.

1930

*

All who serve the meals or prepare curds, etc. must, while they are doing this work, cover their hair with a cloth tied like a turban fully covering the head.

1930

*

Never kill lizards; they are most useful creatures. Without them you would be devoured by the insects.

1930

*

Mother,

When P handed the monthly Prosperity things to me I thought: "What will Mother do if the stock of toothbrushes is exhausted? Mother must have this one — it goes to Mother."

I have taken already my precautions. Since more than four months I am using my finger as a toothbrush and find it quite convenient. So I am sending back your toothbrush. If you have no use for it, you can return it to the stores.

2 February 1932

*

Mother,

Nolini brought me the typed message² sent by You. I have read it again and again. It is the strongest letter I have ever read. The last few lines about Your children's disobedience and disregard for You are heart-rending. Though the letter is not addressed to me and though You do not make me responsible for this dramatic catastrophe, I cannot shirk it.

The letter is not from me but from Sri Aurobindo.

Last night I was going to write to You: how can I pay You the price of the 250 items?

I do not see why you should have to pay for it. We do not consider you in fault.

I will give You the easy chair and iron bed, and if that does not suffice I will send to You the trunk with some clothes given by You.

Send me *nothing*. I want nothing. Keep the bed, the chair, the box and the rest.

My first thought was to give up half my measure of milk for one year.

Certainly not. I find that already you are not eating enough and would like you to eat rather *more* than less.

2. This may have been the typed message:

The Mother had arranged for the good order of the distribution of dishes and their return. X was to arrange for all necessary facilities demanded by Y, Y was to be responsible for the good order of the work, and for that he was to have full control; for if he has not full control, he cannot be held responsible and good order becomes impossible. All who are concerned with this work ought to report everything that is necessary to report to Y and help him to control this work; but it seems that no one is willing to do according to the Mother's arrangement and orders and each wants to be a law to himself. In that case there is no use in making complaints about insufficient dishes or anything else of the kind to the Mother. We refuse to issue more dishes under the present conditions. Already in a single year more than 250 items belonging to the dining-room have been broken, lost, stolen, taken away without authorisation by the sadhaks for their private use or have otherwise vanished. Indiscipline, carelessness, regard for one's own convenience only, disobedience to rules, utter disregard for economy or proper use or safeguarding of the property of the Asram are responsible for this result. It is no use any farther protecting the sadhaks against the results of their own wilful disorders or providing them with means of life which they show no will or fitness to use rightly. They must go on as best they can with what is there, sufficient or insufficient, so long as it lasts.

I do not know what you mean by these phrases about jumping into disorder or all being the Mother's children. The Mother gives no sanction to disorder, and it is idle for the sadhaks to sentimentalise about being children of the Mother and at the same time constantly to disregard and disobey her.

3 February 1932

— Sri Aurobindo
(CWSA, Vol. 32, pp. 377-78)

Mother, disregard for You? Disobedience to You?

I never said that you did disregard or disobey me.

If this is the case, it is all the same whether I am here or elsewhere. Why pain You by gross darkness?

This is quite absurd. I am not pained.

No longer will I trouble You with writing "Thy child".

I never objected to your writing "Thy child" and expect you to do it always.

Mother, let Your Will alone be fulfilled.

This is quite good. And I trust you will do it.

In fact I sent the letter to you so that you might use it to show to people if necessary.

4 March 1932

*

Dyuman,

I find no good use for this lace except to give it back to you. When holding your hair together, it will remind you of the Divine's unifying action and thus be of double use.

28 March 1932

*

Mother,

This bowl has been put on the fire by somebody and is now spoiled. Who this somebody is, is not known.

It is a great pity, because the best punishment would be to serve his or her meal in the bowl!

7 June 1932

*

Dyuman,

Why were you so serious, almost grave, at pranam this morning? Is it that you thought V was occupying your place? It is not so. He had asked permission to sit behind you after I had come, and we had agreed.

Let no cloud come over you and keep our love ever present in your heart.

19 August 1932

*

My child,

Be quiet, peaceful, strong. Nothing is impossible with a quiet strength, the Divine's Grace and the Mother's blessings.

With love

22 November 1932

*

Dyuman,

For the bread problem. All those who want their usual number of slices must be given them, part from the Ashram bread and the complement from bazaar bread.

I suppose you will easily calculate how many bazaar loaves are to be bought daily.

P.S. You can scarcely ask people to take rice instead of bread as those who take bread generally do not want rice.

3 December 1932

*

Dyuman,

I cannot understand why you have got so upset, for I have been conscious of nothing unusual except a little more concentration because of S's accident (she has broken her arm by falling yesterday). I found it quite good that you should sit at that place so long as she cannot occupy it herself, and I have no objection to your removing my sandals.

So cast away all disturbance and recover your normal balance.

With my blessings

December 1932

*

My child,

I have an impression that the visitors are arriving with a big appetite and that they may find our dishes somewhat small. Consequently I have increased the quantity on the “menu”.

14 February 1933

*

My child,

I hear that your clothes are torn — this won't do. But I have no long dhoties. I am sending you 2 pairs of shomins. Instead of cutting in the middle (where there is the mark), cut them as long as needed to wear them as dhoties and with the bit left I suppose you can have a punjabi made by Kanai. This will do for the moment until I receive the new cloth.

16 February 1933

*

My child,

Why were you so serious at pranam?

Don't let anything from outside approach and disturb you. What people think, do or say is of little importance. The only thing that counts is your relation with the Divine — and from that point of view you have nothing to worry about, all is all right.

And never forget that we love and trust you.

30 April 1933

*

My dear Mother,

P and I went to Aroumé [the Ashram Dining Room] today. We find the existing kitchen an impossibility. To change it we will have to spend time and money. We can put the kitchen somewhere else, as I am showing here in the plan.

The room which has an opening towards the Governor's house can be turned into a kitchen. It has tiles on the roof and glass ventilators for light. We can put the ovens there. As for the smoke from the ovens, we can put up a chimney. The food we can carry to the serving room. The kitchen vessels we can wash in the kitchen itself.

Unfortunately the latrines are next to the kitchen and also a new gutter. We can close the gutter and cut off the view of the latrines by planting a creeper.

I do not think this idea is at all practicable.

First, the greatest objection is the neighbourhood of the latrines; to hide them or to shut a gutter does not prevent the flies from going freely from the latrines to the food in the kitchen.

Second, X was very particular that we should not misuse these rooms. I do not think he would agree to turn them into a kitchen.

Third, to put a kitchen just under the windows of the Government House, sending them directly all the smoke of our cooking, is just the best way to get us into trouble.

Fourth, it is a long way to carry the food to the serving place.

Fifth, there are many other minor inconveniences.

Sixth, you cannot judge the existing kitchen so long as it is not thoroughly cleaned and repaired. If it is not sufficiently ventilated and if there is not enough light, we can put in a new window. I am ready to do it at my own expense if necessary.

4 December 1933

*

(Around this time Dyuman suffered a nervous breakdown due to overwork. It took him about four months to recover. A number of letters in the following pages refer to this condition of nervous exhaustion.)

My child,

I would like you to go to bed now. I am sending you a hot tisane which is expected to make you perspire.

As I am not sure that you have something sufficiently warm to cover yourself in bed, I am sending you a cover.

18 December 1933

*

Mother,

About the Aroumé accounts, I shall make one account for You and one for the accountant.

You can ask S to lend you his books, it will help you to learn the words; 3 books only: *menu, entrées, sorties*. The description of all that has been used in each dish is not necessary.

c. 24 December 1933

*

Mother,

Instead of so many books, can there not be less?

