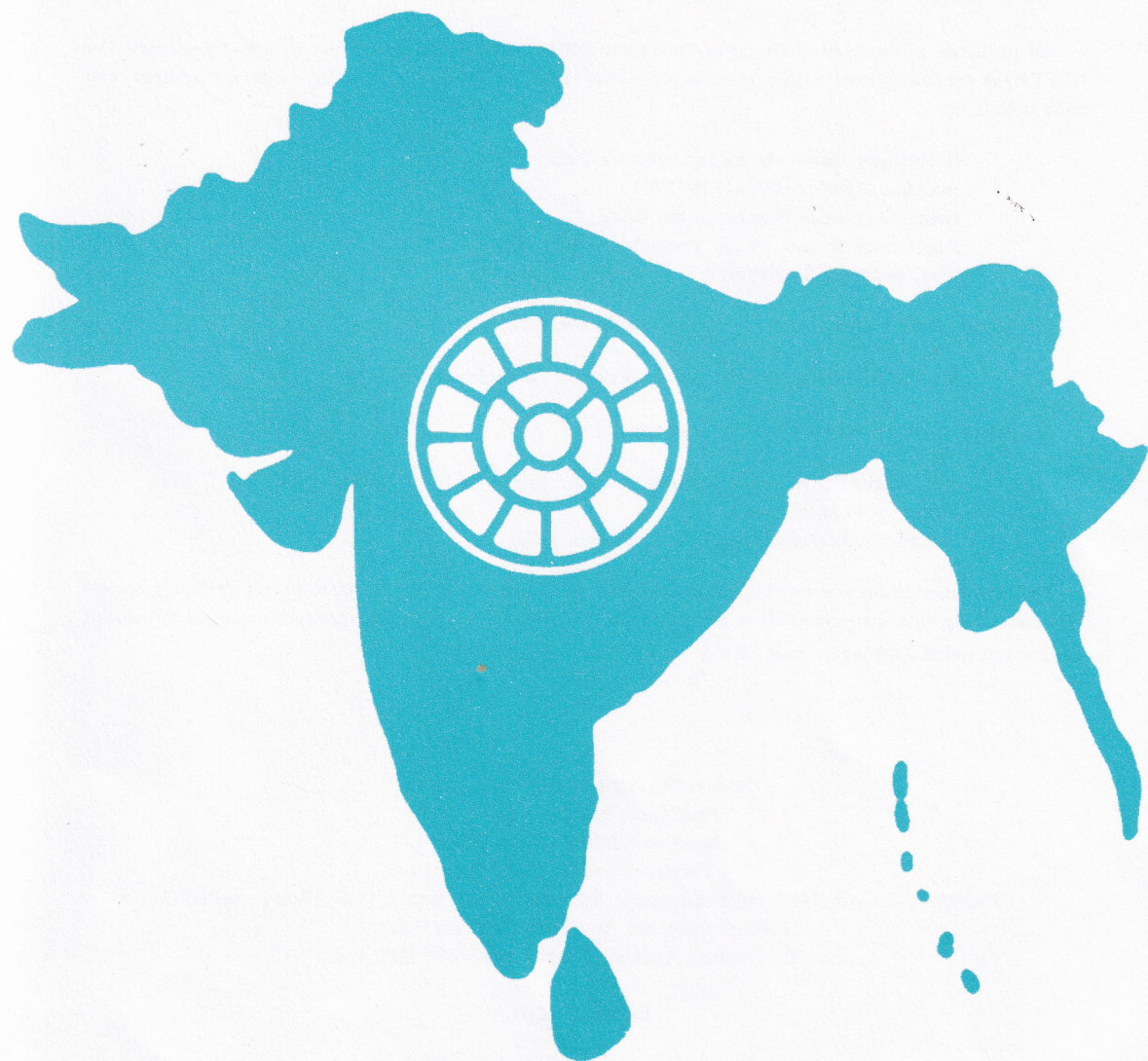


Price: ₹ 30

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE



MARCH 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

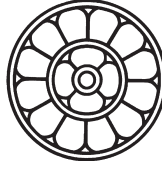
Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers for India: RNI No. 8667/63

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

MARCH 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. 3

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

Sri Aurobindo

‘HE’S CREATOR WHO GREATLY HANDLES GREAT MATERIAL’	...	7
THE DIVINE AND THE UNDIVINE	...	10
SHALL INDIA BE FREE?	...	17

The Mother

‘O LORD, WE KNOW THAT IT IS		
AN HOUR OF GREAT GRAVITY FOR THE EARTH’	...	25
A CONVERSATION OF 8 APRIL 1953	...	26

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)

“I LOVE THEE” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO	...	29
---	-----	----

Sahana

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO — VI	...	32
--	-----	----

Arvind Sule

ARVIND SULE RECOLLECTS (INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY RAMAN REDDY)	...	44
--	-----	----

Gautam Malaker

“LIFE OF PREPARATION AT BARODA” —		
SRI AUROBINDO, THE PERFECT GENTLEMAN (PART 33)	...	55
Section 3: A Quiet and Humble Disposition		

**‘HE’S CREATOR WHO GREATLY HANDLES
GREAT MATERIAL’**

KING PHILIP

Count Beltran.

BELTRAN

Your Highness?

KING PHILIP

What is your masque’s device
For which I still must thank your loyal pains
To cheer our stay in this so famous city?
Shall we hear it?

BELTRAN

Nothing from me, Your Highness.
Castilians, forgèd iron of old time,
And hearts that beat to tread of empires, cannot
Keep pace with dances, entertainments, masques.
But here’s my son, a piece of modern colour,
For now our forward children overstep
Their rough begetters — ask him, Sire; I doubt not
His answers shall reveal the grace men lend him
In attribution, — would ’twere used more nobly.

KING PHILIP

Your son, Lord Beltran? Surely you fatigued
The holy saints in heaven and perfect martyrs
In your yet hopeful youth, till they consented
To your best wish. What masque, Antonio?

ANTONIO

One little worthy, yet in a spirit framed
That may excuse much error; 'tis the Judgment
Of Paris and the Rape of Spartan Helen.

GUZMAN

Is that not very old?

[. . .]

KING PHILIP

It has I think
Been staged a little often and though, Antonio,
I doubt not that fine pen and curious staging
Will raise it beyond new things rough conceived,
Yet is fresh subject something.

ANTONIO

For a play
It were so; this is none. Pardon me, Sir,
I err in boldness, urge too far my answer.

KING PHILIP

Your boldness, youth, is others' modesty.
Speak freely.

ANTONIO

Thus I say then. A masque is heard
Once only and in that once must all be grasped at
But the swift action of the stage speeds on,
While slow conception labouring after it
Roughens its subtleties, blurs over shades,
Sees masses only. If the plot is new,
The mind is like a traveller pressed for time,
And quite engrossed with incident, omits

To take the breath of flowers and lingering shade
From haste to reach a goal. But the plot old
Leaves it at leisure and it culls at ease
Those delicate, scarcely-heeded strokes, which art
Throws in, to justify genius. These being lost
Perfection’s disappointed. Then if old
The subject amplifies creative labour,
For what’s creation but to make old things
Admirably new; the other’s mere invention,
A small gift, though a gracious. He’s creator
Who greatly handles great material,
Calls order out of the abundant deep,
Not who invents sweet shadows out of air.

KING PHILIP

You are blessed, Lord Beltran, in your son. His voice
Performs the promise of his eyes; he is
A taking speaker.

SRI AUROBINDO

(From the opening scene of the Play ‘Maid in the Mill’,
Collected Plays and Stories, CWSA, Vol. 4, pp. 787-90)



THE DIVINE AND THE UNDIVINE

The Seer, the Thinker, the Self-existent who becomes everywhere has ordered perfectly all things from years sempiternal.

*Isha Upanishad.*¹

Many purified by knowledge have come to My state of being. . . . They have reached likeness in their law of being to Me.

*Gita.*²

Know That for the Brahman and not this which men cherish here.

*Kena Upanishad.*³

One controlling inner Self of all beings. . . . As the Sun, the eye of the world, is not touched by the external faults of vision, so this inner Self in beings is not touched by the sorrow of the world.

*Katha Upanishad.*⁴

The Lord abides in the heart of all beings.

*Gita.*⁵

The universe is a manifestation of an infinite and eternal All-Existence: the Divine Being dwells in all that is; we ourselves are that in our self, in our own deepest being; our soul, the secret indwelling psychic entity, is a portion of the Divine Consciousness and Essence. This is the view we have taken of our existence; but at the same time we speak of a divine life as the culmination of the evolutionary process, and the use of the phrase implies that our present life is undivine and all the life too that is below us. At the first glance this looks like a self-contradiction; instead of making a distinction between the divine life we aspire for and a present undivine existence, it would be more logical to speak of an ascent from level to higher level of a divine manifestation. It may be admitted that essentially, if we look at the inner reality alone and discount the suggestions of the outer figure, such might be the nature of the evolution, the change we have to undergo in Nature; so it would appear perhaps to the impartial eye of a universal vision untroubled by our dualities of

1. Verse 8.

2. IV. 10; XIV. 2.

3. I. 4.

4. II. 2. 12, 11.

5. XVIII. 61.

knowledge and ignorance, good and evil, happiness and suffering and participating in the untrammelled consciousness and delight of Sachchidananda. And yet, from the practical and relative point of view as distinguished from an essential vision, the distinction between the divine and the undivine has an insistent value, a very pressing significance. This then is an aspect of the problem which it is necessary to bring into the light and assess its true importance.

The distinction between the divine and the undivine life is in fact identical with the root distinction between a life of Knowledge lived in self-awareness and in the power of the Light and a life of Ignorance, — at any rate it so presents itself in a world that is slowly and with difficulty evolving out of an original Inconscience. All life that has still this Inconscience for its basis is stamped with the mark of a radical imperfection; for even if it is satisfied with its own type, it is a satisfaction with something incomplete and inharmonious, a patchwork of discords: on the contrary, even a purely mental or vital life might be perfect within its limits if it were based on a restricted but harmonious self-power and self-knowledge. It is this bondage to a perpetual stamp of imperfection and disharmony that is the mark of the undivine; a divine life, on the contrary, even if progressing from the little to the more, would be at each stage harmonious in its principle and detail: it would be a secure ground upon which freedom and perfection could naturally flower or grow towards their highest stature, refine and expand into their most subtle opulence. All imperfections, all perfections have to be taken into view in our consideration of the difference between an undivine and a divine existence: but ordinarily, when we make the distinction, we do it as human beings struggling under the pressure of life and the difficulties of our conduct amidst its immediate problems and perplexities; most of all we are thinking of the distinction we are obliged to make between good and evil or of that along with its kindred problem of the duality, the blend in us of happiness and suffering. When we seek intellectually for a divine presence in things, a divine origin of the world, a divine government of its workings, the presence of evil, the insistence on suffering, the large, the enormous part offered to pain, grief and affliction in the economy of Nature are the cruel phenomena which baffle our reason and overcome the instinctive faith of mankind in such an origin and government or in an all-seeing, all-determining and omnipresent Divine Immanence. Other difficulties we could solve more easily and happily and make some shift to be better satisfied with the ready conclusiveness of our solutions. But this standard of judgment is not sufficiently comprehensive and it is supported upon a too human point of view; for to a wider outlook evil and suffering appear only as a striking aspect, they are not the whole defect, not even the root of the matter. The sum of the world's imperfections is not made up only of these two deficiencies; there is more than the fall, if fall there was, of our spiritual or material being from good and from happiness or our nature's failure to overcome evil and suffering. Besides the deficiency of the ethical and hedonistic satisfactions demanded by our being, the paucity of Good and Delight in our world-experience,

there is also the deficiency of other divine degrees: for Knowledge, Truth, Beauty, Power, Unity are, they too, the stuff and elements of a divine life, and these are given to us in a scanty and grudging measure; yet all are, in their absolute, powers of the Divine Nature.

It is not possible then to limit the description of our and the world's undivine imperfection solely to moral evil or sensational suffering; there is more in the world-enigma than their double problem, — for they are only two strong results of a common principle. It is the general principle of imperfection that we have to admit and consider. If we look closely at this general imperfection, we shall see that it consists first in a limitation in us of the divine elements which robs them of their divinity, then in a various many-branching distortion, a perversion, a contrary turn, a falsifying departure from some ideal Truth of being. To our minds which do not possess that Truth but can conceive it, this departure presents itself either as a state from which we have lapsed spiritually or as a possibility or promise which we cannot fulfil, cannot realise because it exists only as an ideal. There has been either a lapse of the inner spirit from a greater consciousness and knowledge, delight, love and beauty, power and capacity, harmony and good, or else there is a failure of our struggling nature, an impotence to achieve what we instinctively see to be divine and desirable. If we penetrate to the cause of the fall or the failure, we shall find that all proceeds from the one primal fact that our being, consciousness, force, experience of things represent — not in their very self, but in their surface pragmatic nature — a principle or an effective phenomenon of division or rupture in the unity of the Divine Existence. This division becomes in its inevitable practical effect a limitation of the divine consciousness and knowledge, the divine delight and beauty, the divine power and capacity, the divine harmony and good: there is a limitation of completeness and wholeness, a blindness in our vision of these things, a lameness in our following of them, in our experience of them a fragmentation, a diminution of power and intensity, a lowering of quality, — the mark of a descent from spiritual heights or else of a consciousness emerging from the insensible neutral monotone of the Inconscience; the intensities which are normal and natural on higher ranges are in us lost or toned down so as to harmonise with the blacks and greys of our material existence. There arises too by a secondary ulterior effect a perversion of these highest things; in our limited mentality unconsciousness and wrong consciousness intervene, ignorance covers our whole nature and — by the misapplication or misdirection of an imperfect will and knowledge, by automatic reactions of our diminished consciousness-force and the inept poverty of our substance — contradictions of the divine elements are formed, incapacity, inertia, falsehood, error, pain and grief, wrong-doing, discord, evil. There is too, always, somewhere hidden in our selves, nursed in our recesses, even when not overtly felt in the conscious nature, even when rejected by the parts of us which these things torture, an attachment to this experience of division, a clinging to the divided way of being which prevents the excision of these unhappinesses

or their rejection and removal. For since the principle of Consciousness-Force and Ananda is at the root of all manifestation, nothing can endure if it has not a will in our nature, a sanction of the Purusha, a sustained pleasure in some part of the being, even though it be a secret or a perverse pleasure, to keep it in continuance.

When we say that all is a divine manifestation, even that which we call undivine, we mean that in its essentiality all is divine even if the form baffles or repels us. Or, to put it in a formula to which it is easier for our psychological sense of things to give its assent, in all things there is a presence, a primal Reality, — the Self, the Divine, Brahman, — which is for ever pure, perfect, blissful, infinite: its infinity is not affected by the limitations of relative things; its purity is not stained by our sin and evil; its bliss is not touched by our pain and suffering; its perfection is not impaired by our defects of consciousness, knowledge, will, unity. In certain images of the Upanishads the divine Purusha is described as the one Fire which has entered into all forms and shapes itself according to the form, as the one Sun which illumines all impartially and is not affected by the faults of our seeing. But this affirmation is not enough; it leaves the problem unsolved, why that which is in itself ever pure, perfect, blissful, infinite, should not only tolerate but seem to maintain and encourage in its manifestation imperfection and limitation, impurity and suffering and falsehood and evil: it states the duality that constitutes the problem, but does not solve it.

If we simply leave these two dissonant facts of existence standing in each other's presence, we are driven to conclude that there is no reconciliation possible; all we can do is to cling as much as we can to a deepening sense of the joy of the pure and essential Presence and do the best we may with the discordant externality, until we can impose in its place the law of its divine contrary. Or else we have to seek for an escape rather than a solution. For we can say that the inner Presence alone is a Truth and the discordant externality is a falsehood or illusion created by a mysterious principle of Ignorance; our problem is to find some way of escape out of the falsehood of the manifested world into the truth of the hidden Reality. Or we may hold with the Buddhist that there is no need of explanation, since there is this one practical fact of the imperfection and impermanence of things and no Self, Divine or Brahman, for that too is an illusion of our consciousness: the one thing that is necessary for liberation is to get rid of the persistent structure of ideas and persistent energy of action which maintain a continuity in the flux of the impermanence. On this road of escape we achieve self-extinction in Nirvana; the problem of things gets itself extinguished by our own self-extinction. This is a way out, but it does not look like the true and only way, nor are the other solutions altogether satisfactory. It is a fact that by excluding the discordant manifestation from our inner consciousness as a superficial externality, by insisting only on the pure and perfect Presence, we can achieve individually a deep and blissful sense of this silent Divinity, can enter into the sanctuary, can live in the light and the rapture. An exclusive inner concentration on the Real, the Eternal is possible, even a self-immersion by which we can lose or

put away the dissonances of the universe. But there is too somewhere deep down in us the need of a total consciousness, there is in Nature a secret universal seeking for the whole Divine, an impulsion towards some entire awareness and delight and power of existence; this need of a whole being, a total knowledge, this integral will in us is not fully satisfied by these solutions. So long as the world is not divinely explained to us, the Divine remains imperfectly known; for the world too is That and, so long as it is not present to our consciousness and possessed by our powers of consciousness in the sense of the divine being, we are not in possession of the whole Divinity.

