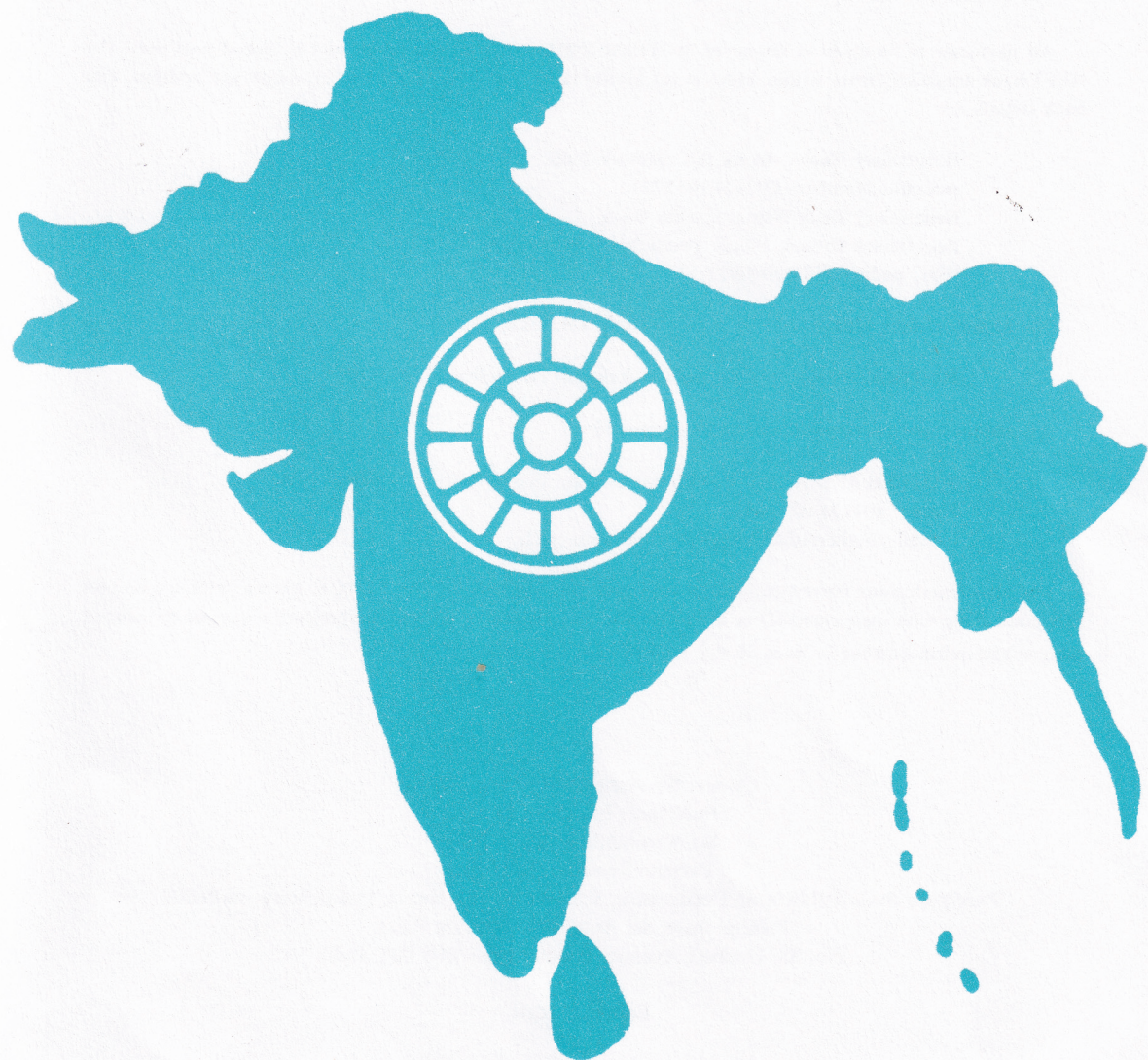


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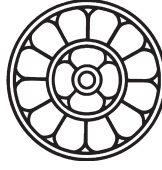
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APRIL 2023

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.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXXVI

No. 4

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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SHIVA

The Inconscient Creator

A face on the cold dire mountain peaks
Grand and still; its lines white and austere
Match with the unmeasured snowy streaks
Cutting heaven, implacable and sheer.

Above it a mountain of matted hair
Aeon-coiled on that deathless and lone head
In its solitude huge of lifeless air
Round, above illimitably spread.

A moon-ray on the forehead, blue and pale,
Stretched afar its finger of chill light
Illumining emptiness. Stern and male
Mask of peace indifferent in might!

But out from some Infinite born now came
Over giant snows and the still face
A quiver and colour of crimson flame,
Fire-point in immensities of space.

Light-spear-tips revealed the mighty shape,
Tore the secret veil of the heart's hold;
In that diamond heart the fires undrape,
Living core, a brazier of gold.

This was the closed mute and burning source
Whence were formed the worlds and their star-dance;
Life sprang, a self-rapt inconscient Force,
Love, a blazing seed, from that flame-trance.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, pp. 548-549)

SHIVA — The Inconscient Creator

The quantitative metre of *Trance* is suited only for a very brief lyrical poem. For longer poems I have sought to use it as a base but to liberate it by the introduction of an ample number of modulations which allow a fairly free variation of the rhythm without destroying the consistency of the underlying rhythmic measure. This is achieved in *Shiva* by allowing as the main modulations (1) a paeon anywhere in place of an amphibrach, (2) the substitution of a long for a short syllable either in the first or the last syllable of an amphibrach, at will, thus substituting a bacchius or an antibacchius, (3) the substitution of a dactyl for an initial amphibrach, (4) the substitution of a long instead of short syllable in the middle of the final anapaest, both this and the ultimate syllable to be in that case stressed in reading, e.g.,

deathless | and lone head —

a bacchius replacing the anapaest.

The suppression of the full value of long syllables to make them figure as metrical shorts has to be avoided in quantitative metre.

Scan:

Ǻ fācē ōn | thē cōld dīrē | mōuntāin pēaks
 Grānd ānd still; | its līnē whītē | ānd āustērē
 Māch wīth thē | unmēasurēd | snōwŷ strēaks
 Cūtting heav|ēn, īmplācā|blē ānd shēer.

The Inconscient as the source and author of all material creation is one of the main discoveries of modern psychology, but it agrees with the idea of a famous Vedic hymn. In the Upanishads, Prajna, the Master of Sushupti, is the Ishwara and therefore the original Creator out of a superconscient sleep. The idea of the poem is that this creative Inconscient also is Shiva creating here life in matter out of an apparently inconscient material trance as from above he creates all the worlds (not the material only) from a superconscient trance. The reality is a supreme Consciousness — but that is veiled by the appearance on one side of the superconscient sleep, on the other of the material Inconscience. Here the emphasis is on the latter; the superconscient is only hinted at, not indicated, — it is the Infinity out of which comes the revealing Flame.

(*Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, pp. 554-555)

THE DIVINE AND THE UNDIVINE

(Continued from the issue of March 2023)

But these conclusions are only first reasonings or primary intuitions founded on our inner self-experience and the apparent facts of universal existence. They cannot be entirely validated unless we know the real cause of ignorance, imperfection and suffering and their place in the cosmic purpose or cosmic order. There are three propositions about God and the world, — if we admit the Divine Existence, — to which the general reason and consciousness of mankind bear witness; but, one of the three, — which is yet necessitated by the character of the world we live in, — does not harmonise with the two others, and by this disharmony the human mind is thrown into great perplexities of contradiction and driven to doubt and denial. For, first, we find affirmed an omnipresent Divinity and Reality pure, perfect and blissful, without whom, apart from whom nothing could exist, since all exists only by him and in his being. All thinking on the subject that is not atheistic or materialistic or else primitive and anthropomorphic, has to start from this admission or to arrive at this fundamental concept. It is true that certain religions seem to suppose an extracosmic Deity who has created a world outside and apart from his own existence; but when they come to construct a theology or spiritual philosophy, these too admit omnipresence or immanence, — for this omnipresence imposes itself, is a necessity of spiritual thinking. If there is such a Divinity, Self or Reality, it must be everywhere, one and indivisible, nothing can possibly exist apart from its existence; nothing can be born from another than That; there can be nothing unsupported by That, independent of It, unfilled by the breath and power of Its being. It has been held indeed that the ignorance, the imperfection, the suffering of this world are not supported by the Divine Existence; but we have then to suppose two Gods, an Ormuzd of the good and an Ahriman of the evil or, perhaps, a perfect supracosmic and immanent Being and an imperfect cosmic Demiurge or separate undivine Nature. This is a possible conception but improbable to our highest intelligence, — it can only be at most a subordinate aspect, not the original truth or the whole truth of things; nor can we suppose that the one Self and Spirit in all and the one Power creator of all are different, contrary in the character of their being, separate in their will and purpose. Our reason tells us, our intuitive consciousness feels, and their witness is confirmed by spiritual experience, that the one pure and absolute Existence exists in all things and beings even as all things and beings exist in It and by It, and nothing can be or happen without this indwelling and all-supporting Presence.

A second affirmation which our mind naturally accepts as the consequence of the first postulate, is that by the supreme consciousness and the supreme power of

this omnipresent Divinity in its perfect universal knowledge and divine wisdom all things are ordered and governed in their fundamental relations and their process. But, on the other hand, the actual process of things, the actual relations which we see are, as presented to our human consciousness, relations of imperfection, of limitation; there appears a disharmony, even a perversion, something that is the contrary of our conception of the Divine Existence, a very apparent denial or at least a disfigurement or disguise of the Divine Presence. There arises then a third affirmation of the Divine Reality and the world reality as different in essence or in order, so different that we have to draw away from one to reach the other; if we would find the Divine Inhabitant, we must reject the world he inhabits, governs, has created or manifested in his own existence. The first of these three propositions is inevitable; the second also must stand if the omnipresent Divine has anything at all to do with the world he inhabits and with its manifestation, building, maintenance and government: but the third seems also self-evident and yet it is incompatible with its precedents, and this dissonance confronts us with a problem which appears to be incapable of satisfactory solution.

It is not difficult by some construction of the philosophic reason or of theological reasoning to circumvent the difficulty. It is possible to erect a fainéant Deity, like the gods of Epicurus, blissful in himself, observing but indifferent to a world conducted or misconducted by a mechanical law of Nature. It is open to us to posit a Witness Self, a silent Soul in things, a Purusha who allows Nature to do what she will and is content to reflect all her order and all her disorders in his passive and stainless consciousness, — or a supreme Self absolute, inactive, free from all relations, unconcerned with the works of the cosmic Illusion or Creation which has mysteriously or paradoxically originated from It or over against It to tempt and afflict a world of temporal creatures. But all these solutions do no more than reflect the apparent dissonance of our twofold experience; they do not attempt to reconcile, neither do they solve or explain it, but only reaffirm it by an open or covert dualism and an essential division of the Indivisible. Practically, there is affirmed a dual Godhead, Self or Soul and Nature: but Nature, the Power in things, cannot be anything else than a power of the Self, the Soul, the essential Being of things; her works cannot be altogether independent of Soul or Self, cannot be her own contrary result and working unaffected by its consent or refusal or a violence of mechanical Force imposed on an inertia of mechanical Passivity. It is possible again to posit an observing inactive Self and an active creating Godhead; but this device cannot serve us, for in the end these two must really be one in a dual aspect, — the Godhead the active aspect of the observing Self, the Self a witness of its own Godhead in action. A discord, a gulf between the Self in knowledge and the same Self in its works needs explanation, but it presents itself as unexplained and inexplicable. Or, again, we can posit a double consciousness of Brahman the Reality, one static and one dynamic, one essential and spiritual in which it is Self perfect and absolute, another

formative, pragmatic, in which it becomes not-self and with which its absoluteness and perfection have no concern of participation; for it is only a temporal formation in the timeless Reality. But to us who even if only half-existent, half-conscious, yet inhabit the Absolute's half-dream of living and are compelled by Nature to have in it a terrible and insistent concern and to deal with it as real, this wears the appearance of an obvious mystification; for this temporal consciousness and its formations are also in the end a Power of the one Self, depend upon it, can exist only by it; what exists by the power of the Reality cannot be unrelated to It or That unrelated to the world of its own Power's making. If the world exists by the supreme Spirit, so also its ordering and relations must exist by the power of the Spirit; its law must be according to some law of the spiritual consciousness and existence. The Self, the Reality must be aware of and aware in the world-consciousness which exists in its being; a power of the Self, the Reality must be constantly determining or at least sanctioning its phenomena and operations: for there can be no independent power, no Nature not derived from the original and eternal Self-Existence. If it does no more, it must still be originating or determining the universe through the mere fact of its conscious omnipresence. It is, no doubt, a truth of spiritual experience that there is a status of peace and silence in the Infinite behind the cosmic activity, a Consciousness that is the immobile Witness of the creation; but this is not the whole of spiritual experience, and we cannot hope to find in one side only of knowledge a fundamental and total explanation of the Universe.

Once we admit a divine government of the universe, we must conclude that the power to govern is complete and absolute; for otherwise we are obliged to suppose that a being and consciousness infinite and absolute has a knowledge and will limited in their control of things or hampered in their power of working. It is not impossible to concede that the supreme and immanent Divinity may leave a certain freedom of working to something that has come into being in his perfection but is itself imperfect and the cause of imperfection, to an ignorant or inconscient Nature, to the action of the human mind and will, even to a conscious Power or Forces of darkness and evil that take their stand upon the reign of a basic Inconscience. But none of these things are independent of Its own existence, nature and consciousness and none of them can act except in Its presence and by Its sanction or allowance. Man's freedom is relative and he cannot be held solely responsible for the imperfection of his nature. Ignorance and inconscience of Nature have arisen, not independently, but in the one Being; the imperfection of her workings cannot be entirely foreign to some will of the Immanence. It may be conceded that forces set in motion are allowed to work themselves out according to the law of their movement; but what divine Omniscience and Omnipotence has allowed to arise and act in Its omnipresence, Its all-existence, we must consider It to have originated and decreed, since without the fiat of the Being they could not have been, could not remain in existence. If the Divine is at all concerned with the world He has manifested, there is no other Lord than He and

from that necessity of His original and universal being there can eventually be no escape or departure. It is on the foundation of this self-evident consequence of our first premiss, without any evasion of its implications, that we have to consider the problem of imperfection, suffering and evil.

And first we must realise that the existence of ignorance, error, limitation, suffering, division and discord in the world need not by itself, as we too hastily imagine, be a denial or a disproof of the divine being, consciousness, power, knowledge, will, delight in the universe. They can be that if we have to take them by themselves separately, but need not be so taken if we get a clear vision of their place and significance in a complete view of the universal workings. A part broken off from the whole may be imperfect, ugly, incomprehensible; but when we see it in the whole, it recovers its place in the harmony, it has a meaning and a use. The Divine Reality is infinite in its being; in this infinite being, we find limited being everywhere, — that is the apparent fact from which our existence here seems to start and to which our own narrow ego and its ego-centric activities bear constant witness. But, in reality, when we come to an integral self-knowledge, we find that we are not limited, for we also are infinite. Our ego is only a face of the universal being and has no separate existence; our apparent separative individuality is only a surface movement and behind it our real individuality stretches out to unity with all things and upward to oneness with the transcendent Divine Infinity. Thus our ego, which seems to be a limitation of existence, is really a power of infinity; the boundless multiplicity of beings in the world is a result and signal evidence, not of limitation or finiteness, but of that illimitable Infinity. Apparent division can never erect itself into a real separateness; there is supporting and overriding it an indivisible unity which division itself cannot divide. This fundamental world-fact of ego and apparent division and their separative workings in the world existence is no denial of the Divine Nature of unity and indivisible being; they are the surface results of an infinite multiplicity which is a power of the infinite Oneness.

There is then no real division or limitation of being, no fundamental contradiction of the omnipresent Reality; but there does seem to be a real limitation of consciousness: there is an ignorance of self, a veiling of the inner Divinity, and all imperfection is its consequence. For we identify ourselves mentally, vitally, physically with this superficial ego-consciousness which is our first insistent self-experience; this does impose on us, not a fundamentally real, but a practical division with all the untoward consequences of that separateness from the Reality. But here again we have to discover that from the point of view of God's workings, whatever be our reactions or our experience on the surface, this fact of ignorance is itself an operation of knowledge and not a true ignorance. Its phenomenon of ignorance is a superficial movement; for behind it is an indivisible all-consciousness: the ignorance is a frontal power of that all-consciousness which limits itself in a certain field, within certain boundaries to a particular operation of knowledge, a particular mode

of conscious working, and keeps back all the rest of its knowledge in waiting as a force behind it. All that is thus hidden is an occult store of light and power for the All-Consciousness to draw upon for the evolution of our being in Nature; there is a secret working which fills up all the deficiencies of the frontal Ignorance, acts through its apparent stumblings, prevents them from leading to another final result than that which the All-Knowledge has decreed, helps the soul in the Ignorance to draw from its experience, even from the natural personality's sufferings and errors, what is necessary for its evolution and to leave behind what is no longer utilisable. This frontal power of Ignorance is a power of concentration in a limited working, much like that power in our human mentality by which we absorb ourselves in a particular object and in a particular work and seem to use only so much knowledge, only such ideas as are necessary for it, — the rest, which are alien to it or would interfere with it, are put back for the moment: yet, in reality, all the time it is the indivisible consciousness which we are that has done the work to be done, seen the thing that has to be seen, — that and not any fragment of consciousness or any exclusive ignorance in us is the silent knower and worker: so is it too with this frontal power of concentration of the All-Consciousness within us.

In our valuation of the movements of our consciousness this ability of concentration is rightly held to be one of the greatest powers of the human mentality. But equally the power of putting forth what seems to be an exclusive working of limited knowledge, that which presents itself to us as ignorance, must be considered one of the greatest powers of the divine Consciousness. It is only a supreme self-possessing Knowledge which can thus be powerful to limit itself in the act and yet work out perfectly all its intentions through that apparent ignorance. In the universe we see this supreme self-possessing Knowledge work through a multitude of ignorances, each striving to act according to its own blindness, yet through them all it constructs and executes its universal harmonies. More, the miracle of its omniscience appears most strikingly of all in what seems to us the action of an Inconscient, when through the complete or the partial nescience — more thick than our ignorance — of the electron, atom, cell, plant, insect, the lowest forms of animal life, it arranges perfectly its order of things and guides the instinctive impulse or the inconscient impetus to an end possessed by the All-Knowledge but held behind a veil, not known by the instrumental form of existence, yet perfectly operative within the instinct or the impetus. We may say then that this action of the ignorance or nescience is no real ignorance, but a power, a sign, a proof of an omniscient self-knowledge and all-knowledge. If we need any personal and inner witness to this indivisible all-consciousness behind the ignorance, — all Nature is its external proof, — we can get it with any completeness only in our deeper inner being or larger and higher spiritual state when we draw back behind the veil of our own surface ignorance and come into contact with the divine Idea and Will behind it. Then we see clearly enough that what we have done by ourselves in our ignorance was yet overseen and guided in its result

by the invisible Omniscience; we discover a greater working behind our ignorant working and begin to glimpse its purpose in us: then only can we see and know what now we worship in faith, recognise wholly the pure and universal Presence, meet the Lord of all being and all Nature.

As with the cause, — the Ignorance, — so is it with the consequences of the Ignorance. All this that seems to us incapacity, weakness, impotence, limitation of power, our will's hampered struggle and fettered labour, takes from the point of view of the Divine in his self-workings the aspect of a just limitation of an omniscient power by the free will of that Power itself so that the surface energy shall be in exact correspondence with the work that it has to do, with its attempt, its allotted success or its destined because necessary failure, with the balance of the sum of forces in which it is a part and with the larger result of which its own results are an indivisible portion. Behind this limitation of power is the All-Power and in the limitation that All-Power is at work; but it is through the sum of many limited workings that the indivisible Omnipotence executes infallibly and sovereignly its purposes. This power to limit its force and to work through that self-limitation, by what we call labour, struggle, difficulty, by what seems to us a series of failures or half-baulked successes and through them to achieve its secret intention, is not therefore a sign, proof or reality of weakness, but a sign, proof, reality — the greatest possible — of an absolute omnipotence.

As to suffering, which is so great a stumbling-block to our understanding of the universe, it is evidently a consequence of the limitation of consciousness, the restriction of force which prevents us from mastering or assimilating the touch of what is to us other-force: the result of this incapacity and disharmony is that the delight of the touch cannot be seized and it affects our sense with a reaction of discomfort or pain, a defect or excess, a discord resultant in inner or outer injury, born of division between our power of being and the power of being that meets us. Behind in our self and spirit is the All-Delight of the universal being which takes its account of the contact, a delight first in the enduring and then in the conquest of the suffering and finally in its transmutation that shall come hereafter; for pain and suffering are a perverse and contrary term of the delight of existence and they can turn into their opposite, even into the original All-Delight, Ananda. This All-Delight is not present in the universal alone, but it is here secret in ourselves, as we discover when we go back from our outward consciousness into the Self within us; the psychic being in us takes its account even of its most perverse or contrary as well as its more benign experiences and grows by the rejection of them or acceptance; it extracts a divine meaning and use from our most poignant sufferings, difficulties, misfortunes. Nothing but this All-Delight could dare or bear to impose such experiences on itself or on us; nothing else could turn them thus to its own utility and our spiritual profit. So too nothing but an inalienable harmony of being inherent in an inalienable unity of being would throw out so many harshest apparent discords and yet force them to

its purpose so that in the end they are unable to do anything else but to serve and secure, and even themselves change into elements that constitute, a growing universal rhythm and ultimate harmony. At every turn it is the divine Reality which we can discover behind that which we are yet compelled by the nature of the superficial consciousness in which we dwell to call undivine and in a sense are right in using that appellation; for these appearances are a veil over the Divine Perfection, a veil necessary for the present, but not at all the true and complete figure.