If you put *entrées* and *sorties* in the same book, you can have two books only; but it must be very clear, so that I can see at the first glance.

c. 24 December 1933

*

My dear Mother,

There is no peace and happiness in my being. What has happened to me? It was seven years ago, when I was in the hospital, that I took the final decision: I am here to live at the Feet of Sri Aurobindo; it is my only life.

Today there is a great struggle in me. I hope it will not lead to misery, trouble, peril and difficulty. My body falls down as if it is dying. Mother, my heart is completely broken today.

What has happened? I am anxious and want to know. Anything wrong physically? Of which heart are you speaking? and why? Is there any exterior cause for that? My love is anxious and wants to know all about it.

25 December 1933

*

My Mother,

Bless me with Thy Love. I now go out of this compound for the Divine Work, protected and surrounded by Your Love and the Love of my beloved Sri Aurobindo.

My Mother, though I shall be working outside, I am ever Thine, ever at Thy Feet.

Why do you speak of working *outside*? Do you think that any house of the Ashram is outside our atmosphere, even the most material? Here or there it is just the same: I am always close to you, helping you, supporting you, working through you, and it is not a few yards more or less which can make any difference for that.

4 January 1934

*

Mother,

S wants to work with me. But she will not be able to bear this atmosphere and will easily get upset. I am altogether a different person in my room than when I am at work. She had not seen me at work: quite upright, honest and full of justice. She must become more quiet and calm and get firmly established in the faith before we give her any work.

I fully agree with you in this. She is not yet ready for that, and it is better if she goes on with her paddy work. She might be given separate work from the two others to avoid all clash.

10 January 1934

*

Let a wide and deep peace settle in you, my child; it will give you rest. As far as your body is concerned, I wish that you should go to the market in a push rickshaw. I am sure that it will do much to lessen the burden of fatigue. Some monthly arrangement can easily be made with a pushwalla and it will be, on the whole, quite an insignificant increase of expense. It seems that the peon who worked some time for the Ashram could do that. You might speak to him and find a suitable arrangement.

10 January 1934

*

Mother,

I am quietly happy. Now I go to bed at 10.20, to rise in the morning with Your Vastness and Peace.

If it were possible for you to go to bed 20 minutes earlier, I would like it very much.

13 January 1934

*

Mother,

I have learned that N is not remaining healthy at present. I would like to stop her work at least for a week, to let her rest.

I do not think it advisable to stop altogether N's work. It would not be good for her. If she feels tired she may do less, but she must remain occupied.

22 January 1934

*

Mother,

S wanted to spend 20 minutes with me. That is not possible — not even 10 minutes regularly at a fixed hour. It is nothing but a vital demand on me; I cannot satisfy that. I can give her 2 or 3 minutes and not more.

It is not at all advisable to let her encroach like that upon you. The more she will get, the more she will want and finally, if she could, she would swallow you up.

Mother, I do not think that I should go to call her; if she comes to me I shall receive her. What do You say?

Keep quiet. You must not go to call her. She wants to annex you; this cannot be tolerated.

c. 25 January 1934

*

Mother,

I do not understand this Yoga. I know only this: To be one with the Mother and to live and work for Her; this is all.

Why are the Ashram inmates hankering after food? Why this big fuss over eating? Why are we breaking our heads due to vital desire, ego, pride, self-will, mental ideas and preferences? I do not follow all this and am unable to understand.

Mother, my heart was filled with such feelings; it was restless and unquiet again. But now I am quiet and happy. All these feelings have passed away.

This is very good. Indeed, if you want to do your work with a clear mind and discrimination, you must never get upset — whatever happens. This is a very important point.

26 January 1934

*

My child,

When I wrote “your work”, I meant “your working”, still more clearly “your carrying out of my work”. I know that your aspiration is to become more and more fit to manifest the Divine’s Will. That will never be forgotten or doubted. It is understood once and for all. And whatever I tell you to be or to do, it is from that point of view that I tell it.

27 January 1934

*

Mother,

Seeing the work of the Building Department at Aroumé, I found so many faulty repairs. [The disciple noted several defects in the carpentry, painting and masonry work.] Mother, we spend plenty of money, but get a very bad result. We do some work, we find faults in it, we break it, we redo it and it comes out as something else. Labour, time, money and energy are wasted, yet we do not get what we require.

For all that, the change can come only from within, when the consciousness of each and everyone will be changed.

28 January 1934

*

Mother,

These are the books I tried to write. Certainly I shall give You all the information in detail.

I thought you were writing the books and not sending them. That is why I asked for them. But if it is to add to a work already somewhat excessive, I do not want it. You will let me know only if there is something of importance.

Is there no way of arranging the work so that you might take a little more rest? It would please me immensely.

January 1934

*

Mother,

S, the new visitor, came for work today. She cut the vegetables, then did not even wait to clean the knife she used. At noon she is expected to stay up to the finishing of the cutting, that is, to put aside the peelings for the bullocks, to put away the knives etc. in the cupboard and do other such works.

I think we cannot ask that from her in the beginning, at least. If she truly wants to do work she will ask you what to do and how to do it, and then things can be explained to her, leaving her the choice to do or not to do. She is only a visitor and cannot be treated as the permanent members are.

4 February 1934

*

Mother,

Newcomers staying in the Ashram houses come to the Dining Room for food. But what about people staying outside the Ashram, in hotels and private houses?

Is it not easier to let them eat in the Dining Room as food cannot be sent to the hotel? That is why I said that they could come to the Dining Room. But it may be better to give them food in the late-comers' room to prevent their mixing too much with the inmates and . . . their bad habits!

7 February 1934

*

My dear Mother,

I am quietly happy, though I still have a cold and headache. This physical disturbance is sure to go away. And I am joining in the work. Mother, let me be out doing my work; it will be good for me. I defy all attacks on the body.

One day of rest from time to time is not a bad thing — but it is better to get rid of the cold and headache as soon as possible.

8 February 1934

*

Mother,

Often I get colds and fevers and am obliged to remain in bed for some time. During and after each illness my body becomes weak and faints.

How is it that I often have illnesses and my body becomes so weak? I feel that it is not as strong as it ought to be for Your work. I had high hopes and expected much from the body, but it has failed.

Your body is all right, but you are not giving it enough rest and food. I will have to ask you to be more careful on these two points because I want to make it strong and healthy, but regular rest and nourishing food are indispensable for that. I would like to give you one orange for orange juice every day. The best time would be when you rise. For that, if you give me a flask, I could fill it in the evening and send it to you before you go to bed and you would take it in the morning when you wake up.

9 February 1934

*

Mother,

The cartman could not get a coolie to help him transport the kerosene. Not minding the load, he dragged the cart to Aroumé. While going up the slope at the gate, he was thrown back with the cart. I was there just in time to help. He gave me back the two annas I had given him for a coolie. Seeing the work he did, I gave one anna to him, as he deserved it. I would have paid two annas to a coolie.

You could have given him the two annas.

10 February 1934

*

Mother,

I have asked R to see whether corn flour is available in the European shops. This will be the best corn flour. We can no longer give You Your food prepared out of bazaar flour full of insects, old and kept out in the open. I shall put an end to this business.

Yes, it is better to stop that bad flour.

12 February 1934

*

My Mother,

I hope that You will not hesitate to tell me anything required to be done during our crucial Darshan days.

Be quiet and confident, it is all that is required.

Blessings

19 February 1934

*

Dear Mother,

All kinds of bad suggestions about myself come and pass away; I have no time at present to pay attention to them, but every possible thing tries to enter: (1) I am bad; (2) I am fallen; (3) the body is a failure; I would like to give it up; (4) I have received nothing, progressed nowhere; and many more such things.

All this is mere nonsense and falsehood and nothing more. You do well to pay no attention to it.