It is possible to escape from the problem otherwise; for, admitting always the essential Presence, we can endeavour to justify the divinity of the manifestation by correcting the human view of perfection or putting it aside as a too limited mental standard. We may say that not only is the Spirit in things absolutely perfect and divine, but each thing also is relatively perfect and divine in itself, in its expression of what it has to express of the possibilities of existence, in its assumption of its proper place in the complete manifestation. Each thing is divine in itself because each is a fact and idea of the divine being, knowledge and will fulfilling itself infallibly in accordance with the law of that particular manifestation. Each being is possessed of the knowledge, the force, the measure and kind of delight of existence precisely proper to its own nature; each works in the gradations of experience decreed by a secret inherent will, a native law, an intrinsic power of the self, an occult significance. It is thus perfect in the relation of its phenomena to the law of its being; for all are in harmony with that, spring out of it, adapt themselves to its purpose according to the infallibility of the divine Will and Knowledge at work within the creature. It is perfect and divine also in relation to the whole, in its proper place in the whole; to that totality it is necessary and in it it fulfils a part by which the perfection actual and progressive of the universal harmony, the adaptation of all in it to its whole purpose and its whole sense is helped and completed. If to us things appear undivine, if we hasten to condemn this or that phenomenon as inconsistent with the nature of a divine being, it is because we are ignorant of the sense and purpose of the Divine in the world in its entirety. Because we see only parts and fragments, we judge of each by itself as if it were the whole, judge also the external phenomena without knowing their secret sense; but by doing so we vitiate our valuation of things, put on it the stamp of an initial and fundamental error. Perfection cannot reside in the thing in its separateness, for that separateness is an illusion; perfection is the perfection of the total divine harmony.

All this may be true up to a certain point and so far as it goes; but this also is a solution incomplete by itself and it cannot give us an entire satisfaction. It takes insufficient account of the human consciousness and the human view from which we have to start; it does not give us the vision of the harmony it alleges, and so it cannot meet our demand or convince, but only contradicts by a cold intellectual conception

our acute human sense of the reality of evil and imperfection; it gives too no lead to the psychic element in our nature, the soul's aspiration towards light and truth and towards a spiritual conquest, a victory over imperfection and evil. By itself, this view of things amounts to little more than the facile dogma which tells us that all that is is right, because all is perfectly decreed by the divine Wisdom. It supplies us with nothing better than a complacent intellectual and philosophic optimism: no light is turned on the disconcerting facts of pain, suffering and discord to which our human consciousness bears constant and troubling witness; at most there is a suggestion that in the divine reason of things there is a key to these things to which we have no access. This is not a sufficient answer to our discontent and our aspiration which, however ignorant in their reactions, however mixed their mental motives, must correspond to a divine reality deeper down in our being. A Divine Whole that is perfect by reason of the imperfection of its parts, runs the risk of itself being only perfect in imperfection, because it fulfils entirely some stage in an unaccomplished purpose; it is then a present but not an ultimate Totality. To it we could apply the Greek saying, *Theos ouk estin alla gignetai*, the Divine is not yet in being, but is becoming. The true Divine would then be secret within us and perhaps supreme above us; to find the Divine within us and above us would be the real solution, to become perfect as That is perfect, to attain liberation by likeness to it or by attaining to the law of its nature, *sādrśya*, *sādharmya*.

If the human consciousness were bound to the sense of imperfection and the acceptance of it as the law of our life and the very character of our existence, — a reasoned acceptance that could answer in our human nature to the blind animal acceptance of the animal nature, — then we might say that what we are marks the limit of the divine self-expression in us; we might believe too that our imperfections and sufferings worked for the general harmony and perfection of things and console ourselves with this philosophic balm offered for our wounds, satisfied to move among the pitfalls of life with as much rational prudence or as much philosophic sagacity and resignation as our incomplete mental wisdom and our impatient vital parts permitted. Or else, taking refuge in the more consoling fervours of religion, we might submit to all as the will of God in the hope or the faith of recompense in a Paradise beyond where we shall enter into a happier existence and put on a more pure and perfect nature. But there is an essential factor in our human consciousness and its workings which, no less than the reason, distinguishes it entirely from the animal; there is not only a mental part in us which recognises the imperfection, there is a psychic part which rejects it. Our soul's dissatisfaction with imperfection as a law of life upon earth, its aspiration towards the elimination of all imperfections from our nature, not only in a heaven beyond where it would be automatically impossible to be imperfect, but here and now in a life where perfection has to be conquered by evolution and struggle, are as much a law of our being as that against which they revolt; they too are divine, — a divine dissatisfaction, a divine aspiration. In them is

the inherent light of a power within which maintains them in us so that the Divine may not only be there as a hidden Reality in our spiritual secrecies but unfold itself in the evolution of Nature.

In this light we can admit that all works perfectly towards a divine end by a divine wisdom and therefore each thing is in that sense perfectly fitted in its place; but we say that that is not the whole of the divine purpose. For what is is only justifiable, finds its perfect sense and satisfaction by what can and will be. There is, no doubt, a key in the divine reason that would justify things as they are by revealing their right significance and true secret as other, subtler, deeper than their outward meaning and phenomenal appearance which is all that can normally be caught by our present intelligence: but we cannot be content with that belief, to search for and find the spiritual key of things is the law of our being. The sign of the finding is not a philosophic intellectual recognition and a resigned or sage acceptance of things as they are because of some divine sense and purpose in them which is beyond us; the real sign is an elevation towards the spiritual knowledge and power which will transform the law and phenomena and external forms of our life nearer to a true image of that divine sense and purpose. It is right and reasonable to endure with equanimity suffering and subjection to defect as the immediate will of God, a present law of imperfection laid on our members, but on condition that we recognise it also as the will of God in us to transcend evil and suffering, to transform imperfection into perfection, to rise into a higher law of Divine Nature. In our human consciousness there is the image of an ideal truth of being, a divine nature, an incipient godhead: in relation to that higher truth our present state of imperfection can be relatively described as an undivine life and the conditions of the world from which we start as undivine conditions; the imperfections are the indication given to us that they are there as first disguises, not as the intended expression of the divine being and the divine nature. It is a Power within us, the concealed Divinity, that has lit the flame of aspiration, pictures the image of the ideal, keeps alive our discontent and pushes us to throw off the disguise and to reveal or, in the Vedic phrase, to form and disclose the Godhead in the manifest spirit, mind, life and body of this terrestrial creature. Our present nature can only be transitional, our imperfect status a starting-point and opportunity for the achievement of another higher, wider and greater that shall be divine and perfect not only by the secret spirit within it but in its manifest and most outward form of existence.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Life Divine, CWSA, Vol. 21, pp. 403-12)

SHALL INDIA BE FREE?

(From *Bande Mataram*, Calcutta, April 27th, 1907)

The Loyalist Gospel

Liberty is the first requisite for the sound health and vigorous life of a nation. A foreign domination is in itself an unnatural condition, and if permitted, must bring about other unhealthy and unnatural conditions in the subject people which will lead to fatal decay and disorganisation. Foreign rule cannot build up a nation, — only the resistance to foreign rule can weld the discordant elements of a people into an indivisible unity. When a people, predestined to unity, cannot accomplish its destiny, foreign rule is a provision of Nature by which the necessary compelling pressure is applied to drive its jarring parts into concord. The unnatural condition of foreign rule is brought in for a time in order to cure the previous unnatural condition of insufficient cohesiveness; but this can only be done by the resistance of the subject people; for the incentive to unity given by the alien domination consists precisely in the desire to get rid of it; and if this desire is absent, if the people acquiesce, there can be no force making for unity. Foreign rule was therefore made to be resisted; and to acquiesce in it is to defeat the very intention with which Nature created it.

These considerations are not abstract ideas, but the undeniable teaching of history which is the record of the world's experience. Nationalism takes its stand upon this experience and calls upon the people of India not to allow themselves to fall into the acquiescence in subjection which is the death-sleep of nations, but to make that use of the alien domination which Nature intended, — to struggle against it and throw it off for unity, for self-realisation as an independent national organism. In this country, however, there is a class of wise men who regard the rule of the British bureaucracy as a dispensation of Providence, not only to create unity but to preserve it. They preach therefore a gospel of faith in the foreigner, distrust of our countrymen and acquiescence in alien rule as a godsend from on high and an indispensable condition for peace and prosperity. Even those whose hearts rebel against a doctrine so servile, are intellectually so much dominated by it that they cannot embrace Nationalism with their whole heart and try to arrive at a compromise between subjection and independence, — a half-way house between life and death. Their ingenuity discovers an intermediate condition in which the blessings of freedom will be harmoniously wedded with the blessings of subjection; and to this palace in fairyland they have given the name of Colonial Self-Government. If it were not for the existence of this Moderate opinion and its strange parti-coloured delusions we would not have thought it worth while to go back to first principles and

show the falsity of the Loyalist gospel of acquiescence. But the Moderate delusion is really a by-product of the Loyalist delusion; and the parent error must be demolished first, before its offspring can be corrected. The Moderates are a hybrid species, emotionally Nationalist, intellectually Loyalist. It is owing to this double nature that their delusions acquire an infinite power for mischief. People listen to them because they claim to be Nationalist and because a sincere Nationalist feeling not infrequently breaks through the false Loyalist reasoning. Moreover by associating themselves with the Moderates on the same platform the Loyalists are enabled to exercise an influence on public opinion which would otherwise not be accorded to them. The gospel according to Sir Pherozshah Mehta would not have such power for harm if it were not allowed to represent itself as one and the same with the gospel according to Mr. Gokhale.

What then are the original ideas from which the Loyalist gospel proceeds? It has a triple foundation of error. First comes the postulate that disunion and weakness are ingrained characteristics of the Indian people and an outside power is necessary in order to arbitrate, to keep the peace and to protect the country from the menace of the mightier nations that ring us in. Proceeding from this view and supporting it, is the second postulate that there must be an entire levelling down and sweeping away of all differences; aristocrat and peasant, Brahmin and Sudra, Bengali, Punjabi and Mahratta, all must efface their characteristics and differences before any resistance to foreign domination can be attempted, even if such resistance were desirable. The third postulate is that a healthy development is possible under foreign domination and that this healthy development must be first effected before we can dream of freedom or even of becoming a nation. If these three postulates are granted, then the Loyalist creed is unassailable; if they are proved unsound, not only the Loyalist creed but the standpoint of the Moderates ceases to have any basis of firm ground and becomes a thing in the air. The Nationalist contention is that all these three postulates are monuments of political unreason and have no firm foundation either in historical experience or in the facts we see around us or in the nature of things. They are inconsistent with the fundamental nature of foreign domination; they ignore the experience of all other subject nations; they disregard human nature and the conditions of human development in communities. The Loyalist gospel is as untrue as it is ignoble.

SHALL INDIA BE FREE?

(From *Bande Mataram*, Calcutta, April 29th, 1907)

National Development and Foreign Rule

In dealing with the Loyalist creed it will be convenient to examine first the general postulate before we can come to those which apply particularly to the conditions of India. The contention is that a healthy development is possible under foreign domination. In this view national independence is a thing of no moment or at least its importance has been grossly exaggerated. Nations can very well do without it; provided they have a good government which keeps the people happy and contented and allows them to develop their economic activities and moral virtues, they need not repine at being ruled by others. For certain nations in certain periods of their development liberty would be disastrous and subjection to foreign rule is the most healthy condition. India, argue the Loyalists, is an example of such a nation in such a period. The first business of its people is to develop their commerce, become educated and enlightened, reform their society and their manners and so grow more and more fit for self-government. In proportion as they become more civilised and more fit, they will receive from their sympathetic, just and discerning rulers an ever-increasing share in the administration of the country until with entire fitness will come entire possession of the status of British citizenship. The idea is that foreign rule is a Providential dispensation or a provision of Nature for training an imperfectly developed people in the methods of civilisation and the arts of self-government. This theory is a modern invention. Ancient and mediaeval Imperialism frankly acknowledged the principle of might is right; the conquering nation considered that its military superiority was in itself a proof that it was meant to rule and the subject nation to obey; liberty, being denied by Providence to the latter, could not be good for it and there was no call on the ruler to concede it either now or hereafter. This was the spirit in which England conquered and governed Ireland by the same methods of cynical treachery and ruthless massacre which in modern times are usually considered to be the monopoly of despotisms like Turkey and Russia. But by the time that England had fastened its hold on India, a change had come over the modern world. The Greek ideas of freedom and democracy had penetrated the European mind and created the great impulse of democratic Nationalism which dominated Europe in the nineteenth century. The idea that despotism of any kind was an offence against humanity, had crystallised into an instinctive feeling, and modern morality and sentiment revolted against the enslavement of nation by nation, of class by class or of man by man. Imperialism had to justify itself to this modern sentiment and could only do so by pretending to be a trustee of liberty, commissioned from on high to civilise the uncivilised and train the untrained until the time had come when the

benevolent conqueror had done his work and could unselfishly retire. Such were the professions with which England justified her usurpation of the heritage of the Moghul and dazzled us into acquiescence in servitude by the splendour of her uprightness and generosity. Such was the pretence with which she veiled her annexation of Egypt. These Pharisaic pretensions were especially necessary to British Imperialism because in England the Puritanic middle class had risen to power and imparted to the English temperament a sanctimonious self-righteousness which refused to indulge in injustice and selfish spoliation except under a cloak of virtue, benevolence and unselfish altruism. The genesis of the Loyalist gospel can be found in the need of British Imperialism to justify itself to the liberalised sentiment of the nineteenth century and to the Puritanic middle-class element in the British nation.

The question then arises, has this theory any firmer root? Is it anything more than a convenient theory? Has it any relations with actual facts or with human experience? To answer this question it is necessary to distinguish between three kinds of liberty, which are generally confused together. There is a national liberty or freedom from foreign control; there is an internal liberty or that freedom from the despotism of an individual, a class or a combination of classes to which the name of self-government is properly given; and there is individual liberty or the freedom of the individual from unnecessary and arbitrary restrictions imposed on him either by the society of which he is a part or by the Government, whether that Government be monarchical, democratic, oligarchic or bureaucratic. The question at issue is, then, which, if any, of these three kinds of liberty is essential to the healthy development of national life; or can there be such development without any liberty at all?

The object of national existence, of the formation of men into groups and their tacit agreement to allow themselves to be ruled by an organised instrument of administration which is called the Government, is nothing else than human development in the individual and in the group. The individual, standing alone, cannot develop; he depends on the support and assistance of the group to which he belongs. The group itself cannot develop unless it has an organisation by means of which it not only secures internal peace and order and protection from external attack but also proper conditions which will give free play for the development of its activities and capacities — physical, moral, intellectual. The nation or group is not like the individual who can specialise his development and throw all his energies into one line. The nation must develop military and political greatness and activity, intellectual and aesthetic greatness and activity, commercial greatness and activity, moral sanity and vigour; it cannot sacrifice any of these functions of the organism without making itself unfit for the struggle for life and finally succumbing and perishing under the pressure of more highly organised nations. The purely commercial State like Carthage is broken in the shock with a nation which has developed the military and political as well as the commercial energies. A purely military state like Sparta cannot stand against rivals which to equal military efficiency unite a greater science,

intellectual energy and political ability. A purely aesthetic and intellectual state like the Greek colonies in Italy or a purely moral and spiritual community like the empire of Peru are blotted out of existence in the clash with ruder but more vigorous and many-sided organisms. No Government, therefore, can really be good for a nation or serve the purposes of national life and development which does not give full scope for the development of all the national activities, capacities and energies. Foreign rule is unnatural and fatal to a nation precisely because by its very nature it throws itself upon these activities and capacities and crushes them down in the interests of its own continued existence. Even when it does not crush them down violently, it obstructs their growth passively by its very presence. The subject nation becomes dependent, disorganised and loses its powers by atrophy. For this reason national independence is absolutely necessary to national growth. There can be no national development without national liberty.