But even when we thus regard the universe, we cannot and ought not to dismiss as entirely and radically false and unreal the values that are given to it by our own limited human consciousness. For grief, pain, suffering, error, falsehood, ignorance, weakness, wickedness, incapacity, non-doing of what should be done and wrongdoing, deviation of will and denial of will, egoism, limitation, division from other beings with whom we should be one, all that makes up the effective figure of what we call evil, are facts of the world-consciousness, not fictions and unrealities, although they are facts whose complete sense or true value is not that which we assign to them in our ignorance. Still our sense of them is part of a true sense, our values of them are necessary to their complete values. One side of the truth of these things we discover when we get into a deeper and larger consciousness; for we find then that there is a cosmic and individual utility in what presents itself to us as adverse and evil. For without experience of pain we would not get all the infinite value of the divine delight of which pain is in travail; all ignorance is a penumbra which environs an orb of knowledge, every error is significant of the possibility and the effort of a discovery of truth; every weakness and failure is a first sounding of gulfs of power and potentiality; all division is intended to enrich by an experience of various sweetness of unification the joy of realised unity. All this imperfection is to us evil, but all evil is in travail of the eternal good; for all is an imperfection which is the first condition — in the law of life evolving out of Inconscience — of a greater perfection in the manifesting of the hidden divinity. But at the same time our present feeling of this evil and imperfection, the revolt of our consciousness against them is also a necessary valuation; for if we have first to face and endure them, the ultimate command on us is to reject, to overcome, to transform the life and the nature. It is for that end that their insistence is not allowed to slacken; the soul must learn the results of the Ignorance, must begin to feel their reactions as a spur to its endeavour of mastery and conquest and finally to a greater endeavour of transformation and transcendence. It is possible, when we live inwardly in the depths, to arrive at a state of vast inner equality and peace which is untouched by the reactions of the outer nature, and that is a great but incomplete liberation, — for the outer nature too has a right to deliverance. But even if our personal deliverance is complete, still there is the suffering of others, the world travail, which the great of soul cannot regard with indifference. There is a unity with all beings which something within us feels and the deliverance of others must be felt as intimate to its own deliverance.

This then is the law of the manifestation, the reason of the imperfection here. True, it is a law of manifestation only and, even, a law special to this movement in which we live, and we may say that it need not have been — if there were no movement of manifestation or not this movement; but, the manifestation and the movement being given, the law is necessary. It is not enough simply to say that the law and all its circumstances are an unreality created by the mental consciousness, non-existent in God, and to be indifferent to these dualities or to get out of the manifestation into God's pure being is the only wisdom. It is true they are creations of mind Consciousness, but Mind is only secondarily responsible; in a deeper reality they are, as we have seen already, creations of the Divine Consciousness projecting mind away from its all-knowledge so as to realise these opposite or contrary values of its all-power, all-knowledge, all-delight, all-being and unity. Obviously, this action and these fruits of the Divine Consciousness can be called by us unreal in the sense of not being the eternal and fundamental truth of being or can be taxed with falsehood because they contradict what is originally and eventually the truth of being; but, all the same, they have their persistent reality and importance in our present phase of the manifestation, nor can they be a mere mistake of the Divine Consciousness without any meaning in the divine wisdom, without any purpose of the divine joy, power and knowledge to justify their existence. Justification there must be even if it reposes for us upon a mystery which may confront us, so long as we live in a surface experience, as an insoluble riddle.

But if, accepting this side of Nature, we say that all things are fixed in their statutory and stationary law of being, and man too must be fixed in his imperfections, his ignorance and sin and weakness and vileness and suffering, our life loses its true significance. Man's perpetual attempt to arise out of the darkness and insufficiency of his nature can then have no issue in the world itself, in life itself; its one issue, if there is any, must be by an escape out of life, out of the world, out of his human existence and therefore out of its eternally unsatisfactory law of imperfect being, either into a heaven of the gods or of God or into the pure ineffability of the Absolute. If so, man can never really deliver out of the ignorance and falsehood the truth and knowledge, out of the evil and ugliness the good and beauty, out of the weakness and vileness the power and glory, out of the grief and suffering the joy and delight which are contained in the Spirit behind them and of which these contradictions are the first adverse and contrary conditions of emergence. All he can do is to cut the imperfections away from him and overpass too their balancing opposites, imperfect also, — leave with the ignorance the human knowledge, with the evil the human good, with the weakness the human strength and power, with the strife and suffering the human love and joy; for these are in our present nature inseparably entwined together, look like conjoint dualities, negative pole and positive pole of the same unreality, and since they cannot be elevated and transformed, they must be both abandoned: humanity cannot be fulfilled in divinity; it must cease, be left behind

and rejected. Whether the result will be an individual enjoyment of the absolute divine nature or of the Divine Presence or a Nirvana in the featureless Absolute, is a point on which religions and philosophies differ: but in either case human existence on earth must be taken as condemned to eternal imperfection by the very law of its being; it is perpetually and unchangeably an undivine manifestation in the Divine Existence. The soul by taking on manhood, perhaps by the very fact of birth itself, has fallen from the Divine, has committed an original sin or error which it must be man's spiritual aim, as soon as he is enlightened, thoroughly to cancel, unflinchingly to eliminate.

In that case, the only reasonable explanation of such a paradoxical manifestation or creation is that it is a cosmic game, a Lila, a play, an amusement of the Divine Being. It may be He pretends to be undivine, wears that appearance like the mask or make-up of an actor for the sole pleasure of the pretence or the drama. Or else He has created the undivine, created ignorance, sin and suffering just for the joy of a manifold creation. Or, perhaps, as some religions curiously suppose, He has done this so that there may be inferior creatures who will praise and glorify Him for his eternal goodness, wisdom, bliss and omnipotence and try feebly to come an inch nearer to the goodness in order to share the bliss, on pain of punishment — by some supposed eternal — if, as the vast majority must by their very imperfection, they fail in their endeavour. But to the doctrine of such a Lila so crudely stated there is always possible the retort that a God, himself all-blissful, who delights in the suffering of creatures or imposes such suffering on them for the faults of his own imperfect creation, would be no Divinity and against Him the moral being and intelligence of humanity must revolt or deny His existence. But if the human soul is a portion of the Divinity, if it is a divine Spirit in man that puts on this imperfection and in the form of humanity consents to bear this suffering, or if the soul in humanity is meant to be drawn to the Divine Spirit and is His associate in the play of imperfection here, in the delight of perfect being elsewhere, the Lila may still remain a paradox, but it ceases to be a cruel or revolting paradox; it can at most be regarded as a strange mystery and to the reason inexplicable. To explain it there must be two missing elements, a conscious assent by the soul to this manifestation and a reason in the All-Wisdom that makes the play significant and intelligible.

The strangeness of the play diminishes, the paradox loses its edge of sharpness if we discover that, although fixed grades exist each with its appropriate order of nature, they are only firm steps for a progressive ascent of the souls embodied in forms of matter, a progressive divine manifestation which rises from the inconscient to the superconscient or all-conscient status with the human consciousness as its decisive point of transition. Imperfection becomes then a necessary term of the manifestation: for, since all the divine nature is concealed but present in the Inconscient, it must be gradually delivered out of it; this graduation necessitates a partial unfolding, and this partial character or incompleteness of the unfolding

necessitates imperfection. An evolutionary manifestation demands a mid-stage with gradations above and under it, — precisely such a stage as the mental consciousness of man, part knowledge, part ignorance, a middle power of being still leaning on the Inconscient but slowly rising towards the all-conscious Divine Nature. A partial unfolding implying imperfection and ignorance may take as its inevitable companion, perhaps its basis for certain movements, an apparent perversion of the original truth of being. For the ignorance or imperfection to endure there must be a seeming contrary of all that characterises the divine nature, its unity, its all-consciousness, its all-power, its all-harmony, its all-good, its all-delight; there must appear limitation, discord, unconsciousness, disharmony, incapacity, insensibility and suffering, evil. For without that perversion imperfection could have no strong standing-ground, could not so freely manifest and maintain its nature as against the presence of the underlying Divinity. A partial knowledge is imperfect knowledge and imperfect knowledge is to that extent ignorance, a contrary of the divine nature: but in its outlook on what is beyond its knowledge, this contrary negative becomes a contrary positive; it originates error, wrong knowledge, wrong dealing with things, with life, with action; the wrong knowledge becomes a wrong will in the nature, at first, it may be, wrong by mistake, but afterwards wrong by choice, by attachment, by delight in the falsehood, — the simple contrary turns into a complex perversion. Inconscience and ignorance once admitted, these form a natural result in a logical sequence and have to be admitted also as necessary factors. The only question is the reason why this kind of progressive manifestation was itself necessary; that is the sole point left obscure to the intelligence.

A manifestation of this kind, self-creation or Lila, would not seem justifiable if it were imposed on the unwilling creature; but it will be evident that the assent of the embodied spirit must be there already, for Prakriti cannot act without the assent of the Purusha. There must have been not only the will of the Divine Purusha to make the cosmic creation possible, but the assent of the individual Purusha to make the individual manifestation possible. But it may be said that the reason for the Divine Will and delight in such a difficult and tormented progressive manifestation and the reason for the soul's assent to it is still a mystery. But it is not altogether a mystery if we look at our own nature and can suppose some kindred movement of being in the beginning as its cosmic origin. On the contrary, a play of self-concealing and self-finding is one of the most strenuous joys that conscious being can give to itself, a play of extreme attractiveness. There is no greater pleasure for man himself than a victory which is in its very principle a conquest over difficulties, a victory in knowledge, a victory in power, a victory in creation over the impossibilities of creation, a delight in the conquest over an anguished toil and a hard ordeal of suffering. At the end of separation is the intense joy of union, the joy of a meeting with a self from which we were divided. There is an attraction in ignorance itself because it provides us with the joy of discovery, the surprise of new and unforeseen creation, a great adventure

of the soul; there is a joy of the journey and the search and the finding, a joy of the battle and the crown, the labour and the reward of labour. If delight of existence be the secret of creation, this too is one delight of existence; it can be regarded as the reason or at least one reason of this apparently paradoxical and contrary Lila. But, apart from this choice of the individual Purusha, there is a deeper truth inherent in the original Existence which finds its expression in the plunge into Inconscience; its result is a new affirmation of Sachchidananda in its apparent opposite. If the Infinite's right of various self-manifestation is granted, this too as a possibility of its manifestation is intelligible and has its profound significance.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Life Divine, CWSA, Vol. 21, pp. 412-27)



KENA UPANISHAD¹

An Incomplete Commentary

Foreword

As the Isha Upanishad is concerned with the problem of God & the world and consequently with the harmonising of spirituality & ordinary human action, so the Kena is occupied with the problem of God & the Soul and the harmonising of our personal activity with the movement of infinite energy & the supremacy of the universal Will. We are not here in this universe as independent existences. It is evident that we are limited beings clashing with other limited beings, clashing with the forces of material Nature, clashing too with forces of immaterial Nature of which we are aware not with the senses but by the mind. The Upanishad takes for granted that we are souls, not merely life-inspired bodies — into that question it does not enter. But this soul in us is in relation with the outside world through the senses, through the vitality, through mind. It is entangled in the mesh of its instruments, thinks they alone exist or is absorbed in their action with which it identifies itself — it forgets itself in its activities. To recall it to itself, to lift it above this life of the senses, so that even while living in this world, it shall always refer itself & its actions to the high universal Self & Deity which we all are in the ultimate truth of our being — so that we may be free, may be pure & joyous, may be immortal, that is the object of the seer in the Kena Upanishad. Briefly to explain the steps by which he develops and arrives at his point and the principal philosophical positions underlying his great argument, is as always the purpose of this commentary. There is much that might & should be said for the full realisation of this ancient gospel of submission & self-surrender to the Infinite, but it is left to be said in a work of greater amplitude and capacity. Exegesis in faithful subordination to the strict purport & connotation of the text will be here as always my principle.

1. Circa 1912. Editorial subtitle. Sri Aurobindo wrote only the “foreword” and portions of one “part” of this planned commentary . . . — *Part of editorial note in CWSA.*

The First Part

The Self & the Senses

“By whom controlled, by whom commissioned & sent forth falleth the mind on its object, by whom yoked to its activity goeth abroad this chief of the vital forces? By whom controlled is this word that men speak, and what god set ear & eye to their workings? That which is hearing within hearing, mind of the mind, speech behind the word, he too is the life of vitality & the sight within vision; the calm of soul are liberated from these instruments and passing beyond this world become Immortals. . . . There the eye goes not & speech cannot follow nor the mind; we know it not nor can we decide by reason how to teach of it; for verily it is other than the known & it is beyond the unknown; so have we heard from the men that went before us by whom to us this Brahman was declared. That which is not uttered by speech, but by which speech is expressed, know thou that to be the Soul of things and not this which men here pursue. That which thinketh not by the mind, but by which mind itself is realised, know thou that to be the Soul of things, not this which men here pursue. That which seeth not by sight, but by which one seeth things visible, know thou that to be the Soul of things and not this which men here pursue. That which heareth not by hearing but by which hearing becomes subject to knowledge through the ear, know thou that to be the Soul of things & not this which men here pursue. That which liveth not by the breathing, but by which the breath becometh means of vitality, know thou that to be the Soul of things & not this which men here pursue.”

I

In order to understand the question with which the Upanishad opens its train of thought, it is necessary to remember the ideas of the Vedantic thinkers about the phenomena of sensation, life, mind and ideas which are the elements of all our activity in the body. It is noticeable that the body itself and matter, [the] principle of which the body is a manifestation, are not even mentioned in this Upanishad. The problem of matter the Seer supposes to have been so far solved for the inquirer that he no longer regards the physical state of consciousness as fundamental and no longer considers it as a reality separate from consciousness. All this world is only one conscious Being. Matter to the Vedantist is only one of several states — in reality, movements — of this conscious being, — a state in which this universal consciousness, having created forms within & out of itself as substance, absorbs & loses itself by concentration in the idea of being as substance of form. It is still conscious, but, as form, ceases to be self-conscious. The Purusha in matter, the Knower in the leaf, clod, stone, is involved in form, forgets himself in this movement of his Prakriti or Mode of Action and loses hold in outgoing knowledge of his self of

conscious being & delight. He is not in possession of himself; He is not Atmavan. He has to get back what he has lost, to become Atmavan, and that simply means that He has to become gradually aware in matter of that which He has hidden from Himself in matter. He has to evolve what He has involved. This recovery in knowledge of our full and real self is the sole secret meaning & purpose of evolution. In reality it is no evolution, but a manifestation. We are already what we become. That which is still future in matter, is already present in Spirit. That which the mind in matter does not yet know, it is hiding from itself — that in us which is behind mind & informs it already knows — but it keeps its secret.

For that which we regard as matter, cannot be, if the Vedantic view is right, mere matter, mere inert existence, eternally bound by its own inertness. Even in a materialistic view of the world matter cannot be what it seems, but is only a form or movement of Force which the Indians call Prakriti. This Force, according to the Upanishads, is composed in its action & capable in its potentiality of several principles, of which matter, mind & life are those already manifestly active in this world, and where one of these principles is active, the others must also be there, involved in it; or, to put it in another way, Force acting as one of its own principles, one of its movements, is inherently capable even in that movement of all the others. If in the leaf, clod, stone & metal life and mind are not active, it is not because they are not present, but because they are not yet brought forward (prakrita) and organised for action. They are kept concealed, in the background of the consciousness-being which is the leaf, stone or clod; they are not yet vilu, as the Rigveda would say, but guha, not vyakta, but avyakta. It is a great error to hold that that which is not just now or in this or that place manifest or active, does not there & then exist. Concealment is not annihilation; non-action is not non-being nor does the combination of secrecy & inaction constitute non-existence.

If it is asked how we know that there is the Purusha or Knower in the leaf, clod or stone, — the Vedantin answers that, apart from the perceptions of the Seer & the subjective & objective experiences by which the validity of the perceptions is firmly established in the reason, the very fact that the Knower emerges in matter shows that He must have been there all the time. And if He was there in some form of matter He must be there generally & in all; for Nature is one & knows no essential division, but only differences of form, circumstance and manifestation. There are not many substances in this world, but one substance variously concentrated in many forms; not many lives, but one liver variously active in many bodies; not many minds, but one mind variously intelligent in many embodied vitalities.

It is, at first sight, a plausible theory that life & mind are only particular movements of matter itself under certain conditions & need not therefore be regarded as independent immaterial movements of consciousness involved in matter but only as latent material activities of which matter is capable. But this view can only be held so long as it appears that mind and life can only exist in this body & cease as soon as

the body is broken up, can only know through the bodily instruments and can only operate in obedience to and as the result of certain material movements. The sages of the Upanishads had already proved by their own experience as Yogins that none of these limitations are inherent in the nature of life & mind. The mind & life which are in this body can depart from it, intact & still organised, and act more freely outside it; mind can know even material things without the help of the physical eye, touch or ear; life itself is not conditioned necessarily, and mind is not even conditioned usually, though it is usually affected, by the state of the body or its movements. It can always and does frequently in our experience transcend them. It can entirely master & determine the condition of the body. Therefore mind is capable of freedom from the matter in which it dwells here, — freedom in being, freedom in knowledge, freedom in power.

It is true that while working in matter, every movement of mind produces some effect & consequently some state or movement in the body, but this does not show that the mind is the material result of matter any more than steam is the mechanical result of the machine. This world in which mind is at present moving, in the system of phenomena to which we are now overtly related, is a world of matter, where, to start with, it is true to say *Annam vai sarvam*; All is matter. Mind and life awaken in it & seek to express themselves in it. Since & when they act in it, every movement they make, must have an effect upon it and produce a movement in it, just as the activity of steam must produce an effect in the machine in which its force is acting. Mind and life also use particular parts of the bodily machine for particular functions and, when these parts are injured, those workings of life & mind are correspondingly hampered, rendered difficult or for a time impossible — & even altogether impossible unless life & mind are given time, impulse & opportunity to readjust themselves to the new circumstances & either recreate or patch up the old means or adopt a new system of function. It is obvious that such a combination of time, impulse & opportunity cannot usually or even often occur, — cannot occur at all unless men have the faith, the *nistha* — unless that is to say, they know beforehand that it can be done & have accustomed themselves to seek for the means. Bodies, drowned & “lifeless”, — nothing is really lifeless in the world, — can now be brought back to life because men believe & know that it can be done & have found a means to do it before the organised mind & life have had time to detach themselves entirely from the unorganised life which is present in all matter. So it is with all powers & operations. They are only impossible so long as we do not believe in their possibility & do not take the trouble or have not the clarity of mind to find their right process.

Life & mind are sometimes believed to descend, — or the hypothesis is advanced — into this world from another where they are more at home. If by world is meant not another star or system in this material universe, but some other systematisation of universal consciousness, the Vedantin who follows the Vedas & Upanishads, will not disagree. Life & mind in another star or system of this visible universe might, it

is conceivable, be more free and, therefore, at home; but they would still be acting in a world whose basis & true substance was matter. There would therefore be no essential alteration in the circumstances of their action nor would the problem of their origin here be at all better solved. But it is reasonable to suppose that just as here Force organises itself in matter as its fundamental continent & movement, so there should be — the knowledge & experience of the ancient thinkers showed them that there are — other systems of consciousness where Force organises itself in life and in mind as its fundamental continent & movement. — It is not necessary to consider here what would be the relations in Time & Space of such worlds with ours. Life & mind might descend, ready organised, from such worlds and attach themselves to forms of matter here; but not in the sense of occupying physically these material forms & immediately using them, but in the sense of rousing by the shock of their contact & awakening to activity the latent life & mind in matter. That life & mind in matter would then proceed, under the superior help & impulse, to organise a nervous system for the use of life and a system of life-movements in the nerves for the use of mind fit to express in matter the superior organisations who have descended here. It was indeed the belief of the ancients that — apart from the government of each living form by a single organised personality — such help from the worlds of life & mind was necessary to maintain & support all functionings of life & mind here below because of the difficulty otherwise of expressing & perfecting them in a world which did not properly belong to them but to quite other movements. This was the basis of the idea of Devas, Daityas, Asuras, Rakshasas, Pisachas, Gandharvas etc, with which the Veda, Upanishad & Itihasa have familiarised our minds. There is no reason to suppose that all worlds of this material system are the home of living things — on the contrary the very reverse is likely to be the truth. It is, probably, with difficulty & in select places that life & mind in matter are evolved.

If it were otherwise, if life & mind were to enter, organised or in full power, (such as they must be in worlds properly belonging to them) into material forms, those forms would immediately begin to function perfectly & without farther trouble. We should not see this long & laborious process of gradual manifestation, so laboured, so difficult, the result of so fierce a struggle, of such a gigantic toil of the secret Will in matter. Everywhere we see the necessity of a gradual organisation of forms. What is it that is being organised? A suitable system for the operations of life, a suitable system for the operations of mind. There are stirrings similar to those that constitute life in inanimate things, in metals as Science has recently discovered, — vital response & failure to respond, but no system for the regular movement of vitality has been organised; therefore metals do not live. In the plant we have a vital system, one might almost say a nervous system, but although there is what might be called an unconscious mind in plants, although in some there are even vague movements of intelligence, the life system organised is suitable only for the flow of rasa, sap, sufficient for mere life, not for prana, nerve force, necessary for the

operation in matter of mind. Apah is sufficient for life, vayu is necessary for life capable of mind. In the animal life is organised on a different plan and a nervous system capable of carrying currents of pranic force is developed as one rises in the scale of animal creation, until it becomes perfect in man. It is, therefore, life & mind awakening in matter & manifesting with difficulty that is the truth of this material world, not the introduction of a ready made life entirely foreign to it in its own potentiality.

If it be said that the life & mind attaching themselves to matter only enter it by degrees as the system becomes more fit, putting more & more of itself into the body which is being made ready for it, that also is possible & conceivable. We are indeed led to see, as we progress in self-knowledge, that there is a great mental activity belonging to us only part of which is imperfectly expressed in our waking thoughts & perceptions — a sub-conscious or super-conscious Self which stores everything, remembers everything, foresees everything, in a way knows everything knowable, has possession of all that is false & all that is true, but only allows the waking mind into a few of its secrets. Similarly our life in the body is only a partial expression of the immortal life of which we are the assured possessors. But this only proves that we ourselves are not in our totality or essentiality the life & mind in the body, but are using that principle for our purpose or our play in matter. It does not prove that there is no principle of life & mind in matter. On the contrary, there is reason to believe that matter is similarly involved in mind & life & that wherever there is movement of life & mind, it tends to develop for itself some form of body in which securely to individualise itself. By analogy we must suppose life & mind to be similarly involved & latent in matter & therefore evolvable in it & capable of manifestation.

We know then the theory of the early Vedantins with regard to the relations of life, mind and matter & we may now turn to the actual statements of the Upanishad with regard to the activities of life & mind and their relation to the soul of things, the Brahman.