22 February 1934

*

Dear Mother,

The fever is over. I am quite all right. Tonight I will drink the decoction again and I am sure I will get up 100 percent cured. My Mother, You are with me and our relation is now more close, more compact and more loving.

Certainly our relation is bound to become more and more close and strong and intimate.

Only your insistence is on *the work* — and my insistence is on *your health* first.

I have just heard somebody coughing. Is it you? It seems to me that, *until you are quite free from this cough*, it would be better not to rise before the sun rises; because these early morning hours are *very cold* and that helps in prolonging the illness.

My love and blessing are constantly with you, whatever are the circumstances.

3 March 1934

*

Dear Mother.

G has sent to me four annas through the doctor to buy oranges for her from the market. Shall I bring them?

Yes.

The doctor tells me that she wants to eat soft khichri. I said: "Let her eat sago conjee, bread and milk. If you go on giving food like khichri, there will be no end to it; people will go on demanding special things, you will not find people to cook them and then you will be in difficulty."

Your answer was *quite right*. This special diet for each one is an impossibility. You can send her the oranges, saying that I am sending them.

With love and blessings

5 March 1934

*

My child,

Why are you not taking honey and butter? They are both good for your health and will give you strength. It is light and wholesome food. For cough it is recommended to drink very hot milk sugared with honey (2 teaspoons in a cup of milk). Or the drink that P prepares for you can also be sweetened with honey.

What you say about my trust in you is quite true — and that in itself should give you the strength and the courage to do what is needed to get completely cured.

With love.

5 March 1934

*

My child,

Resist all depression, it is just the thing that would delay your cure. If this cold is not gone, I want you to take rest tomorrow (Saturday) and on Sunday I shall see you at 11 a.m. to set things right.

Our force and love are with you.

16 March 1934

*

(Regarding the disciple's physical condition. He had a headache, sore throat, fever, and suffered from general nervous strain and weakness.)

To get over this attack soon, one thing is needed: remain quiet, calm, peaceful. Do not get upset, do not fear, do not get restless or impatient. A quiet, firm trust in the Divine's Grace is the one thing needed.

The anxiety of the mind, the restlessness of the vital delay the cure more than anything else.

Our love and protection are always with you.

21 March 1934

*

Mother,

I feel hungry and I eat. My weakness is decreasing, I feel. The doctor told me: "Because you remain confined in your room, there is this weakness."

I am very happy to hear that you are all right. It seems to me that if you walk for some time in the garden, it will help to make you recover your strength.

With love and blessings

22 March 1934

*

Mother,

I walked in the sun from 10 to 11.20 a.m. It was all right as long as I was out in the sun, but no sooner did I enter my room than I began to get cold on the body. I remained lying on the bed up to 12.25. I found that there was fever in the body. I took some food, covered myself tightly and slept. At 1.30 I was completely wet with perspiration, yet the fever was still there and the shivering of the body. Again I covered myself, again perspired and after the third perspiration at 3.30 all was cool, no fever, no headache.

Today I am quiet, Mother. But a suggestion passed: Why write such things again and again to Mother?

It is better to write always whatever happens in your consciousness and in your body also.

What you had felt like fever and the consequent perspiration is simply the working of the force to throw out what remains of the illness in you.

It is good that you are becoming quiet. You must teach your body to be quiet also and to have full confidence. Then things will become all right.

With love and blessings

25 March 1934

*

Mother,

In the afternoon, I perspired so much that all the clothes on my body were quite damp; and like yesterday, there was that kind of fever, but after one hour's walk in the sun I was fresh and full of strength.

When You look at me from the roof, my body gets heated. Even when You start from Your room for the roof, it begins to heat up; the eyes burn and my whole body is as if on fire.

You need not worry, it is the fire that is pushing the illness away.

My well beloved Mother, at each moment You remind me of Your love and affection; and to You my difficulties do not seem to be so severe as they present themselves to me.

I am not at all anxious and find nothing so very severe about it. You have strained your nerves to the utmost and nerves require time to recover, that is all.

With love and blessings

26 March 1934

*

Mother,

When I started turning myself towards God 22 years ago or so, I never imagined that this could happen to me, not even when Sri Aurobindo openly questioned me: “Who has given you this Yoga?”

Now it has happened: that unfailing confidence and courage got shaken, and I had a breakdown. Yet in all this nervousness, my love for You, my faith in You and our relation is just the same, or rather, we have become closer. You have treated me like a sick baby — Your baby — and it is Your love that is curing me.

Yes, you have only to keep your faith unshaken and to be patient — everything will be all right.

We are not speaking of work just now, because we want you to rest quietly without any worry — but we have no intention of changing your work. It is waiting for you and you will take it back as soon as you are quite all right.

26 March 1934

(To be continued)

DYUMAN

(New Correspondences with the Mother – I, pp. 3-24)

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

(Part 39)

(Continued from the issue of September 2023)

Section 4: FORTHRIGHTNESS WITH THE MAHARAJA

In a biography of Sri Aurobindo which K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar was writing, he stated, “He was diligent and he was serious and he had, so it might have seemed to many, really settled down to a career of meritorious service.” Sri Aurobindo corrected it to:

“diligent, serious, etc.” This valuation of Sri Aurobindo’s qualities was not the Maharaja’s. He gave him a certificate for ability and intelligence but also for lack of punctuality and regularity. If instead of “diligent and serious” and “a career of meritorious service” it were said that he was brilliant and quick and efficient in work, it would be more accurate. The description, as it is, gives an incorrect picture.¹

Once while highlighting Sri Aurobindo’s brilliance, Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad, in an official note, went as far as to state that “he is a man of great powers”.² The Maharaja wanted to exploit his Cambridge scholar-cum-I.C.S. probationer’s inimitable talents to the fullest. Barin writes, “Very often a rider used to come in the morning with letters from the Maharaja’s secretary inviting him to the Palace for an interview with his Highness.”³ However, now and again, Sri Aurobindo resisted as he felt that his personal time was being sacrificed. This is apparent from a Huzur Order (Royal Order) from Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad on 6th August, 1902, which pointedly read:

His Highness is pleased to note that he found Mr. Ghose a very useful and capable young man. With a little more of regularity and punctual habits he can be of much greater help; and it is hoped that Mr. Ghose will be careful in future not to injure his own interests by any lack of these useful qualities.⁴

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

2. *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva, 1st Ed., p. 15.

3. Sourced from papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

4. *Ibid.*

However, shortly afterwards it was rumoured that the Maharaja was to give Sri Aurobindo a handsome salary increment. On 15th August, 1902, Sri Aurobindo wrote in a humorous vein to his maternal uncle about this impending promotion:

. . . There is a wonderful story travelling about Baroda, a story straight out of Fairyland, that I have received Rs 90 promotion. Everybody seems to know all about it except myself. The story goes that a certain officer rejoicing in the name of Damn-you-bhai wanted promotion, so the Maharaja gave him Rs 50. He then proceeded to remark that as this would give Damn-you-bhai an undue seniority over M^r Would-you-ah! and M^r Manoeu(vre)bhai, the said Would-you-ah and Manoeu(vre)bhai must also get Rs 50 each, and “as M^r Ghose has done good work for me, I give him Rs 90”. The beautiful logical connection of the last bit with what goes before, dragging M^r Ghose in from nowhere & everywhere, is so like the Maharaja that the story may possibly be true. If so, it is very satisfactory, as my pay will now be — Famine permitting — Rs 450 a month. It is not quite so good as Mejdada’s job, but it will serve. Rs 250 promotion after ten years’ service does not look very much, but it is better than nothing. At that rate I shall get Rs 700 in 1912 and be drawing about Rs 1000 when I am ready to retire from Baroda either to Bengal or a better world. Glory Halleluja!⁵

Interestingly, two-and-half years later, more precisely in March 1905, the Maharaja, in cognisance of Sri Aurobindo’s work, increased his salary to Rs 710.⁶

Subsequent to the aforesaid Huzur Order, Sri Aurobindo, in a letter dated 20th August, 1902, confirmed to Mrinalini Devi his promotion but also mentioned that the Maharaja was overburdening him with work. This somewhat explains the reason why he did not meet the Maharaja’s exacting standards “of regularity and punctual habits”. The letter reads:

. . . I have not been in very good health . . . I went out of Baroda to see whether change and rest would set me up . . . I suppose there was nothing really the matter with me except overwork. I am sorry I made you so anxious . . .