Individual liberty is necessary to national development, because, if the individual is unduly hampered, the richness of national life suffers and is impoverished. If the individual is given free room to realise himself, to perfect, specialise and enrich his particular powers and attain the full height of his manhood, the variety and rapidity of national progress is immensely increased. In so far as he is fettered and denied scope, the development of the nation is cramped and retarded. A Government which denies scope and liberty to the individual, as all foreign Governments must to a considerable extent deny it, helps to cramp the healthy development of the nation and not to forward it. The development of the individual is and must be an embarrassment to the intruding power unless the numbers are so few that they can be bribed into acquiescence and support by the receipt of honours, employment or other personal advantages. For development creates ambition and nothing is more fatal to the continuance of foreign rule than the growth of ambitions in the subject race which it cannot satisfy. The action of Lord Curzon in introducing the Universities Act was for the British domination in India an act of inevitable necessity, which had to be done some time or other. Its only defect from the Imperialist point of view was that it came too late.

Just as individual liberty is necessary for the richness and variety of national development, so self-government is necessary for its completeness and the full deployment of national strength. If certain classes are dominant and others depressed, the result is that the potential strength of the depressed classes is so much valuable force lost to the sum of national strength. The dominant classes may undoubtedly show a splendid development and may make the nation great and famous in history; but when all is said the strength of the nation is then only the sum of the strength of a few privileged classes. The great weakness of India in the past has been the political depression and nullity of the mass of the population. It was not from the people of India that India was won by Moghul or Briton, but from a small privileged class. On the other hand the strength and success of the Marathas and Sikhs in the

eighteenth century was due to the policy of Shivaji and Guru Govind which called the whole nation into the fighting line. They failed only because the Marathas could not preserve the cohesion which Shivaji gave to their national strength or the Sikhs the discipline which Guru Govind gave to the Khalsa. Is it credible that a foreign rule would either knowingly foster or allow the growth of that universal political consciousness in the subject nation which self-government implies? It is obvious that foreign rule can only endure so long as political consciousness can be either stifled by violence or hypnotised into inactivity. The moment the nation becomes politically self-conscious, the doom of the alien predominance is sealed. The bureaucracy which rules us, is not only foreign in origin but external to us, — it holds and draws nourishing sustenance for itself from the subject organism by means of tentacles and feelers thrust out from its body thousands of miles away. Its type in natural history is not the parasite, but the octopus. Self-government would mean the removal of the tentacles and the cessation both of the grip and the sustenance. Foreign rule is naturally opposed to the development of the subject nation as a separate organism, to the growth of its capacity for and practice in self-government, to the development of capacity and ambition of its individuals. To think that a foreign rule will deliberately train us for independence or allow us to train ourselves is to suppose a miracle in nature.

SHALL INDIA BE FREE?

(From *Bande Mataram*, Calcutta, April 30th, 1907)

We are arguing the impossibility of a healthy national development under foreign rule, — except by reaction against that rule. The foreign domination naturally interferes with and obstructs the functioning of the native organs of development. It is therefore in itself an unnatural and unhealthy condition, a wound, a disease, which must result, unless arrested, in the mortification and rotting to death of the indigenous body politic. If a nation were an artificial product which could be made, then it might be possible for one nation to make another. But a nation cannot be made, — it is an organism which grows under the stress of a principle of life within. We speak indeed of nation-building and of the makers of a nation, but these are only convenient metaphors. The nation-builder, Cavour or Bismarck, is merely the incarnation of a national force which has found its hour and its opportunity, of an inner will which has awakened under the stress of shaping circumstances. A nation is, indeed, the outward expression of a community of sentiment, whether it be the sentiment of a common blood or the sentiment of a common religion or the sentiment of a common interest or any or all of these sentiments combined. Once this sentiment grows strong enough to develop into a will towards unity and to conquer obstacles

and make full use of favouring circumstances, the development of the nation becomes inevitable and there is no power which can ultimately triumph against it. But the process, however rapid it may be, is one of growth and not of manufacture. The first impulse of the developing nation is to provide itself with a centre, a means of self-expression and united action, a chief organ or national nerve-centre with subsidiary organs acting under and in harmony with it. If the need of self-protection is its first overpowering need, the organization may be military or semi-military under a single chief or a warlike ruling class; if the pressure from outside is not overpowering or the need of internal development strongly felt, it may take the shape of some form of partial or complete self-government. In either case the community becomes a nation or organic State.

What, then, is the place of foreign rule in such an organic development? The invasion of the body politic by a foreign element must result either in the merging of the alien into the indigenous nationality or in his superimposition on the latter in a precarious position which can only be maintained by coercion or by hypnotizing the subject people into passivity. If the alien and the native-born population are akin in blood and in religion, the fusion will be easy. Even if they are not, yet if the former settles down in the conquered country and makes it his motherland, community of interests will in the end inevitably bring about union. The foreigners become sons of the country by adoption and the sentiment of a common motherland is always a sufficient substitute for the sentiment of a common race-origin. The difficulty of religion may be solved by the conversion of the foreigner to the religion of the people he has conquered, as happened with the ancient invaders of India, or by the conversion of the conquered people to the religion of their rulers, as happened in Persia and other countries conquered by the Arabs. Even if no such general change of creed can be effected, yet the two religions may become habituated to each other and mutually tolerant, or the sentiment of a common interest and a common sonhood of one motherland may overcome the consciousness of religious differences. In all these contingencies there is a fusion, complete or partial; and the nation, though it may be profoundly affected for good or evil, need not be disorganized or lose the power of development. India under Mahomedan rule, though greatly disturbed and thrown into continual ferment and revolution, did not lose its power of organic readjustment and development. Even the final anarchy which preceded the British domination, was not a process of disorganization but an acute crisis, — the attempt of Nature to effect an organic readjustment in the body politic.

Unfortunately the crisis was complicated by the presence and final domination of a foreign body, foreign in blood, foreign in religion, foreign in interest. This body remains superimposed on the native-born population without any roots in the soil. Its presence, so long as it is neither merged in the nation nor dislodged, must make for the disorganization and decay of the subject people. It is possible for a foreign body differing in blood, religion and interest, to amalgamate with the native

organism but only on one of two conditions; either the foreign body must cut itself off from its origin and take up its home in the conquered country, — a course which is obviously impossible in the present problem, — or it must assimilate the subject State into the paramount State by the removal of all differences, inequalities, and conflicting interests. We shall point out the insuperable difficulties in the way of any such arrangement which will at once preserve British supremacy and give a free scope to Indian national development. At present there is no likelihood of the intruding force submitting easily to the immense sacrifices which such an assimilation would involve. Yet if no such assimilation takes place, the position of the British bureaucracy in India in no way differs from the position of the Turkish despotism as it existed with regard to the Christian populations of the Balkans previous to their independence or of the Austrians in Lombardy before the Italian Revolution. It is a position which endangers, demoralizes and eventually weakens the ruling nation as Austria and Turkey were demoralized and weakened, and which disorganizes and degrades the subject people. A very brief consideration of the effects of British rule in India will carry this truth home.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Bande Mataram, CWSA, Vol. 6, pp. 357-69)



‘O LORD, WE KNOW THAT IT IS AN HOUR OF GREAT GRAVITY FOR THE EARTH’

August 6, 1914

What then are the defects, the blemishes that prevent the offering from being complete enough for Thee to welcome it, the holocaust from seeming to Thee worthy to be received? . . . There are still some limitations in this being, but wilt Thou not shatter them?

O Lord, we know that it is an hour of great gravity for the earth: those who can be Thy intermediaries to it to make a greater harmony arise from the conflict and from its dark ugliness a diviner beauty, must be ready for the work. O Lord, O eternal Master, we entreat Thee, answer our endeavour, enlighten it, show us the way, give us the strength to break down all inner resistance and overcome every obstacle.

O my sweet Master, I prostrate myself at Thy feet; my entire being cries to Thee in an ardent supplication. . . . “Deliver me from the incapacity of the personal being.”

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 218)



A CONVERSATION OF 8 APRIL 1953

“One of the commonest forms of ambition is the idea of service to humanity. All attachment to such service or work is a sign of personal ambition.”

*Questions and Answers 1929-1931
(14 April 1929)*

Why do you say that this is ambition?

Why do you want to serve humanity, what is your idea? It is ambition, it is in order to become a great man among men. It is difficult to understand? . . .

The Divine is everywhere. So if one serves humanity, one serves the Divine, isn't that so?

That's marvellous! The clearest thing in this matter is to say: “The Divine is in me. If I serve myself, I am also serving the Divine!” (*Laughter*) In fact, the Divine is everywhere. The Divine will do His own work very well without you.

I see quite well that you do not understand. But truly, if you do understand that the Divine is there, in all things, with what are you meddling in serving humanity? To serve humanity you must know better than the Divine what must be done for it. Do you know better than the Divine how to serve it?

The Divine is everywhere. Yes. Things don't seem to be divine. . . . As for me, I see only one solution: if you want to help humanity, there is only one thing to do, it is to take yourself as completely as possible and offer yourself to the Divine. That is the solution. Because in this way, at least the material reality which you represent will be able to grow a little more like the Divine.

We are told that the Divine is in all things. Why don't things change? Because the Divine does not get a response, everything does not respond to the Divine. One must search the depths of the consciousness to see this. What do you want to do to serve humanity? Give food to the poor? — You can feed millions of them. That will not be a solution, this problem will remain the same. Give new and better living conditions to men? — The Divine is in them, how is it that things don't change? The Divine must know better than you the condition of humanity. What are you? You represent only a little bit of consciousness and a little bit of matter, it is that you call “myself”. If you want to help humanity, the world or the universe, the only thing to do is to give that little bit entirely to the Divine. Why is the world not divine? . . . It is evident that the world is not in order. So the only solution to the problem is to give what belongs to you. Give it totally, entirely to the Divine; not only for yourself but for humanity, for the universe. There is no better solution. How do you want to help humanity? You don't even know what it needs. Perhaps you know still less

what power you are serving. How can you change anything without indeed having changed yourself?

In any case, you are not powerful enough to do it. How do you expect to help another if you do not have a higher consciousness than he? It is such a childish idea! It is children who say: "I am opening a boarding-house, I am going to build a *crèche*, give soup to the poor, preach this knowledge, spread this religion. . . ." It is only because you consider yourself better than others, think you know better than they what they should be or do. That's what it is, serving humanity. You want to continue all that? It has not changed things much. It is not to help humanity that one opens a hospital or a school.

All the same it has helped, hasn't it? If all the schools were abolished . . .

I don't think that humanity is happier than it was before nor that there has been a great improvement. All this mostly gives you the feeling "I am something." That's what I call ambition.

If these very people who are ready to give money for schools were told that there was a divine Work to be done, that the Divine has decided to do it in this particular way, even if they are convinced that it is indeed the Divine's Work, they refuse to give anything, for this is not a recognised form of beneficence — one doesn't have the satisfaction of having done something good! This is what I call ambition. I had instances of people who could give lakhs of rupees to open a hospital, for that gives them the satisfaction of doing something great, noble, generous. They glorify themselves, that's what I call ambition.

I knew a humorist who used to say: "It won't be so soon that the kingdom of God will come, for those poor philanthropists — what would remain for them? If humanity suffered no longer, the philanthropists would be without work." It is difficult to come out of that. However, it is a fact that never will the world come out of the state in which it is unless it gives itself up to the Divine. All the virtues — you may glorify them — increase your self-satisfaction, that is, your ego; they do not help you truly to become aware of the Divine. It is the generous and wise people of this world who are the most difficult to convert. They are very satisfied with their life. A poor fellow who has done all sorts of stupid things all his life feels immediately sorry and says: "I am nothing, can do nothing. Make of me what You want." Such a one is more right and much closer to the Divine than one who is wise and full of his wisdom and vanity. He sees himself as he is.

The generous and wise man who has done much for humanity is too self-satisfied to have the least idea of changing.

It is usually these people who say: "If indeed I had created the world, I wouldn't have made it like this, I would have created it much better than that", and they try to set right what the Divine has done badly! According to their picture, all this is stupid

and useless. . . . It is not with that attitude that you can belong to the Divine. There will always be between you and Him the conscious ego of one's own intellectual superiority which judges the Divine and is sure of never being mistaken. For they are convinced that if they had made the world, they would not have committed all the stupidities that God has perpetrated. And all this comes from pride, vanity, self-conceit; and there is exactly the seed of that in people who want to serve humanity.

What are they going to give to humanity? Nothing at all! Even if they gave every drop of their blood, all the ideas in their head, all the money in their pocket, that could not change one individual, who is but a second of time in eternity. They believe they can serve eternity? There are even beings higher than man who have come, have brought the light, given their life, and that has not changed things much. So how can a little man, a microscopic being, truly help? It is pride. The argument given is: "If everyone did his best, all would go well." I don't think so and, even, it is impossible. In a certain way, each thing in the universe does its best. But that best doesn't come to anything at all. Unless everything changes, nothing will change. It is this best that must change. In the place of ignorance must be born knowledge and power and consciousness, otherwise we shall always turn in a circle around the same stupidity.

You may open millions of hospitals, that will not prevent people getting ill. On the contrary, they will have every facility and encouragement to fall ill. We are steeped in ideas of this kind. This puts your conscience at rest: "I have come to the world, I must help others." One tells oneself: "How disinterested I am! I am going to help humanity." All this is nothing but egoism.

In fact, the first human being that concerns you is yourself. You want to diminish suffering, but unless you can change the capacity of suffering into a certitude of being happy, the world will not change. It will always be the same, we turn in a circle — one civilisation follows another, one catastrophe another; but the thing does not change, for there is something missing, something not there, that is the consciousness. That's all.

At least, that's my opinion. I am giving it to you for what it is worth. If you want to build hospitals, schools, you may do so; if that makes you happy, so much the better for you. It has not much importance. When I saw the film *Monsieur Vincent*, I was very interested. He found out that when he fed ten poor men, a thousand came along. That was what Colbert told him: "It seems you create them, your poor ones, by feeding them!" And it is not altogether false. However! If it is your destiny to found schools and give instruction, to care for the sick, to open hospitals, it is good, do it. But you must not take that very seriously. It is something grandiose you are doing for your own pleasure. Say: "I am doing it because it gives me pleasure." But do not speak of yoga. It is not yoga you are doing. You believe you are doing something great, that's all, and it is for your personal satisfaction.

THE MOTHER

(*Questions and Answers 1953*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 5, pp. 12-16)

“I LOVE THEE” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

I feel doubtful about this poem: is it very commonplace?

CANZONET

I love thee for the sacred perfume clinging
To thy pure limbs, of amaranthine peaks —
O luminous¹ form whose every line² goes singing
The immortality which void earth seeks
Yet even Gods have found not, so far springing
To sheer omnipotence are those ecstatic hills!

But more I love thee for thy radiant will's
Miraculous smile to beckon darkness downward —
Assuring the poor claybound soul that plods,
Unshadowed pinnacles through one step onward:
For in thy human lips the towering Glow
Yearns down unto the pale heart-heave of woe —
“Rise but a little, earth — and reach beyond all Gods!”

[*Amal's questions:*]

1. “lustrous” for “luminous”?
2. Perhaps “curve” for “line” will improve the rhythm? Of course “line” is far more felicitous.

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

1. No
2. No, line is better.

It is not as good as it might be. The first four lines are very good in diction and rhythm and third line is very fine, but afterwards it becomes less perfect and the last three lines are not felicitous in expression.

14 October 1934

*

Sri Aurobindo —

I have changed my poem into an octet — modifying slightly the first line also to be in thought-tune with the new second stanza. How do you find it now and where does the inspiration come from?

I love thee for the scented rumour clinging
 To thy pure limbs, of amaranthine peaks —
 O luminous form whose every line goes singing
 The immortality which void earth seeks.

Unto my shadow-calm thy beauty's passion
 Glows like an inward-surgingspirit-force:
 Over thy body's rhythm of adoration
 My floating eyes attain eternal shores.
 deific

If “eternal” is not inevitable, I should like to keep “deific”, as a fresher epithet. Does it not make better music also?