II

Mind

If the Upanishads were no more than philosophical speculations, it would be enough in commenting upon them to state the general thought of a passage and develop its implications in modern language and its bearing upon the ideas we now hold. Or if they only expressed in their ancient language general conclusions of psychological experience, which are still easily accessible & familiar, nothing would be gained by any minute emphasis on the wording of our Vedantic texts. But these great writings are not the record of ideas; they are a record of experiences; and those experiences,

psychological and spiritual, are as remote from the superficial psychology of ordinary men as are the experiments and conclusions of Science from the ordinary observation of the peasant driving his plough through a soil only superficially known or the sailor of old guiding his bark by the few stars important to his rudimentary investigation. Every word in the Upanishads arises out of a depth of psychological experience and observation we no longer possess and is a key to spiritual truths which we can no longer attain except by discipline of a painful difficulty. Therefore each word, as we proceed, must be given its due importance. We must consider its place in the thought and discover the ideas of which it was the spoken symbol.

The opening phrase of the Kena Upanishad, *keneshitam patati preshitam manah*, is an example of this constant necessity. The Sage is describing not the mind in its entirety, but that action of it which he has found the most characteristic and important, that which, besides, leads up directly to the question of the secret source of all mental action, its president and impelling power. The central and common experience of this action is expressed by the word *patati*, falls. Motion forward and settling upon an object are the very nature of mind when it acts.

Our modern conception of mind is different; while acknowledging its action of movement and forward attention, we are apt to regard its essential & common action to be rather receptivity of objects, than research of objects. The scientific explanation of mental activity helps to confirm this notion. Fixing its eye on the nervous system & the brain, the physical channels of thought, Physiology insists on the double action of the afferent and the efferent nerves as constituting the action of thought. An object falls on the sense-organ, — instead of mind falling on the object, the afferent nerves carry the impact to the brain-cells, their matter undergoes modification, the brain-filaments respond to the shock, a message — the will of the cell-republic — returns through the efferent nerves and that action of perception, — whether of an object or the idea of an object or the idea of an idea, which is the essence of thinking — is accomplished. What else the mind does is merely the internal modification of the grey matter of the brain and the ceaseless activity of its filaments with the store of perceptions & ideas already amassed by these miraculous bits of organised matter. These movements of the bodily machine are all, according to Physiology. But it has been necessary to broach the theory of thought-waves or vibrations created by those animalcular amusements in order to account for the results of thought.

However widely & submissively this theory has been received by a hypnotised world, the Vedantist is bound to challenge it. His research has fixed not only on the physiological action, the movement of the bodily machine, but on the psychological action, the movement of the force that holds the machine, — not only on what the mind does, but on what it omits to do. His observation supported by that careful analysis & isolation in experiment of the separate mental constituents, has led him to a quite different conclusion. He upholds the wisdom of the sage in the phrase *patati manas*. An image falls on the eye, — admittedly, the mere falling of an image on

the eye will not constitute mental perception — the mind has to give it attention; for it is not the eye that sees, it is the mind that sees through the eye as an instrument, just as it is not the telescope that sees an otherwise invisible sun, but the astronomer behind the telescope who sees. Therefore, physical reception of images is not sight; physical reception of sounds is not hearing. For how many sights & sounds besiege us, fall on our retina, touch the tympanum of the ear, yet are to our waking thought non-existent! If the body were really a self-sufficient machine, this could not happen. The impact must be admitted, the message must rush through the afferent nerve, the cells must receive the shock, the modification, the response must occur. A self-sufficient machine has no choice of action or non-action; unless it is out of order, it must do its work. But here we see there is a choice, a selection, an ample power of refusal; the practical researches of the Yogins have shown besides that the power of refusal can be absolute, that something in us has a sovereign & conscious faculty of selection or total prohibition of perception & thought & can even determine how, if at all, it shall respond, can even see without the eye & hear without the ear. Even European hypnotism points to similar phenomena. The matter cannot be settled by the rough & ready conclusions of impatient Physiology eager to take a shortcut to Truth & interpret the world in the light of its first astonished discoveries.

Where the image is not seen, the sound is not heard, it is because the mind does not settle on its object — *na patati*. But we must first go farther & inquire what it is that works in the afferent & efferent nerves & insures the attention of the nerves. It is not, we have seen, mere physical shock, a simple vibration of the bodily matter in the nerve. For, if it were, attention to every impact would be automatically & inevitably assured. The Vedantins say that the nerve system is an immensely intricate organised apparatus for the action of life in the body; what moves in them is *prana*, the life principle, materialised, aerial (*vayavya*) in its nature and therefore invisible to the eye, but sufficiently capable of self-adaptation both to the life of matter & the life of mind to form the meeting place or bridge of the two principles. But this action of life-principle is not sufficient in itself to create thought, for if it were mind could be organised in vegetable as readily as in animal life. It is only when *prana* has developed a sufficient intensity of movement to form a medium for the rapid activities of mind and mind, at last possessed of a physical instrument, has poured itself into the life-movement and taken possession of it that thought becomes possible. That which moves in the nerve system is the life-current penetrated & pervaded with the habitual movement of mind. When the movement of mind is involved in the life-movement, as it usually is in all forms, there is no response of mental knowledge to any contact or impression. For just as even in the metal there is life, so even in the metal there is mind; but it is latent, involved, its action secret, — unconscious, as we say, and confined to a passive reception into matter of the mind-forms created by these impacts. This will become clearer as we penetrate deeper into the mysteries of mind; we shall see that even though the clod, stone & tree do not think, they have

in them the secret matrix of mind and in that matrix forms are stored which can be translated into mental symbols, into perception, idea and word. But it is only as the life-currents gain in intensity, rapidity & subtlety, making the body of things less durable but more capable of works, that mind-action becomes increasingly possible & once manifested more & more minutely & intricately effective. For body & life here are the *pratistha*, the basis of mind. A point, however, comes at which mind has got in life all that it needs for its higher development; and from that time it goes on enlarging itself & its activities out of all proportion to the farther organisation of its bodily & vital instruments or even without any such farther organisation in the lower man.

But even in the highest forms here in this material world, matter being the basis, life an intermediary and mind the third result, the normal rule is that matter & life (where life is expressed) shall always be active, mind only exceptionally active *in the body*. In other words, the ordinary action of mind is subconscious and receptive, as in the stone, clod & tree. The image that touches the eye, the sound that touches the ear is immediately taken in by the mind-informed life, the mind-informed & life-informed matter & becomes a part of the experience of Brahman in that system. Not only does it create a vibration in body, a stream of movement in life but also an impression in mind. This is inevitable, because mind, life & matter are one. Where one is, the others are, manifest or latent, involved or evolved, supraliminally active or subliminally active. The sword which has struck in the battle, retains in itself the mental impression of the stroke, the striker & the stricken and that ancient event can be read centuries afterwards by the Yogin who has trained himself to translate its mind-forms into the active language of mind. Thus everything that occurs around us leaves on us its secret stamp & impression. That this is so, the recent discoveries of European psychology have begun to prove & from the ordinary point of view, it is one of the most amazing & stupendous facts of existence; but from the Vedantist's it is the most simple, natural & inevitable. This survival of all experience in a mighty & lasting record, is not confined to such impressions as are conveyed to the brain through the senses, but extends to all that can in any way come to the mind, — to distant events, to past states of existence & old occurrences in which our present selves had no part, to the experiences garnered in dream & in dreamless sleep, to the activities that take place during the apparent unconsciousness or disturbed consciousness of slumber, delirium, anaesthesia & trance. Unconsciousness is an error; cessation of awareness is a delusion.

It is for this reason that the phenomenon on which the sage lays stress as the one thing important & effective in mental action here & in the waking state, is not its receptiveness, but its outgoing force — *patati*. In sense-activity we can distinguish three kinds of action — first, when the impact is received subconsciously & there is no message by the mind in the life current to the brain, — even if the life current itself carry the message — secondly, when the mind is aware of an impact, that

is to say, falls on its object, but merely with the sensory part of itself & not with the understanding part; thirdly, when it falls on the object with both the sensory & understanding parts of itself. In the first case, there is no act of mental knowledge, no attention of eye or mind; as when we pass, absorbed in thought, through a scene of Nature, yet have seen nothing, been aware of nothing. In the second, there is an act of sensory knowledge, the mind in the eye attends & observes, however slightly; the thing is perceived but not conceived or only partly conceived, as when the maidservant going about her work, listens to the Hebrew of her master, hearing all, but distinguishing & understanding nothing, not really attending except through the ear alone. In the third, there is true mental perception & conception or the attempt at perception & conception, and only the last movement comes within the description given by the Sage — *ishitam preshitam patati manas*. But we must observe that in all these cases somebody is attending, something is both aware & understands. The man, unconscious under an anaesthetic drug in an operation, can in hypnosis when his deeper faculties are released, remember & relate accurately everything that occurred to him in his state of supposed unconsciousness. The maidservant thrown into an abnormal condition, can remember every word of her master's Hebrew discourse, & repeat in perfect order & without a single error long sentences in the language she did not understand. And, it may surely be predicted, one day we shall find that the thing our minds strove so hard to attend to and fathom, this passage in a new language, that new & unclassified phenomenon, was perfectly perceived, perfectly understood, automatically, infallibly, by something within us which either could not or did not convey its knowledge to the mind. We were only trying to make operative on the level of mind, a knowledge we already in some recess of our being perfectly possessed.

From this fact appears all the significance of the sage's sentence about the mind.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Kena and Other Upanishads*, CWSA, Vol. 18, pp. 297-310)

“THE FEAST OF YOUTH”¹

This is the first published book of a young poet whose name has recently and suddenly emerged under unusually favourable auspices. English poetry written by an Indian writer who uses the foreign medium as if it were his mother tongue, with a spontaneous ease, power and beauty, the author a brother of the famous poetess Sarojini Naidu, one of a family which promises to be as remarkable as the Tagores by its possession of culture, talent and genius, challenging attention and sympathy by his combination of extreme youth and a high and early brilliance and already showing in his work, even though still immature, magnificent performance as well as a promise which makes it difficult to put any limits to the heights he may attain, — the book at once attracts interest and has come into immediate prominence amidst general appreciation and admiration. We have had already in the same field of achievement in Sarojini Naidu’s poetry qualities which make her best work exquisite, unique and unmatched in its kind. The same qualities are not to be found in this book, but it shows other high gifts which, when brought to perfection, must find an equal pitch with a greater scope. Here perhaps are the beginnings of a supreme utterance of the Indian soul in the rhythms of the English tongue.

That is a combination which, it may be well hoped for the sake of India’s future, will not become too frequent a phenomenon. But at the present moment it serves both an artistic and a national purpose and seems to be part of the movement of destiny. In any case, whatever may be said of the made-in-India type of secondhand English verse in which men of great literary gift in southern India too often waste their talent, Mr. Chattopadhyay’s production justifies itself by its beauty. This is not only genuine poetry, but the work of a young, though still unripe genius with an incalculable promise of greatness in it. As to the abundance here of all the essential materials, the instruments, the elementary powers of the poetical gift, there can be not a moment’s doubt or hesitation. Even the first few lines, though far from the best, are quite decisive. A rich and finely lavish command of language, a firm possession of his metrical instrument, an almost blinding gleam and glitter of the wealth of imagination and fancy, a stream of unfailingly poetic thought and image and a high though as yet uncertain pitch of expression, are the powers with which the young poet starts. There have been poets of a great final achievement who have begun with gifts of a less precious stuff and had by labour within themselves and a difficult alchemy to turn them into pure gold. Mr. Chattopadhyay is not of these; he is rather overburdened with the favours of the goddess, comes like some Vedic Marut with golden weapons, golden ornaments, car of gold, throwing in front of him

1. Poems, by Harindranath Chattopadhyay, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras.

continual lightnings of thought in the midst of a shining rain of fancies, and a greater government and a more careful and concentrated use rather than an enhancement of his powers is the one thing his poetry needs for its perfection.

The name of the volume, taken from its first poem, *The Feast of Youth*, is an appropriate description of its spirit, though one is inclined to call it rather a riot or revel than a simple feast. It is the singing of a young bacchanal of the Muse drunk with a bright and heady wine. In his first poem he promises to himself,

O! I shall draw the blue out of the skies
And offer it like wine of paradise
To drunken Youth,

and the rest is an ample fulfilment of the promise. For the thought and sentiment are an eager, fine and fiery drinking of the joy of life and being, not in the pagan or physically sensuous kind of enjoyment, but with a spiritual and singularly pure intoxication of the thought, imagination and higher sense. The spiritual joy of existence, of its primal colour and symbolic subtleties, its essential sense, images, suggestions, a free and intense voluptuousness of light is the note. Occasionally there is the attempt to bring in an incidental tone of sorrow, but attacked by the glowing atmosphere of exultation, overcome and rendered unreal by the surrounding light and bliss, it fails to convince. Expression matches substance; there is here no holding back, no reticence, no idea of self-restraint, but rather a reckless ecstasy and outpouring. Suggestion chases suggestion, fancy runs after or starts away from fancy with no very exacting sequence; the exhilaration of self-utterance dominates. One is a little dazzled at first and has to accustom the eyes to the glitter, before one can turn to the heart of the meaning: excess, profusion, an unwearied lavishing of treasures creates the charm of the manner as well as its limitations, but this is often an excellent sign in a young poet, for it promises much richness in the hour of maturity; and here it is almost always, — not quite always, for there are lapses, — a fine, though not yet a sovereign excess, which continually attracts and stimulates the imagination, if it does not always quite take it captive.

There is here perhaps a side effect of one remarkable peculiarity of Mr. Chattopadhyay's poetical mentality. There is a background in it of Hindu Vedantic thought and feeling which comes out especially in “Fire”, “Dusk”, “Messages” and other poems, but will be found repeatedly elsewhere and runs through the whole as a sort of undercurrent; but the mould of the thought, the colour and tissue of the feeling betray a Moslem, a Persian, a Sufi influence. This source of inspiration appears in the title of some of the poems, and it has helped perhaps the tendency to lavishness. Sanskrit poetry, even when it clothes itself in the regal gold and purple of Kalidasa, or flows in the luscious warmth and colour of Jayadeva, keeps still a certain background of massive restraint, embanks itself in a certain firm solidity;

the later poetry of the regional languages, though it has not that quality, is oftenest sparing at heart, does not give itself up to a curious opulence. But the Moslem mind has the tendency of mosaic and arabesque, loves the glow of many colours, the careful jewellery of image and phrase; its poetry is apparelled like a daughter of the Badshahs.

Her girdles and her fillets gleam
Like changing fires on sunset seas:
Her raiment is like morning mist,
Shot opal, gold and amethyst.

Mr. Chattopadhyay's spirit and manner are too expansive for the carefully compressed artistry of the Persian poets, but the influence of the passion for decorative colour is there. But though the kinship is visible even in the external expression, what is more striking, is a certain idiosyncrasy of the fancy, the turn given to the thought, the colour of the vision, which are very often of the Sufi type. Something of the union of the two cultures appeared in the temperament of Mrs. Naidu's poetry, but here it is more subtly visible as part of the intellectual strain. This is however only one shaping influence behind; except in one or two poems, where we get some echo of his sister's manner and movement, this young poet is astonishingly original; it is himself that he utters in every line.

The thought-substance, the governing inspiration of this poetry is such as might well spring from a fusion of the Vedantic and the Sufi mentality. It is the utterance of a mystical joy in God and Nature, sometimes of the direct God-union, — but this is not quite so successful — more characteristically of God through Nature. Yet this is not usually the physical Nature that we feel with the outward bodily sense; it is a mystic life of light and ecstasy behind her, hidden in sun and moon and star, morning and noon and dusk and night, sea and sky and earth. It is to bring this remoter splendid vision near to us that image is strained and crowded, symbol multiplied. We get this mystic sense and aspiration in the poem, “Fire”, in an image of love, —

I am athirst for one glimpse of your beautiful face, O Love!
Veiled in the mystical silence of stars and the purple of skies.

The closing lines of the “Hour of Rest” express it more barely, — I quote them only for their directness, though the expression stumbles and even lapses badly in the last two lines, —

There is a sweetness in the world
That I have sometimes felt,
And oft in fragrant petals curl'd

His fragrance I have smelt . . .
And in sad notes of birds, unfurl'd
The kindness He hath dealt!

It is more beautifully and mystically brought out in another poem, “Worship”, —

Like a rich song you chant your red-fire sunrise,
Deep in my dreams, and forge your white-flame moon . . .
You hide the crimson secret of your sunset,
And the pure, golden message of your noon.

Your fashion cool-grey clouds within my body,
And weave your rain into a diamond mesh.
The Universal Beauty dances, dances
A glimmering peacock in my flowering flesh!

Spring lives as a symbol of inner experience, universal spring, —

The Spring-hues deepen into human Bliss!
The heart of God and man in scent are blended . . .
The sky meets earth and heaven in one transparent kiss.

Simple, moving, melodious and direct is its utterance in “Messages”, with one image at least which deepens into intimate revelation, —

In my slumber and my waking
I can hear His sobbing flute . . .
Thro' the springtime and the autumn
Shaping every flower and fruit . . .
And His gleaming laughter colours
Orange hills and purple streams,
He is throbbing in the crystal,
Magic centre of my dreams. . . .
Silver stars are visible twinkles
Of His clear, transparent touch . . .
He is moving every moment
To the world He loves so much!

In the sea

God churns thy waters into silvern foam
And breathes His music into every shell.

Noon is the Master’s “mystic dog with paws of fire” and “Behind the clouds some hidden Flutist plays His flute.” These are some of the more overt and express phrasings of the predominant idea, exquisite in harmony, lovely and subtly penetrating in their thought. Elsewhere it is simply Nature and the bliss, light and wonder behind her that are expressed, the rest is concealed, yet suggested in the light. But there is always the same principle of a bright mystic vision and the transmutation of natural things into symbol values of the universal light, joy and beauty.

This poetry is an utterance of an ancient mystic experience with a new tone and burden of its own. Its very character brings in a certain limitation, it is empty of the touch of normal human life; our passion is absent, the warm blood of our emotion does not run through the veins of this Muse to flush her cheek with earthly colour. There is indeed a spiritual passion, a spiritual, not a physical sensuousness. Light and ecstasy there is, not the flame of earth’s desire. Heaven takes up the symbols of the earth-life, but there is not the bringing of the Divine into the normal hues of our sight and our feeling which is the aim of Vaishnava poetry. Crystal is a favourite epithet of the poet, and there is here something crystalline, a rainbow prism of colours in the whiteness of shining stalactites. There is at first even some impression of a bright and fiery coldness of purity, as of a virgin rarity of the atmosphere of some high dawn, or as if that had happened which is imaged in “Dusk”,

Ah God! my heart is turning crystalline
Seeing Thee play at crystal stars above!

or as if the poet had indeed, as he writes elsewhere, “put out the lamp of his love and desire, for their light is not real”, and replaced them by the miraculous fire of this shining ideal. In the Sonnets, however, in some other poems and in the poet’s later work there is the beginning of a greater warmth and a nearer sweetness.

The genius, power, newness of this poetry is evident. If certain reserves have to be made, it is because of a frequent immaturity in the touch which at times makes itself too sharply felt and is seldom altogether absent. I do not refer to the occasional lapses and carelessnesses of which I have noted one example, — for these are not very numerous, and the flagrant subjection of the expression to the necessity of the rhyme occurs only in that one passage, — but to the fact that the poet is still too much possessed by his gifts rather than their possessor, too easily carried away by the delight of brilliant expression and image to steep his word always in the deeper founts of his inspiration. The poetic expression is always brilliant, but never for long together quite sure, — lines of most perfect beauty too often alternate with others which are by no means so good. The image-maker’s faculty is used with a radiant splendour and lavishness, but without discrimination; what begins as imaginative vision frequently thins away into a bright play of fancy, and there are lines which come dangerously near to prettiness and conceit. Especially there is not yet that

sufficient incubation of the inspiration and the artistic sense which turns a poem into a perfectly satisfying artistic whole; even in the Sonnets, beautiful enough in themselves, there is an insufficient force of structure. The totality of effect in most of these poems is a diffusion, a streaming on from one idea and image to another, not a well-completed shapeliness. The rhythmic turn is always good, often beautiful and admirable, but the subtlest secrets of sound have not yet been firmly discovered, they are only as it were glimpsed and caught in passing.

These limitations however matter very little as they are natural in a first and early work and do not count in comparison with the riches disclosed. Moreover there is quite enough to show that they are likely to be rapidly outgrown. Young as he is, the poet has already almost all the secrets, and has only to use them more firmly and constantly. Already — in most of the poems, but I may instance “Memory”, “My Unlaunched Boat”, the three Sonnets and some of the Songs of Sunlight, — there is the frequency of a full and ripe expression and movement, sometimes varying from a mellow clarity to a concentrated force, —

daylight dies

In silence on the bosom of the darkening skies . . .

And with him, every note

Is crushed to silent sorrow in the song-bird’s throat, —

sometimes in a soft, clear and magical beauty, —

The Spring hath come and gone with all her coloured hours.

The earth beneath her tread

Laughed suddenly a peal of blue and green and red . . .

And for her tender beauty wove a flowery bed . . .

She gathered all her touch-born blossoms from bright bowers . . .

And fled with all the laughter of earth’s flowers,

sometimes in a delicate brightness and richness, constantly in a daring yet perfectly successful turn, suggestion or subtle correspondence of image. There is often an extraordinary and original felicity in the turning of the physical image to bring out some deep and penetrating psychological or psychical suggestion.

Since the appearance of this book Mr. Chattopadhyay has given to the public one or two separate poems of a still greater beauty which show a very swift development of his powers; he is already overcoming, almost though not yet quite entirely, the touch of unripeness which was apparent in his earlier poems. Sureness of expression, a thought in full possession of itself and using in admirable concordance its imaginative aids and means, subtler turns of melody and harmony, especially an approach to firmer structural power are now strongly visible and promise the

doubling of the ecstatic poet with an impeccable artist. There is also a greater warmth and nearness, a riper stress, a deeper musing. We may well hope to find in him a supreme singer of the vision of God in Nature and Life, and the meeting of the divine and the human which must be at first the most vivifying and liberating part of India's message to a humanity that is now touched everywhere by a growing will for the spiritualising of the earth-existence.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Early Cultural Writings, CWSA, Vol. 1, pp. 614-22)



‘MAKE ME WORTHY TO BE WHOLLY THINE . . .’