The Maharajah has given me Rs 90 promotion — this will raise my pay to Rs 450. In the order he has made me a lot of compliments about my powers, talent, capacity, usefulness etcetera, but also made a remark on my want of regularity and punctual habits. Besides he shows his intention of taking the value of the Rs 90 out of me by burdening me with overwork, so I don’t feel very grateful to him. He says that if convenient, my services can be utilised in the College. But I don’t see how it will be convenient, just now, at least; for it is

5. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 144.

6. See K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, p. 46.

nearly the end of the term. Even if I go to the College, he has asked the Dewan to use me for writing Annual Reports etc. I suppose this means that he does not want me to get my vacations. However, let us see what happens. . . .⁷

Sri Aurobindo would normally follow the rules laid out by the Maharaja. A disciple once told Sri Aurobindo, “You used to write very strong memoranda for the Gaekwad; you once asked him to go and give it to the Resident personally.” Sri Aurobindo replied: “That is legend. I could not have said so. Of course, I wrote many memoranda for the Maharaja. Generally he used to indicate the lines and I used to follow them.”⁸ Sri Aurobindo’s obedience to the Maharaja is also illustrated in a story he narrated to his disciples:

There was a tailor at Cambridge who used to tempt me with all sorts of clothes for suits and make me buy them; of course, he gave credit. Then I went to London. He somehow traced me there and found Manmohan and canvassed orders from him. Manmohan went in for a velvet suit, not staring red but aesthetic, and used to visit Oscar Wilde in that suit. After we came away to India, the tailor was not to be deprived of his dues! He wrote to the Government of Bengal and to the Baroda State for recovering the sum from me and Manmohan. I had paid up all my dues and kept £4/- or so. I did not believe that I was bound to pay it, since he always charged me double. But as the Maharaja said I had better pay it, I paid.⁹

As regards Sri Aurobindo being burdened “with overwork”, one gets an idea of his busy schedule when Mr. Clarke, the Principal of Baroda College, wrote to the Dewan on 26th March, 1903, about Sri Aurobindo’s absence from college. Addressing Mr. Clarke’s concerns Sri Aurobindo sent a note from Kashmir, dated 6th June, to the Dewan:

1. From the 22nd February I was absent on leave for a month. I had written to the Principal reporting my departure, but it appears the letter was not received.
2. Previous to that for two or three days I was called to the Palace on urgent work.
3. Subsequent to my return from leave I was taking the classes in the afternoon at my own house, as three-quarters in the morning were insufficient. I may mention that I was always in the habit of making my own arrangements with the students, which was the more necessary as I had several branches of work to attend to.

7. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 145.

8. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 568.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 624-25.

4. As I am now attached to the Swari in charge of the secretary's work during the Cashmere trip, I shall not be able to take the French classes this term.¹⁰

Sri Aurobindo had taken a month's leave at the end of February 1903 to reconcile differences between Jatin Banerjee and Barin in Kolkata and from May to August 1903, Sri Aurobindo accompanied the Maharaja to Kashmir. Once while alluding to his 1903 Kashmir trip with the Maharaja Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple about the charm and supreme beauty of Kashmir and referred to it as “a kind of earthly Paradise”. He wittily adds:

Unfortunately there was the over-industrious Gaekwar to cut short the Paradise! His idea of Paradise was going through administrative papers and making myself and others write speeches for which he got all the credit. But after all, according to the nature, to each one his Eden.¹¹

The “over-industrious Gaekwar” was a workaholic of sorts. His great grandson, Fatehsingrao Gaekwad, writes:

Hard work had taken toll of him like some habit-forming drug, and it was the immense load he carried as much as the loss of his [*first*] wife, that broke his hitherto robust health, as he was himself quick to realise. In October 1886, he writes in a letter to a friend: “There is nothing wrong with me in particular . . . but what I feel is the after effect of hard work I took arduously at first start.” Both the habit and its damaging consequences were to remain with him for the rest of his life.¹²

Diligence and seriousness was a characteristic that the Maharaja demanded from his talented employees so that he could extract the most out of them. There was an instance of a person who was invited for an interview for the post of a Reader to the Maharaja. He arrived punctually at nine in the morning but owing to a slip up on part of the Private Secretary it was not till well past twelve that he was brought to the Maharaja. The interview with the Maharaja went on past four thirty at which point he was informed that the interviewee hadn't even eaten his breakfast. “Happily for the man who was thus interviewed, he got the job; after all someone who could go on working on an empty stomach could be relied upon to be diligent.”¹³ This man was none other than Dr. G. S. Sardesai, who later became a close confidant of the Maharaja. About his first meeting with the Maharaja, Sardesai recounted:

10. See A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, pp. 56-57.

11. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, pp. 14-15.

12. Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, *Sayajirao of Baroda – The Prince and the Man*, 1989, pp. 112-13.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

His Highness directed me to a chair and began to dictate while pacing up and down behind me, and now and then asking me to read what had gone before . . . The dictation went on for four hours and I must have used up between 20 and 25 sheets of paper . . .

It was past four thirty in the afternoon when the Private Secretary came in and, very hesitatingly, revealed that I had still not had my morning meal. I was abruptly released with the admonition: “Oh, but why didn’t you tell me that you hadn’t eaten!”¹⁴

There is a similar anecdote which Dr. Manilal narrated to Sri Aurobindo and his attendants about the Maharaja’s gout:

Gouty people are usually good eaters. The Maharaja Sayajirao was also like that. He knew which things were forbidden to him but when they were served on the table, without looking this way or that, he would go on eating everything. Afterwards somebody would say, “Sir, you shouldn’t have taken those things!” and he would reply, “Oh, why didn’t you tell me?” (*Laughter*)¹⁵

Sri Aurobindo was aware that the Maharaja had his defects as is apparent in the following discussion:

DR. MANILAL: I remember he once lost his wallet. He had dropped it in the bathroom. He suspected somebody and charged him with the theft. When the wallet was found, the man came to the Maharaja and gave him a bit of his mind: “You are great people; I am your poor, small officer. So you could charge me with the theft. Even when I denied it you didn’t believe me,” etc. The Maharaja heard all that very calmly and didn’t utter a single word.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but he would take his revenge afterwards.

DR. MANILAL: Yes, of course. But to listen to the abuses so calmly is unusual for a Maharaja. He was a great man except for one or two defects.

SRI AUROBINDO: More than two! (*Laughter*)¹⁶

When the Maharaja ascended the throne the administrative machinery was quite inefficient and indeed he tried to practise patience. Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad writes:

At the subordinate levels of clerks, superintendents, village officers and such-like, most offices were still staffed by old hands inherited from the previous regime. One way would have been to dismiss the lot, but this Sayajirao refused

14. *Ibid.*

15. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 2, 2013, p. 1005.