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

The difficulty is that deific sounds dandified and unnatural when it comes into a style like this. It might do well enough in another context; but here it takes away from the impression of the inevitable.

Very fine. Inspired illumined.

15 October 1934

*

Sri Aurobindo —

I think the second line of stanza 2 of my poem will be more mobile, thus:

plumbless surging
 Glows like a surge of plumbless spirit-force
 surging plumbless

I avoid “plumbless surge” because the two lines preceding this both stop a little at the end of the third foot.

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

I object to “plumbless” as I do to “deific”. It looks as if thrust in for the sake of effect.

15 October 1934

(Version from *The Secret Splendour — Collected Poems of K. D. Sethna [Amal Kiran]*, 1993 Ed., p. 479)

I LOVE THEE

I love thee for the scented rumour clinging
To thy pure limbs, of amaranthine peaks —
O luminous form whose every line goes singing
The immortality which void earth seeks.

Unto my shadow-calm thy beauty’s passion
Glow like an inward-surgingspirit force:
Over thy body’s rhythm of adoration
My floating eyes attain eternal shores.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

Mystic Poetry

Mystic poetry does not mean anything exactly or apparently; it means things suggestively and reconditely, — things that are not known and classified by the intellect.

What you are asking is to reduce what is behind to intellectual terms, which is to make it something quite different from itself.

3 December 1936

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Poetry and Art*, CWSA, Vol. 27, p. 87)

SAHANA'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO — VI

(Continued from the issue of January 2023)

Mother mine, Sri Aurobindo has written that I haven't informed you about the cause of my depression, but I couldn't myself make out at first what the reason was. On the first day, I felt a weakness since things began to be insipid and gradually the depression went on increasing. It seems to me this was an attack coming from outside and passing by me. There was nothing against you or anybody else. Often the past invades and causes a fall of consciousness, but there was nothing of that sort. I was myself surprised at what had happened. One day Dilip came in a very depressed condition and was saying many things. I was very much distressed to hear them. Could that be the reason then?

There is a Force going about the Ashram trying to attack anybody who gives an opening. It fell upon Dilip and threw him into depression — in his case there were small outward reasons but all quite small and trivial, but the depression was of great violence and lasted long. Somehow or other it came through him to you but as it could not find any place to get through in the mind or the vital, it fell upon the body (vital-physical or nervous) and created a weakness in which it was able to play. As soon as it could do that, helped by Dilip's remark, it began to whirl round the old machine of thoughts and repinings and despairs. This time it was purely mechanical and irrational, the subconscious bringing up the old habit and turning it like a wheel — which shows that it is nearing its last resources. This is what I saw, but I wanted to know the outward details from you and these entirely confirm what I saw. (12.9.33)

*

Mother, since yesterday, I have been feeling worse. Painful old memories afflict me. Egoism again was coming back, I tried to reject it, but couldn't. Then followed a severe depression with thoughts of failure and other self-lowering tendencies increasing and ending in a climax that with this body and this nature no sadhana can be done. Therefore let this body perish; where is the necessity to continue living? Now, the tendency to tell you everything got closed up and I took up the attitude that since I was going to die, I shouldn't disturb you further. All possible sorts of painful, depressing thoughts I indulged in, more in anger at myself. Deeply perplexed, I failed to find the cause. When, however, this phase passes, I laugh at myself and feel even ashamed. So dramatic, and yet disturbing!

It is the suggestion of incapacity and departure (if not death) that the adverse Force is trying to suggest in each case. The whole thing is absurd and meaningless in your case, a mechanical repetition of old movements. But there was some spot somewhere in the physical in which the button could be pressed and the machinery began to turn round. You must therefore be on your guard especially against any beginning of depression and react immediately — you must not allow physical weakness to bring mental depression, for that is the gate by which it came in. (13.9.33)

*

Mother, Sri Aurobindo's reply of today showed me how many kinds of forces are at play and how they make us suffer.

It is really the same Force taking different forms using different means of approach or acting on different levels of the nature. (13.9.33)

*

At times I feel so vexed to see that the things one should seek for in a pure or unmixed way in order to go forward in sadhana, are all lacking in me, — there is only the ego!

It is so with everybody. Human nature is shot through in all its stuff with the thread of the ego, even when one turns to get away from it, it is in front or could be behind all thoughts and actions like a shadow. To see that is the first step — to discern the falsity and absurdity of the ego movement is the second, to discourage and refuse it at each step is the third, — but it goes entirely only when one sees and experiences (not only thinks) the One in everything and equally everywhere. (8.10.33)

*

Dear Mother, I find that many people are upset over X's and Y's departure. Why should one be upset when a person leaves? I feel neither sympathy nor pain in such cases. I rather feel for you, thinking that you have taken so much trouble, spent so much of your time for them. But why are people so frequently leaving the Ashram? Is there any undue pressure of sadhana? In this year, just see how many departures! We didn't see so many going when we came. Is there any special reason or simply the action of the same hostile force? If so, why should that force succeed to such an extent now?

I don't know why. It is perfectly irrational. People have been going as well as coming since the Ashram began. Perhaps it arises from the ignorant idea that the people who go like X and Y are great bhaktas and sadhaks — while the fact is that X never made much progress even elementary and Y has been in a state of vital revolt sometimes against the Mother, sometimes against myself, latterly against both, for the last six or seven years. People go away because they are too proud and arrogant to accept the control of the Guru or of the Truth or of the Divine. Y had decided that the Truth was in Him alone and there was no Truth in myself or in the Mother. (10.10.33)

*

From time to time my body has been giving me so much trouble that I can't say that I have really enjoyed what may be called good health.

The human body has always been in the habit of answering to whatever forces chose to lay hands on it and illness is the toll it pays for its inertia and ignorance. It has to learn to answer to the one force alone, but that is not easy for it to learn. (16.10.33)

*

Herewith a letter from a friend. She would like to come and settle here if you would accept her.

The difficulty is that she seems to have vairagya for worldly life without any knowledge or special call for this yoga and this yoga and the life here are quite different things from ordinary yoga and ordinary Ashram. It is not a life of meditative retirement as elsewhere. Moreover it would be impossible for us to decide anything without seeing her and knowing at close hand what she is like. We are not just now taking more inmates into the Ashram except in a very few cases.

Sri Aurobindo, I have received a letter from another girl who had come for Darshan. You may remember that long ago she wrote once asking for shelter here. I have known her since her childhood. She wants now to come to do yoga. I have asked her to read your books, but she expects a reply. Will you let me know what to write?

As for your friend, it is not possible to say that she can come here for that depends on many things which are not clearly present here. First, one must enter this Path or it must be seen that one is called to it; afterwards there is the question whether one is meant for the Ashram life here. The question about the family duties can be answered in this way — the family duties exist so long as one is in the ordinary

consciousness of the Garhastha, if the call to spiritual life comes, whether one keeps to them or not depends partly upon the way of yoga one follows, partly on one's own spiritual necessity. There are many who pursue inwardly the spiritual life and keep the family duties, not as social duties but as a field for the practice of Karmayoga, others abandon everything to follow the spiritual call or line and they are justified if that is necessary for the yoga they practise or if that is the imperative demand of the soul within them.

Mother, my inborn idleness is still very cheerfully alive; but I am none the less desirous of offering myself through work. I was never devoted to work, especially household work — this big fault finds scope even when I remain in a good condition, while it is also true that I want to get rid of this idleness and turn a good worker. It seems I became one, and a habit also grew up but the frequent bouts of idleness unsettle that habit.

Idleness must of course go — but sometimes I think you have pulled too much the other way. To be able to work with full energy is necessary — but to be able not to work is also necessary.

Mother, what is the colour of moonlight? Does it give the impression of a golden colour or a silver colour? My impression is that the light of the Sun is gold but the light of the moon is silvery. Is it not generally said "Silvery moon"? Of course in the moon sometimes one can see a little golden tint just when it begins to rise, but its light is always silver. Is it not so? Or is it sometimes golden?

The moon itself is often golden, not always silvery. As for the light when it rests on the ground it is golden, in the air it is pale whitish blue. (21.10.33)

*

Sri Aurobindo, what is the poetical convention regarding moonlight? In Bengali poetry and in Sanskrit too, moonlight is considered to be "silver-white". Dilip said that the poetical convention is golden light. You wrote: "in the air it is pale whitish blue." When pale whitish blue becomes radiant or shining, then the impression, if it is not silvery, can't be golden. By silvery I have meant silver-white and when the white becomes shining, the silver tint is suggested. Am I right?

In English poetry moonlight is usually spoken of as golden, because of its effect on the ground or water, although moon-silvered is also used. The silvery element is there in the moonlight in the air, but it is an element only. (22.10.33)

*

I am ever busy with thinking of myself, seeing and giving importance to myself. Even the progress I make is to my credit. My ego at every step brings in front the "I" as the master, and due to habit I accept it again and again. The play of this "I-ness" is going on; the road out of it shown by Sri Aurobindo in so many ways and so beautifully remains out of reach. As long as this "I" is there, how shall I realise you or become entirely yours? This feeling is getting the upper hand and making me suffer, even depressed.

You cannot expect to drive the ego out of the movements in a short time. What is necessary is to see it quietly without being discouraged by its presence, and by a steady persistent action work it out of the system. (26.10.33)

*

Mother, on the whole, I am all right. There is no longer a feeling of irritation about work; the inclination to work comes now and then. Still, a state of disorder seems to persist. Sometimes a state of spontaneous conscious control over some aspects, at other times a sense of "lightening" in regard to other aspects — these keep alternating.

All these things are in fact things that had been left in the outer being, in the physical consciousness, though some were rejected by the higher parts and their persistence there or their remnants made the progress incomplete. Now they are rising up for dispersal and have to be thrown out from these parts also. As for unwillingness to work, if the sleep comes fully back and the body recovers its elasticity it should not be difficult to get rid of that.

Today also at noon there was an attack of depression. At first, I thought of concealing it from you. Neither did I want to reject it. I feared that you might be displeased with me. However, eventually I rejected it after a regular tussle! And the light came, thanks to your Grace.

It is always a mistake to conceal. That was the tamasic ego in the vital physical — a resistance of inertia which comes when the rajasic is disappointed. (7.11.33)

*

Mother, again everything appears off-colour even after coming from you. I feel so bad. I expected that everything would be all right, once I would see you, but quite the contrary is the effect. I feel so bad that there is a strong impulse to go away; that feeling is still active. Today your dealing with me seemed very

remote and on the surface. I missed this time the intimacy I had known when I had come up to you with my last difficulty. You had put me right with the touch of your deep affection, but there was no joy of satisfaction in the recent contact; you had moved far away and this was the first time that I felt like this. For the first time I feel no ardour, eagerness or prayer for the 24th's Darshan. God knows what will happen finally! Perhaps this movement may draw me away! Death appears to be preferable as a way of deliverance.

I don't feel like writing even. If this continues I will have to stop writing. Have I then stumbled upon a desert-tract?

It was certainly not because the Mother was different to you from other days or pushed you to a distance, but because you came rather shut up in that part of your physical being which is still shrinking from the Light. It is this part which was always fundamentally responsible for all your bad passages and painful movements even when the direct difficulty was higher up. Its nature is to cling to the old habitual pre-Yogic consciousness and to shut up doors and windows against the help that is offered and lament in the darkness when it has felt itself hurt. This is a thing that everybody must get rid of who wants to progress. Do not go on identifying yourself with this part and calling it yourself. Get back into your inner being and look at this only as a small though obstinate part of the nature that has to change. For apart from its insistence there is no reason why your way should enter into a desert. It should enter into a wideness of liberation — open to the calm and peace and power and light of a consciousness that is wider than the personal and into which the ego can happily disappear. (8.11.33)

*

Sri Aurobindo's letter has made me healthy again. I was completely closed within. My abhimāna about you went on increasing till it ended in revolt, finally in madness. That's how I was in its grip and suffered a lot. There was no will at all. I won't write further; the body is utterly broken.

We are very glad to know that you have recovered. Your true self got covered up by a dark cloud of a foreign Force. It covered up your reason and took from you your will. You must always in future turn back from any movement that allows this to come in. At the least trouble turn to take refuge in our protection and love. (8.11.33)

*

My dear Mother, I am well, I am happy but with a vital joy, for I talked a lot — the aftermath of suffering, as it were. Your affection has filled me up. The whole

Ashram came to know I was on the point of leaving. What a drama! And a total shrinking! Now the approach of the 24th's Darshan fills me with joy. How I was caught by what Sri Aurobindo calls the 'black being'!

At any rate you know now and can be on your guard — so that lessens his chance.

As the moment of the possibility of the supramental Descent grows nearer, these forces have become more eager to keep their hold in the Asram atmosphere and break the sadhana of anyone they can touch. Their main aim is to get as many as possible to leave the Asram, so that they may not share in the descent and so that the descent itself may be delayed and disturbed by a constant tempest in the atmosphere. That is why I put the notice suggesting that the sadhaks should not admit these forces and need not. To be on one's guard and admit no violent and irrational movements, to be calm and persistent in faith and self-opening to us is all that is needed. (12.11.33)

*

Mother, today what I heard from some sadhaks would have been better for me not to hear and for all not to hear. They were not saying it with any disrespect, still when they do utter things like "If the Supermind has descended, why should Mother's eyes suffer?", they don't seem to know that it is not our business to bother about such matters. I was pondering: "Our limited mind, vision, consciousness can't have the slightest inkling about these things; why then should we sit in judgement over them?" Maybe, I am posing myself as a superior being trying to judge others from an egoistic attitude. Still, I told them, "Have Sri Aurobindo and the Mother said anywhere that the Supermind has descended into their bodies?"

No, I have not said that at all. It is quite impossible for the Supramental to take up the body before there has been the full Supramental change in the mind and the vital. X and others seem always to expect some kind of unintelligible miracle — they do not understand that it is a concentrated evolution, rapid but following the law of creation, that has to take place. A miracle can be only a moment's wonder. A change according to the Divine Law can alone endure. (14.11.33)

*

Here in the Ashram many people say, "Mother and Sri Aurobindo want that our sadhikas should dress well." I can't accept this opinion, since both of you have often stressed detachment. My belief is that women are by nature much attached to good dress. If, however, Sri Aurobindo has written anything to this effect, I would like to know.

After realisation whatever the Higher Will demands is the best — but first detachment is the rule. To reach the Freedom without the discipline and detachment is given to few. The Mother and myself went for years through the utmost self-imposed bareness of life. (15.11.33)

*

I feel a sort of calm and quietness. I am aware still of what I have to do. Usually all our talks revolve round persons, their actions, doings etc. Now I see that if we put a stop to idle gossip, there remains hardly anything to talk about. Besides, even if the talks were of a good kind the sense of "I", with its pride, superiority, has a play in various guises. So, there is no further incentive to talk. Everything seems to become quiet.

What you say about ordinary conversations is quite correct and that all should fall away is very necessary for the true consciousness.

Now, the matter of food doesn't appear to be a problem. If anything good is sent to me the taste is enjoyable, but the former pleasure has changed its character. Once you said that these things can crop up after a long lapse. If I pay no attention to it, then what would you say?

It is better to be careful in the matter of food etc.; as in the stage through which your sadhana is passing there is a considerable sensitiveness in the vital physical part of the being and it may be easily disturbed by a wrong impact or a wrong movement like overfeeding.

Mother, when K was overtaken by an attack of depression, I saw distinctly that he was possessed by something very black. I at once remembered the eclipse of the moon by Rahu. Just as the moon is slowly devoured by Rahu, so was he by this black something. I didn't have visions before. Is there any truth in it?

It is so seen when the inner vision is opened. It is an influence from an adverse force or from the universal lower nature (an influence more often than a possession) that brings about this violent depression and disturbance and it is seen like a grey or black cloud or form throwing itself on the adhar.

Mother dear, people see light, radiance etc. in your face. Not all have this faculty. Can it be then the Divine Grace that enables one to see it? Or is it an inborn gift? Does this vision open by itself by people's contact with you or do you open it in them?