August 8, 1914

My pen is silent. . . . So absorbing is this material world! Why must we let it take so much place in our consciousness? Is it an incapacity in us? Is it Thy Will?

O my sweet Master, I would live only in Thee but Thou hast told me that I must live *for* Thee, and in thus living for Thee our consciousness turns towards external fields and we seem to go far from Thee.

I know this is not altogether true; but there is a resistance still in the being which refuses to yield, there is a door which remains closed, a certain door of luminous intelligence which no effort has been able till now to open, and this terribly impoverishes Thy manifestation.

When wilt Thou decide that the hour has come for all this resistance to disappear?

Monstrous forces have swooped down upon the earth like a hurricane, forces dark and violent and powerful and blind. Give us strength, O Lord, to illumine them. Thy splendour must break out everywhere in them and transfigure their action: their devastating passage must leave behind it a divine sowing. . . .

O my divine Master, do not reject my offering. Make me worthy to be wholly Thine in the plenitude of the giving and the fullness of the manifestation.

THE MOTHER

(*Prayers and Meditations*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 219)



A CONVERSATION OF 28 AUGUST 1968

It was interesting, my child. I have kept all these notes. We will go through them. It is not finished. It is not finished and I do not know when it will be finished.

Have you news?

No, Mother. I had seen something before 15th August, one night, about 11th August. I saw an enormous, fantastic wave of white foam, a wave taller than a house, fantastic; and driven by this wave a huge boat, all black, which seemed to roll upon the rocks, but not get crushed: it was pushed by this wave. There was another, much smaller, of light grey colour it seemed to me, but going at a still greater speed. And this fantastic wave of white foam. . . .

Many things are astir over there. . . . You know the happenings in Czechoslovakia?

It is on the move.

A black boat?

Yes, a huge boat. And curiously, one had the feeling that it was rolling upon the rocks (also black), without being crushed however.

I am sure the movement has started. . . . How long will it take to come to a concrete, visible and organised realisation? I don't know.

Something has started. . . . It seems it must be the onrush of the new species, the new creation, or a new creation in any case.

A terrestrial reorganisation and a new creation.

For me things became very acute. . . . It was impossible for me to utter a word, a single word: as soon as I began to talk, I started coughing, coughing, coughing. Then I saw it was decided that I should not speak. And I remained in that way and I let the curve develop itself. Afterwards I understood. We are not at the end, but . . . (how to say it?) we are on the other side.

There was a moment when things were so acute. . . . Usually I do not lose patience, but it had reached a point where everything, everything in the being was as though annulled. Not only could I not speak, but the head was in a state in which it had never been in the whole of my life: painful, indeed. I did not see at all, I did not hear at all. Then one day (I will tell you my experiences presently), one day things were really . . . it was pain, suffering everywhere; the body said, it said indeed very spontaneously and very strongly: "It is all the same to me if I am dissolved, and I am also quite ready to live, but the state in which I am is impossible, it cannot continue — either to live or to die, but not this." From that moment, it began to be a little

better. Then, little by little things got settled, put in their places.

I took down notes, they are not worth much, but I believe they may be useful. (*Mother looks for the notes on a table near her.*) I still do not see. I do not see, only I know.

The first note is dated 22nd August:

“For several hours, the landscape was marvellous, of a perfect harmony.

“Also, for a long time, visions of the inside of huge temples, of living deities. Each thing had a reason, a precise aim, to express states of consciousness not mentalised.

“Visions constantly.

“Landscapes.

“Buildings.

“Towns.

“Everything vast and greatly varied, covering the entire visual field and translating the states of body consciousness.

“Many, many buildings, huge towns being built . . .”

Yes, the world is being built, the future world is being built. I was no longer hearing, I was no longer seeing, I was no longer speaking: I was living within there, all the while, all the while, all the while, night and day. Then as soon as I was able to note down, I noted down that.

“All sorts of styles of construction, above all new, inexpressible. They are not pictures seen, but places where I happen to be.”

Yes, it is that. I will explain to you what happened. There is another note here which is the beginning:

“The vital and the mental are sent away so that the physical is truly left to its own resources.”

All by itself. All by itself.¹ And it was then that I found out to what extent the vital and the mental make what we see and hear and speak. It was . . . I could see, in the sense that I could move, but it was all very imprecise. Imprecise. I could hear even less than before, that is to say, very little, just a little; sometimes the same as before;

1. A few days later, Mother added: “The vital and the mental have left, but the psychic being has not left at all. It is the intermediaries that have left. For example, the contact with people (the contact with people who are present and even with those who are not here), the relation with them has remained the same, absolutely the same. It is even more constant.”

sometimes just a little sound, very far away, which others could not hear, I heard. And when they spoke to me, I did not hear them: “What do you say?” I do not know. And that continuously, day and night.

One night (it is to tell you that everything was topsy-turvy), but one night I had trouble. Something had happened and I had a pretty severe pain and it was impossible to sleep. I remained concentrated in that condition and the night passed, it seemed to me, in a few minutes. Then at other times, on other days, at other moments, I remained concentrated, and from time to time I asked what time it was. Once it seemed to me that I had remained so for hours and hours, and I asked for the time: five minutes only. . . . So everything seemed to be, I cannot say topsy-turvy, but it was a very different order, very different.

On the 23rd, it was the birthday of X. I had called him and he was seated. All at once, yes, all at once the head began to be active — not the “head”, not “thought” (*Mother shows some kind of currents and waves passing through her*); I do not know how to explain it: it was not a thought, they were a sort of visions, perceptions. And then I put to him some questions and he took them down. (*Mother hands to the disciple a typed note.*) He has noted down only my questions, not his answers.

“Mother said on the afternoon of 23rd August 1968:

“Do they know how Matter was formed?”

It was the physical that put the questions. I do not know, but probably in contact with the atmosphere of X,² the body became interested in knowing how all that was formed. And X was there, I knew he could answer; so I put to him the questions.

“Do they know how Matter was formed?”

“To say that it is condensed energy is merely to push back the question.

“The true question is: How did the Supreme manage to manifest Himself in Matter?”

You see, these subjects that are considered so important, so vast, so noble, so . . . I speak of them in an altogether childlike tone and with quite ordinary words (*Mother laughs*).

“Do they know since when the earth has existed?”

“When you speak of millions and millions of years, what does that mean?”

They had no watches, you understand! It was the body, with the simplicity of a child, which said: “You speak of millions and millions of years; with what have you measured?”

2. X was a scientist.

“Are they sure that what we call one year has always represented the same thing? . . . had, in this period, the consciousness of the unreality of our normal conception of time. Sometimes one minute seemed interminable; at other times, hours, even a whole day passed without seeming to have existed.

“Do they say there was a beginning?”

(Here X explains to Mother the theory according to which the universe passes through successive periods of expansion and contraction, and this theory seems to please Mother.)

Yes, they are the *pralayas*.

“Now it is the body that is putting these questions. The mind has left long ago. But the body, the cells of the body would like to have contact with the true being, without having to pass, so to say, through the vital or even through the mind. That is what is happening.

“During this period I have had two or three times the Knowledge.”

Ah! I have had moments, twice or thrice, absolutely wonderful and unique moments — they are untranslatable, untranslatable.

“But as soon as you are aware of such an experience . . .”

You have the experience and then you become aware of having it; and as soon as you become aware of having it, it gets obscured, something gets obscured.

Yes, it is the whole phenomenon of mental objectification which basically will disappear in the coming species.

Yes, it seems to be like that.

“As soon as you are aware of such an experience, as soon as it is marked in the memory, it is already completely falsified.

“Basically, this is what happens to the scientists. When they have just a bit of knowledge, they must clothe it, dress it up, to make it accessible to human consciousness, understandable to the mind.

(After a silence, Mother puts another question:)

“Do they know since when man came into existence?”

“It will take less time for the superman to appear than it took man to develop, but it is nothing immediate.”

That day, the 23rd, I was still . . . I was still like pulp, my child! So I told myself: to come out of this pulpy state and to become someone effective, someone who exists and acts, well, it will take long. That is what I told him.

But you say also in concluding the note:

“We will have done what we could.”

Yes, I said it to console him!

Well, last night, this is what happened (*Mother hands another note to the disciple, written by herself*).

“Night of the 26th to 27th

“Powerful and prolonged penetration of supramental forces into the body, everywhere at the same time . . .”

Penetration into the body. Yes, penetration of the current, I had had on many occasions, but that night (that is to say, the night before last), it came all of a sudden, as though there was nothing but a supramental atmosphere; there was nothing but that. And my body was within it. That was *pressing* to enter, from everywhere, everywhere, everywhere at the same time — everywhere. So it was not a current that was entering, it was an atmosphere that penetrated from everywhere. That continued for at least four or five hours. And there was only one part that was *hardly* penetrated, it was from here to there (*Mother indicates between the throat and the crown of the head*): there, it had a grey and dull look, as though the current penetrated less there. . . . But apart from that, all the rest, all . . . it entered and entered and entered. . . . I never, never saw anything like *it*, never! It lasted for hours and hours. Altogether consciously.

So, at the time when it came and during the time it was there, I was conscious: “Ah, it is for that, it is for that: it is that, it is that which You want of me, O Lord! It is for that, it is for that, it is that which You want.” At that moment I had the feeling that *something* was about to happen.

I hoped for its return this night, but nothing came about.

It was the first time. For hours. There was nothing else but That. And this (*Mother’s body*), it was like an absorbing sponge.

Only the head, it is still grey, dull — grey and dull. But then, all the same, a very clear vision of whatever has happened to the body during these few months, and . . . almost a hope. Almost a hope, it is as though someone told me that something could happen here. That’s all.

And this, it was as though an answer to what the body had said (perhaps two or three days back), what I told you in the beginning: that it was quite ready to

get dissolved (it is a perfect surrender) and it was quite ready to continue to live, under any circumstances whatever, but not in that condition. Not in that condition of decomposition. To that, however, there was no answer for two days, and then there came this Penetration. That is to say, the very next day I began to feel a little better, I could begin to . . . I could not even remain standing! I did not have the sense of balance; someone had to hold me. I had lost the sense of balance, I could not take a step. It was there that I protested. And from the next morning it began to recover.

Then came the 23rd. I saw X and I noticed that when he was there the body was quite interested; no, it was not the mental or the vital: they had left! I do not know if you are able to realise what that means.

Yes, it is fantastic.

A body without the mind, without the vital. It was in that condition when X came in. There were only these perceptions (towns, buildings, temples), it lived in soul states: there were the soul states of others, the soul states of the earth, the soul states . . . Soul states that were translated by images. It was interesting. I cannot say it was not interesting; it was interesting, but there was no contact with material life, very little: I could hardly eat, hardly walk . . . in short, it was something with which one had to busy oneself.

And then, at the contact of X, the body began to be interested in all that, to put questions quite spontaneously, it did not know why. It asked and asked: "Well, it is in that way that one is made . . ." So it began to amuse itself.

It will take a little time.

When this Penetration came, the day before yesterday, I said to myself: "Ah!" I hoped that the curve would get accelerated and one would come out soon, but this night there was nothing. That makes me say that it will take some time more.

But it is curious, your note of the 26th to the 27th adds this:

"... as though the whole body bathed in the forces that penetrated everywhere at the same time with a slight friction."

And then you say:

"The head down to the neck was the least receptive region."

It is curious that it was the least receptive.

No, it is the most mentalised region, isn't it? It is the mind that offers the obstacle.

It is curious, each time you had one of these great moments, or these big blows, if I may say so, each time it was the mental and the vital that were swept away. The first time also, in 1962.

Yes, each time.

I know, it is so: the mental and the vital have been the instruments for . . . grinding Matter — to grind and grind and grind in every way, the vital by its sensations, the mind by its thoughts — to grind and grind. But they seem to me to be passing instruments that will be replaced by other states of consciousness.

You understand, it is a phase of universal development, and they will be . . . they will fall away as instruments no longer useful.

And then I have had the concrete experience of what is this Matter ground by the vital and the mental, but *without* the vital and *without* the mental . . . it is another thing.

But this “perception of soul states”, there were things . . . marvels! No mental conception, *none*, can be so wonderful, none. I have passed through moments . . . whatever one can feel, see, humanly, is *nothing* in comparison with that. There were moments . . . moments absolutely wonderful. But without thought, without thought.

There are still several notes there which I have not read out to you. You say:

“For man, in the majority of cases, consciousness begins with sensation. For the body, all the sensations were as if reduced, or rather suppressed: sight and hearing as if behind a veil. But extremely clear perception of the degree of harmony or disharmony. A translation in image: not thought, not even felt.”

I told you, I have seen . . . it is not “seen” as a picture is seen; it is to *be within*, within a certain place. I never saw or felt anything so beautiful as that, and it was not felt, it was . . . I do not know how to explain it. There were moments absolutely wonderful, wonderful, unique. And this was not thought, I could not even describe — how to describe? You can begin to describe only when you begin to think.

There is yet another note:

“The state of consciousness of the body and the quality of its activity depend on the individual or individuals with whom it happens to be.”

Ah! That was very interesting. It was very interesting because I saw it like this (*gesture as of a film being unrolled*), it was changing. Someone was approaching me: there was a change in it. Something happened to someone: there was a change in it. I had near me Y and Z; my child, one day . . . I do not know what happened to

them: they were superhuman; one day when probably in appearance I was in danger, I do not know, one day, during the whole day, images (not “images”: these places where I was), it was so wonderfully beautiful, harmonious . . . it was inexpressible, inexpressible. And then, the least thing that changed in their consciousness, ah, there, all began to change! It was a kind of perpetual kaleidoscope, day and night. If one could note that down . . . it was unique; it was unique. And the body was inside there, yes, almost porous — porous, without resistance as though the thing was passing through.

I have had some most wonderful hours, I believe the most wonderful that one can have upon earth.

And then, it was so expressive and so revealing. So expressive. One night, for two hours, these temples of which I speak (it is not physical), so immense, so majestic . . . the *living* deities, my child! not images. And I know what it is. And then the state of consciousness of Eternity, oh! . . . as though above all circumstances.

There were things *unique*, but how to relate them? . . . Impossible, impossible, not even sufficient consciousness to be able to write.

The note continues:

“The seat and the field of its [the body’s] consciousness as well as the quality of its activity change and vary according to the beings present, on a whole scale from the most material up to the most spiritual, passing through all varieties of intellectual activity.

“But the perception of the Presence is constant and associated with all states of consciousness, whatever they are . . .”

Ah! I became aware that the cells, everywhere like this, all the time, all the time were repeating their Mantra, all the time, all the time.

“And the Mantra is repeated spontaneously and automatically in a kind of ‘fluid’ peace.”

It is for this, well, one cannot say that it was suffering, one cannot say that it was ill; this is not possible, not possible.

THE MOTHER

(Notes on the Way, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 11, pp. 116-27)

CHANGING THE POSSIBILITIES

If you see some catastrophe coming, can you, Mother, by your effort change it?

That depends upon the nature of the event. There are many things. . . . That depends also upon the level from which one sees. There is a plane where there are all the possibilities, and on that level, as there are all the possibilities, there is the possibility also of changing these possibilities. If a catastrophe is foreseen in that plane, one can have the power of preventing it also. In other cases, even though one is forewarned, one has no action upon the event. And yet there, it depends on the level from where one sees.

A case of this kind was reported to me once where the very seeing of a thing prevented it from happening. An American gentleman had arrived at one of those big American hotels where there are lifts (you do not go down a staircase, you take a lift to go up or come down); now, early in the morning just before getting up, he had a dream which he remembered well: he had seen a boy dressed as a lift-boy and making the same movement a lift-boy makes directing you to get in. He was there. And then, at the end of the movement, instead of a lift, there was a hearse! — that is to say, that kind of carriage . . . oh! you must have seen some here now and then, to carry the dead to the cemetery; when they are not burnt, they are carried on a bier with black draperies, etc. So there was such a carriage, a hearse for carrying the dead. And the boy was signing to him to get into the carriage. When he came out of his room, the boy was there with the lift to take him down: exactly the same boy, the same face, the same dress, the same gesture. He remembered the hearse — he did not get into the lift. He said: “No, no!” and he walked down. And before he reached the ground floor, he heard a terrible noise and the lift had crashed down to the ground and all who were in it were killed. It was because of the dream that he had not got in, for he had understood.

Therefore in such a case when you have the vision, you can avert the catastrophe.

There are other cases, as I said, when you are simply forewarned. You are forewarned. In reality, it is to help you to prepare within for what must come, so that you may take the right inner attitude to face the event. It is like a lesson telling you: “This is what it must teach you.” You cannot change the thing, but you can change your attitude and your inner reaction. Instead of having a bad reaction, a wrong attitude towards the experience that occurs, you have a good reaction, a good attitude, and you derive as much benefit as possible out of what has happened.

In either case, it depends absolutely on the plane on which you see. When you have control over your nights and are conscious of your sleep and your dreams or of your visions, you also see the difference between the two; you can distinguish the

difference: what is given to you as a warning so that you may intervene and what is given to you as an intimation so that you may take the right attitude towards what is going to happen. It is always a lesson, but it is not always the same lesson. At times you can act with your will; at times you must learn the inner lesson which the incident is about to give you so that you may be ready for the event to have a fully favourable consequence. The same thing holds for everything that you see, there are hundreds of different varieties of visions and dreams and each one brings you the lesson it has to bring.

For example, when people are taken ill or when they are caught in an accident. Well, whether I see it myself or come to know of it from outside through someone's telling me about it — in every case it is not the same. There are cases when I am informed and I see that it is for intervening and I have the full power to change the consequence, that is, to cure the sick person. There are cases where I see I am not to intervene. For instance, it is time for the person to leave his body: he will leave the body. But knowing this, I must do for the person and for those around him what has to be done for the event to have the maximum beneficial effect or the minimum adverse effect — it depends on the circumstances.

There are events appertaining to a universal necessity and those one cannot change. There are events still in the balance which can be decided either way. The whole thing is to have a perception that's not only clear-sighted but also quite impartial and impersonal, without even the shadow of a shadow of preference. Then, when one is in that perfect state — it can't be said, of neutrality, it is not neutrality: it is a state of consciousness which is immobile like a mirror — then one can see within it the quality of the thing that's happening, one can see the things that have been decided so that they cannot be altered and those that are still in the balance and can be changed.

To tell the truth, for each event the situation is different. There are some that can be changed completely, reversed altogether; there are some that are capable of undergoing quite a considerable change; there are others that can suffer only a slight modification — a slight modification but one that has a considerable consequence; and there are some that are inevitable; they are so because they are so; if you tried to oppose, you would break your head against a wall and that would serve no purpose. The whole thing is to have this perspicacity, know to which domain the event belongs and not will any other thing than what *must be*.

I could give hundreds of instances of different cases.

A thing seems to have been completely determined: it is *going* to be so. But you have within you a will that surges up, a flame that is kindled, a great aspiration that is in harmony with a higher Will and you force it upon the event. And then a kind of combination takes place: what had to happen will happen, but along with something else which comes at the same time and changes the nature of the former. For events of importance to the earth, this happens very often. For example, when

an entire set of movements, circumstances, combinations of forces bring about an absolute necessity of war, one can, by calling in another force, change the extent and the consequences, and sometimes even the nature of the war, but one is not able to avert it. I could give you examples of this kind, of a very general nature.

I told you the other day with regard to the “spirit” of death, what can be done, through an inner action, to prevent Death from coming to someone’s house; but then it goes to another’s. You cannot deprive Death of what is its due. I have explained this to you. There are other cases where one might say in a somewhat childish way: “Death was not yet informed”, and so you can take away from it its booty without any consequences. But that does not always happen. There are cases when one does that. But put in this way it sounds childish like a fairy tale. Yet, it corresponds to something in the setting of the circumstances: it depends on the way the circumstances move.

What I would like to bring home to you is that the problem is extremely complicated and subtle, and that at times the direction of the movement can be altered a little; at other times, the movement can be reversed; and at still others just the consequences and the inner attitude with regard to the movement alone can be changed. And naturally men see all these things in a too simplified way and translate all this by their prayer to God: they say, in one case, “God has given me what I asked from him”, in another case, “He has refused me.” And so, that’s that. That is how they understand and it is sheer stupidity. To know how it happens, you must have a general, collective consciousness, at least as wide as the earth. That is the minimum. To understand truly one must have a universal consciousness. Then you can understand. For, I have said it somewhere in what I was reading today; I have said that all things are interdependent and there is neither any “beginning” nor any “end”. Where do you put the beginning?¹ . . . To understand that, you have to go beyond the earth-bound consciousness, you have to enter a universal consciousness. Then you will be able to understand.

But we are compelled — I am repeating what I said at the beginning — we are compelled to say things one after another. We say: “When the universe began . . . When the creation began . . . it begins in that way. . . . This happened and then that happened and then this took place and then that took place. . . .” We say one thing after another, and to say the truth, it is not really like that at all! From a certain point of view, it is foolishness, but we cannot do otherwise. I cannot say all the words at the same time. So it is the state of our consciousness and the means at our disposal for expressing ourselves which make us say things that are stupid from the point of view of the absolute knowledge. But it is an approximation. Our stupidity is an approximation and becomes less stupid when we become aware that it happens only because we cannot express ourselves otherwise. We are obliged to say things in succession, but they are a single whole.

1. See *Questions and Answers 1929-1931*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 3, p. 58.

And for most people it is not merely a question of saying but of knowing. They know things only one after another, feel them still more thus, live them yet more so. But there is a consciousness in which one knows all at the same time, understands all at the same time, can express all at the same time and can live wholly at the same time. But how to do it? Here it is not like that!

And so, you see, what one tries to do is to bring the two modes of consciousness as near each other as one is able to, so that even while living externally in the way we are compelled to do (because the physical world is like that and our physical consciousness is like that), we may be able at the same time to join the other Consciousness so closely that while doing things according to the material law and in the material way, in our consciousness we may not lose sight of the fact that it is only an approximation, a translation, and that it is not the Thing itself.

29 July 1953

THE MOTHER

(*Questions and Answers 1953*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 5, pp. 188-93)



“NO MORTAL BREATH” —

Sri Aurobindo —

This poem is not, like that day's, addressed to a soulless perfection of the body. It is about some great and beautiful soul, awake to its own divine nature but not fully self-realised: there is a thin veil not perhaps so much across its self-knowledge even, as between that knowledge and an assured feeling that it can manifest the supreme Force.