16. *Ibid.*

to do. For one thing he knew that such a step would have caused severe hardships to thousands of public servants and to their dependants, and for another, he was prepared, indeed anxious, to give them a chance to learn their work. His way was to let an official go on till he had reached retirement age and only then to replace him by a properly qualified recruit. This meant that, for many years to come, he would still be bothered by doormats and door handles, but, odd as it may seem in anyone so young, patience was the one thing he seemed to possess in abundance. Seven years later he was to enjoin it on his *Khangri Karbhari* (Comptroller of the Household) Pestonji, in a letter, “We have to take men as they are. Reforms cannot be done in a hurry. Don’t push reforms . . . Patience is a great virtue”.¹⁷

Thanks to his industriousness and progressiveness, Sayajirao Gaekwad brought several radical social reforms to benefit the people, especially educational reforms where he introduced free and compulsory education for all school-going children, encouraged adult and women’s education, and ensured that every village had access to a library. Other reforms were “child marriages were banned, widows could remarry and bigamy was outlawed.” One of Sayajirao’s most significant social reforms was his success in eradicating untouchability (even before Gandhi returned in India to espouse its cause). He started mixed schools, and temples were open to all. A young Dalit boy, who had just finished school, desirous of further education, was taken to the Maharaja to ask for a scholarship. The Maharaja granted a scholarship of Rs 50 per month and said, “Well, what you must do is to pass on the benefits of your education to the others who suffer from the same handicaps as yours.”¹⁸ The young boy was none other than B. R. Ambedkar who not only finished college but went on to do further studies in America with Sayajirao’s help. When a disciple asked, “I find it strange that they have made the Gaekwar the President of the World Conference of Faiths. Is he a Hindu?” Sri Aurobindo remarked, “When I knew him the Gaekwar was a free-thinker without any religion; I don’t know if he has altered his views since. Formally, he is of course a Hindu.”¹⁹

The main occupation of the subjects of Baroda, as also in British India, was agriculture; now most of the fallow land in the state was allotted to farmers who were attracted with special incentives such as low assessment and loans on easy terms. Wells and canals were dug for drinking water and for crop irrigation. Medical facilities and public sanitation was improved upon. To the main railway line numerous branches were added and all major towns were connected by a system of roads. Rest houses were built at intervals along these roads for the use of travelling officials. And Baroda itself was rapidly developing as a modern city with broad roads, parks, and

17. Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, *Sayajirao of Baroda – The Prince and the Man*, 1989, p. 90.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 307.

19. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, p. 184.

handsome public buildings. The Government resented Sayajirao's policies for some of his innovative reforms were not considered in British India till then.²⁰ The States usually raised money from Customs duties, profits from post-offices where the Ruler had his own stamps printed, rents from the railways which passed through the State, and taxes imposed on subjects.²¹

The Cambridge don, Oscar Browning, “a scholar and writer of some contemporary fame, who expressed admiration for Sri Aurobindo's scholarship”,²² visited Baroda in 1902 as a guest of the Maharaja. Sri Aurobindo not only reconnected with his former Cambridge examiner-cum-admirer but also acted as his guide and companion in Baroda right till his departure where Sri Aurobindo personally saw him off in the train to Bombay. After his tour Browning wrote a book *Impressions of Indian Travel* where he exalted Sri Aurobindo, adding they formed “a kind of blood-brotherhood”. On Baroda he wrote:

Baroda offers to the traveller the spectacle of a thoroughly well governed Native State. It has of late years been sorely tried by famine, but the people seem happy and contented. Everywhere there are broad roads, well watered, pleasant groves, picturesque houses, the abode either of ministers or of members of the royal family. The Maharajah does everything for the comfort and amusement of his guests. They are met at the station by royal carriages, and conducted to a spacious guest-house, as it would be impossible for them to be lodged in the palace of the Gaekwar. They may stay as long as they please, and they are shown all the sights of the city.

There is a noble college, with ample, airy class-rooms, and competent English teachers; there is a hospital conducted on the best principles of modern science; there is a gaol in which the prisoners are, if anything, too well off, as the climate of India does not lend itself to solitary confinement. The palace of the Maharajah possesses an extensive library, chiefly of English books, which is open to everyone.²³

Sayajirao Gaekwad was a proud Indian, one who would stand his ground against the British rulers if he was treated disrespectfully, even if the offender happened to be the Viceroy himself. Of particular interest was the unpleasant dispute between Sayajirao and Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, 1899-1905. Curzon was a pompous man and never let slip an opportunity to show his superiority over his Indian subjects. In May 1900, Sayajirao set off to Europe on a long tour. Curzon, piqued that Sayajirao was making his sixth trip to Europe in thirteen years, asserted

20. See Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, *Sayajirao of Baroda – The Prince and the Man*, 1989, pp. vii, 111.

21. ‘The Integration of the Princely States of India’, *Mother India*, August 2007, pp. 738.

22. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, pp. 29-30.

23. Oscar Browning, *Impressions of Indian Travel*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1903, pp. 193-95.

his authority over the Princes by issuing “The Curzon Circular” on 27th July, 1900. In the Circular the Viceroy pointed out to his officials that the Native Princes had duties and obligations towards their subjects as well as towards their master and they shall devote their “best energies not to the pursuit of pleasure, nor to the cultivation of absentee interests and amusements.” Sensing that the Circular was especially directed at him, Sayajirao felt humiliated, especially since he was administering one of the most progressive and well organised States and his private life was free from the sort of scandal that Royalty everywhere and particularly Europe attracted. The effect of the circular was that Indian rulers wishing to go abroad were henceforth required to make a formal application to the Viceroy through their Resident and get his approval. This meant that any Resident could prevent an Indian ruler from leaving the country out of personal animosity or overbearingness. Sayajirao opined that the Circular “involved a serious alteration in the position and dignity of the Princes.” Lord Curzon, who must have heard of Sayajirao’s reservations about the circular, resented that the Gaekwad had a mind of his own. He proposed to visit Baroda State in November 1900 but the Maharaja had no intention of cutting short his visit to Europe and accordingly sent a message to his Dewan and asked him to receive the Viceroy. This added further fuel to the fire since Curzon felt insulted and cancelled his trip to Baroda. Sayajirao returned in January 1901.²⁴

Sometime around May 1902, Sayajirao again wished to travel to Europe and as per provisions of the “Curzon Circular” made an application to the Resident but the necessary permission was not granted by the Government. Subsequently, a protest letter to the Resident on behalf of the Maharaja was sent on 19th December, 1902, raising concerns about certain issues in the “Curzon Circular”. The draft of this letter may possibly have been written by Sri Aurobindo. G.S. Sardesai stated that Sri Aurobindo carried on the major part of the correspondence that passed between the Indian Government and the Baroda State on the delicate matter of the insult which Curzon felt because Sayajirao had held his ground.²⁵

Matters worsened on New Year’s Day 1903 when Lord Curzon held a durbar (a court) in Delhi to celebrate the succession of King Edward VII as Emperor of India. It was an act of self-aggrandisement for in absence of the King, it was Lord Curzon, as the King’s representative, who would receive the homage of the Empire’s subjects. At the durbar, instead of the customary bowing and passing on at the throne, Sayajirao made a short speech in which he “asked the Viceroy to convey to His Majesty the King-Emperor his hearty and loyal congratulations on his coronation”, thus demonstrating that he was paying homage to the King and not the Viceroy. Curzon must have been furious.²⁶ Barin has written: “Sayajirao was very daring” because once when the Maharaja met Lord Curzon he shook hands instead

24. See Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, *Sayajirao of Baroda – The Prince and the Man*, 1989, pp. 185-91.

25. Sourced from papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

26. See Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, *Sayajirao of Baroda – The Prince and the Man*, 1989, pp. 195-97.

of saluting him.²⁷

On 11th February, 1903, the Resident, on behalf of the Government, replied to Sayajirao's protest letter on the Curzon Circular, to which Sri Aurobindo drafted a rejoinder.