What people see around the Mother is first her aura, as it is called nowadays and secondly the forces of Light that pour out from her when she concentrates as she always does on the roof for instance. (Everybody has an aura — but in most it is weak and not very luminous, in the Mother's aura there is the full play of lights and powers.) People do not see usually because it is a subtle physical and not a gross material phenomenon. They can see only in two conditions, first if they develop sufficient subtle sight, secondly if the aura itself begins to become so strong that it affects the sheath of gross matter which conceals it. The Mother has certainly no idea of making people see it — it is of themselves that one after another, some 20 or 30 in the Asram I believe, have come to see. None of them are big yogis, some of them are mere beginners. It is certainly one of the signs that the higher Force (call it supramental or not) is beginning to influence matter. (15.11.33)

*

After receiving that letter of Sri Aurobindo saying, "First detachment is the rule. The Mother and myself went for years through the utmost self-imposed bareness of life", an aspiration towards detachment has come upon me and a will that luxury or desire or habit of any kind should be eschewed. It is after the darshan of the 24th that the will has become active that I should plunge into sadhana with all sincerity.

If it can be done (in a positive not merely in a negative way), then it would be an immense step forward. (18.11.33)

*

Mother, Sri Aurobindo has written of a positive way, not a negative way. I can't make out what it means. Please explain.

By negative I mean merely repressing the desire and wrong movements and egoism, by positive I mean the bringing down of light and peace and purity in those parts from above. I do not mean that these movements are not to be rejected — but all the energy should not be directed solely to rejection; it must also be directed to the positive replacement of them by the higher consciousness. The more this consciousness comes, the easier also will the rejection be. (19.11.33)

*

Mother, the resolution that I have taken is extremely difficult. I know it. Even so, since by your Grace it has come, I must proceed on the way. You know very well, Mother, that plenty of difficulties will try to entangle my steps:

sentimentality, attachment, tenderness etc. will beckon me and block the way. But I must remain firm. On the 24th, laying down all my past at your feet and carrying your blessings and with complete surrender I would like to walk on the path with quiet steps. I am getting prepared within but the outer has not yet begun to follow.

Determination is needed and a firm patience, not to be discouraged by this or that failure. It is a change in the habit of the physical nature and that needs a long patient work of detail. (19.11.33)

*

Mother, not 'this' or 'that' alone but all that is not the Divine I want to be free from and go forward.

Yes, detachment from all that is not the Divine and development of all that is the Divine. (21.11.33)

*

I have no inclination for reading or writing or any other mental work, except to live within. Why is there this unwillingness, while the physical work is quite welcome?

There is no indispensable need to do these things when the mind is otherwise concentrated. At present the preparation of the inward change is more important than anything else. (25.11.33)

*

I understand that I shouldn't pay any attention to whatever we do or say when seized by anger, for they aren't really part of our true nature, but still when it happens, for the moment I am much disturbed.

I think it would be quite useless and harmful to lay stress on things said by anyone in these fits of the whirl of dark forces or to resent or remember them at all for they are exaggerations and perversions of the vital mind, that boil up whenever the vital is in effervescence and they cannot be taken as something deliberately thought and spoken. It is better to let them disappear and be forgotten as if they had not been said — to give them importance strengthens them to return when the occasion arises. (30.11.33)

*

It is not that I have no weakness for things, but I feel a joy to see that to reject firmly and to call for your help are helping me greatly not to submit to the weakness or to think of these things. The result being: by rejection grows the strength of rejection.

Yes, that is so. Each victory gained over oneself means new strength to gain more victories. (7.12.33)

*

I have observed that whatever I have decided to give up and am ready to fight out with all my strength tries in all possible ways to take advantage of my weakness, thwart me and baffle my resolutions. In other words, it tries to entangle me in its clasp. Is this the rule?

That always happens; when one gets the definite release, then they fall away. (9.12.33)

*

Mother, today my concentration was amusing. When the mind was becoming one-pointed various thoughts began to enter in and when I took interest in them, I observed with a startle that the consciousness was moving from inward to outward: the concentration was all on a sudden losing itself in various useless thoughts and then again getting collected — so, there is a tendency for the movement to get externalised. Am I right in my observation?

That is the present nature of the physical mind — its motion is outward. (9.12.33)

*

Sweet Mother, when I heard that letters to Sri Aurobindo would be discontinued, then at first I felt very sad that we were going to miss Sri Aurobindo's contact, but immediately felt how selfish I was, and at once I started feeling in the other way and was really glad that Sri Aurobindo would have a little rest; Mother, through writing letters to him regularly for such a long period I came so near to you and him, but at the same time I understood quite well that I must be more intimate inwardly.

The books and letters are not going to be discontinued — but I shall have to take one day off in the week (Sunday). The volume of the correspondence is becoming enormous and it takes me all the night and a good part of the day — apart from the

work done separately by the Mother who has also to work the greater part of the night in addition to her day's work. It is this that makes the Pranam later and later, for we do not finish till 7.30 or after. Also much work falls in arrears and piles up and many things that have their importance have had to be discontinued. Some relief is necessary. If all sadhaks were more discreet it would be better. But this does not apply to you, for you keep always within the limits. (19.12.33)

*

Sweet Mother, I am thinking of giving up writing to you regularly — can I do so? I shall write whenever I need to write: in my difficulty, or about work or permission, or concerning my sadhana, otherwise I do not want to take up Sri Aurobindo's time in this way. I am really feeling so very sorry for you both.

I don't think it would be good for you to discontinue altogether like that. Your discontinuing alone would not make any appreciable difference, and besides your book was not part of the heavy baggage. At the least you could write every second day and on other days whatever may be urgent. But I would prefer to have a few lines from you at least each day. (20.12.33)

(To be continued)

SAHANA

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

If the psychic is active — or in so far as it is active, there is something in it which is like an automatic test for the universal forces — warning against (not by thought so much as by an essential feeling) and rejecting what should not be, accepting and transmuting what should be.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga – III, CWSA, Vol. 30, p. 340)

ARVIND SULE RECOLLECTS

(Interviews conducted by Raman Reddy in November-December 2007)

[Arvind Sule (16.03.1930 -13.11.2022) arrived in Pondicherry on the 16th of February 1947, drawn by an inner call to Sri Aurobindo Ashram. He was only 17 when he came and could not quite understand the contours of Ashram life, which were so different from what he had expected in a regular old-style Ashram — serious-minded people practising *mantra*, *japa*, *dhyana* in uncomfortable huts in a forest, far away from the noise and bustle of life in the cities. In the beginning Sri Aurobindo was for him only a Guru (who would teach him the Yoga) and Mother, a French lady (!) who seemed to be the manager of the Ashram. Over the years he understood that this was a different type of Ashram and that work was accorded here a very high place in Yoga. The lime mortar grinder (*chakki*) that he was made to supervise from his very first day in the Building Service thus became his altar of worship. A few years later the thousand and one trivial problems of the Domestic Service which provided servants and hot water to the inmates of the Ashram became his field of sadhana. And surprisingly he never knew how and when Sri Aurobindo and the Mother imperceptibly wove their way into his heart and installed themselves firmly in his inner being over a period of 75 years of dedicated service in the Ashram.]

Life in Gujarat

R: What did you read to make you come here? What made you come here?

SULE: I was in Baroda, in school. Now I was 7/8 years old when there was a children's talk competition. I don't remember on what subject was the talk. But the teacher coached us and we had to speak for 5 minutes in front of the headmaster and others. It was to encourage us to speak, and there I remember I got first place. Now as a reward I got one Marathi booklet where sketches of all great people were there: Tilak, Dayanand, and there was in it Sri Aurobindo's photo and a sketch of his life saying that he was a great revolutionary, that now he's doing Yoga sadhana in Pondicherry. At that moment I said, "Ah, yes!" From the beginning I had some kind of feeling that I wanted to see God, I wanted to do sadhana, that one day I will go to the Himalayas. So when I saw Sri Aurobindo's photo I said to myself: "Yes, I am going to Pondicherry after I am grown-up," because in those days who will allow me? "When I am a little grown up and can run away or go out by myself, I will go to Pondicherry."

R: Oh, so from that sketch . . .

SULE: When I saw that sketch, I said, “Yes, he is my Guru. I am going to him.” But when I came here and saw this Ashram, I said: “Ashram has to be in some kind of jungle or a garden and there should be huts and all that. Here you see a town and there is a big building here! How can this be an Ashram?”

R: Your family did not try to restrain you from going?

SULE: No. What happened after my mother died, we were in Patan, the place where Champaklal came from. In the school there, I had to learn Gujarati. In Baroda there were Marathi schools because it was a Marathi state. Patan was part of the Gaekwad state, but there was no Marathi there because it was inside pure Gujarat, so I had to learn Gujarati. My brother was a headmaster in that school. So there once Ambubhai Purani came and gave a lecture which I attended, and then I wanted to go to Pondicherry.

But the funny thing was — this was quite some years before. In Patan there is the Saraswati River. Every year Jaleshwar Mahadev festival is celebrated. There used to be a big fair for 3-4 days. So we all, 3-4 friends, we all went to Jaleshwar Mela. And there I remember saying, “No, enough of this, I must go now.”

At that time I had completely forgotten about Pondicherry or Sri Aurobindo. (See how forces work!) I thought I should go to the Himalayas; Himalayas were very far, but Abu Parvat was quite near, and I had heard that there were many yogis on Mount Abu. So during the Mela time, “For about 2-3 days my friends are busy. There should be no problem now.”

And there you were on your own. We had decided that we will go back home together. Otherwise, you moved about wherever you liked. Either you went with another friend or you were alone. I was a loner at that time also. Perhaps they thought I was a crackpot. So one night I left the Mela and started walking towards Mount Abu thinking I will come across some Guru.

That happened to be the last night of the Mela and the next morning all my friends gathered. “Where is Arvind? Where is Arvind? He seems to have gone home.” So they came back home.

My brother asked them, “He had gone with you, where is he?”

“Oh, he has not come home? We did not see him at night. He did not sleep with us.”

Then my brother being a headmaster, he had all the boys under him. He said, “Where is he? Look for him.”

Now after walking through the jungle I had come to the nearest station to go to Mount Abu, and I was waiting for the train to Mount Abu. And one of the students came there. “Hey, there he is sitting!” and they caught me. “What happened? Your

brother is so much worried!”

I remember I quietly came back home. My brother asked me, “Where did you run away? What happened? Where were you going?”

“No, I want to go to Pondicherry.” (That’s the funny side of it.)

“But why did you run away? You should have told me that you want to go to Pondicherry.” He had no objection to it and he was very nice.

My teacher was a relative of Champaklal. My brother being a headmaster, he knew them all, and he knew this particular teacher who had some connection with Pondicherry, though he himself was never interested in the Ashram. So he contacted the gentleman. “*Bhai*, my brother wants to go to Pondicherry. Do you know something about Pondicherry?”

“*Han*, yes, yes, Champaklal is there.” (I don’t know exactly how he was related to Champaklal.) “I will give you a note.”

My brother told me, “See, your teacher has given you a note.” Then he sent me to my sister. My sister was married and she was in Bombay. “From here, Patan, go to Bombay. Stay with her for some days, then go to Pondicherry.”

He gave me money for a ticket and told my sister, “He wants to go to Pondicherry. Make some arrangements for him.”

R: Your father was not there?

SULE: No, my father and mother had died. My father died when I was three or four and my mother died when I was twelve. After my mother’s death, we went to Patan to my brother who was the eldest brother.

R: So your eldest brother was the one who was looking after you.

SULE: Yes.

R: And he gave you permission.

SULE: He gave me permission. “If you want to go, you could have told me. There was no need to run away.”

But then my brother and the teacher said, “Hey, this is your last year in matric. Finish your exams and go. Then you will have something in hand.” I was a good student and they were hoping that I will do better in the University and make the school’s name shine. They had high hopes on me.

I said, “No.” I didn’t know at that time that the call had come. “No, I am not going to study anymore. I want to go now.”

Then he gave me that letter. I remember it was Deepavali time. I came to my sister to go to Pondicherry and I stayed with her. And I liked Deepavali so much that

I sort of forgot about coming here. (*laughter*)

My brother in Patan was worried because we can't stay with a married sister for long. As a guest, it is all right for 15 days, one month. Finally, he himself wrote, "What happened? Is he still there? He has not gone to Pondicherry?"

My sister told me, "*Dada's* letter has come. He says you want to go to Pondicherry, when do you want to go?"

Suddenly I remembered, "Of course, I want to go to Pondicherry. Take the ticket for today."

So my brother-in-law, poor fellow, ran to the station. "Where is Pondicherry? Where is Pondicherry?" because we had no connection with the South. We went to the station and found out that there are two ways: either you go to Madras directly and take a bus, or change the train at Villupuram and then that train will slowly go to Pondicherry. He thought I was a new boy and had never gone out alone. I did not know English and they don't know Hindi in the South. So instead of going to Madras and finding the bus to Pondicherry, it was better to go to Villupuram. He told me that I have to change the train at Villupuram.

So I remember getting down at Villupuram early in the morning and for the first time I saw somebody making coffee in a stall. We all drink tea; about coffee I had no knowledge. I saw a stall and a man pouring something in a glass and 7-8 people drinking it. I asked here and there, "*Chai, chai*?"

'*Chai*' nobody understood. "Tea, tea?"

"No tea, Kāffee! (*laughter*) Kāffee!"

"My God, you don't even get tea here. What a problem! I need tea, but if tea is not available, let me take whatever is there as long as it is drinkable." So I drank coffee and I immediately fell in love with it. "Oh, my God! This is Kāffee!"

I was on my own most of the time, so whenever I got a chance in the evening or morning, "Kāffee." It also stopped my hunger because I had very limited money.

R: So you reached Pondicherry at what time?

SULE: Around 3 o'clock. The train came slowly stopping at Villianur, etc., and by the time I reached Pondicherry it was 2/2.30, I remember it was afternoon. When I came out, there was that Communist procession and the steamer was leaving and Subbiah [*the Communist leader*]¹ was going to France.

1. Subbiah was jubilantly proceeding to France after being elected to the Senate by the Pondicherry Representative Assembly on 26 January 1947. He was going by steamer from the old pier of Pondicherry – one can see only the broken remains of it now behind the Gandhi statue on the beach road. Passengers had to take a boat from the pier to board the ship. Pondicherry was under French rule then.

First Days in the Ashram

You see the first time when the *rickshawallah* showed me the Ashram, I said to myself, “How can this be an Ashram? Ashram means huts and all that. This looks like a bungalow!”

I didn’t believe the fellow. Of course, I didn’t know Tamil either. “Ashram? Ashram?” I spoke to him more in sign language. So I just went on a *parikrama* of the Ashram. “This doesn’t look like an Ashram. Perhaps the *rickshawallah* doesn’t know what I am talking about and I don’t know what he is saying.” So I waited there.

In those days they used to keep the main gate half closed and one watchman will be there sitting inside. I arrived here at about 3 o’clock. When the *rickshawallah* first showed me the Ashram, I said, “All right. Let me see.”

I remember slowly pushing the gate open (it was afternoon and there was blazing heat) and there that fellow was dozing or meditating, whatever you might call it. As soon as I opened the gate, he shouted, “*EH, PO.*” (*laughter*)

Now I got all this firing after I had just walked out of the train. You can imagine two days in the train, unwashed, in half pant, shirt, and one bag which my sister had actually forced on me. She had told me, “Keep one rug, one sweater in case of need; if you don’t need it, throw it away, but take it so that at least I will have the satisfaction that I have provided you with something.” And she gave me a little money.

So when the gateman shouted, “*EH*”, I got so scared that I ran out. That was T; you know his uncle, you remember B, he was also like that, I felt the whole family was a little crack. So you can understand the situation. I had disturbed him. He must have seen somebody who almost looked like a beggar. It is understandable. I had just come from the station, unwashed, God knows how I was looking, but he just threw me out, “GET OUT, GET OUT, GET OUT!”

So I went on waiting for a signal to indicate that this was an Ashram. Luckily, at about 4 o’clock, after half an hour, Haradhan-da came there with a *kuja* and an umbrella. (Those days Padmasini used to provide these Tamil umbrellas.²) He was going to the Filter to fetch water and he was wearing *khadams*.

When I saw Haradhan-da coming out, “*Han*, he looks like a *sadhak*.” (*laughter*) He was walking on the footpath and I went and did *namaskar* to him.

“What do you want?” He could speak Hindi well.

“*Dada*, *Ashram me rehna hai*. [*Dada*, I want to stay in the Ashram.]

“*Oh tum Ashram me rehne ke liye aya?*” [Oh you have come to stay in the Ashram?]

2. Prabhakar Pantulu (Batti) humorously describes this umbrella: “It was a large dome-like affair made of palm leaves and bamboo strips, no closing or opening, always open. The handle too was bamboo. (We see pictures of our ancients, like Vamana Avatar, using this model.)” *Mother India*, January 1996, later published in *Among the Not So Great*.