TO - - -

No mortal breath you bring: a¹ love divine
 || Makes your whole countenance a silver call
 || To meet an unviewed vast of spirit-hush.
 For² in the mystic vault your home is hung:
 We turn our faces to your planet soul
 || And all infinity weighs upon our eye
 || A³ plumbless sleep. O light unwithering,
 O far bloom mirrored in a lake of earth,
 | Remember that your roots suck the pure sky!
 { narrow and crowding curves of life⁴
 | Dream not the {brief and narrow curves of clay
 Limit your destiny of pristine power —
 A throne amid ecstatic thrones that rule
 A
 || Some⁵ loneliness of superhuman night.

Please give a full estimate of the lines, judging how the blank-verse expression, rhythm and structure have been managed, explaining what plane the lines come from and marking those that especially appeal to you.

1. “a” is rather weak here and there is besides “a” in the same place in the next line introducing a similar movement.
2. What a pity it is not “far” instead of “for” — I would then have been able to extend the straight line of admiration uninterruptedly up to “sleep”.
3. Couldn’t “a” be “its”?

4. If this form is preferred, should that “and” be omitted? I thought a glide-anapaest would be a good variation of rhythm?

I prefer the other form.

5. Is “Some” better than “A”?

Not at all — it spoils the line. “A” by all means.

Very fine all through both in language and rhythm — the last part, except for the closing line, is not so near the absolute as the first half, but all the same it is very fine and powerful. The blank verse is very good, each line has sufficient power to stand by itself, yet all combine together to make a linked whole. The basis is the higher mind; in the first half many of the lines are strongly illumined with a strong influence of the overmind intuition. In the latter half the same with a slighter illumination. Last line again the uplifting overmind intuition influence.

28 March 1937

*

Sri Aurobindo —

Thanks very much for your detailed consideration. Some points below apropos of it.

1) What is the second [thirteenth] word in l. 4 of your comment? Is it “basis”?

Yes.

2) In the phrase — “many of the lines are strongly illumined with a strong influence of the overmind intuition” — shouldn’t one “strong” be changed to something else?

Yes. The strongly should be left out and “illumined” should be followed by “and there is even a strong influence”.

3) The penultimate line of your comment has: “In the latter half the same with a slighter illumination.” What does that “same” mean? Not surely that, as in the first half, there is in many lines a strong influence of the Overmind intuition but only with less touch of the illumined mind; for then the final phrase of the comment would not run: “Last line again the uplifting overmind intuition influence.” Or perhaps you mean that the influence is there but not

in an “uplifting” way — i.e. the lines are not lifted from the higher mind to the illumination. However, I personally don’t see much Overmind intuition of even a non-uplifting kind in “Remember that your roots suck the pure sky” or “Dream not the brief and narrow curves of clay”. My first impression was that “same” referred to “many lines” and nothing more, but with reference to the construction of the sentence where the “many lines” occurs the grammar here seems doubtful if that is the sense intended.

The same means there is a basis of the higher mind with illumined lines but the illumination is slight. By “uplifting” I do mean that the overmind influence lifts to the illumination, the illumination is already there in the higher mind basis, but the influence lifts towards itself, its own O I plane. In the second half that influence comes only in the last line.

4) Surely “Its” can replace “A” in “A plumbless sleep” in l. 7 of my poem. The sense becomes more direct and deep; besides the two lines of the conclusion have each an “A” at the beginning and a variation is rather welcome here. Only, I hope it does not make a slightly awkward rhythm, coming after “eye”.

I don’t find any awkwardness.

5) Your suggestion that l. 4 should open with “Far” instead of “For” is excellent. It necessitates, however, a modification of l. 8. as “far” happens to be there. What about “O star-bloom”?

Very good indeed.

6) If “a” is weak in l. 1, one of four or five things can be done. The line may read —

*{offer
No mortal breath you {carry: love divine*

or a phrase like “rapture divine”, “divine desire”, “divine delight” may be introduced, with the line otherwise intact or recast thus: “You bring no mortal breath”. If “delight” is chosen, will it be necessary to write in l. 7: “O fire”, “O love” or “O joy” instead of “O light”? Please indicate clearly what you wish me to do.

I don’t know that any of these are very convincing; the first alternative.

7) If “Far” comes in place of “For” in l. 4, would you run uninterruptedly a double mark of admiration down to “sleep”?

Yes.

And what does such a mark mean as distinguished from a single one?

Well obviously it means doubly fine, — the single mark lines rise above the others, but these rise to a double height.

[At the bottom of the sheet:]

Your answer to my 6th point leaves me vague. What is the “first alternative” you mean? Is it “offer” or “carry”?

A new version occurs to me: “No mortal breath you bring us: love divine”.

I meant “offer” but your new version supersedes it.

This is [by] far the best — in fact, I was trying to put it into your head — glad it got in.

29 March 1937

*

[Revised version of the poem with revised comment]

NO MORTAL BREATH

No mortal breath you bring us: love divine
 || Makes your whole countenance a silver call
 To meet an unviewed vast of spirit-hush.
 Far in the mystic vault your home is hung:
 We turn our faces to your planet soul
 And all infinity weighs upon our eye
 || Its plumbless sleep. O light unwithering,
 O star-bloom mirrored in a lake of earth,
 | Remember that your roots suck the pure sky!
 | Dream not the brief and narrow curves of clay
 Limit your destiny of pristine power —
 A throne amid ecstatic thrones that rule
 || A loneliness of superhuman night.

Very fine all through both in language and rhythm — the last part, except for the closing line, is not so near the absolute as the first half, but all the same it is very fine and powerful. The blank verse is very good, each line has sufficient power to stand by itself, yet all combine together to make a linked whole. The basis is the higher mind; in the first half many of the lines are illumined and there is even a strong influence of the overmind intuition. In the latter half the same with a slighter illumination. Last line again the uplifting overmind intuition influence.

29 April 1937

Sri Aurobindo —

What precisely is meant when we say that poems exist already on the higher planes and have only to be transmitted here by the human consciousness? If the parts of a poem hail from quite different planes, where exactly does the whole exist? Are there poetic fragments floating about which cohere only in the mind of the man who catches them? And have these fragments a form already of language or do they become expressed by us alone? Are all the innumerable languages of earth spoken in the higher planes or do the latter possess merely modes or states of consciousness?

A poem may pre-exist in the timeless as all creation pre-exists there or else in some plane where the past, present and future exist together. But it is not necessary to presuppose anything of the kind to explain the phenomena of inspiration. All is here a matter of formation or creation. By the contact with the source of inspiration the creative Power at one level or another and the human instrument, receptacle or channel get into contact. That is the essential point, all the rest depends upon the individual case. If the substance, rhythm, form, words come down all together ready-formed from the plane of poetic creation, that is the perfect type of inspiration; it may give its own spontaneous gift or it may give something which corresponds to the idea or the aspiration of the poet, but in either case the human being is only a channel or receptacle, although he feels the joy of the creation and the joy of the *āveśa*, *enthousiasmos*, elation of the inrush and the passage. On the other hand it may be that the creative source sends down the substance or stuff, the force and the idea, but the language, rhythm etc. are formed somewhere in the instrument; he has to find the human transcription of something that is there in diviner essence above; then there is an illumination or excitement, a conscious labour of creation swift or slow, hampered or facile. Something of the language may be supplied by the mind or vital, something may break through from somewhere behind the veil, from whatever source gets into touch with the transcribing mind in the liberating or stimulating excitement or uplifting of the consciousness. Or a line or lines may come through from some plane

and the poet excited to creation may build around them constructing his material or getting it from any source he can tap. There are many possibilities of this nature. There is also the possibility of an inspiration not from above, but from somewhere within on the ordinary levels, some inner mind, emotional vital etc. which the mind practised in poetical technique works out according to its habitual faculty. Here again in a different way similar phenomena, similar variations may arise.

As for the language, the tongue in which the poem comes or the whole lines from above, that offers no real difficulty. It all depends on the contact between the creative Power and the instrument or channel, the Power will naturally choose the language of the instrument or channel, that to which it is accustomed and can therefore readily hear and receive. The Power itself is not limited and can use any language, but although it is possible for things to come through in a language unknown or ill-known — I have seen several instances of the former — it is not a usual case, since the *saṁskāra* of the mind, its habits of action and conception would normally obstruct any such unprepared receptiveness; only a strong mediumistic faculty might be unaffected by this difficulty. These things however are obviously exceptional, abnormal or supernormal phenomena.

If the parts of a poem come from different planes, it is because one starts from some high plane but the connecting consciousness cannot receive uninterruptedly from there and as soon as it flickers or wavers it comes down to a lower, perhaps without noticing it, or the lower comes in to supply the continuation of the flow or on the contrary the consciousness starts from a lower plane and is lifted in the *āveśa*, perhaps occasionally perhaps more continuously higher for a time or else the higher force attracted by the creative will breaks through or touches or catches up the less exalted inspiration towards or into itself. I am speaking here especially of the overhead planes where this is quite natural; for the Overmind for instance is the ultimate source of intuition, illumination or heightened power of the planes immediately below it. It can lift them up into its own greater intensity or give out of its intensity to them or touch or combine their powers together with something of its own greater power — or they can receive or draw something from it or from each other. On the lower planes beginning from the mental downwards there can also be such variations or combinations, but the working is not the same, for the different powers here stand more on a footing of equality whether they stand apart from each other, each working in its own right, or cooperate.

29 April 1937

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

HYMN TO INDIA

India, my India, where first human eyes awoke to heavenly light,
All Asia's holy place of pilgrimage, great Motherland of might!
World-mother, first giver to humankind of philosophy and sacred lore,
Knowledge thou gav'st to man, God-love, works, art, religion's opened door.

India, my India, who dare call thee a thing for pity's grace today?
Mother of wisdom, worship, works, nurse of the spirit's inward ray!

To thy race, O India, God himself once sang the Song of Songs divine,
Upon thy dust Gouranga danced and drank God-love's mysterious wine,
Here the Sannyasin Son of Kings lit up compassion's deathless sun,
The youthful Yogin, Shankar, taught thy gospel: "I and He are one."

India, my India, who dare call thee a thing for pity's grace today?
Mother of wisdom, worship, works, nurse of the spirit's inward ray!

Art thou not she, that India, where the Aryan Rishis chanted high
The Veda's deep and dateless hymns and are we not their progeny?
Armed with that great tradition we shall walk the earth with heads unbowed:
O Mother, those who bear that glorious past may well be brave and proud.

India, my India, who dare call thee a thing for pity's grace today?
Mother of wisdom, worship, works, nurse of the spirit's inward ray!

O even with all that grandeur dwarfed or turned to bitter loss and maim,
How shall we mourn who are thy children and can vaunt thy mighty name?
Before us still there floats the ideal of those splendid days of gold:
A new world in our vision wakes, Love's India we shall rise to mould.

India, my India, who dare call thee a thing for pity's grace today?
Mother of wisdom, worship, works, nurse of the spirit's inward ray!

DWIJENDRALAL ROY

Translated by Sri Aurobindo from the original Bengali

(Translations, CWSA, Vol. 5, pp. 553-54)

SAHANA'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO — VII

(Continued from the issue of March 2023)

Gracious Mother, surely I will take rest as long as you want me to do so. I am feeling really sorry to think that as it is you have so much work to do and I increase your work because of mere negligence and carelessness on my part. In this way I help to prolong my own physical suffering instead of allowing myself to be cured soon. Anyhow from now on I shall remain very quiet without doing any work. So from now kindly let me know frankly if you have any objections to anything.

After an illness like the one you had, the body remains very sensitive especially where it has been touched in the illness and one should be very careful for some time afterwards. This weather is very bad for these things and it is easy to catch a chill in it. I don't think there is any other cure; it is a physical struggle which is going on and of which all this illness is the result. These were the reasons for which we were urging you to be careful for some time. (21.1.34)

*

Mother mine, I know it is my weakness and carelessness and laziness too to make a constant effort for rejection, I haven't enough will to undergo the discipline of constant effort and it is because I wanted to give up all these small habitual things that all these old things have come in my way; anyhow, I don't want to deceive myself in any way. If I am unable to see anything hidden behind this movement of self-deception, pray make me conscious.

The vital in the physical easily slips back to its old small habits if it gets a chance. It is there that they stick. They go entirely only when that part gets equanimity and a simple natural freedom from all desires. (22.3.34)

*

Mother Divine, I am physically all right by your grace today; only, I am not feeling so cheerful. I am not doing properly the things which I ought to do. I am neither sincere nor serious about the sadhana etc. etc.

Whatever you see, don't get disturbed or depressed. If one sees a defect one must look at it with the utmost quietude and call down more force and light to get rid of it. (3.4.34)

*

Sri Aurobindo, out of the two methods which is better: either to go on writing poems till one comes in contact with the original source of inspiration or to concentrate first till one gets the contact? It seems to me (if I have understood aright) the Mother approved of the second method when I had asked her. But my concentration leads me to deep meditation; and I meditate not only when I concentrate — the result is that whenever I sit with closed eyes I fall into meditation. However, whatever the means, the point is the opening. And so long as it doesn't happen I can take up your poems and try to translate them as an exercise. What do you say? I would then live in your atmosphere. Until the inspiration comes down, I can go on with concentration as well as the translation of your poems. Please give me your frank opinion.

Dhyana is perhaps the best way — for if you can get into the consciousness which makes all poetry which proceeds from it original, that is the best, even if it means postponement of the actual writing of poetry. The habit of writing no doubt increases the skill and mastery of verse, but then it might only be verse such as all good littérateurs can write. A higher inspiration is necessary. As for translation I don't know — if one has the translator's gift like Dilip or Nishikanta, then it is all right — but otherwise translation is more difficult than original writing.

Sri Aurobindo, one question: it is about poetical expression. Our poet has written in one of his songs, "What a numerous crowd of water-maids are playing Holi with diamond powder in the sea!" Is such a combination permissible? For, "diamond" indicates a bright whitish something while "powder" here indicates red, for the Holi is played with a red powder and gives a different impression. "Diamond", which means sparkling white cannot possibly qualify something which is red: it is contrary to fact. Are we then to understand that even something inconsistent and having no resemblance to reality can be poetically used? When the sun rises or sets, poets usually describe it as "The disc of red powder" or, during the sunset when the entire sky is red and red, the poets say, "The body of the sky is sprinkled all over with red powder." Such images have no incongruity and the impression is just. The truth of reality takes its proper form there. The red being called powder doesn't destroy the impression, since the powder is red. Nevertheless, I don't know what is permissible in poetry and what is not. So I would like to know, learn and understand.

It depends on what the poet wants to say. The scattering of red powder or liquid is the outward traditional sign of the Holi and when the poets so describe the sunrise, that is the image they want to bring out. But the poet may want to express something else, something which has the force and reckless play of the holi, the spirit of that play but it need not be in the exact outward form — from this point of view there may be a Holi-play in which what is scattered is not red colour but a spray of diamond hue. A poet is not bound always by the physical outward fact, he can play variations on things, provided he expresses some essential truth of them in his image. (14.4.34)

*

Sri Aurobindo, the editor Lilabati Nag of Jayasri is constantly writing to me for some articles. Once I sent with your permission a poem, after which I heard that the Mother and yourself had forbidden it. As I haven't sent any reply, she goes on writing, and will even give some remuneration, she says. Not to take notice of her letters would amount to rudeness, I think. Is there any harm in just replying to her letter? The paper seems to be supported by many literary figures and national leaders. So it may not matter much if I don't contribute. Would you like to have a look at the paper? Jyoti and I would like however to know what you want us to do.

I told Jyotirmoyi she could reply and then gradually allow the correspondence to drop, you can do the same (without giving any reason for the dropping off). The public men in India are not circumstanced like the Asram. For us also if it were a personal matter it would not matter. But if a report goes from the British or French police that the Asram is associated with revolutionaries in Bengal or with a paper run by a Terrorist, that will be a note against us in the record (which is at present quite clear) and any future Governor or party in power here, if hostile to us, may use it in a report or complaint to the ministry in Paris. In that case any such Governor or party would be able on that ground alone to dissolve the Asram by a stroke of the pen — the Governor is all powerful and can do such things by a single order of decree. It is no use running the Asram and the work into danger for a trivial reason which has nothing to do with our work. That is why the Mother is so careful not to give any ground for hostile representations and that is why she wants no connection of this kind between the people in the Asram and suspects there.

Mother, the songs I am singing for gramophone recording are not turning out at all well. My throat is also bad. Besides, those who have come for recording believe that the old songs I used to sing before in Calcutta would have been better. I told them "That won't do, I feel no inspiration for singing such songs." I don't regret the songs being unsuccessful, but since they have come from a

great distance and have spent so much for it I would be happy if they didn't incur any loss on my account.

If the condition of your voice had been brought to our attention in time, we would have tried to set it right before these people came. Even as it is, if you can shake off the nervous hesitation and get the impulse from within, the voice may come back suddenly and maintain itself long enough for the purpose of the records. Afterwards with rest and the necessary improvement of the condition of the throat, it can permanently recover.

*

(Note: The following letter of Sri Aurobindo is apropos of my wanting to return some money sent by a distant relative.)

It is hardly possible to return the money once it has been sent, in view of your past relation with him; but you can consider it as an advance on any money that may fall due to you after the expenses of the book have been met. Your mistake was to say that you were in need of money — his sending is a natural result; but once sent, if you send it back, it will be throwing back his gift in his face — which cannot very well be done.

In connection with some particular matter, a lower trait of my nature has been very rudely exposed to my view and I am filled with shame and disgust to see that even now such possessive instincts are lurking in me. What a shame, what a repulsion! It had hidden itself so cleverly that I could not detect it at all. Dear Mother, I want not detachment alone, but wideness as well. Do cleanse my entire being. I can't bear to see these ugly figures of the lower nature any longer.

In a certain sense it is good that it has risen and you have seen clearly and got disgusted with it. Only give no justification, support it in no way, be resolute to finish with it altogether. You will get all the help we can give you.

I seem to be engrossed in writing. Is it all right? Have I understood your views exactly regarding the novel I want to write? There must be somewhere something amiss, otherwise why this unease? If so, I shall give up the writing. I was hurrying up with the work with the thought that I would be able to offer you the book on my birthday if it could be finished in time.

Mother does not disapprove of your writing a book — what she does not like is your being so lost in it that you can do nothing else. You must be master of what you do and not possessed by it. She quite agrees to your finishing and offering the book on your birthday if that can be done. But you must not be carried away — you must keep your full contact with higher things. (3.5.34)

*

What you have written about writing is clear to me, but I don't know how to carry it out. As soon as I sit to write I am lost in it. Suppose I stop writing for two days; the thoughts still go on spinning in the brain. How to stop them, regulate them, harmonise them? If the mind is preoccupied with these thoughts, then what good accrues from it? So it may be better to suspend the writing for the time being; I didn't want my sadhana to be jeopardised at any cost. You have done well by sending a note of warning, otherwise I would have thought that other writers too suffer in this way.

If you cannot get rid of the ideas it may be best to finish off the thing. (3.5.34)

*

I observe that I have a softness towards my own writing, which does not seem good to me. So I decided to give it up. Why should there be such a strong attachment? One day perhaps the book will be finished or it may not. What does it matter? I haven't come here for writing. So today I feel light. It is up to you to say if I am right or wrong.

I think you are right. There should be no attachment to the work — if it is to be done it will be done hereafter as well as now. (4.5.34)

*

For the last few days, I have been passing through a dryness. A dissatisfaction has shown itself regarding my aspiration. If the aspiration does come, it is in a very small dose. At times, my mind says that even if I don't realise you in this life, it is no small thing to be able to pass this life under your shelter at your feet with your blessings. It is not a sign of aspiration, I know; but it is better than allowing the mind to run into a worse condition. But there is no satisfaction in it; on the contrary a discontent. And no sign of detachment either; perhaps I don't want it sincerely.

Thoughts like these should never be accepted — they come to lower the condition or keep it lowered. When there is a cessation, dryness or other difficulty as understood, then something has come up which has to be changed, remain quiet and call down the Force to change it. (12.5.34)

*

Instead of gathering myself, I am dissipating myself all the while. If I could cut off all connection with others inwardly, or feel myself all alone, perhaps then I could do sincerely what I have come for. My mind tries always to plunge itself in petty things.

You must gather yourself within more firmly. If you disperse yourself constantly, go out of the inner circle, you will constantly move about in the pettinesses of the ordinary outer nature and under the influences to which it is open. Learn to live within, to act always from within, from a constant communication with the Mother. It may be difficult at first to do it always and completely, but it can be done if one sticks to it — and it is at this price, by learning to do that, that one can have the siddhi in Yoga. (5.6.34)

*

Another thing I notice is that my family-feeling has become uppermost in my consciousness. I quite understand that it has to go. I see that at first something crops up from within, then I become conscious of it, then follows the resolution, but to carry it out needs time. This is the habitual trend in many other things. In this matter it is clear that I have to give it up now. There is will and determination. But they are not put in action. Perhaps some time has to be given as in other cases. Am I right?

The habitual movement in the consciousness which persists or revives from time to time has to lose its hold and disappear. (6.6.34)

*

I am not allowing myself to be overjoyed at what is going on within, for I have seen that if I do so the good movements get lost in the outer expressions. I am trying to effect a control over them so that they may get a chance to grow instead of being spent in outward-going movements.

Yes, that is the best. If one can establish a basis of unalterable peace and equality — that is always the best foundation for spiritual progress. (19.5.34)

*

I am getting more and more conscious, by your compassion, of the source of the desire to criticise or find fault with others or speak ill of them, what forces act behind these tendencies and why one indulges in them. Mother, there are so many sides to see and your light is bringing them out!

It is the petty ego in each that likes to discover and talk about the (real or unreal) defects of others — and it does not matter whether they are real or unreal, the ego has no right to judge them, because it has not the right view or the right spirit. It is only the calm disinterested dispassionate all-compassionate and all-loving Spirit that can judge and see rightly the strength and weakness in each being. (12.6.34)

*

I am trying to turn my mind inward. The effort is sometimes enjoyable, sometimes dry. This creates a sort of tension. At times, the effort becomes very difficult, at others quite easy. Today I noticed with surprise that a deep devotion was welling up towards you and the feeling, the perception, is changing everything. What appeared to be dry and difficult was changing to an easy and encouraging matter of joy.