After writing this draft Sri Aurobindo sent a note on 14th February to an official: “I shall be very much obliged if you can kindly arrange for the letter to the Residency²⁸ to be seen by His Highness and approved tomorrow, Sunday, so that I may be able to leave Baroda tomorrow night. I am sending the draft to the Naib Dewan Saheb for his perusal and approval.”²⁹ The final version must have been sent under signature of the Dewan or Naib Dewan. We quote some excerpts of Sri Aurobindo's draft which, amongst other things, addresses: 1) why the protest letter was sent two years after the circular was issued, 2) the conduct of the administration during the Maharaja's absences from Baroda, and 3) the Maharaja's visits to Europe:

. . . I am to express to you His Highness' extreme disappointment that the Government of India has not seen its way to give a more favourable consideration to the representation, I had the honour to submit in December last. That letter expresses a hope that His Highness will now withdraw his objections to the provisions of the circular. It further makes certain remarks on the delay in sending the protest, the absence of His Highness from Baroda and its results on the administration of the State.

I am anxious therefore to place before the Government of India certain facts and circumstances relating to those matters and in explanation of His Highness' objections to the circular.

It must be admitted that the protest reached the Government of India more than 2 years after the circular was issued but in explanation of that circumstance I have to state in the first instance that no copy of the circular has ever been formally and officially communicated to His Highness' Government . . . Such occasion first arose in 1902 when in answer to this Government's intimation of His Highness' wish to proceed to Europe on account of ill health the Government of India required His Highness to conform to the provisions of the circular for the first time. This was in May 1902 about 2 years after the circular had been issued. Thereupon the protest was forwarded in December last. . . .

The next point which calls for an explanation is the implication clearly conveyed in the letter that no efficient administration of the State is possible during the absence of H.H. from Baroda. With reference to this I beg to submit that the administration of the Baroda State has been systematically regulated

27. See Barindra Kumar Ghose, *Agni-yug*, (translated from Bengali); sourced from papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

28. “Draft of a Reply to the Resident on the Curzon Circular”.

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

by H.H. so that it can be worked by his officers even when he is not present in person at the Capital. It stands therefore on a very different footing from unregulated administrations in which every detail is dependent on the personal will of the ruler. Further His Highness when going to a hill station during the hot months of the year takes with him his staff & office & the supervision of administrative work goes on with the same regularity as at Baroda. Indeed it is a fact that owing to better health & greater freedom from harassment more work is done by H.H. outside than at Baroda.

In the case of absences in Europe efficient control is no doubt more difficult but on such occasions H.H. has to delegate some of his powers & those matters which require reference to him can in these days of easy communication be answered in a comparatively short space of time & in urgent cases orders can even be obtained by wire. Incidentally it may be remarked here that in making arrangements for the conduct of administration during the absence of H.H. in Europe H.H. is not allowed a free hand which his close knowledge of the administration & the people & the intimate & permanent manner in which his interests are bound up with the good government of the State would seem to require. If greater freedom of action were allowed H.H. feels that more satisfactory arrangements could be made than are now possible. . . .

With regard to the discontent consequent on the injury to the administration referred to in your letter, I wish to state that His Highness' Government is not aware of any genuine dissatisfaction which has resulted from his absence from Baroda. It must be remembered that there are grievance mongers everywhere especially in a Native State . . . so far as His Highness' Government is aware no real injury has up to now resulted to the administration by the absence of His Highness from Baroda much less any discontent consequent on such injury. . . .

It need hardly be stated that in sending the protest nothing was further from His Highness' mind than either to challenge the policy of Government or to question their authority. What His Highness intended was to place before the Government of India his feelings and present for their consideration the effect which the Circular was calculated to produce on his status and dignity as a Ruler . . . the necessity now imposed of an application for permission in every instance leaves no independent power of movement out of India & gives room for the inference that in the estimation of the Government of India H.H. if left to himself cannot be trusted to enjoy this privilege in a reasonable & judicious manner. . . .

It may be that some Princes fell short of their responsibilities but a general rule which applies equally to all is calculated to discourage those who may have been devoting their whole time and energy to the welfare and good Government of their subjects.

. . . In your letter you calculate the absences of H.H. from Baroda at 7½

years since 1886, thereby probably implying that they were not moderate. Of these only 4 years were spent out of India & that too during the course of the 22 years of his rule. It would seem to H.H. that this was not an immoderate exercise of the privilege but possibly it is thought otherwise by the Government of India. . . .

These are some of the objections to the Circular which still hold good. His Highness therefore can only express his regret that the Government of India could not see their way to alter its provisions.³⁰

The British Government replied to the above letter in May 1903 following which Sri Aurobindo wrote a confidential letter, dated 14th August, 1903, from Gulmarg, to the Dewan, on behalf of the Maharaja who was then spending his summer in Kashmir. The letter again illustrates the Maharaja's verve to protect his freedom and dignity against the British authorities:

My dear Sir,

In reference to the answer of the Government of India to our protest dated the 2^d May, 1903, His Highness directs me to write that you must think over the whole matter and consider what is to be done. You must clearly understand that it is not because His Highness wishes to go to Europe often, as is popularly supposed, that he stands by his protest, for he does not care about the matter in that light, but because he is bound to defend a natural right which is being hedged in with humiliating conditions and that without rhyme or reason. It is under such circumstances your part as Minister to consult with M^r Bhandarkar, M^r Samarth and other officers on whose abilities and devotion His Highness places confidence, and if they merit that confidence, they should surely be able to suggest some course which would meet the peculiar difficulties of the situation, and advise His Highness in a wise and fruitful manner.

Yours sincerely
Aravind. A. Ghose
Secretary

P.S. His Highness wishes you to consult M^r Pherozshah Mehta *very confidentially* on the point, paying him his fees, as to what action he would advise the Maharaja to take.

A. A. G.³¹

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-58.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-59.

Although Lord Curzon expressed his reservations about the Gaekwad's administering his state, Baroda came to be recognised as a model state and its ruler, Sayajirao, as a well-travelled, cultured and well-rounded man with progressive ideas, perhaps the best known Indian of his times in Europe and America. The book *Kingsmen of the Century* — a publication of King's College, Cambridge — had referred to Sri Aurobindo as one of its notable alumni. It had also mentioned that Sayajirao Gaekwad as an “enlightened Maharaja”.³²

And after his visit to Baroda in 1902, Oscar Browning repudiated Curzon's argument that Sayajirao was spending too much time in Europe and was against the interests of his subjects:

The Gaekwar of Baroda is a very remarkable man. He is enlightened and hard-working, his whole heart is given to the improvement of his people. It has been objected that he spends too much of his money on palaces, and of his time in Europe. But neither of these charges was supported by what I saw in my visit. It is true that he has constructed, at the cost, perhaps, of half a million, a large palace outside the town. But his ancestors lived in a wooden house in the midst of the city, a place quite out of harmony with modern conditions. The palace at Baroda is not too large for the requirements of a court in which the women live in purda; nor is it better furnished than many English country houses. . . .

The Gaekwar's tours in Europe have always been conducted for the benefit of his countrymen. In these journeys he has collected a fund of knowledge and experience which has enabled him to govern his estates in accordance with modern principles, and the Museum of Baroda shows with what judgment the money which he has spent in Europe has been laid out. It is filled with objects collected from the civilised world, of literary, artistic, and scientific interest, best calculated to stimulate the curiosity and to improve the education of his subjects. It was a touching sight to watch the crowds of natives, men, women, and children, as they thronged the galleries, delighted and instructed by the treasures which their sovereign had collected for them.