At last, there was somebody with sympathy.

“*Bhai*, you cannot come like that and immediately stay in the Ashram. You have to take permission from the Mother.”

“Mother? Who is Mother?”

“*Ek French lady hai.*” [She is a French lady.]

I am telling you all this because this was the reaction in my mind. Then he said, “You have to write a letter to Mother, then something can be done. Now immediately nothing can be done. You have some money with you? Stay outside.”

He gave me very sound advice. He must have seen what I was looking like. “Oh, you have come by train? Come tomorrow morning after taking a good bath and wear fresh clothes.”

R: Where were you staying?

SULE: I had come straight from the station to the Ashram.

R: This was the first day?

SULE: Yes, the first day. And that was the day when our Subbiah [*Communist leader*] was going to France. When I came out of the station at about 3 o'clock by the local train from Villupuram, you could see thousands of people outside.

There was another funny incident when I came out. I had never seen a man-pulled *rickshaw*. We had *tanga* in Baroda. I was in Gujarat where Sri Aurobindo was there, Gaekwad State of Baroda, and our *rickshaw* was then cycle *rickshaw*. When I saw for the first time here a man-pulled *rickshaw*, I got the shock of my life. A man pulling another man! So when that fellow said, “*Ayya*” with a gesture, I understood that he wanted me to come. But I felt so ashamed that I just said, “No, no, no” and ran away.

When I came out of the station, they were all going to the seaside to our old pier. I enquired with one or two people, “*Ashram kahan hai?*” [Where is the Ashram?]

One of them said, “*Chalo, wahi ja rahe hain.*” [Come, we are all going there.]

So I followed the procession and Subbiah went away. Then some people showed me the Ashram and I came stumbling here. When Haradhan-da said that you have to take Mother's permission and that she was French, I thought, “Have I come to the wrong place or what? What have ladies got to do with Sri Aurobindo's Yoga Ashram, and that too a French lady?”

Those days, you know, the Britishers in the schools had created the impression that the French are drunkards and loose characters. “We Britishers stand for culture!”

I thought, “Have I made a mistake and come to the wrong place or what? Let us see.” So for many days I went about like that.

Another thing, here nobody tells you anything — who is Mother, nothing.

For quite a few years, I took Mother as one of us — one of the disciples. I didn't know anything about Mother. Nobody told me of Mother. So I thought she was the manager of the Ashram. I only worshipped Sri Aurobindo. Luckily, thank God, with Mother's Grace there was no revolt, though I thought at first I had come to the wrong place. Luckily, I did not run away. Mother saved me in that way, you can say.

* * *

R: Where did you stay overnight?

SULE: Outside.

R: In a hotel?

SULE: Sankar Lodge, some bench was there costing 8 annas. Those days it was cheap, you know.

R: You had money in your pocket.

SULE: Some 40/50 rupees. My sister had insisted on having some money. So Haradhan asked me, "*Bhai*, do you have some money in your pocket?"

"Yes, I have some 40-50 rupees."

"Because nothing can be done immediately, it will take some time."

So I still remember I took some coffee because I did not know whether I could manage with the money I had. Everything was cheap at that time. One *dosa* in the morning and evening and a little lunch at 12 o'clock, and I used to manage.

R: Where were you eating outside?

SULE: *Idlis* I remember eating in Sankar Lodge itself. Then I used to look for *chapathis*. I don't eat curds or buttermilk and the *chutney* looked all white, so I was scared that they had put curd or buttermilk in it, because I won't be able to digest and I will vomit. And then eating only rice . . . you see we had the habit of eating *chapathis*. So I used to look for a place where *chapathis* are served and somehow manage a *paratha* or two.

R: So the next day you came dressed up?

SULE: Yes. Dressed up early morning at 8 o'clock at the Ashram gate again! Then both the gates were open and Hiren³ was sitting just where they sit under the clock. Very nice gentleman!

"Dada, namaskar, I would like to stay in the Ashram. I met a gentleman (Haradhan, whose name I had never asked) yesterday and he said that you have to write a letter. I don't know that much English." I was in matric when I came. But I had no habit of writing and I had never written an application type of letter.

"Achchha. Where have you come from?"

My birthplace was Baroda. I was very confused, so I said, "I have come from Baroda." Had he known that I was from Patan, he would have perhaps asked me, "Do you know Champaklal?" But all my life I was in Baroda, so I said I came from Baroda.

"Oh Baroda State where Sri Aurobindo was staying."

"Yes, I have come from there."

I mean there was a kind of sympathy, and then he wrote a letter to Mother.

R: He was more sympathetic.

SULE: Ah yes, helpful!

R: You just entered the main gate.

SULE: Yes. I went to him and talked to him. He saw that I was washed and a little fresh. "I am a student; I would like to stay in the Ashram."

"Yes, Haradhan said the right thing. You are not taken here immediately like that. You have to ask for permission. Wait, I will ask for you."

He wrote a letter and gave it to Amrita. Amrita took it to Mother and he told him that Mother has asked him to bring the boy with him and stand near him at the balcony. She will look from there and then decide. So I said, "Thank God, I will be chosen by the Mother directly."

R: You must have gone a couple of times to Hiren asking whether . . .

SULE: *Han*, every day he used to say, "Come here at 8 o'clock. Mother has not seen you today. Come tomorrow at 5.30 and we will go to the balcony."

Then I was free and I used hunt for a place where *chapathis* were available and pass some time.

* * *

3. Not to be confused with the gateman who did not allow Arvind Sule to enter the Ashram on the first day.

SULE: After Hiren wrote to Mother for my permission, Mother said, “Okay, you stand with him at the balcony [*during Balcony Darshan at about 6 a.m.*]. I will see him from there.”

Now he wrote on the 17th morning, and he told me in Hindi because those days I didn’t know English, “Come tomorrow to the Ashram gate at 5.30 after taking your bath. I will take you from here. You have to stand near me. Mother will see you from the balcony.”

So I remember 18th morning. Mother came to the balcony, we both stood there. Then Hiren went to Amrita at 8 o’clock, “Mother asked me to bring that boy. Has Mother given any answer?”

Amrita said, “Yes, Mother said, ‘I am sorry. I forgot to see. (*laughter*) Let him come tomorrow.’ ”

That was 18th. The same thing happened on the 19th! Mother saw here and there, but did not particularly notice me and see whether I am eligible to join the Ashram.

So 19th also, “Sorry, tomorrow.”

20th — the same story.

Now I didn’t know 21st was Mother’s birthday and Darshan day. But 20th Hiren again wrote, “Mother, tomorrow is Darshan. Can he come for Darshan?”

Mother said: “YES.” There was a big “YES. He can come.”

So my first Darshan was as a non-inmate of the Ashram. And I remember the 21st February Darshan.

* * *

Mother forgot to see me on the 20th. When Hiren asked again, she said, “Yes, he can come for Darshan.”

I remember there was something on 20th evening which was supposed to make us ready for Darshan; that is the impression that I have. Then I had Darshan on 21st February as a non-inmate of the Ashram. There I saw them sitting together, both of them. It was as if I was seeing some god in the temple. I had come with the impression that Sri Aurobindo was our Guru. When I saw them sitting together, it struck me that Mother was not one of us, that Mother was different, and she was closer to Sri Aurobindo. I still sometimes try to recollect when Mother turned me around. Even today I don’t know when I started believing in Mother.

So like this 21st February Darshan was over. 22nd, 23rd — the same story. Finally on the 24th Mother saw me from the balcony and immediately the news came at 8 o’clock.

“Yes, I have seen him. All right.”

Then Hiren asked, “What next?”

“Take him to Khirod for work.”

The moment Mother gave sanction you became an inmate of the Ashram. Hiren took me to Khirod-da at 8 o'clock, "Khiro, Amrita has sent this boy to you. Give him work."

Khiro-da brought me to the *chakki* [a lime making machine pulled by bullocks in the courtyard of what is presently the Atelier]. Nobody was there. "Sit here. I will come here from time to time and guide you. That is the stores. Keep an eye on it. All right?"

"All right."

Then I remember an interesting thing, Hiren gave me another piece of sound advice. Sanction was given, so he told me to get my clothes. I went and brought them.

"Now remember, you are in an institution with a Dining Room."

At 11.30 he came and took me to the Dining Room; there he introduced me as a new boy who has got Mother's permission. He said, "11.15 to 12.30. Now, if you don't come within this time, no food for you. *Ye tomara ghar nahin hai* [This is not your house] where your mother is waiting for you to give food. 'I had work. I went to take my bath.' — none of these excuses will do. Leave everything within this time. Your work finishes at 11.30, wash your hands here. If you want to go home, okay, but come before 12 and take your food." Then he told me the evening timings.

He again came at 5 o'clock.

"What happened?"

"Your room, I have come with the key."

I'm telling you this because in those days there was no waiting. Evening at 5 o'clock he was ready with the key, "This is your room." It was just a room. "In 2-3 days, you will get a cot, chair and everything else."

"No, no, I don't need anything."

"Look here, this is not like other Ashrams. Here you will get a cot, you will get a mattress, you will get a chair, you will get everything to keep your things and stay here."

"Oh, this is a room type of Ashram, I see!" (*laughter*)

So it went on like this for about a month. And 7.30 means 7.30! I used to be in the department at 7.15. Before that, you finish your Dining Room, everything, and come back. From time to time Hiren used to come and see me, "*Bhai*, everything is going on well? Okay? All right."

One day I asked him hesitatingly, "Hiren-*bhai*, work is going on all right. But what about sadhana? (*laughter*) Will I get any *diksha*? Nobody has taught me how to do sadhana. What do you do in sadhana?"

"Oh, sadhana! Nobody has taught you how to do sadhana?" Now he himself perhaps did not know what to answer.

"Hiren-*bhai*, I am working, I am eating. But I was doing that outside also. I was going to school and eating at home."

I was from Baroda, but I came to Patan when my mother died. Champaklal, Bansidhar, they are all from Patan, and one of their close relatives was my teacher. He gave me a letter to Champaklal and Bansidhar when he knew that I wanted to come to Pondicherry to do Yoga sadhana. He said, “Yes, our people are there, you go, they will help you.”

Now when I came I luckily remembered their names, otherwise I wouldn’t even have known their names. I opened the letter and saw what was written. “Champaklal-ji and Bansidhar-bhai, this is my student and he wants to do sadhana. Can you help him?” It went on like that.

When I came here, something, you can say an evil force said, “Why should I join with recommendation? If I am worthy or not, they should know. But why take a letter of recommendation? No, no!” So I remember tearing the letter.

R: At the railway station?

SULE: No, here, after coming here. I was outside for 3-4 days and I never said that I wanted to see Champaklal or Bansidhar-bhai. Then after Mother saw me and I got permission, one day I thought, “Let me see who they are.” I asked Hiren, “Is there anyone here called Champaklal or Bansidhar-bhai?”

“Yes, there is. Why?”

“I had got a letter for them.”

“Idiot, why didn’t you tell me?” (*laughter*)

Now I couldn’t tell him that I had torn it. “No, when I came I forgot that it was in my pocket and I washed my clothes. But I had read the letter and I remember the names.”

“You got a letter for Champaklal! Had you told me about it, you would not have had to wait for so many days. Champaklal’s name is given first preference even in going for meditation on one’s birthday.”

I came to know later on who Champaklal was. Mother always gave first preference to Champaklal’s people.

“You would have got work upstairs with him had he known that you came from his place and you are a student of his relative.”

Then I thought, “Thank God, Mother saw me directly and gave me permission.” Maybe if I had brought the letter and showed it to Champaklal, it may have been so, but no, I would rather be Mother’s man than Champaklal’s man.

(To be continued)

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

(Part 33)

Section 3: A QUIET AND HUMBLE DISPOSITION

(Continued from the issue of January 2023)

Several people including Dinendra Kumar Roy, Sri Aurobindo’s family members, his revolutionary comrades, his students at Baroda College and Bengal National College — Rajaram Patkar, P. B. Chandwani, G. H. Gokhale, Balai Deb Sharma etc. — Nationalist leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Ganesh Kharpade, Bipin Pal and others, and several other associates have remarked about Sri Aurobindo’s simple attire, his indifference to his appearance and his disinterest or apathy in projecting himself in any manner, or diffidence in talking about himself.

In 1935, a sadhak, soon after a darshan, remarked to Sri Aurobindo about his grandeur and majesty. Sri Aurobindo replied with a touch of amusement:

All this insistence on grandeur and majesty makes me remember Shakespeare’s remarks — the greatness that is thrust on one. I am unaware, as of grimness, so of any stiff majesty or pompous grandeur — the state of peace, wideness, universality I feel is perfectly easy, simple, natural, *déagagé*, more like a robe of ease than any imperial purple. Between X’s palpitating testimony to my grandeur and your melancholy testimony to my majesty — it appears I sit like the Himalayas and am as remote as the stratosphere — I begin to wonder whether it is so and how the devil I manage to do the trick. Unconscious hypnotism? No, for I begin to feel not like the juggler but like the little boy who has to climb his rope and perch there in a perilous and uncomfortable elevation — and it seems to be rather a self-hypnotism by the spectators of the show. All the same it was a relief to find someone writing of a beautiful and “loving” darshan and others who describe it in a similar tone. From which I conclude that the quality of the object lies in the eye of the seer . . .¹

At the *Bande Mataram* office in Calcutta, Sri Aurobindo was the leader and the spirit behind the newspaper but his mannerisms were modest. He was often approached for articles at very short notice. Abinash Bhattacharya writes:

1. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, p. 51.

If someone came to him for articles or about other *Bande Mataram* matters, he would ask him to wait and would begin writing. Sometimes looking at the paper, sometimes not glancing at it, he would write. The pen or pencil did not stop at all. After writing a few pages he would say: ‘Do you think that will do?’ I would say yes, take the article and hand it over to the person who had come.²

Another member of the *Bande Mataram* staff, Suresh Chandra Deb, reiterated that Sri Aurobindo would ask his young assistants for their opinion:

With the transfer of *Bande Mataram* from Cornwallis Street to Creek Row my connection with it ceased. But in March, 1908, I was called in by Sri Aurobindo to serve as a sub-editor. . . . We “edited” the telegrams, and Sri Aurobindo passing through our room would ask of us of the day’s news on which to comment. He generally finished his articles by 3 p.m., and when handing these over to us would inquire if they would be sufficient. If we replied in the negative, he would stand by our table, look over the telegram sheets, and write a “para” or two, as the mood was on.³

One is reminded of a story that Mother narrated about a Japanese flower-artist who was asked to arrange a bouquet. After the bouquet was made the artist left a pair of scissors next to it. The Mother explains the significance of this gesture:

By this he means that if there is any flaw in the bouquet, anyone can take the scissors and cut away what offends the eye.

The artist has done a fine piece of work, but he would not dream of exalting its merits. He admits that he may have made mistakes. He is modest.

Perhaps the Japanese artist really thinks that his work deserves compliments. I cannot tell his thoughts. But at any rate he does not boast and his behaviour is pleasing.