It is by so doing that finally the rejection of these things becomes a habit. And they must be rejected for that is now the field of sadhana and this ground must be cleared for it to progress. (16.7.34)

*

Mother mine, here is the account of last month. You will see that I took ten rupees' advance last month. May I take another ten rupees extra from Amrita, as I have bought some very good cheese for Sri Aurobindo's sandwiches? I have signed my name and not yet paid the money. When I see anything especially good or nice anywhere I feel like buying it then and there for you and can't remember about the money question. Though you have given me permission, can I go on like this? I feel I am too extravagant perhaps. What I have taken in advance I have kept back. May I take extra this time as I don't think I shall be able to deduct the sum any more.

This is only a business letter.

It is as you like. But why spend like that? You should make a rule not to exceed the means you have — so that you will train yourself to control the habit of too easy spending. (1.9.34)

*

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo, I don't know what to write today! I am so moved, flooded with deep gratitude for what you have granted me! Why on earth do all these movements come and cover up this beautiful and really genuine feeling? I wish I could keep up this sweet feeling and not trouble you with all these silly things any more.

It is the small habits of the lower vital being which gather all their strength to resist correction and try to occupy the consciousness. When they come you must learn to detach your inner consciousness from them entirely so that even when they strongly come they will not be able to occupy the consciousness or get any assent.

Be sure that all our help will be with you. (6.9.34)

*

Sweet Mother, I have become conscious of another movement now. When I am in a very good condition, that is to say when I feel intensely the upward movement in me, I see also that another movement (of the lower vital) pushes me downward. Formerly I was not conscious of the latter movement, I used to think it was a movement of joy but the other day, after meeting you, I experienced the significance of the flower: "Sweetness of the mind, filled with beautiful thoughts turned exclusively to the Divine." I was absolutely filled with your thought and simply thrilled with an intense joy. While this upward movement was going on so intensely I felt a strong impulse to go to the market to buy cheese for Sri Aurobindo's sandwiches, and in fact I was carried away by this impulse, but as soon as I came back I felt that it was not out of a true movement of joy that I had yielded but from a movement that had pushed towards self-deception by bringing in a reason that seemed highly satisfactory; then the impulse of enjoying oneself in a sort of social way also comes, that is to say: go and chat or eat or drink with someone with whom one has an affinity. Before, I was not conscious of these two movements together, I used to take it as an expression of joy and nothing else. May I know whether I have understood or interpreted the thing correctly? If not, kindly clear my mind.

Yes, it is quite correct. It is this mixture that has always stood in the way. Now that you have seen it, it must be farther separated and thrown away. (13.9.34)

*

Mother, I still have one thing to ask you to know clearly. In our love, I mean in spite of its mixture, is there no true element? Why do I feel so happy to see you? Why does all my being become so happy, so joyous whenever I happen to see or meet you? And why, after coming back from you, is the whole day filled with you alone? Is this vital love?

There is no harm in vital love provided it is purified from all insincerity (as for example self-importance etc.) and from all demand. To feel joy on seeing the Mother is all right, but to demand it as a right or to be upset or in revolt or *abhimān* when it is not given, to be jealous of others who get it — all that is demand and creates an impurity which spoils both the joy and the love. (13.9.34)

*

Beloved Mother, since last Thursday an intense silence and deep peace has descended on me, and it is getting more and more intensified. I am also very careful this time to keep what has descended on me. This silence and peace has given me a turning towards inwardness. In all my work and movements I find I remain in my inner self. Sometimes I feel so strongly like sitting for meditation that I can neither speak nor keep my eyes open; the meditation comes of itself.

It is very good indeed. The peace and silence must settle deep in, so deep that whatever comes from outside can only pass over the surface without troubling the settled calm within. It is good also that the meditation comes of itself — it means the Yoga Force is beginning to take up the *sādhana*. (18.9.34)

*

Mother dear, you are revealing so much to me from within myself! So many things are showing themselves in the consciousness like a cinema! Occasionally, the physical wants to be lazy, unwilling and obstinate — but by your Grace the psychic being will not allow it at any cost; it makes the physical do its will. When such darkness comes like a wave, the part that used to be disturbed gets ready to respond, but the Helper from behind exposes the movement and places it before my consciousness so that I can see that I have already become detached, there is no link with it. “It has come from somewhere, let it pass” — this attitude prevails and I remain completely untouched. I watch all these movements and how I react to them. My feeling towards you gives great joy and satisfaction. All hurry-scurry, all impatience etc. seem to have been drowned in the wideness of peace. But one part is still there which seeks some room to indulge in its vagaries and is happy to work hard to satisfy them. I want to

draw your attention to this aspect. Another thing I notice nowadays: whenever something seems impossible to me, I try to ignore this 'I' and open my inner being towards your light so that a descent may take place from it. I feel such a movement within and wish to concentrate on it. In other words an aspiration rises to invoke something above that will give me what I am lacking. Is it all right? At every step it makes me realise that my petty capacity can do nothing. So long as I feel any power as mine, how puny it looks!

It is the right fundamental consciousness that you have now got. The tamas and other movements of the lower universal Nature are bound to try to come in, but if one has the calm of the inner being which makes them felt as something external to the being and the light of the psychic which instantly exposes and rejects them, then that is to have the true consciousness which keeps one safe while the more positive transformation is preparing or taking place.

That transformation comes by the descent of the Force, Light, Knowledge, Ananda from above. So you are right in your feeling that you should open with a quiet শান্ত সমাহিত¹ aspiration or invocation for the descent of the Light from above. Only it must be an aspiration in this calm and wideness, not disturbing it in the least — and you must be prepared for the result being not immediate — it may be rapid, but also it may take some time. (25.10.34)

*

Mother dear, learning everything and living within — what a joy it brings! Even then, just for a bubbling vital pleasure, we forget it and cling to transient sentimentalities and create no end of trouble and suffering. I perceive clearly that attachment of any kind to men or things is a big hindrance to our progress.

One word more, please. Now I don't feel the intense peace that came down before. It seems rather natural; the peace has become part of the vast experience and one with my flesh and blood.

That is how it should be. It should go so far indeed that you would feel this peace and vastness as your very self, the abiding stuff of your consciousness — unchangeably there. (26.9.34)

Sri Aurobindo and Mother, this is to let you know that I was not so upset this time. I made a mistake to tell X about it and I felt it at once, but when I saw that he had taken it in the right way, I was relieved. But it was giving me pain to see in myself the spirit to hide the thing from you, and not only that but to insist on

1. Quiet calmness

another person also to do the same thing. I was not quite upset or disturbed as there was always the inner calm and quiet, I was feeling separately the struggle of this part, which was not violent in its nature but deep and calm too, and I took the watching part as my true being, the psychic, which was feeling so much pain to see the spirit to hide this thing from you and indulge in the insincerity of the mind (and vital perhaps). I had recognised both the parts and was wanting the psychic to persuade the unwillingness, and as soon as I started telling myself: "No, this thing cannot go on. I must tell Mother" — the whole thing became absolutely motionless, calm like a sheet all spread out, but the struggle was going on only when the other part was refusing to listen to the psychic.

It is very good and shows that you have got a firm foundation in the inner being. It was of course the psychic that made the vital feel about the concealment and compelled it to assent to the working. That also is good, for if the psychic control is not yet so complete (as it must and will come) as to prevent some instinctive movements, yet it is evidently much greater than before and is increasing its influence. (14.12.34)

(To be continued)

SAHANA

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

Perfect knowledge indeed leads to perfect love, integral knowledge to a rounded and multitudinous richness of love. "He who knows me" says the Gita "as the supreme Purusha," — not only as the immutable oneness, but in the many-souled movement of the divine and as that, superior to both, in which both are divinely held, — "he, because he has the integral knowledge, seeks me by love in every way of his being."

Sri Aurobindo

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

ARVIND SULE RECOLLECTS

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

(Continued from the issue of March 2023)

SULE: I never looked upon Sri Aurobindo as a god or someone whom we should worship. I thought his Yoga Ashram is there, he is my Guru, and I am going to learn Yoga from him. He will teach me. But he was never to be seen. Mother was supposed to be in charge. So it was as if nobody cared for me. I had come from a family where I was the youngest. My mother, sister, everyone looked after me and saw that I had my food in time. Here it was as if I had drifted into the sea. Work was given, but nobody seemed to care whether you went there or not, a young boy with no experience, not known to anybody.

Then one day in the Library I came across our Shankar Gowda who could speak Marathi. At last there was someone who could speak my language. There were very few Marathis at that time. He sort of sympathised and encouraged me and used to give me advice, so I always looked at him as a friend. That's why I remember Baba Saheb, though I never went to him. He had some connection with the Gowda family and they all used to stay together. When Baba Saheb passed away, Mother gave Pudukotai house to Shankar Gowda.

So I asked him: "When do I do sadhana? I don't know what is sadhana, I know nothing about *mantra, japa, dhyana* . . ."

"No, don't worry. Mother will teach you all that."

"But when? I have no contact with Mother."

First of all, I was scared of all ladies. I had come with the impression that if you have to do yoga, you have to be away from ladies. Here I saw ladies and gents among the inmates — "This seems to be a new kind of sadhana." Like that, things were going on.

* * *

SULE: The only incident I remember is this (I was quite new then): One day I was shaving. The mirror was in front of me. I worshipped Sri Krishna as a god and Sri Aurobindo as a Guru. I was on the terrace. It was early morning around 9 o'clock. So when I was shaving I could just see or feel inside me, as a slide passes, the picture of Sri Krishna getting removed and Sri Aurobindo in his place.

I am telling you all this because I thought this also to be a quite normal routine. "Oh, after coming here it looks like I have been now accepted by Sri Aurobindo."

I had seen Sri Aurobindo only on Darshan day. It was a rather pleasant surprise. I never knew that Sri Krishna was inside me, and like a slide he was taken out and Sri Aurobindo came in. “Aha, this means that I am now accepted by him.” But I thought it must be everybody’s experience.

It took me 50 years to know what it was. One day when I was standing there and I recollected the experience, “Oh, my goodness. A duffer like me who knew nothing, Sri Aurobindo himself coming to me and taking possession of me! What a supreme grace!”

Making Lime Mortar for the Building Service

R: What was your work?

SULE: My work was in the centre of the courtyard of [*what is presently*] Atelier. There was a big shade made of dry coconut leaves and below it the bullocks did *chakki* work, making *chunam* [*lime*]. The bullocks would go on turning a huge stone. You put sand, [*unprocessed*] *chunam* and water, and we made *chunam* [*lime mortar*] for the Building Service.

R: Who was making the chunam?

SULE: I was there as a storekeeper and supervisor. I had to sit there.

R: But were you putting the sand?

SULE: No. We had two workers for that, and then this turning business was done by the cartman. We used to get a bullock cart. Even now we see it, though very rarely. They put red sand which those cartmen supplied. We did not have trucks those days. So when we wanted to make *chunam*, the man who used to supply us sand, I mean, there was an understanding with him that he will go round and round with his bullocks. There was something like a screw by which you knew how much to do. When the rod came to the top, you had to stop — it was 100 rounds or something like that.

R: So the cartman himself would provide the bullocks?

SULE: Yes, yes, and he would take them round and our servants, one or two, they would put sand and water from time to time, when it was necessary.

R: And what were you doing?

SULE: I had to supervise. I had to see that they were putting water in time. And when the lime was ready, take it out from that round pit and put it in the centre which was an open place. Then the cartman would untie his bullocks and be paid by Khirod-da.

Khirod-da¹ and the Mother's Blessings

R: What was Mother's programme in 1947? I heard that you came in 1947.

SULE: Yes, I came in February 1947.

R: So what was Mother's general routine when you came here?

SULE: Early morning at 6, you know, there was Balcony Darshan. Then in the morning at about 8 there was Blessings.

R: What was the Blessings and where was it?

SULE: The Meditation Hall. Mother would be in the Meditation Hall. She sat where that big photo is there now, and you go in line. What I remember is that the timing of the Blessings became gradually late. Mother would either give you a flower or a message on special days, but it was mostly flowers. What is most interesting is that it slowly, slowly became late, so much that it was sometimes at 12 noon. What used to be at 8/8.30 ("Mother is late today, Mother is late today.") became 9 o'clock, then it got almost fixed at 9. Then it became slowly 10, slowly 11.30.

Now the difficulty was that it was during the working hours of departments, so people could not be there all the time. For those who didn't have work, it was all right, but for working people it was difficult. I was in the Building Service which was at that time in [*what is presently*] the Atelier. There was a *chakki* [*machine to make lime mortar*] in the centre of the courtyard under Khirod-da's Building Service. So as soon as I heard the Mother has come, I used to run there and come back. I am telling you this because there is a story about Khirod-da.

R: Could you tell me the story?

SULE: Yes, yes, I mean I cannot give you 100 per cent guarantee, but Amrita told this story to Padmasini and Padmasini told it to me. And it sounds very authentic because Khirod-da was like that. So between 7.30 and 11.30 there was no stopping of work,

1. Khirod (Kshirode Kanti Bose, 8.8.1893-24.6.1982), was an early Bengali disciple from Faridpur, now in Bangladesh. He settled in Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1929 and became head of the Ashram Building Service after Chandulal Shah, the Ashram engineer, died in November 1945.

even if there was Blessings or any other programme. But after 11.30 Khirod-*da* was free, so he started going to Blessings because working hours were over. Now after 11.30, 11.45, sometimes 12, sometimes even at 12 Mother did not come. Or Mother may come at 11.30 and many people would come because working hours are over, and the Blessings will continue till 12.30/1. Now Khirod-*da* used to go at 11.30 for Blessings after finishing his work. By the time he went there, it may be 11.40/11.45. Naturally there was a line, so Khirod-*da* had to stand in the line. Slowly, slowly, he would come near Mother. Now you know we have a clock there which strikes the time. Now as soon as he heard it striking 12, wherever he was, even if he was 5 persons behind, he will walk out of the line. So Mother noticed it once, then she noticed it clearly because he was 4 or 5 persons behind when he just walked out of the line, and Mother was just looking at him.

[*Sule's humorous remark describing what Mother may have thought:*] "What's the matter, you have gone off or what?"

After that she started noticing that the moment Khirod-*da* heard the clock striking 12, wherever he was, whichever place in the line, he will walk out. Mother noticed it for a week. Then, as usual, when Amrita went to Mother she asked him, "Amrita, what's the matter with Khirod?"

"Why Mother, nothing."

"No, for some days, I have noticed he comes for Blessings in the line and suddenly he walks out of the line."

"Oh, I don't know Mother, I will inquire and I will tell you tomorrow."

So in the evening he called Khirod-*da*, "What's the matter, Khirod? You're not well. Mother was saying you stand in the line for going to Mother and suddenly you walk out."

I think Khirod-*da* must have replied in Bengali or something, but the gist is this: "You see 12 o'clock is Mother's lunch time. So if we stand in the line for Blessings, when will Mother have her lunch? Now I can't ask the others to go and I can't ask Mother to stop giving Blessings, so I am doing what I can. I don't want Mother to be late for her lunch because of me. I don't need Blessings. I want Mother to have her lunch."

R: Wow!

SULE: Just imagine, I don't think anybody ever thought of it. (*smiling with emotion*) This story Amrita had narrated to Mother. That was Khirod-*da*.

Khirod-*da* in the Building Service

*R: Tell us something about Khirod-*da*. First of all, where was he staying?*

SULE: Now his room is where our Ramakant-*bhai* is staying now [*in Guerre House on Rue Saint Gilles*], corner house on Balcony street. That was his room and I will tell you one thing. We used to call it a miracle — he never shaved!

R: Never shaved!

SULE: No. He had just a little beard and it stopped growing (*laughter*), believe it or not!

R: Maybe he used to trim it, who knows.

SULE: But that was the general belief. He was so simple and nice a gentleman that he had no time for shaving. What I remember mostly is this, that he was one person in the department from 7.30 to 11.30 and 1 to 5. His work was his sadhana. He would never go out. If during that time there was any Blessings or this and that, he would never attend it.

R: He would not go to the Blessings?

SULE: If it is during working hours. Early morning Balcony Darshan, yes. At night in the Meditation Hall, or when the Blessings got delayed and it was after 11.30, yes. I told you about the incident when he walked out of the line.

R: But when the Blessings was at 8 o'clock?

SULE: No, he wouldn't leave his work. Now I read this somewhere in the *Evening Talks*. Nirod-*da* and others were sitting around Sri Aurobindo. The topic came up that some people do not even come to Mother for this and that, and Nirod-*da* sort of sarcastically said, "See Khirod-*da*. He never comes during working hours."

Now Sri Aurobindo's reply stunned them all. "Yes, I know, Khirod is the only Karmayogi² in the Ashram."

2. The reference to this quote is not available. Arvind Sule may have mixed up the following two quotes which are full of praise for Khirod:

(1) Sri Aurobindo: "He is one of the ablest and most quietly successful 'men of work' I have come across." (*Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* (1983), Vol. 1, p. 100, dated January 15, 1935)

(2) Nirodbaran: "Mother put me in contact with two of the finest Karmayogis, Khirod and Rishabhchand." (*Nirodbaran, Memorable Contacts with the Mother*, pp. 19-20)

Though Khirod was among the early disciples who settled in Sri Aurobindo Ashram in the late 1920s and early 1930s, not much has been written on him. He seemed to have quietly and cleverly avoided the focus of

The moment they heard his reply, everybody became absolutely quiet. Otherwise, till then I had the impression that such nice and good people are never given the respect that they should get and people have the habit of making fun of them. You follow. But after Sri Aurobindo said that he was the only Karmayogi in Ashram, then everybody came to know about him. “Oh, I see, Khirod-*da* is that.” After that there was a lot of respect for him, and I am happy that I was trained by him.

R: Can you tell us anything more about him?

SULE: Yes. He had a sort of mania of finding the rate at which people worked, what is exactly the rate. “I am trying to find the rate at which the servants are working.” He used to always say, “Last 20 years I am trying to find the rate at which they are working.” That was his patent.

Rate? What rate he’s talking about, I thought.

I remember when I first came and the *chakki* was going on. We were sitting on this side and he pointed to the rod in the centre, “You see that rod. It will move up. When it comes to the top, you have to stop.”

But I did not know what he was pointing at, because I had never seen a *chakki* before. I used to say “Yes. Yes.” to whatever he said.

When the cartman saw me, he must have thought “Oh, this fellow, doesn’t

public attention. In the early 1930s when Dara (a Muslim disciple from Hyderabad) went about taking photographs of disciples in the Ashram, Khirod gave him the slip. His nephew says that Khirod managed to do the same disappearing trick even later on (1940s to 1960s), so that we have practically no individual photographs of him. He does appear with others in functions and on special occasions which the Mother attended, where I suppose it was not so easy to escape.

Sri Aurobindo’s correspondence with his disciples has a number of laudatory remarks on him made in various contexts such as:

(1) Sri Aurobindo: “Certainly if any sadhak had to be imitated in outward action, it would be Dyuman and Khirod. . . . But why do they want to imitate?”

(*Bulletin*, February 2014, pp. 66-68)

(2) Nagin Doshi: “There are some sadhaks who still have the same enthusiasm for work, in spite of the sadhana being in the physical or subconscious. But how can that be so?”

Sri Aurobindo: “Some have, like Khirod and some others; but for them work is their field of sadhana and it is not by vital enthusiasm that they do it, but by the inner urge.”

(*Guidance from Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 2, p. 99)

Dr. Manubhai Naik’s letter to Sri Aurobindo on 1 April 1934 sums up Khirod’s remarkable qualities:

“I sometimes wonder at the immensity of sacrifice that Khirod does: how he works day and night without thinking of his personal needs, without thinking even of his sadhana, even forgetting and missing the Pranam due to his absorption in work, having no demands, wanting nothing, only a simple and peaceful service of the Divine; also a complete absence of fault-finding or defect-observing attitude, sympathy with people, and so on. Of course, the most remarkable thing is his selflessness.”

know when to stop.”

So one day when a little was still left (say 10 rounds or so) he stopped. And I had no idea of what Khirod-*da* had told me, though I remembered that he had told me to look there. He used to speak half in English, half in Hindi which he hardly knew. And whatever he said in English, I used to half-understand and half-guess.

Those days Purnananda also used to work with us in the Building Service.

R: In [what is presently] the Atelier?

SULE: No, not there, he used to supply paint in the main office [*presently Drawing Office*]. His job was to supply paint to everybody, but as was his nature he would go on wandering here and there. Perhaps Khirod-*da* must have told him that I am a new boy and to see that things are all right.

So the cartman stopped and he was removing his bullocks and that was the time when Purnananda happened to come. “Hey!” he shouted. He noticed it. “Hey *shala*, it is not yet finished.”

Then he started scolding me. “It is your job to see that.”

He took me and showed me the rod in the centre, and then it struck me. “Oh, this is what Khirod-*da* was trying to tell me.” But as he was showing it with his hand from far, I did not know what he was showing. Khirod-*da* must have thought that I understood when he pointed it to me.

“You see that, it must come to the top, don’t you know it?”

“*Han Dada*, Khirod-*da* told me about it. But at that time I didn’t know what he was showing me. Sorry, now I know. Now I will see that it goes to the top.”

Strike in the Building Service

R: Did you have any strike among the servants at that time, in the 50s or the 40s?

SULE: Not in the Domestic Service, in the Building Service.

R: Could you tell me about that strike?

SULE: Yes, because at that time I was in the Building Service.

R: Which year was that?

SULE: It was after 50 definitely. I came to the Domestic Service around 56, so it has to be between 50 and 53. They wanted more pay. Oh yes, remember, that was the time when the Ashram was financially in great difficulty. Now at that time these people asked for increment.

R: How many people were there in the Building Service?

SULE: Not many, 30/40 masons and then their helpers, about 100/200 staff.

R: 100/200!

SULE: Yes, 30/40 masons and their helpers.

R: They were permanent workers?

SULE: I think those days there was no such thing. I think after this strike Counouma was a little more careful, because there were a few cases. Tatya Saheb was there at that time and he was helping Counouma in the court. We didn't give the increment and Khirod-da had to sack them.