. . . Europe has not a useful lesson which the Gaekwar has not done his best to learn, and to convey in fitting measure to his countrymen.³³

Sri Aurobindo also differed with Curzon's insinuation against the Maharaja. Following is a discussion he had with his attendants:

PURANI: The present Gaekwar has already curtailed a large amount of his privy purse. Sayajirao was bad in that way. He used to grab a heavy amount for his

32. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, November 2011, p. 907 (Kingsmen of the Century by L. P. Wilkinson, a publication of King's College, Cambridge).

33. Oscar Browning, *Impressions of Indian Travel*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1903, pp. 191-93.

private purse but at the same time he did a lot of public works.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, he didn't starve the public services.

NIRODBARAN: Only, he spent a lot of money in going frequently to Europe, and has also erected a lot of buildings.

SRI AUROBINDO: His European visits and the buildings have been good for the State.³⁴

And during a conversation in 1939 on the question of giving power to the political parties, Sri Aurobindo commented, “If the States’ people get power, the Princes will have no work but to sign papers and hunt animals. The Gaekwad will have to stop making buildings.”³⁵

Sri Aurobindo has spoken of Baroda as “the Indian State which has been most successful in reproducing and improving upon the Anglo-Indian model of administration.”³⁶

About Sayajirao's accomplishments, Georges Van Vrekhem writes:

Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III (1863-1939) had been put on the throne by the British when he was still a boy, but he had developed into a good ruler. As Aurobindo said to his Bengali teacher: “The present Maharajah is capable of ruling over a large empire. As a politician he has no peer in the whole of India.” We find his opinion confirmed in Elisabeth Keesing's biography of Inayat Khan, who hailed from Baroda: “This prince, Sayaji Rao III, reorganised the administration, even modernised his court, seriously reformed the system of justice, encouraged new industries, embellished the town with broad boulevards, and opened parks for his people from the suffocating alleys. For himself this maharajah built baroque-style palaces, but he still knew and honoured his own culture.”³⁷

Finally, as destiny would have it, Curzon had to resign because he clashed with another man of iron will, Lord Kitchener, the Commander in Chief of the Indian Army. Later Curzon's policy to partition Bengal was annulled in 1911 by the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge. When Curzon departed from India in November 1905, many princes went to Bombay to personally see him off. Sayajirao, instead, sent a cryptic telegram to Curzon which said, “Bon Voyage, may India never see the like of you again.”³⁸

Interestingly, Sri Aurobindo has noted:

34. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, pp. 385-86.

35. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 678.

36. *CWSA*, Vol. 1, p. 677.

37. Georges Van Vrekhem, *The Mother*, 2000, pp. 102-03..

38. Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, *Sayajirao of Baroda – The Prince and the Man*, 1989, p. x.

Barin had done some very extraordinary automatic writing at Baroda in a very brilliant and beautiful English style and remarkable for certain predictions which came true and statements of fact which also proved to be true although unknown to the persons concerned or anyone else present: there was notably a symbolic anticipation of Lord Curzon's subsequent unexpected departure from India . . .³⁹

Sri Aurobindo has termed Curzon an “autocrat” and “a vain man loving praise & sensitive to dislike & censure”.⁴⁰ Journalist and author Henry Nevinston said Curzon was “always impatient of criticism”.⁴¹ In 1911, Sayajirao told Lord Crewe, Secretary of State for India, that he had differences with Curzon as he tended to treat him “like a servant”.⁴²

Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad notes how the British Government always demonstrated their superiority over the princely states. Referring to the period immediately after Sayajirao was enthroned the ruler of Baroda, he writes:

Even though the curbs that the Government had thought fit to impose on Sayajirao were pretty innocuous, the manner in which they were revealed to him was calculated to drive home the subordinate relationship in which the Indian princes stood with the Raj. It was also like a scene, enacted with meticulous attention to detail, and perhaps even its lines rehearsed in advance. By now the British had been the masters of India for nearly a hundred years and had worked over their method of dealing with the princes till they had made it a precise science. And official rudeness was carefully cultivated.

In most princely states, such slights were regarded as part of the price of vassalage . . .⁴³

Sayajirao believed in the Indian independence movement and admired the Swadeshi leaders like Tilak, Lajpat Rai and others but in his biography it is Sri Aurobindo who stands out. Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad writes:

To his pride as a ruler who knew his business and whose treaty rights entitled him to be an-all-but absolute ruler, was now added a spirit of nationalism. Like most sensitive Indians of his age, he too had been drawn under the spell of the advance guard of the freedom movement, Tilak, Gandhi, Chittaranjan Das, Lajpat Rai, Bipinchandra Pal, and others, and the most fervent and outspoken

39. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 95.

40. See A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 688; *CWSA*, Vol. 6, p. 72.

41. See Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1st Ed., p. 159.

42. See Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, *Sayajirao of Baroda – The Prince and the Man*, 1989, p. 228.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

among the nationalists, and possibly the most brilliant too, Aurobindo Ghose, had been recruited by Sayaji to his administrative service. Four years later Aurobindo was made Sayajirao's Private Secretary [*sic*] and thus came into daily contact with him and enjoyed his utmost confidence.

But of course there was no question of showing any open sympathy with the nationalists; for a Maharaja to do so would have been an act of self-immolation. A ruling prince could not echo the sentiments of Tilak and Gandhi and still remain a ruling prince. What was nationalism to the Indian was, to the British, sedition, no less, a movement to be crushed with utmost firmness. The princes who called themselves progressive were closely watched to see if their liberalism strayed into the sphere of politics, and any prince who was not properly subservient at all times was marked down as disloyal.⁴⁴

In November 1906, Sayajirao wrote to the Secretary of State for India, John Morley: “A greater degree of autonomy is needed to secure the natural and healthy development of the Native States.”⁴⁵ Sayajirao took the initiative to discontinue the practice of the British Government where the bureaucracy had magisterial powers and thus could sit in judgment over people whom they were themselves prosecuting. This system was to the advantage of the British in dealing with political dissidents for punishment could be given without following the customary judicial procedures. On the theory that what was good for British India was good for the Indian states, the practice had been continued in virtually all the princely states. Baroda was the first state to abolish it when Sayajirao separated the judiciary from the executive branch of administration.⁴⁶ In England there were some who applauded the Maharaja. On 31st March, 1908, O'Grady, a member of Parliament rose in the house to ask:

Is the Secretary of State for India aware that the Maharaja of Baroda has separated the judicial from the executive functions, has restored local self-Government, has instituted primary education throughout his State, and has further instituted popularly elected members in his Legislative Council? If so, will the Council of India consider the application of such reforms to other Native States and to India as a whole?⁴⁷

The Secretary of State for India cautiously replied that the results of these measures in Baroda would be watched with interest, but that he could not undertake forthwith to suggest the introduction of similar measures in the whole of British

44. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 205-06.