On the other hand, we smile at people who are vain.⁴

Sri Aurobindo never asserted himself with the *Bande Mataram* staff. In one instance he waited for an hour to suggest a change in a word in an article written by his subordinate, Hemendra Prasad Ghose. On learning about it, Hemendra gently protested that it was needless to seek his consent. Sri Aurobindo smiled and said: “But I could not do that.” He also requested Hemendra to encourage the other *Bande Mataram* writer, Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, to write short pieces instead of articles, although he excelled in the latter too. Sri Aurobindo explained that “he may take

2. Abinash Bhattacharya, ‘Sri Aurobindo’, *Mother India*, July 2012, p. 531.

3. Suresh Chandra Deb, ‘Sri Aurobindo as I Knew Him’, *Mother India*, November 2002, p. 948.

4. *CWM*, Vol. 2, 2nd Ed., p. 254.

offence if I make the proposal.”⁵

Let us briefly examine Shyam Sundar Chakravarty’s (1869-1932) association with Sri Aurobindo. Both were dismayed with the announcement of the Bengal partition on 19th July, 1905, (implemented on 16th October 1905) by Lord Curzon at which point they resolved to devote their energies entirely to the freedom movement. Sri Aurobindo’s cousin, Sukumar Mitra, writes: “This was when the attitudes of the late Bipin Chandra Pal, Raja Subodh Mullick, Manoranjan Guha Thakurta, Shyam Sundar Chakravarty and others hardened. They felt that the means that they were using to obtain political rights had failed. Therefore they abandoned the path of Surendranath [Banerji] and began adopting other ways. Their party was labelled as ‘Extremist’.”⁶

Both Shyam Sundar and Hemendra Prasad Ghose opposed the Carlyle Circular, which insisted that school and college students in Bengal should distance themselves from the Swadeshi movement. According to the Circular, issued on 22nd October, 1905, “If any college violates the government order and the student quits the educational institution then no assistance will be provided by the government to the institute”.⁷ At a public meeting at Calcutta, held two days later, Shyam Sundar pleaded for the setting up of an independent system of education for the youth. On 25th October, Hemendra Prasad published a letter in an English daily, where he asked: “If we have decided to solve the economic question without Government help, can we not undertake to teach our boys without that help? Can we not found a university of our own?” Subsequently, in a meeting on 9th November a gift of Rs. one lakh was promised by Subodh Chandra Mullick for the founding of a National College which earned him the title of Raja — at the meeting he probably also announced that Sri Aurobindo could be persuaded to take up the position of its founder-principal.⁸

In early July 1906 Sri Aurobindo moved from Baroda to Calcutta to fully dedicate himself to the independence struggle. On his arrival at the Calcutta railway station he was escorted to the *Yugantar* office, where within a short time Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, Brahmbandhav Upadhyay and Sukumar Mitra arrived to meet him.⁹ A couple of months later Sri Aurobindo gave Rs. 300 from his scarce personal funds to Shyam Sundar and Hemendra Prasad to help the *Bande Mataram* tide over a financial crisis which it was facing from its inception.¹⁰

5. Hemendra Prasad Ghose, ‘Reminiscences of Aurobindo Ghose’, *Orient Illustrated Weekly*, 27 February 1949; sourced from papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

6. Sukumar Mitra, *Sri Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose*, compiled and edited by Supriya Bhattacharya and Biswajit Gangopadhyay, January 2019 (translated from Bengali by Kumkum Roy – manuscript).

7. Website: <https://byjus.com/question-answer/what-was-carlyle-circular/>

8. See Sanat K. Banerji, ‘The Problem of a Common Language’, *Mother India*, June 1967, p. 341; See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, June 2013, p. 489.

9. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, July 2013, p. 572.

10. See Hemendra Prasad Ghose, ‘Reminiscences of Aurobindo Ghose’, *Orient Illustrated Weekly*, 27 February 1949; sourced from papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

Apropos the *Bande Mataram* editorial staff, Sri Aurobindo writes:

The new party was at once successful and the *Bande Mataram* paper began to circulate throughout India. On its staff were not only Bepin Pal and Sri Aurobindo but some other very able writers, Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, Hemendra Prasad Ghose and Bejoy Chatterji. Shyam Sundar and Bejoy were masters of the English language, each with a style of his own; Shyam Sundar caught up something like Sri Aurobindo's way of writing and later on many took his articles for Sri Aurobindo's.¹¹

However, Shyam Sundar and Hemendra Prasad, who supported the secret revolutionary movement, opposed Bipin Chandra Pal's editorship of *Bande Mataram* due to his moderate leanings. Sometime in November or December 1906 they were instrumental in ousting Bipin Pal. About this ouster Sri Aurobindo told his attendants:

Shyam Sundar and Hem Ghose were not pleased with Pal's editorship. They said he was too moderate and . . . they published my name as editor without my consent and in Pal's absence. I called them and remonstrated strongly. They said they wouldn't have anything to do with the paper if Pal remained editor, and so he was pushed out.¹²

Sri Aurobindo also told his attendants:

Bipin Pal was a great orator, and at times his speeches were highly inspired, a sort of a descent. Later on his power of oration also got diminished. I remember he never used the word independence but always said “Autonomy without British control.” Later on, when after the Barisal Conference we brought in the peasants in the movement, forty to fifty thousand of them used to gather to hear Pal. Suren Banerjee cannot stand comparison with Pal — he has never done anything like it; but he also lost his power later on. Pal was more an orator, he had not the qualities of a leader. Then Shyam Sundar and some other people joined the *Bande Mataram* staff, and the paper soon drew the attention of a large number of people and became an all-India paper.¹³

Although Shyam Sundar and Hemendra Prasad were his assistants Sri Aurobindo would address them courteously by using the appellation of “Babu” [a respectful title or form of address for a man, especially an educated one].¹⁴

11. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 55.

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

13. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 569.

14. Sourced from papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

From the first week of January till the first week of April 1907 Sri Aurobindo was in Deogarh recovering from an illness. During this period he reposed the editorial responsibilities on Shyam Sundar and Hemendra.¹⁵

In 1907 the Scottish statesman James Keir Hardie (1856-1915), the pioneer of the labour movement in Britain and the first leader of the Labour Party in the House of Commons, came to India. On the 6th October, 1907, he visited the *Bande Mataram* office but none of the editorial Staff were there. Hemendra Prasad Ghose notes in his diary:

After this, Sjt. Aurobindo Ghose, Shyam Sundar Chakravarty went to see him at the Spencer's Hotel. But as they were dressed in dhoties the manager hesitated to let them in. So they left and wrote a note all about it to Mr. Hardie who called on them at 12, Wellington Square.¹⁶

Interestingly, Sri Aurobindo had several admirers in Britain and Keir Hardie was one of them. On 8th October, 1907, Sri Aurobindo writes in the *Bande Mataram*:

The visit of Mr. Keir Hardie to Bengal, so much feared by the English papers, has come and gone and the reactionist Press have taken care that it should create the right sort of sensation in England so that whatever he may tell of the carefully-hidden truth about the “unrest” in India may be discredited beforehand. We have been watching these manoeuvres with some amusement, mingled with a kind of admiration for the sheer bare-faced impudence of the lies which these amiable gentry are administering so liberally to a willing British public. Anything is good enough for British consumption, and accordingly Anglo-India sets itself no limits in the grossness and incredibility of the inventions it circulates. Mr. Hardie's presence is responsible for the riots, for the Union Jute Mills strike, for every development of the political struggle which has occurred since the formidable Labourite set foot on Indian soil. We shall hardly be surprised if we see it next asserted in the *Englishman* and then telegraphed by the *Englishman's* faithful Reuter that the boldness of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay's statement in the dock was caused by the expectation of Keir Hardie's visit or that some dim prophetic anticipation of it moved Basanta Bhattacharjee when he faced the terrors of British law. We are ready to give Anglo-India credit for very great lengths of denseness, ignorance and folly, but it is hard to believe that they cannot realise the change which has come over Indian political life and still think that the words or presence of an Englishman can ever again influence the minds of the people even in an ordinary way much less in the

15. *Ibid.*

16. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, March 2014, p. 223.

fabulous fashion which Newmanism concocts. Anglo-India feared that if the truth travelled to England, the campaign of repression might be stopped and measures of conciliation adopted. For ourselves we never entertained any such fear. It is not ignorance of the truth, but their own self-interest as a nation which determines the attitude of all English parties, not excluding the Labourites. The interest of the monied classes is bound up with the continuance of arbitrary British domination, and for that domination Liberal as well as Tory will fight tooth and nail. As for the Labour party, it will support that domination if they think it is to the interest of the working classes; otherwise they will oppose it. We have met and talked with Mr. Keir Hardie and we found him a strong, shrewd-witted man possessed of a great deal of clear common sense. He is a Labourite and a Socialist. As a Labourite he will do whatever he thinks best in the interests of Labour; as a Socialist, the interests of whose creed are bound up with the progress of internationalism, he may take Indian questions with a greater sincerity than the Cottons and Wedderburns. But as we said before in our article on Mr. Keir Hardie, to suppose that he can do anything for us is a delusion. India like other countries, must work out her salvation for herself, and the less she trusts to foreign help, the swifter will be her deliverance.¹⁷

Shyam Sundar, who was three years elder to Sri Aurobindo, accompanied Sri Aurobindo to Surat for the Congress Conference in December 1907. At Surat they, along with other party workers, stayed in a Dharmasala. While others spread their beddings over carpets both of them were given cots to distinguish their position.¹⁸

Following the Surat Conference Sri Aurobindo did a political tour of Maharashtra. After his visit to Bombay, Sri Aurobindo began his journey back to Calcutta. *En route* he delivered speeches in several cities: 24th January, 1908 at Nasik, 26th January at Dhulia, 28th and 29th January at Amravati, 30th and 31st January and 1st February at Nagpur. Shyam Sundar was present during these gatherings.¹⁹

A few weeks later when Sri Aurobindo gave a speech at Baruaipur on 12th April, 1908, Shyam Sundar was also one of the speakers. From a third-person transcript that was published in the *Bande Mataram* we learn of Sri Aurobindo's humble and transparent unpretentious demeanour. An extract of the report read:

Sj. Shyamsunder Chakravarti having finished his speech, Sri Aurobindo Ghose rose to address the audience. He began with an apology for being under the necessity of addressing a Bengali audience in a foreign tongue, specially by one like himself who had devoted his life for the Swadeshi movement. He pointed out that through a foreign system of education developing foreign tastes

17. *CWSA*, Vol. 7, pp. 716-17.

18. See Suresh Chandra Deb, 'Sri Aurobindo as I Knew Him', *Mother India*, November 2002, p. 948.

19. See A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, pp. 102-03.

and tendencies he had been denationalised like his country and like his country again he is now trying to renationalise himself.

Next he referred to the comparative want of the Swadeshi spirit in West Bengal to which Shyamsunder Babu made very polite reference, himself coming from East Bengal. But S. Ghose as he belonged to West Bengal had no hesitation in admitting the drawback. This superiority of East Bengal he attributed solely to its privilege of suffering of late from the regulation *lathis* and imprisonment administered by the alien bureaucracy.²⁰

Earlier, on 15th December, 1907, Hemendra Prasad Ghose noted in his diary about the Beadon Square meeting:

Audience would not rest till they heard S. Arabinda Ghose speak. So he had to and said, “I have made it a rule not to speak in public and I have good reasons for it. I went to England when too young to learn my mother tongue and I can’t speak it. And rather than address you, my countrymen, in a language which is not mine and which is not yours I kept ‘self silent’.” He then explained the position of the nationalists.²¹

On 30th April, 1908, Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose, in a case of mistaken identity, assassinated two ladies at Muzaffarpur. The next day was perhaps the penultimate time that Sri Aurobindo met Shyam Sundar. Sri Aurobindo writes of this fateful day:

On Friday, May 1, 1908, I was sitting in the *Bande Mataram* office, when Sriji Shyam Sundar Chakravarty handed over a telegram from Muzaffarpur. On reading it I learned of a bomb outrage in which two European ladies had been killed. In that day’s issue of the “*Empire*” I read another news item that the Police Commissioner had said that he knew the people involved in the murder and that they would soon be put under arrest. At that time I had no idea that I happened to be the main target of suspicion and that according to the police I was the chief killer, the instigator and secret leader of the young terrorists and revolutionaries. I did not know that that day would mean the end of a chapter in my life, and that there stretched before me a year’s imprisonment during which period all my human relations would cease, that for a whole year I would have to live, beyond the pale of society, like an animal in a cage. And when I would re-enter the world of activity it would not be the old familiar Aurobindo Ghose. Rather it would be a new being, a new character, intellect, life, mind,

20. *CWSA*, Vol. 7, p. 1034.

21. ‘Documents in the Life of Sri Aurobindo’, *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1980, p.

embarking upon a new course of action that would come out of the ashram at Alipore. I have spoken of a year's imprisonment. It would have been more appropriate to speak of a year's living in a forest, in an ashram or hermitage.²²

At the time of Sri Aurobindo's arrest at 48, Grey Street, Sarojini Ghose requested her neighbours to inform K. K. Mitra and Shyam Sundar about it.²³

On 11th December, 1908, Shyam Sundar was deported to Burma. The same day Sri Aurobindo's uncle K. K. Mitra too was deported — other distinguished Nationalist leaders like Raja Subodh Mullick, Manoranjan Guha Thakurta and Ashwini Kumar Dutt were also deported at the same time and confined in jails in northern India or Burma. K. K. Mitra was escorted by a British sergeant to Howrah railway station and taken to a second class railway compartment where he found Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, who too was in the custody of another sergeant. Since they were arrested suddenly they did not have time to collect their belongings from home. During the train journey Shyam Sundar told K. K. Mitra, “See, they are taking you to distant Agra, where it is very cold, you do not have any warm clothes, take my shawl, otherwise you will find it very difficult. I am being taken to Burma, which is not so cold.” K. K. Mitra, however, did not accept Shyam Sundar's proposal since the shawl was the only piece of warm clothing that Shyam Sundar had.²⁴ Shyam Sundar was released from prison in February 1910. Sri Aurobindo was there to receive his former junior colleague at the Calcutta pier [Chandpal Ghat], on the 15th.²⁵

When Sri Aurobindo, after his release from Alipore Jail, launched on 19th June, 1909, the weekly English paper, *Karmayogin*, he asked Shyam Sundar's younger brother, Girija Sundar Chakravarty, to buy the type, hand press and other equipment required for the press.²⁶ Girija took charge of production and circulation of the weekly and was very proficient at his work. It was at his suggestion that Sri Aurobindo also started publishing the Bengali weekly, the *Dharma* and contributing articles to it.²⁷ Girija Sundar also had a role to play in Sri Aurobindo's acquittal in a subsequent sedition charge, for shortly after Sri Aurobindo left Calcutta for Pondicherry on 1st April, 1910, an arrest warrant was issued against him on the charge of sedition for publishing an open letter in the *Karmayogin* on 25th December, 1909. In the prosecution the printer of the weekly was convicted. Girija Sundar earnestly appealed

22. Sri Aurobindo, *Tales of Prison Life*, 2014, p. 1 (translated from the original Bengali, *Karakahini*).

23. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, March 2015, p. 220.

24. Sukumar Mitra, *Sri Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose*, compiled and edited by Supriya Bhattacharya and Biswajit Gangopadhyay, January 2019 (translated from Bengali by Kumkum Roy – manuscript).

25. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, January 2017, p. 34.

26. Sukumar Mitra, *Sri Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose*, compiled and edited by Supriya Bhattacharya and Biswajit Gangopadhyay, January 2019 (translated from Bengali by Kumkum Roy – manuscript).

27. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, November 2016, p. 893 and January 2017, pp. 32-33.

in the Calcutta High Court in order to get Sri Aurobindo’s name cleared. According to the C.I.D. report of September 1910:

It is said that the accused, Man Mohan Ghose, printer, personally had no wish to move the High Court against his conviction, as he feared an enhancement of the sentence, and the appeal appears to be preferred in the interest of Aurobindo Ghose, at the instance of Girija Sundar Chakravarty, former manager of this paper. It is believed that if, by any chance, Man Mohan Ghose should be acquitted, it would mean the triumphant return of Aurobindo Ghose to Calcutta.²⁸

The Calcutta High Court overturned the printer’s conviction on 7th November, 1910, thus the charges against Sri Aurobindo were dropped. Sri Aurobindo subsequently wrote: “The article was sufficiently moderate in its tone and later on the High Court refused to regard it as seditious and acquitted the printer.”²⁹

Referring to the time Sri Aurobindo went incognito to Chandernagore in February 1910, Sukumar Mitra reminisced: “There were several writings, based on speculation and conjectures about his disappearance that were appearing in the newspapers in Kolkata. During this time, there was an article in the *Servant*, edited by the late Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, which said: ‘Aurobindo has concealed himself in order to pursue his Yogic sadhana.’”³⁰

At Pondicherry, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar submitted a manuscript of Sri Aurobindo’s biography for his corrections. In a certain section, concerning the *Bande Mataram*, Shyam Sundar’s name features prominently. The manuscript text and Sri Aurobindo’s correction reads:

In other ways also Sri Aurobindo sought to appeal to the hearts of the Indian and British peoples. . . . Vidula . . . appeared in the second issue of the Weekly Bandemataram, which also contained “An Unreported Conversation” in verse between a Briton and Ajit Singh on the eve of his arrest . . .

. . . These articles and other items (satiric verse, parodies, etc.) referred to in these pages (not of course Vidula and Perseus) were the work of Shyamsundar Chakrabarti, not of Sri Aurobindo. Shyamsundar was a witty parodist and could write with much humour, as also with a telling rhetoric; he had caught some imitation of Sri Aurobindo’s style and many could not distinguish between their writings. In Aurobindo’s absences from Calcutta it was Shyamsundar who

28. *Ibid.*, September 2017, p. 50.

29. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 63.

30. Sukumar Mitra, *Sri Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose*, compiled and edited by Supriya Bhattacharya and Biswajit Gangopadhyay, January 2019 (translated from Bengali by Kumkum Roy – manuscript).

wrote most of the *Bande Mataram* editorials, those excepted which were sent by Aurobindo from Deoghar.³¹

Besides Shyam Sundar's "An Unreported Conversation" another striking item in the issue was "Pagri Samalo, Jata", a free rendering by him of the poem that used to be sung by the Jats to rouse their countrymen to protest against the imposition of unfair exorbitant taxes. From the 30th June, 1907, Sri Aurobindo's poetic play, *Perseus the Deliverer*, commenced being serialised and the readers of the Weekly must have seized the import of the word "Deliverer". Two issues later, Shyam Sundar recreated the "Trial Scene" in *The Merchant of Venice* and transposed it to a Calcutta Police Court where Antonio is the editor of the *Yugantar* and Shylock is represented by the denizens of "Law and Order". It is all Shakespearean; but the derogation is directly aimed at the repressive policy of the Government. The following week Shyam Sundar made fun of those who sought to gain favours, positions or titles from the British masters. He comically wrote a mantra for such people titled, "A Hymn to the Supreme Bull" — those who raise their hands in abject prayer to the Supreme Bull and beat their breasts and scream the while:

Hail, sempiternal Lord! Be bounteous still
To give us only titles and posts, and if sedition
Hath gathered aught of evil, or concealed,
Disperse it, as your police disperse our crowds.

These witty barbs were unmistakably directed at the bureaucracy too.³² Several such satirical poems were printed in the editorial pages of the *Bande Mataram*. According to Sri Aurobindo, these "were the work of Shyam Sundar Chakravarti".³³

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar writes: "Whenever Sri Aurobindo was away from Calcutta, Shyamsundar had to do much of the editorial work and write the leading articles, unless Sri Aurobindo sent them from Deoghar or wherever he was camping at the time. One of Shyamsundar's successful skits was the 'mock-petition' to 'Honest John', a piece of vigorous and stinging satire which was printed in the inaugural issue of the Weekly edition of the *Bande Mataram* on 2 June 1907. When the skit was later reproduced in the *Glasgow News*, it created quite a stir in Britain — a stir that had its official repercussions in India."³⁴

More significantly the *Bande Mataram* was instrumental in revolutionising the political thought in India. For instance, on 12th September, 1906, Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Bande Mataram*, "It has been demonstrated repeatedly that prayer and

31. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 80.

32. See K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, pp. 242-43.

33. *CWSA*, Vol. 7, pp. 1171-72.

34. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, p. 242.

petition have no appreciable influence on the British Government . . .”³⁵

Historian R. C. Majumdar, in his *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, quotes from J. L. Banerjee’s tribute: “Whoever the actual contributor to *Bande Mataram* might be — the soul, the genius of the paper was Arabinda. The pen might be that of Shyam Sundar or whoever else but the voice was the voice of Arabinda Ghose.”³⁶

Alluding to Sri Aurobindo’s early days at Pondicherry, Balai Dev Sharma wrote:

After knowing that Sri Aurobindo had gone to Pondicherry, Manoranjan Guha-thakurta and Shyam Sundar Chakravarty wrote a letter requesting him to guide them (and the party) in politics. The letter was answered: its purport was that Sri Krishna had taken the responsibility of freeing India. And so all of us must act from a firm status in yoga. This letter was read at the house of Shyam Sundar Babu, in Vidyasagar Street, Calcutta.³⁷

Over time Shyam Sundar Chakravarty tended to be more moderate in his politics. Following the death of Surendranath Banerji in 1925, Shyam Sundar was appointed editor of *Bengalee*, an English language newspaper based in Calcutta. Founded in 1862, it was bought by Surendranath Banerji in 1879, who edited it for about forty years. It was the highest circulated weekly newspaper in the late 19th and early 20th century. The newspaper had a nationalist slant. Following the fractious Surat Congress Conference it took a more moderate stand and this adversely impacted its readership.³⁸ On assuming the role of editor Shyam Sundar wrote to Sri Aurobindo for some contributions to the paper. Sri Aurobindo replied on 12th March, 1926, expressing his inability to comment on the present state of politics, characteristically remarking, “I should be somewhat at a loss to make any useful pronouncement”:

Dear Chakravarty,

I have been obliged to answer in the negative to your request by wire for contributions to the [“Bengalee”]³⁹ on the occasion of your taking it over on behalf of the Nationalist party. I have been for a long time under a self-denying ordinance which precludes me from making any public utterance on politics and I have had to refuse similar requests from “Forward” and other papers. Even if it were not so, I confess that in the present confused state of politics I should be somewhat at a loss to make any useful pronouncement. No useful purpose could be served by any general statements on duties in the present

35. *CWSA*, Vol. 6, p. 158.

36. Nilima Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo – The Soul of India’, *Mother India*, November 1992, p. 817.

37. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, pp. 141-42.

38. See Website: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bengalee/22.11.2022

39. *MS* “Bengali”.

situation. Everybody seems to be agreed on the general object and issue and the only question worth writing on is that of the best practical means for securing the agreed object and getting rid of the obstacles in the way. This is in any case a question for the practical leaders actually in the field and not for a retired spectator at a distance. It would be difficult for me even to pass an opinion on the rival policies in the field; for I have been unable to gather from what I have seen in the papers what is the practical turn they propose to give these policies or how they propose by them to secure Swaraj or bring it nearer. Please therefore excuse my refusal.

Yours sincerely,
Aurobindo Ghose.⁴⁰

Incidentally, after Sri Aurobindo's release from Alipore Jail, Surendranath Banerji had requested him to write for the *Bengalee* but he declined, saying his views and the *Bengalee's* were poles apart.⁴¹

Beneath Sri Aurobindo's reticence and humility was an unwavering will, a quality of his that was very palpable to the *Bande Mataram* staff and others. Suresh Chandra Deb wrote:

Other denizens of the editorial sanctum were Shyam Sundar Chakravarty and Hemendra Prasad Ghose, the latter still happily with us, a witness to the “high audacity” of those days, Sri Aurobindo's favourite words.⁴²

And Hemendra Prasad Ghose wrote:

He would often indulge in a quiet humour. Thus, during his controversy with N. N. Ghose of the *Indian Nation*, when Ghose had said the last word, Aurobindo told me — “The rapier play is over; now you give a hammer-blow and finish the work.”⁴³

Sri Aurobindo's boldness rubbed off on his editorial assistants. He writes:

I was told by Bejoy Chatterji after I came out from jail that he, Shyamsundar and Hemprasad had carried on somehow with the paper, but the finances became impossible, so he deliberately wrote an article which made the Govt come down on the paper and stop its publication, so that the *Bande Mataram*

40. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 262.

41. See Lt Col. G. L. Bhattacharya, ‘Stray Thoughts’, *Mother India*, August 1974, p. 596.

42. Suresh Chandra Deb, ‘Sri Aurobindo as I Knew Him’, *Mother India*, November 2002, p. 948.

43. Hemendra Prasad Ghose, ‘Reminiscences of Aurobindo Ghose’, *Orient Illustrated Weekly*, 27 February 1949; sourced from papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

might end with some *éclat* and in all honour.⁴⁴

Whilst alluding to an article featured in the *Bande Mataram*, a biographer stated in a note, “In other ways also Sri Aurobindo sought to appeal to the hearts of the Indian and British peoples.” Sri Aurobindo clarified:

As a politician it was part of Sri Aurobindo’s principles never to appeal to the British people; that he would have considered as part of the mendicant policy.⁴⁵

During the *Bande Mataram* Sedition Case, Hemendra Prasad Ghose had observed Sri Aurobindo’s unruffled comportment. After his acquittal in September 1907 Sri Aurobindo attended the Midnapore District Conference held in December 1907, where Hemendra remarked on Sri Aurobindo’s firm leadership and unwavering commitment to his ideals:

When, late in 1907, at the Midnapore Session of the Bengal Provincial Conference, an attempt was made to effect a compromise between the two parties — the “Extremists” and the “Moderates” — Surendranath Banerji acting as the mediator — Aurobindo, in spite of all coaxings and cajoling, remained as firm as a rock and stood by the New Party, and carried the day at the open session of the Conference by having the resolutions on the Partition of Bengal, the Boycott of British goods, law courts and Government educational institutions adopted at the Calcutta Congress in 1906 and accepted in “toto”. He could not allow the Moderate Party to tamper with them.⁴⁶

Earlier in April 1907, Sri Aurobindo bluntly remarked on Surendranath Banerji, “This veteran leader is a declared opportunist, who believes, as he has himself said, in expediency more than in principles.”⁴⁷

Later, at the time of his arrest in the Alipore Bomb Conspiracy, Sri Aurobindo was not intimidated by the aggressive Police Superintendent, Mr. Cregan. Sri Aurobindo narrates the arrest:

I was sitting on my bed, still half-asleep, when Cregan inquired, “Who is Aurobindo Ghose, is that you?” I answered, “Yes. I am Aurobindo Ghose.” Immediately he ordered a policeman to put me under arrest. Then, because of an extremely objectionable expression used by Cregan, there was a little

44. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 80.

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Sri Aurobindo: His Political Life and Activities*, compiled and edited by Anurag Banerjee, p. 189 (Hemendra Prasad Ghose, ‘Reminiscences of Aurobindo Ghosh’, *Orient Illustrated Weekly*, 27 February 1949).

47. *CWSA*, Vol. 6, p. 334.

exchange of words between the two of us. . . . From Cregan’s words it seemed as if he had entered into the lair of some ferocious animal, as if we were a lot of uneducated, wild, lawbreakers, and it was unnecessary to speak or behave courteously towards us. But after the sharp exchange the sahib grew a little milder.⁴⁸

Sri Aurobindo was then taken to the Lal Bazar police station and was kept in a room along with another revolutionary Sailen Bose. There another stiff encounter followed with none other than the Police Commissioner, Mr. Halliday. Sri Aurobindo narrates:

After a while two Englishmen entered the room, later I was told that one of them was the Police Commissioner, Mr. Halliday himself. Finding us both together Halliday was wrathful with the sergeant, and pointing towards me he said, “Take care that nobody stays or speaks with this man.” Sailen was at once removed and locked up in another room. When others had left, Halliday asked me: “Aren’t you ashamed of being involved in this cowardly, dastardly activity?” “What right have you to assume that I was involved?” To this Halliday replied: “I am not assuming, I know everything.” At this I said: “What you know or do not know is your concern. I wholly deny having any connection with these murderous acts.”⁴⁹

Sri Aurobindo was always quiet, courteous and self-effacing but never submissive. The educationist and freedom fighter, Prof. Jyotish Chandra Ghose, in his 1929 book *Life-Work of Sri Aurobindo* — a book which A. B. Purani appreciated — writes: “Meek as a lamb in the ordinary pursuits of life, he roared as a lion, a man divinely inspired, when he had to work as a public man.”⁵⁰

At Baroda, Dinendra Kumar Roy had observed that Sri Aurobindo had no worldly ambition but had a steadfast will.⁵¹ Nirodbaran too writes that Sri Aurobindo was not ambitious but had developed a resolute will:

He has told us that from his very childhood, for whatever reason, he had a certain amount of equanimity — he never cared for positions, nursed ambitions. So that much equanimity he had. But he said, “I was not born perfect. I had many difficulties in my life, many faults, many failings, many weaknesses . . . but by sheer *sādhana*, *tapasyā*, I have transformed my nature” . . . from what

48. Sri Aurobindo, *Tales of Prison Life*, 2014, p. 3 (translated from the original Bengali, *Karakahini*).

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

50. Jyotish Chandra Ghose, *Life-Work of Sri Aurobindo*, 1st Ed., 1929, p. 21.

51. See Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1st Ed., 2006, pp. 6-7 (Dinendra Kumar Roy, *Aurobindo Prasanga* – translated from Bengali by Maurice Shukla).

he was, to what he had become. It was all due to hard *tapasyā* and effort, to change the nature.⁵²

Behind his calm, courteous comportment Sri Aurobindo, over the years, had quietly developed an extraordinary willpower. He told his disciples that despite not being physically tough he had a strong will ever since his childhood.⁵³ A. B. Purani mentions that even in the difficult circumstances during his childhood and youth in England Sri Aurobindo's will was firm.⁵⁴ An instance of his determination went as far back as 1905 when he told his wife that “by any means, I must have the direct experience of God. . . . however hard be the path, I have taken a firm resolution to tread it.”⁵⁵ About his innate power, Sri Aurobindo revealed to his wife and also to his maternal aunt's family that he had the inner strength to free his people.⁵⁶

Sri Aurobindo's humility also did not preclude him from having a mind of his own. While speaking fondly of Sri Aurobindo during his boyhood days, Benoybhusan also referred to Sri Aurobindo's stubborn nature.⁵⁷ Alluding to his independent nature Sri Aurobindo told his disciples, “First of all I believed that nothing was impossible, and at the same time I could question everything. If I had believed in everything that came I would have been like Bijoy Krishna Goswami.”⁵⁸

During and prior to his political life Sri Aurobindo had developed an immense willpower. Just after his retirement from politics he revealed to Paul Richard in 1911 about his powers and the work of changing the world:

I am developing the necessary powers for bringing down the spiritual on the material plane, and I am now able to put myself into men and change them, removing the darkness and bringing light, giving them a new heart and a new mind. This I can do with great swiftness and completeness with those who are near me, but I have also succeeded with men hundreds of miles away. I have also been given the power to read men's characters and hearts, even their thoughts, but this power is not yet absolutely complete, nor can I use it always and in all cases. The power of guiding action by the mere exercise of will is also developing, but it is not so powerful as yet as the other. My communication with the other world is yet of a troubled character, though I am certainly in communication with some very great powers. But of all these things I will write

52. Nirodbaran, ‘Sri Aurobindo as I saw Him’, *Mother India*, February 1994, p. 95.

53. See A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 394.

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

55. Sri Aurobindo, *Bengali Writings*, 1991, p. 352.

56. See A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 82 and Basanti Chakravarty (née Mitra), ‘Our Aurodada’, *Srinwantu*, April/August 1984, p. 86.

57. See Charu Chandra Dutt, ‘My Friend and my Master’, *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, 1952, Eighth number, p. 123.

58. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 169.

more when the final obstacles in my way are cleared from the path.

What I perceive most clearly, is that the principal object of my Yoga is to remove absolutely and entirely every possible source of error and ineffectiveness, of error in order that the Truth I shall eventually show to men may be perfect, and of ineffectiveness in order that the work of changing the world, so far as I have to assist it, may be entirely victorious and irresistible. It is for this reason that I have been going through so long a discipline and that the more brilliant and mighty results of Yoga have been so long withheld. I have been kept busy laying down the foundation, a work severe and painful. It is only now that the edifice is beginning to rise upon the sure and perfect foundation that has been laid.⁵⁹

Sri Aurobindo had once said:

I have borne every attack which human beings have borne, otherwise I would be unable to assure anybody “This too can be conquered.” At least I would have no right to say so.⁶⁰

(To be continued)

GAUTAM MALAKER

59. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, pp. 283-84.

60. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 418.

Apart he lived in his mind's solitude,
A demigod shaping the lives of men:
One soul's ambition lifted up the race;
A Power worked, but none knew whence it came.
The universal strengths were linked with his;
Filling earth's smallness with their boundless breadths,
He drew the energies that transmute an age.

Sri Aurobindo

(Savitri, CWSA, Vol. 33, pp. 44-45)

PY/50/2021-23

RNI 8667/63

Licensed to Post without Prepayment under

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

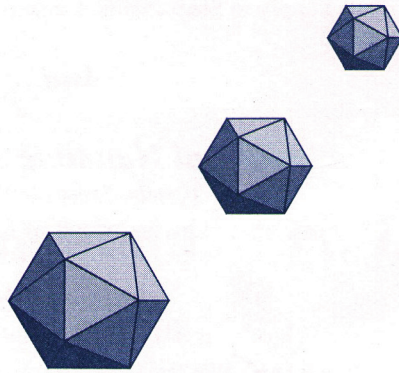
Valid from 01.01.2021 to 31.12.2023

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



AUROSOORYA

www.aurosoorya.com



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

www.deepordertechnologies.com