At that time I remember Mother's notice had come: "What I am giving you at present is the maximum I can give you. I cannot give you more, and I know what I'm giving you is enough. You are wasting your money in drinking. If you stop all that, the money I am giving you, I know, is enough. Well, if conditions get better, we'll see later on."³

But they were adamant and they went on strike, and some of them did hunger strike in front of the Ashram gate under Kailash-bhai's room. I remember one thing. It was a Darshan day or some auspicious day. That morning or rather the night before, the people who were sitting there for hunger strike wound up everything and left without any problem. At least we didn't know why they left. What we understood was that Mother's force must have worked and she had controlled the forces that were behind.

R: How did you solve it outwardly? You gave them more money?

SULE: No. No. When they went on strike, Mother was so annoyed. Mother said, "No more Building Service." That was the time when 'Building Service' became 'Upkeep Service', and even on the printed things, Mother said, "Strike off 'Building Service'."

R: How did the strike end?

SULE: Building Service was renamed Upkeep Service.

R: Oh, it was wound up!

3. See Mother's message to the paid workers of the Ashram dated 21 April 1952, *CWM*, Vol. 13, pp. 173-74.

SULE: Absolutely, completely, for good.

R: Oh, really! So every worker was sacked?

SULE: Yes, those who left. Those who hadn't gone . . . There were some leaders, 7/8 of them, they went away. But some did not. They said, "I was sick. I didn't go on strike. I was not well, that is why I did not come." Mother took back those who willingly surrendered and came back. Then this thing started for repairs, what is called . . .

R: It is now called House Maintenance Service.

SULE: Yes, maintenance. We started doing little works, but major construction was stopped. Then Udar's HEC started, so those people took up big construction.

R: You people didn't do anything after that?

SULE: No big work, no buildings, only upkeep service, house maintenance.

R: How many were sacked?

SULE: 7/8 people, those big leaders were sacked, and then one by one, those who came back were absorbed. But we had nothing to do with the past service, nothing to do with Building Service. It became Upkeep Service for maintenance, for little repairs here and there. And then afterwards we were all shifted to Coco Garden. Till then we were here [*in what is presently Atelier*], I remember. The office was where the Drawing Office is now. Sand, tables were all stocked in my godown here and the cement would also come to me.

Even in 1950 when Sri Aurobindo passed away, when we had to build the Samadhi, the digging up and all that was done there, but the mixing of the concrete was done here. Luckily, I had one very old faithful servant. Both of us worked together mixing the concrete, and those people started the masonry work in the Ashram courtyard. The Ashram boys came with *chetties* and we two supplied them with the concrete mixture.

Other Workers of the Building Service

SULE: In the beginning Jyotindra Ball was our engineer. He was staying with Tulsi-bhai where now our Srinivas [*present engineer*] is there. Under him was Santosh Bannerji, Anil Bannerji's elder brother. He was working under him and he learnt some engineering by working with Jyotin Ball. So when the engineer died or left, I

am not very sure, Santosh (though he was not a qualified engineer but practically he knew quite a lot), he and Khirod-*da* were managing.

I remember another thing, I don't know whether I have told you or not. In construction there was some difficulty and Khirod-*da* and they went to Mother, "Mother, there is some problem. We don't know how to do it."

Mother said: "Ask me tomorrow."

So the next day when they went again, Mother told them what to do.

I think Khirod-*da* must have asked, "Mother, how is it that yesterday you told us to ask you today?"

"Chandulal came to me and I told him that this is the problem, so he told me what to do."

You see, Chandulal used to be with Mother. Even though people died here in those days, they were with Mother. I don't know big philosophy, but this is a practical thing. I think you must have heard this story.

R: You heard this story from Khirod-da?

SULE: In the office because Khirod-*da* generally never talked about anything except work, what is called chatting. Even Sudhir-*da* when he went there, all the talking was done by Sudhir-*da*, and Khirod-*da* will just nod and smile. What is called gossiping was not in his nature. He was a rare gentleman. I can say that I had the privilege of working under him, that when I came here Mother put me under his charge. He gave me a foundation: 7.30 to 11.30, 1 to 5, and during work time, only work and nothing else.

A few months after I joined the Building Service, Chandulal's death anniversary was observed in the office. So at that time they used to always talk about Chandulal, that he was also one of those fellows with a temper. But he was ready for work at any time, for anything. Yes, in those days people worked for 15 hours. I told you about Bula-*da*, there were no working hours. Work has to be done, it must be finished! That was the foundation those people gave us.

R: Who else was working in the Building Service?

SULE: Tulsi-*bhai*? You have heard of him? He used to stay where Ranju-*da* stayed.

R: Yes, it is across Subbu House.

SULE: Just opposite to it in the central room. This side was our artist Krishnalal, Tulsi-*bhai* was in the centre and Ranju-*da* was in the last room at that time. Tulsi-*bhai* was a Gujarati and he was a supervisor. Whenever there was concreting, he would come to me. He used to supervise the concreting work in the Ashram, it was Tulsi-*bhai*'s work.

R: He knew about concreting, he could mix the concrete?

SULE: Not mix; mixing was done by workers only. He would come and instruct me from time to time and see that the mixture is correct. And he would be there on the place where the concreting was going on, and make things ready for it.

Concreting, I still remember, was a big event. Mother was informed what time it would start. Tulsi-bhai was busy right from 7.30 to see how many cement bags will be needed, how much sand, pebbles, and whether a sufficient number of workers were there to mix the concrete. A lot of workers were there and there was a special mason who also built the main Ashram building, and time to time he was at Golconde.

R: What was his name?

SULE: There were two. One was the chief mason. I remember him, but his name I don't know, but he had a son who was abnormal. The chief mason passed away. But his assistant mason, who also built the Ashram building, used to work with Padmasini. She was in charge of little repairs and she had one mason and a carpenter. You could come to her for small repairs.

(To be continued)

The primal law and purpose of the individual life is to seek its own self-development. Consciously or half-consciously or with an obscure unconscious groping it strives always and rightly strives at self-formulation, — to find itself, to discover within itself the law and power of its own being and to fulfil it. This aim in it is fundamental, right, inevitable because, even after all qualifications have been made and caveats entered, the individual is not merely the ephemeral physical creature, a form of mind and body that aggregates and dissolves, but a being, a living power of the eternal Truth, a self-manifesting spirit. In the same way the primal law and purpose of a society, community or nation is to seek its own self-fulfilment; it strives rightly to find itself, to become aware within itself of the law and power of its own being and to fulfil it as perfectly as possible, to realise all its potentialities, to live its own self-revealing life.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Human Cycle, CWSA, Vol. 25, p. 35)

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

(Part 34)

Section 3: A QUIET AND HUMBLE DISPOSITION

(Continued from the issue of March 2023)

As early as 1908 in Baroda Sri Aurobindo had “the realisation of the silent spaceless and timeless Brahman” followed by his second realisation in Alipore jail “which was that of the cosmic consciousness and of the Divine as all beings and all that is”.¹ Yet, whilst talking about his pre-Pondicherry days, he would candidly tell his disciples about the areas that he worked on himself, illustrating the exacting standards that he set for himself. He revealed to his attendants that at about the age of twelve or thirteen he became conscious of a weakness in a part of his being which he worked upon:

I was extremely selfish and then something came upon me and I felt I ought to give up selfishness and I tried in my own way — of course, imperfectly — to put it into practice. But that was a sort of turning-point in my inner life.²

Sri Aurobindo was not fond of administrative work. He once amusingly reflected what would have happened to him if he had joined the I.C.S. “I think they would have chucked me for laziness and arrears of my work!”³

And despite his herculean efforts and accomplishments he once casually told Dilip Kumar Roy:

. . . But all that is probably because I am constitutionally lazy (in spite of my present feats of correspondence) and prefer the easiest and most automatic method possible. . . .⁴

Several distinguished personalities and many others have referred to Sri Aurobindo’s purity and sattwic temperament. Sri Aurobindo told a disciple:

1. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 94.

2. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 395.

3. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, p. 36.

4. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, p. 289.

But if the statement is that nobody can have a successful meditation or realise anything till he is pure and perfect, I fail to follow it; it contradicts my own experience. I have always had realisation by meditation first and the purification started afterwards as a result.⁵

And in another letter he writes:

Are you in a position to make a judgment as to what will or will not help God's work? You seem to have very elementary ideas in these matters. What is your idea of divinisation, — to be a virtuous man, a good husband, son, father, a good citizen etc.? In that case I myself am most undivine, — for I have never been these things. Men like X or Y would then be the great Transformed Divine Men.⁶

Elsewhere he wrote:

It is perfectly possible to change one's nature. I have proved that in my own case, for I have made myself exactly the opposite in character to what I was when I started life. I have seen it done in many and I have helped myself to do it in many. But certain conditions are needed.⁷

A disciple once told Sri Aurobindo, “If a man has transformed his nature, he couldn't have done it all by himself, as you have done.” He replied, “I also did not do it all by myself, if you mean by myself the Aurobindo that was. He did it by the help of Krishna and the Divine Shakti. I had help from human sources also.”⁸

Often despondent disciples would write about their troubles and Sri Aurobindo would offer comfort by revealing his own difficulties in his sadhana and would encourage them to persevere. For instance, he counselled a disciple:

The worst thing for sadhana is to get into a morbid condition, always thinking of “lower forces, attacks etc.” If the sadhana has stopped for a time, then let it stop, remain quiet, do ordinary things, rest when rest is needed — wait till the physical consciousness is ready. My own sadhana when it was far more advanced than yours used to stop for half a year together. I did not make a fuss about it, but remained quiet till the empty or dull period was over.⁹

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 230.

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. 28, pp. 423-24.

7. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 44.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 412.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 372-73.

On another occasion he wrote: “. . . Nor can I see why there should be this devastating sense of humiliation because of an adverse movement that some of the greatest Yogis have passed through, not to speak of myself in my earlier days or some of the most forceful sadhaks here.”¹⁰

About the vicissitudes of his life he told a disciple, “I remember in days long past when I still had personal struggles and difficulties, people came to me from outside for advice etc. when I was in black depression and could not see my way out of a sense of hopelessness and failure . . .”¹¹ The extent of Sri Aurobindo’s difficulties during his life can be gauged from his statement in a letter of 1933: “As for faith, you write as if I had never had a doubt or any difficulty. I have had worse than any human mind can think of.”¹²

The fellow revolutionaries imprisoned in Alipore jail had the highest regard for Sri Aurobindo. Upendranath Banerjee, a co-accused in the Alipore Bomb Case, writes:

We have all read Sri Aurobindo’s own description of the great Vasudev experience he had in Alipore jail. A new sidelight has been thrown by Purshottam Chandra in the preface of his book *Sri Krishna Bhagwana Dwara Updesit Srimad Bhagawat Gita*. He says that so pervasive was Sri Aurobindo’s sense of the Divine Presence in all, that he addressed even the convicts, the warders and the sweepers as Krishna.¹³

Sri Aurobindo and his revolutionary comrades were freedom fighters, yet they were treated like dangerous criminals and kept in appallingly harsh and humiliating prison conditions. He writes:

We all came from gentlemanly stock; many were scions of landlords; some were, in terms of their family, education, quality and character, the equals of the highest classes in England. The charge on which we had been arrested, that too was not ordinary murder, theft or dacoity, it was an attempt at insurrection to liberate the country from foreign yoke or conspiracy tending towards armed conflict. . . . In such cases to be herded together like ordinary thieves and dacoits — and not even as thieves and dacoits, to keep them like animals in a cage, to give them food unfit for animals, to make them endure water scarcity, thirst and hunger, sun, rain and cold, all these do not enhance the glory of the British race and its imperial officers.¹⁴

10. *Ibid.*, p. 378.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 323.

13. Shyam Kumari, *Beautiful Vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, 2003, p. 11 (Upendranath Banerjee, *Nirbashiter Atmakatha* – translated from Bengali).

14. Sri Aurobindo, *Tales of Prison Life*, 4th Ed., 2014, pp. 20-21 (translated from the original Bengali, *Karakahini*).

Although Sri Aurobindo was a revered political leader, he did not expect to be more entitled or privileged than the commoner. He continues:

But, at the time, I was not annoyed at this. On the contrary, I had felt a little happy that no discrimination had been made between the common uneducated masses and myself . . . I was one of the extremists, in whose view democracy and equality between the rich and the poor formed a chief ingredient of nationalism. I remembered that, thinking it our duty to turn the theory into practice, we had travelled together on our way to Surat, in the same third class. In the camp the leaders, instead of making separate arrangements, would sleep in the same room along with the others. Rich, poor, brahmins, businessmen, shudra, Bengali, Maratha, Punjabi, Gujarati, we all stayed, slept, ate together with a wonderful feeling of brotherhood. We slept on the ground, ate the normal fare, made of rice-pulse-curd, in every way it was superlatively *swadeshi*. The “foreign returned” from Bombay and Calcutta and the Brahmin-born Madras with his tilak (head-mark) had become one body. During my stay in the Alipore Jail I ate, lived and went through the same hardship and enjoyed the same “privileges” with the other convicts, my fellow nationals, peasant, iron-monger, potter, the *doms* and the *bagdis*, and I could learn the ways of the Lord who dwells in everybody, this socialism and unity, this sense of nationwide brotherhood had put its stamp on my life’s dedication (*jivan brata*). The day when, before the sacred altar of the World-Mother in the form of the Motherland, all the orders of the country will stand with proud heads as brothers and as of the same mind, thanks to the loving kindness of my fellow convicts and prisoners as well as the impartiality of the British administrators, during the imprisonment I could feel the coming of that happy day and many a time it brought such a delight and thrill. The other day I noticed that the *Indian Social Reformer*, from Poona, had ironically commented on one of my simple easy-to-understand statements by remarking: “We find an excess of Godwardness in the prison!” Alas for the pride and littleness of men, seeking after renown, men of little learning, proud of their little virtues! The manifestation of God, should it not be in prison, in huts, ashrams, in the hearts of the poor, instead of in the temples of luxury of the rich or the bed of repose of the pleasure seeking selfish worldly folk? God does not look for learning, honour, leadership, popular acclaim, outward ease and sophistication. To the poor He reveals Himself in the form of the Compassionate Mother. He who sees the Lord in all men, in all nations, in his own land, in the miserable, the poor, the fallen and the sinner and offers his life in the service of the Lord, the Lord comes to such hearts. So it is that in a fallen nation ready to rise, in the solitary prison of the servants of the nation the nearness of God grows.¹⁵

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-23.

In 1905 Sri Aurobindo wrote *Bhawani Mandir*, a piece of political literature that was an inspiration to several revolutionaries. It was akin to Bankim’s *Ananda Math*, both envisaged mixing spiritual life with politics. A temple, to be called Bhawani Mandir, was planned to be built for preparing political Sannyasis who were to be initiated to completely consecrate themselves to the service of Mother India. One of its general rules stated:

There will be no gradations of rank among the workers and none must seek for distinction or mere personal fame, but practise strength and self-effacement.¹⁶

Around the same time Sri Aurobindo told Mrinalini Devi that he considered all his fellow citizens, including the downtrodden, as his brothers and sisters.¹⁷

The virtue of humility has been an intrinsic aspect of Indian and Asian culture. In *The Renaissance of India* Sri Aurobindo talks about “the self-effacing personality” of the Indian, whose temperament contrasts with the European:

Will-power and personality have not been wanting in India, but the direction preferably given to them and the type most admired are of a different kind. The average European mind is prone to value or at least to be more interested in the egoistic or self-asserting will which insists upon itself with a strong or a bold, an aggressive, sometimes a fierce insistence; the Indian mind not only prizes more from the ethical standpoint, — that is found everywhere, — but is more vividly interested in the calm, self-controlling or even the self-effacing personality; for the effacement of egoism seems to it to be not an effacement, but an enhancement of value and power of the true person and its greatness.¹⁸

On 14th May, 1909, following his release from Alipore jail, the *Bengalee* reported about Sri Aurobindo’s gentleness in receiving people from all strata of society: “Bengalis and Punjabis, old and young, rich and poor, even the lame and the cripple amongst the street beggars — whoever are coming to him he is receiving and answering questions of one and all, quite freely and with his usual simplicity of manners.”¹⁹

Dilip Kumar Roy writes of Sri Aurobindo’s disposition to treat people equally, irrespective of their backgrounds: “And it was with the same kind interest that he dealt with a genius or a multimillionaire as with a wastrel or an orphan. Also, he did it so spontaneously — almost as if it was the least he could do . . .”²⁰

16. *CWSA*, Vol. 6, p. 90.

17. See A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 81.

18. *CWSA*, Vol. 20, p. 252.

19. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, July 2016, p. 536.

20. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, 5th Ed., 2004, p. 261.

The Mother has stressed that visitors to the Ashram should be received with politeness and gentleness. She adds: “High and low, young and old, whether they are well-dressed or ill-clad, all should always be received properly with benevolence and good behaviour. . . . It should not be that we give more care to the people with a motor car than to an ordinary man looking like a beggar. We must never forget that they are as much human as we are and we have no right to think that we are at the top of the scale. . . .”²¹

On 30th May, 1909, Sri Aurobindo went to Uttarpara, at the invitation of several leading Nationalists from the town. He received a royal reception; huge crowds including the entire élite of Uttarpara were there to receive him with great love, enthusiasm and fanfare. Sri Aurobindo was slightly discomfited with the adulation. Although he was a God-realised Yogi, an excerpt from his address at the meeting reads:

You have spoken much today of my self-sacrifice and devotion to my country. I have heard that kind of speech ever since I came out of jail, but I hear it with embarrassment, with something of pain. For I know my weakness, I am a prey to my own faults and backslidings. I was not blind to them before and when they all rose up against me in seclusion, I felt them utterly. I knew then that I the man was a mass of weakness, a faulty and imperfect instrument, strong only when a higher strength entered into me. Then I found myself among these young men and in many of them I discovered a mighty courage, a power of self-effacement in comparison with which I was simply nothing. I saw one or two who were not only superior to me in force and character, — very many were that, — but in the promise of that intellectual ability on which I prided myself. He [*Sri Krishna*] said to me, “This is the young generation, the new and mighty nation that is arising at my command. They are greater than yourself. What have you to fear? If you stood aside or slept, the work would still be done. If you were cast aside tomorrow, here are the young men who will take up your work and do it more mightily than you have ever done. You have only got some strength from me to speak a word to this nation which will help to raise it.” This was the next thing He told me.²²

Another excerpt from the Uttarpara speech reads:

Amongst these thieves and dacoits there were many who put me to shame by their sympathy, their kindness, the humanity triumphant over such adverse circumstances. One I saw among them especially who seemed to me a saint,

21. *CWM*, Vol. 13, 2nd Ed., p. 167.

22. *CWSA*, Vol. 8, pp. 8-9.

a peasant of my nation who did not know how to read and write, an alleged dacoit sentenced to ten years’ rigorous imprisonment, one of those whom we look down upon in our Pharisaical pride of class as *chhotalok*.²³

In his biography of Sri Aurobindo Manoj Das comments on the Uttarpara speech:

The speech has several dimensions. He sets an example in humility when he says “I the man was a mass of weakness,” but the truth that he was more than “the man” becomes unobtrusively revealed to us when he summarily states in one short sentence, “I knew I would come out.” And he would come out as one who knows, no longer a medium kept guessing.²⁴

Alluding to his imprisonment, a disciple asked, “And even apart from spirituality, what of your waiting for the gallows for your country’s sake with perfect equanimity?” Underlining “perfect equanimity”, Sri Aurobindo’s direct yet modest reply reads:

Who told you that? I was perfectly sure of release. But even so plenty of ordinary men did it before me.²⁵

On 15th August, 1909, a group of young men came to felicitate Sri Aurobindo on his 37th birthday by presenting him with cloth, sweets and fruits. The ceremony was marked with cries of “Bande Mataram” and “Long live Arabinda Ghose”. According to a police confidential file Sri Aurobindo “was visibly moved” by this gesture and spoke some inspiring words to the visitors.²⁶ Around the same time Nolini Kanta Gupta attended one of Sri Aurobindo’s political speeches. He recalls that his quiet presence held the audience spellbound and despite his supreme self-sacrifice for the country he apologised to the audience:

I can now recall only these few words of his: it was a matter of shame and regret for him that he was unable to speak in his native tongue, his early training and environment had been such as compelled him to express himself in a foreign language; he was asking to be pardoned by his countrymen.²⁷

The Mother has said, “Humility, a perfect humility, is the condition for all realisation.” She then added:

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

24. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, October 2016, p. 819.

25. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, p. 425.

26. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, November 2016, p. 899.

27. *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 7, 1st Ed., 1978, pp. 323-24.

The mind is so cocksure. It thinks it knows everything, understands everything. And if ever it acts through idealism to serve a cause that appears noble to it, it becomes even more arrogant more intransigent, and it is almost impossible to make it see that there might be something still higher beyond its noble conceptions and its great altruistic or other ideals. Humility is the only remedy.²⁸

Sri Aurobindo once said, “This Yoga, to be done well, requires perfect balance.”²⁹

Sri Aurobindo was forthright. In a conversation he explained that humility and modesty need to be blended with a sense of sincerity and truthfulness:

SRI AUROBINDO: By humility it is not outward humility that is meant. There are many people who profess and show the utmost outward humility, as if they were nothing, but in their hearts they think, “I am the man.” People are mostly impressed and guided by outward conduct.

Mahadev Desai complained that I had lost the old charm of modesty. I did not profess like others that I was nothing. How can I say I am nothing when I know that I am not nothing?

BECHARLAL: Were you “modest” in your early life?

SRI AUROBINDO: I used to practise what you may call voluntary self-effacement or self-denial and I liked to keep myself behind. Perhaps Desai meant that by modesty. But I can’t say that I was more modest within than others.

PURANI: Gandhi also seems to express modesty. When he differs from Malaviya or somebody else, he says, “He is my superior but I differ.”

SRI AUROBINDO: But does he really believe that? When I differed in anything, I used to say very few words and remain stiff, simply saying, “I don’t agree.”

Once Surendranath Banerji wanted to annex the Extremist Party and invited us to the U. P. Moderate Conference to fight against Sir Pherozshah Mehta. But there was a clause that no association that was not of two or three years’ standing could send delegates to the Conference. Ours was a new party. So we could not go. But Banerji said, “We will elect you as delegates.” J. L. Banerji and others agreed to it, but I just said, “No.” I spoke at most twenty or thirty words and the whole thing failed. How can you call a man modest when he stands against his own party?