India, but that he would not interfere with the discretion of the rulers of other states.⁴⁸

Sri Aurobindo would have liked that the princely states support India's independence movement in some form or the other and appreciated that the Sayajirao wanted Baroda to be independent from the diktats of the British authorities. On 4th June, 1907, just days before resigning from Baroda State, Sri Aurobindo, in the *Bande Mataram*, praised Maharaja Sayajirao for his independent mind and spirit of Nationalism, while criticising other princes who buckled under the pressure of the bureaucracy:

Never before were the utter helplessness and the deplorable demoralisation of the Native Princes of India more clearly demonstrated than at the present moment when our political ideas and ideals are undergoing such a change. Writes the *Daily News*: — “It is gratifying to learn that some of the Native States are following in the wake of the Government of India for the suppression of sedition, if not political agitation altogether. News comes from Srinagar that His Highness the Maharaja of Kashmir is about to issue a proclamation warning his subjects against the pitfalls of the so-called nationalist agitation. . . .” Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code runs as follows: —“Whoever by words either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards His Majesty or the Government established by law in British India, shall be punished with transportation for life.” . . . We are asked to believe that the Maharaja of Kashmir, with a wonderful tact for self-effacement, was anxious only to protect the Government established by law in British India. The Maharaja's tender solicitude for the safety of the Power which had sold Kashmir to his ancestor and had, only the other day, condemned him unheard, was amazing indeed. But the matter did not end here. Following close upon the issuing of the Proclamation a durbar was held in Kashmir. Sir Francis Younghusband made a speech and the thanks of the British Government were conveyed to the Maharaja. The Maharaja, we are told, was so greatly affected that he could hardly find words to express his feelings, which is hardly wonderful considering the circumstances. He was able only to say that the tradition of his house was one of loyalty to the British Government. “This,” says the *Hindu Patriot*, “is as it should be.” . . .

. . . we find that Kashmir does not present an isolated instance of such zeal on the part of Native Chiefs to safeguard the interests of the bureaucracy. . . .

But we cannot hold these Indian princes responsible for all they do or say. Their so-called independence is nothing more than a mere name. Though Lord Curzon called them his “colleagues and partners in the task of

48. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

Indian administration” the truth was better expressed by Lord Dufferin who characterised the independence enjoyed by them as a “regulated independence”, regulated by whom and to what extent it is superfluous to say. The incubus of the British Resident is always there. And the results of his intervention — often disastrous to the Chiefs — were thus summed up by the Gaekwar of Baroda in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1901 — “Uncertainty and want of confidence in the indigenous Government is promoted. The influence of the Raja, which is indispensable for the individuality of the States, is thereby impaired. The ruler being discouraged slackens his interest in the continuity of his own policy.” Then, of course, there are the annual visitations to relieve the States of their superfluous wealth and prove to the people that their Chief is no better than a pigmy before the vicegerent of the King of England.

The attitude now taken by these Chiefs towards the spirit of Nationalism that is re-creating India, shows merely the degree to which the bureaucracy is determined directly and indirectly to stamp out the spirit. . . .⁴⁹

Sri Aurobindo followed up with another article in the *Bande Mataram* of 8th June, 1907, under the title ‘Comic Opera Reforms’, where he referred to Lord Morley’s reforms for self-government as nothing but an eyewash. He pointedly mentioned that the advisory Council of Notables did not include Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III and instead comprised Royalty and others who were not unfavourable to British rule in India:

Mr. Morley has made his pronouncement and a long-expectant world may now go about its ordinary business with the satisfactory conviction that the conditions of political life in India will be precisely the same as before. We know now what are the much-talked-of reforms which are to pave the way for self-government under an absolute and personal rule and to quiet Indian discontent. Let us take them one by one, these precious and inestimable boons. They are three in number, a trinity of marvels; an advisory Council of Notables, enlarged Legislative and Provincial Councils, admission of one or two Indians to the India Council.

An advisory Council of Notables — we can see it in our mind’s eye. The Nawab of Dacca, the Maharaja of Darbhanga, the Maharajas of Coochbehar and Kashmir, the Raja of Nabha, Sir Harnam Singh, a few other Rajas and Maharajas (*not* including the Maharaja of Baroda), Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, Mr. Justice Mukherji, a goodly number of non-official Europeans, the knight of the umbrella from Bombay, etc. etc. with Mr. Gokhale bringing up the tail as the least dangerous of those whom Mr. Morley felt that he must reluctantly

49. *CWSA*, Vol. 7, pp. 473-75.

call “our enemies”. And what will the business of this illustrious assembly be? It will find out what the opinion of the country is (on which the members will be better authorities no doubt than a highly inconvenient Press) and inform the Government; they will also find out the meaning of the Government (if that be humanly possible) and inform the country. We suppose it would be seditious to laugh at a Secretary of State, for is he not part of the Government established by law? So we will merely say that the right place for this truly comic Council of Notables with its yet more comic functions is an opera by Gilbert and Sullivan and not an India seething with discontent and convulsed by the throes of an incipient revolution.⁵⁰

An aphorism of Sri Aurobindo reads;

Rather hang thyself than belong to the horde of successful imitators.⁵¹

(To be continued)

GAUTAM MALAKER

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 496-97.

51. *Ibid.*, Vol. 12, p. 467.

In theory, it is true that everything can be known by identification, but in practice it is rather difficult to apply. The whole process is based on the power of concentration. One has to concentrate on the object to be known . . . until all the rest of the world disappears and the object alone exists; then, by a slight movement of will, one can succeed at identification. But it is not very easy to do and there are other means of knowing besides reasoning — intuition, for example — which are also effective.

November 1934

The Mother

(Some Answers from the Mother, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 16, p. 44)

PY/50/2021-23

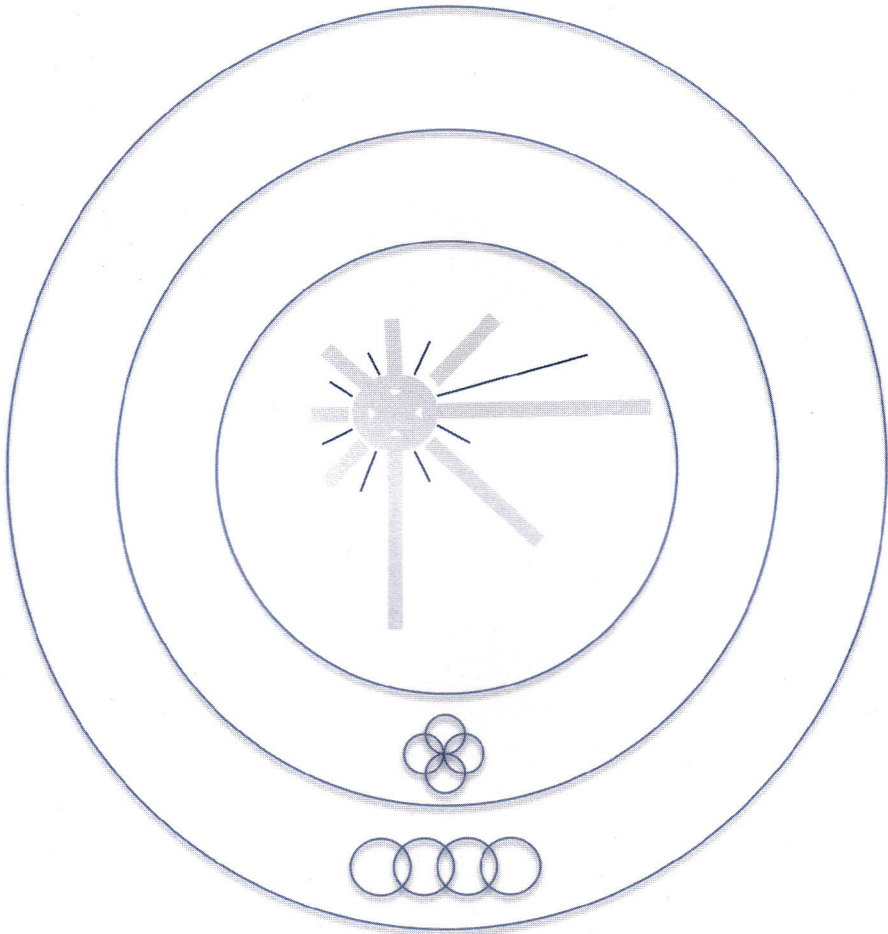
RNI 8667/63

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...



Aurosoorya.com: The source and origin

DeepOrderTechnologies.com: Exploring deep fourfold order

QIQuantum.com: Quaternary based quantum computation