Tilak used to do the same thing. He used to hear all the speeches and resolutions of the delegates but at the end pass his own resolutions. They said, “What a democratic leader he is! He listens to and considers all our opinions and resolutions.”³⁰

28. Mother’s conversation with a disciple, 21 December, 1957.

29. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 168.

30. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 111.

Concerning Gandhi's modesty, a disciple told Sri Aurobindo that Gandhi reportedly said: “To be born as a ‘Bhangi’ [*a member of one of the lowest castes of untouchables in India, traditionally relegated to work that included sweeping, handling dead bodies, or cleaning toilets*] was the result of great *punya* in previous birth.” Sri Aurobindo replied:

The view taken by the Mahatma in these matters is Christian rather than Hindu — for the Christian self-abasement, humility, the acceptance of a low status to serve humanity or the Divine are things which are highly spiritual and the noblest privilege of the soul. . . . All kinds of work are equal before the Divine and all men have the same Brahman within them, is one truth, but that development is not equal in all is another. The idea that it needs special *punya* to be born as a bhangi is of course one of those forceful exaggerations of an idea which are common with the Mahatma and impress greatly the mind of his hearers. . . . In any case it is not true that the bhangi life is superior to the Brahmin life and the reward of especial righteousness. On the other hand the traditional conception that a man is superior to others because he is born a Brahmin is not rational or justifiable. A spiritual or cultured man of Pariah birth is superior in the divine values to an unspiritual and worldly-minded or a crude and uncultured Brahmin. Birth counts, but the basic value is in the man himself, the soul behind and the degree to which it manifests itself in his nature.³¹

On the issue of outward humility or trying to cultivate humility by doing *namaskar* to everyone Sri Aurobindo said:

It [*to feel like doing namaskar to everyone*] is a feeling which some have who either want to cultivate humility (X used to do it, but I never saw that it got rid of his innate self-esteem) or who have or are trying to have the realisation of Narayan in all with a Vaishnava turn in it. To feel the One in all is right, but to bow down to the individual who lives still in his ego is good neither for him nor for the one who does it. Especially in this Yoga it tends to diffuse what should be concentrated and turned towards a higher realisation than that of the cosmic feeling which is only a step on the way.³²

The Mother has explained the true meaning of humility:

. . . when people are told “be humble”, they think immediately of “being humble before other men” and that humility is wrong. True humility is humility before the Divine, that is, a precise, exact, *living* sense that one is nothing,

31. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, pp. 192-93.

32. *Ibid.*, Vol. 28, p. 429.

one can do nothing, understand nothing without the Divine, that even if one is exceptionally intelligent and capable, this is nothing in comparison with the divine Consciousness, and this sense one must always keep, because then one always has the true attitude of receptivity — a humble receptivity that does not put personal pretensions in opposition to the Divine.³³

Sri Aurobindo’s humility was blended with straightforwardness and unpretentiousness. Dilip Kumar Roy writes:

But he was nothing if not unpretentious and truthful. In fact it was his meticulous regard for truth that made people misunderstand him so often. He would never pay a conventional compliment or make overstatements to which lesser men are so prone. Not that he was unsocial or aloof by nature: he could laugh and joke and, aye, give as much as he got in badinage. But he was not what is called bluff or expansive. He could love and love deeply, but never to court popularity or expect recognition of his heart’s gifts. It was always difficult to label him or measure him with our social yardsticks.³⁴

Sri Aurobindo once told a disciple:

The impulse to speak what is untrue or at least to exaggerate or understate or twist the truth so as to flatter one’s own vanity, preferences, wishes or to get some advantage or secure something desired is very general. But one must learn to speak the truth alone if one is to succeed truly in changing the nature.³⁵

When Sri Aurobindo was asked: “Would it not sometimes be dangerous to speak truth, e.g., in politics, war, revolution? The truth-speaking moralist who would always insist on not concealing anything may bring disaster by revealing the plans and movements of one side to the opposite side”, he replied:

Politics, war, revolution are things of stratagem and ambush — one cannot expect the truth there. From what I have heard Gandhi himself has played tricks and dodges there. Das told me it was impossible to lead men in politics or get one’s objects without telling falsehoods by the yard and he was often feeling utterly disgusted with himself and his work, but supposed he would have to go through with it to the end.

There is no necessity to reveal one’s plans and movements to those who have no business to know it, who are incapable of understanding or who would act as enemies or spoil all as a result of their knowledge. Secrecy is perfectly

33. *CWM*, Vol. 5, 2nd Ed., p. 45.

34. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, 5th Ed., 2004, pp. 183-84.

35. *CWSA*, Vol. 31, p. 89.

admissible and usual in spiritual matters except in special relations like that of the shishya to the guru. We do not let people outside know what is going on in the Asram but we do not tell any lies about it either. Most Yogis say nothing about their spiritual experiences to others or not until long afterwards and secrecy was a general rule among the ancient Mystics. No moral or spiritual law commands us to make ourselves naked to the world or open up our hearts and minds for public inspection. Gandhi talked about secrecy being a sin but that is one of his many extravagances.³⁶

Sri Aurobindo was not a strict adherent of non-violence. In the early 1920s Gandhi was keen to meet Sri Aurobindo and sent his youngest son Devdas to meet Sri Aurobindo to pose some questions. Devdas asked Sri Aurobindo about his views on non-violence. Sri Aurobindo directly told him: “Suppose there is an invasion of India by the Afghans, how are you going to meet it with non-violence?” After hearing from Devdas about this meeting, Gandhi lost interest in meeting Sri Aurobindo.³⁷

Whilst describing the character of the Aryan Sri Aurobindo has stated: “The Hindu on his side distastes violence in action, excess in speech, ostentation . . .”³⁸ he explains the task of Nationalism is “to build up Indian character by educating it to heroic self-sacrifice and magnificent ambitions, to restore the tone of nobility which it has lost and bring back the ideals of the ancient Aryan gentleman. The qualities of courage, frankness, love and justice are the stuff of which a Nationalist should be made.”³⁹

Dilip Kumar Roy writes about his Guru: “For while, on the one hand, he was unaggressive by temperament, on the other, he was too farseeing a realist to endorse unqualifiedly *ahimsa* or the gospel of non-resistance. He was wont to say that life was too complex to be plumbed with a doctrinaire precept.”⁴⁰

Gandhi’s initial interest to meet Sri Aurobindo waned when he learnt that Sri Aurobindo’s views on *ahimsa* did not match his. However, in 1934, more than a decade later, Gandhi, through a disciple, approached Sri Aurobindo for a meeting but was declined. Gandhi then wrote directly to Sri Aurobindo stating: “Perhaps you know that ever since my return to India I have been anxious to meet you face to face. Not being able to do that, I sent my son to you. Now that it is almost certain that I am to be in Pondicherry, will you spare me a few minutes & see me!”⁴¹ In his reply to Gandhi Sri Aurobindo politely refused. Sri Aurobindo told a disciple: “Gandhi has his own work, his own ideal and dharma — how can he open himself to receive

36. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 24.

37. See A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 54.

38. *CWSA*, Vol. 1, p. 189.

39. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, pp. 975-76.

40. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, 5th Ed., 2004, p. 184.

41. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, pp. 442-43.

anything from here?”⁴²

Sri Aurobindo once told a disciple:

It is true that there is in most people here this running after those who come from outside especially if they are well-known or distinguished. It is a common weakness of human nature and, like other weaknesses of human nature, the sadhaks seem not inclined to get rid of it. It is because they do not live sufficiently within, so the vital gets excited or attracted when something important or somebody important (or considered so) comes in from outside.⁴³

Sri Aurobindo also had no desire that his Ashram receive any recognition or fame as an institution.

When a sadhak asked: “How far does the arrival of well-known people justify the flutter it causes? Is it a sign that the Truth is spreading?” Sri Aurobindo pointedly replied: “No, not at all. Well-known or unknown has absolutely no importance from the spiritual point of view. . . . One man who earnestly pursues the Yoga is of more value than a thousand well-known men.”⁴⁴ A disciple once told Sri Aurobindo, “I am sure you have read the eulogies showered upon Duraiswami on his retirement and enjoyed them immensely, at the same time feeling proud of him and saying, ‘Ha, ha, here is the fruit of my Force!’ It is indeed a great pleasure to see the prestige of the Asram elevated by at least one man, though I suppose you don’t give a damn about prestige.” Sri Aurobindo’s rejoinder read:

Queer idea all you fellows seem to have of the “prestige” of the Asram. The prestige of an institution claiming to be a centre of spirituality lies in its spirituality, not in newspaper columns or famous people. Is it because of this mundane view of life and of the Asram held by the sadhaks that this Asram is not yet the centre of spirituality it set out to be?⁴⁵

A disciple’s exchange of correspondence with Sri Aurobindo ran:

I suspect, however, that you are closing in your Supramental net and bringing in all the outside fish!

Good Lord, no! I should be very much embarrassed if all the outside fish insisted on coming inside.

42. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 186.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 692.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 691.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 693.

What about X? When do you propose to catch him? . . . It would be a great enrichment of your Fishery. We are all watching with interest and eagerness that big operation of yours. But I don't think you will succeed till your Supramental comes to the field in full-fledged colours, what?

What big operation? There is no operation; I am not trying to hale in X as a big fish. I am not trying to catch him or bring him in. If he comes into the true spiritual life it will be a big thing for him, no doubt, but to the work it means only a ripple more or less in the atmosphere. Kindly consider how many people big in their own eyes have come and gone (Y, Z, A to speak of no others) and has the work stopped by their departure or the Asram ceased to grow? Do you really think that the success or failure of the work we have undertaken depends on the presence or absence of X? or on my hauling him in or letting him go? It is of importance only for the soul of X — nothing else.

Your image of the Fishery is quite out of place; I fish for no one; people are not hauled or called here, they come of themselves by the psychic instinct. Especially, I don't fish for big and famous and successful men. Such fellows may be mentally or vitally big, but they are usually quite contented with that kind of bigness and do not want spiritual things, or, if they do, their bigness stands in their way rather than helps them. The fishing for them is X's idea — he wanted to catch hold of Subhas Bose, Sarat Chatterji, now Lila Desai etc. etc., but they would have been exceedingly troublesome sadhaks, if they ever really dreamed of anything of the kind. All these are ordinary ignorant ideas; the Spirit cares not a damn for fame, success or bigness in those who come to it. People have a strange idea that Mother and myself are eager to get people as disciples and if anyone goes away, especially a “big” balloon with all its gas in it, it is a great blow, — a terrible defeat, — a dreadful catastrophe and cataclysm for us. Many even think that their being here is a great favour done to us for which we are not sufficiently grateful. All that is rubbish.⁴⁶

In 1935 Morarji Desai, who later served as Prime Minister of India, sought permission to attend darshan. Sri Aurobindo wrote to A. B. Purani: “Why should prominent politicians come trooping down here like this? I don't understand. Better wire that it is too late.”⁴⁷ Morarji “Desai came to the Ashram in August 1935. During his stay he wrote a letter to Sri Aurobindo, asking him questions about spiritual matters. Desai published Sri Aurobindo's reply in *The Story of My Life*.”⁴⁸

About outward appearances, a disciple once mentioned that monks in Burma are shown a great respect, to which another disciple rejoined, “Yes, respect for the

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 693-94.

47. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 445.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 594.

appearance and not for the reality.” Sri Aurobindo then narrated an incident in his pre-Pondicherry days about a Sannyasi and his ochre robe:

Lele also used to think that the appearance has some value. Once I met X with him. He asked me, “Why don’t you bow down to him?” I replied that I didn’t believe in the man. He said, “But you must respect the yellow robe.”⁴⁹

Sri Aurobindo clarified to a disciple:

Sannyasa is not enforced, but the inner *tyāga* of non-desire, non-demand, non-attachment is indispensable. A thing like this, an inconvenience that is not remedied when one asks, should be welcomed as a test for this inner *tyāga*; all things of the kind should be welcome as such opportunities to the seeker after the inner perfection.

I don’t know that wearing the Sannyasi dress would help for one can wear the dress and yet be full of desires. But I have no objection if it helps you as a symbol or a reminder.⁵⁰

About money Sri Aurobindo told a disciple:

I have never had any turn for rejection of the money power nor any attachment to it; one has to rise above these things . . . it is precisely when one has risen above that one can more easily command them.⁵¹

Sri Aurobindo’s forthrightness and unpretentiousness is again exemplified when in a letter of 1920 to Barin. He tells his younger brother: “I probably will not be able to return to Bengal. Pondicherry is the appointed place for the fulfilment of my yoga”⁵² and asks, “But I wonder what these people need me for.” He continues in a detached manner:

The saints and great men you have written about appear to me rather dubious. Somehow I do not find in them what I am looking for. Dayananda⁵³ has all sorts of wonderful powers. Illiterate disciples of his do remarkable automatic writing. All right, but this is only a psychic faculty. What I want to know about is the real thing in them and how far it has progressed. Then there is another — he stirs a person to his depths just by touching him. Very well, but what

49. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 22.

50. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, p. 761.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

52. Sri Aurobindo, *Bengali Writings*, 1991, All India Books, p. 360.

53. A yogi of eastern Bengal, alive when this letter was written. Not to be confused with Swami Dayananda of the Arya Samaj.

does that thrill lead to? Does the person become by this touch the kind of man who can stand like a pillar of the new age, the divine Golden Age? This is the question. I see you have your doubts about this. I have mine too.

I laughed when I read the prophecies of those saints and holymen — but not a laugh of scorn or disbelief. I do not know about the distant future. The light God sometimes gives me falls one step ahead of me; I move forward in that light. But I wonder what these people need me for. Where is my place in their great assembly? I am afraid they would be disappointed to see me. And as for me, would I not be a fish out of the water? I am not an ascetic, not a saint, not a holyman — not even a religious man. I have no religion, no code of conduct, no morality. Deeply engrossed in the worldly life, I enjoy luxury, eat meat, drink wine, use obscene language, do whatever I please — a Tantrik of the left-hand path. Among all these great men and incarnations of God am I a great man or an incarnation? If they saw me they might think I was the incarnation of the Iron Age, or of the titanic and demoniac form of the goddess Kali — what the Christians call the Antichrist. I see a misconception about me has been spread. If people get disappointed, it is not my fault.⁵⁴

Regarding Sri Aurobindo’s considered estimate of Tantra we take a quote from *The Synthesis of Yoga*:

Owing to certain of its developments Tantra has fallen into discredit with those who are not Tantrics; and especially owing to the developments of its left-hand path, the Vama Marga, which not content with exceeding the duality of virtue and sin and instead of replacing them by spontaneous rightness of action seemed, sometimes, to make a method of self-indulgence, a method of unrestrained social immorality. Nevertheless, in its origin, Tantra was a great and puissant system founded upon ideas which were at least partially true.⁵⁵

The Mother told a disciple:

Especially at the beginning, Sri Aurobindo used to shatter to pieces all moral ideas (you know, as in the *Aphorisms*, for example). He shattered all those things, he shattered them, really shattered them to pieces. So there’s a whole group of *youngsters* here who were brought up with this idea that “we can do whatever we want, it doesn’t matter in the least!” — that they need not bother about all those concepts of ordinary morality. I’ve had a hard time making them understand that this morality can be abandoned only for a higher one . . . So, one has to be careful not to give them the Power too soon.⁵⁶

54. Sri Aurobindo, *Bengali Writings*, 1991, All India Books, pp. 373-74.

55. *CWSA*, Vol. 23, p. 42.

56. Mother’s conversation with a disciple on 20 September, 1960.

Dilip Kumar Roy wrote about his Guru: “But though by nature unpretentious and pacifist, he would, if his vision demanded it, ruthlessly sweep aside everything and cut away from his moorings of tradition and custom to answer the call of his soul of flame.”⁵⁷

Sri Aurobindo’s straightforwardness is again illustrated when a disciple brought to his notice: “In an article written by a Swami on your book *The Riddle of This World*, he remarks that you have the boldness to say that you have done what the Vedic Rishis could not do.” Sri Aurobindo replied:

It is not I only who have done what the Vedic Rishis did not do. Chaitanya and others developed an intensity of Bhakti which is absent in the Veda and many other instances can be given. Why should the past be the limit of spiritual experience?⁵⁸

In 1905 Sri Aurobindo told Mrinalini Devi: “. . . it is my firm faith that all the virtue, talent, the higher education and knowledge and the wealth God has given me, belong to Him.”⁵⁹ And in April 1920 Sri Aurobindo wrote in Bengali to Barin where he explained his work on the Supermind as not being his, but God’s:

After fifteen years I am only now rising into the lowest of the three levels of the Supermind and trying to draw up into it all the lower activities. But when the process is complete, there is not the least doubt that God through me will give this supramental perfection to others with less difficulty. Then my real work will begin. I am not impatient for the fulfilment of my work. What is to happen will happen in God’s appointed time. I am not disposed to run like a madman and plunge into the field of action on the strength of my little ego. Even if my work were not fulfilled, I would not be disturbed. This work is not mine, it is God’s. I listen to no one else’s call. When I am moved by God, I will move.⁶⁰

And an aphorism of Sri Aurobindo reads:

If when thou art doing great actions and moving giant results, thou canst perceive that *thou* art doing nothing, then know that God has removed His seal from thy eyelids.⁶¹

57. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, 2004, p. 263.

58. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, p. 301.

59. Sri Aurobindo, *Bengali Writings*, 1991, All India Books, p. 351.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 361-62.

61. *CWSA*, Vol. 12, p. 437.

Sri Aurobindo has stated, “. . . when strength comes down from above, personal ambition and pride have to be kept far away from it . . .”⁶² Elsewhere Sri Aurobindo has written:

There should be no straining after power, no ambition, no egoism of power. The power or powers that come should be considered not as one’s own, but as gifts of the Divine for the Divine’s purpose. Care should be taken that there should be no ambitious or selfish misuse, no pride or vanity, no sense of superiority, no claim or egoism of the instrument, only a simple and pure psychic instrumentation of the nature in any way in which it is fit for the service of the Divine.⁶³

And in Chapter V of *The Mother* Sri Aurobindo writes:

There must be no attachment to the work or the result, no laying down of conditions, no claim to possess the Power that should possess you, no pride of the instrument, no vanity or arrogance. Nothing in the mind or in the vital or physical parts should be suffered to distort to its own use or seize for its own personal and separate satisfaction the greatness of the forces that are acting through you.⁶⁴

Sri Aurobindo believed a force was directing him to fulfil God’s goal. He once said:

All men who have been great and strong believe in some higher force greater than themselves, moving them. Socrates used to call this force his Daemon.⁶⁵

In an essay he elaborates:

. . . we find that the greatest men of action the world has known were believers in Fate or in a divine Will. Caesar, Mahomet, Napoleon, what more colossal workers has our past than these? The superman believes more readily in Destiny, feels more vitally conscious of God than the average human mind.

A saying of Napoleon’s is pregnant of the true truth of this matter. Questioned why, since he talked continually of fate, he thought it worth while to be always thinking and planning, he answered with just reason, “Because it is still Fate who wills that I should plan.” This is the truth. There is a Will or Force in the world that determines the result of my actions as part of the great whole;

62. *Ibid.*, Vol. 31, p. 491.

63. *Ibid.*, Vol. 29, p. 245.

64. *Ibid.*, Vol. 32, p. 13.

65. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 654.

there is a Will in me that determines, concealed by my thought and personal choice, the part that I shall take in determining the whole. It is this that my mind seizes on and calls my will. But I and mine are masks. It is All-existence that gives me my reality; it is the All-will and All-knowledge that, while I calculate, works in me for its own incalculable purpose.⁶⁶

Quite early in his life Sri Aurobindo was conscious that he was an instrument of God.⁶⁷ Later in his Uttarpara speech he announced:

I knew I would come out. The year of detention was meant only for a year of seclusion and of training. How could anyone hold me in jail longer than was necessary for God's purpose? He had given me a word to speak and a work to do, and until that word was spoken I knew that no human power could hush me, until that work was done no human power could stop God's instrument, however weak that instrument might be or however small.⁶⁸

In a 1915 letter to the Mother and Paul Richard, Sri Aurobindo writes: “The result is not mine and hardly at all now even the labour.”⁶⁹

And an excerpt of a 1920 letter to Barin reads:

But whatever the capacity, if once God places his finger upon the man and his spirit awakes, greater or lesser and all the rest make little difference. The difficulties may be more, it may take more time, what is manifested may not be the same — but even this is not certain. The god within takes no account of all these difficulties and deficiencies; he forces his way out. Were there few defects in my mind and heart and life and body? Few difficulties? Did it not take time? Did God hammer at me sparingly — day after day, moment after moment? Whether I have become a god or something else I do not know. But I have become or am becoming something — whatever God desired. This is sufficient. And it is the same with everybody; not by our own strength but by God's strength is this yoga done.⁷⁰

Sri Aurobindo was asked: “What could be the Divine's purpose in leaving Arjuna in such a helpless condition after his withdrawal from the world?” He replied:

66. *CWSA*, Vol. 13, pp. 160-61.

67. See A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, pp. 82.

68. *CWSA*, Vol. 8, pp. 4-5.

69. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 285.

70. Sri Aurobindo, *Bengali Writings*, 1991, All India Books, p. 368.

It is said that it was done to break Arjuna’s pride so that he might see his strength was not his, but the Divine’s alone.⁷¹

(To be continued)

GAUTAM MALAKER

71. CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 430.

Its [the intellect’s] function is to reason from the perceptions of the mind and senses, to form conclusions and to put things in logical relation with each other. A well-trained intellect is a good preparation of the mind for greater knowledge, but it cannot itself give the Yogic knowledge or know the Divine — it can only have ideas about the Divine, but having ideas is not knowledge. In the course of the sadhana intellect has to be transformed into the higher mind which is itself a passage towards the true knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga – IV, CWSA, Vol. 31, p. 11)

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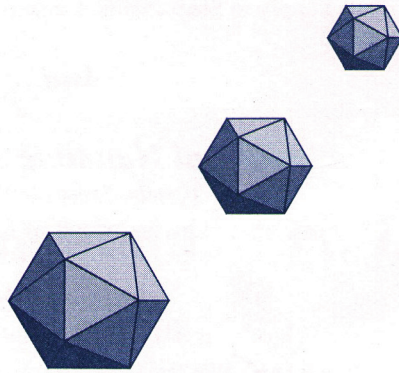
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