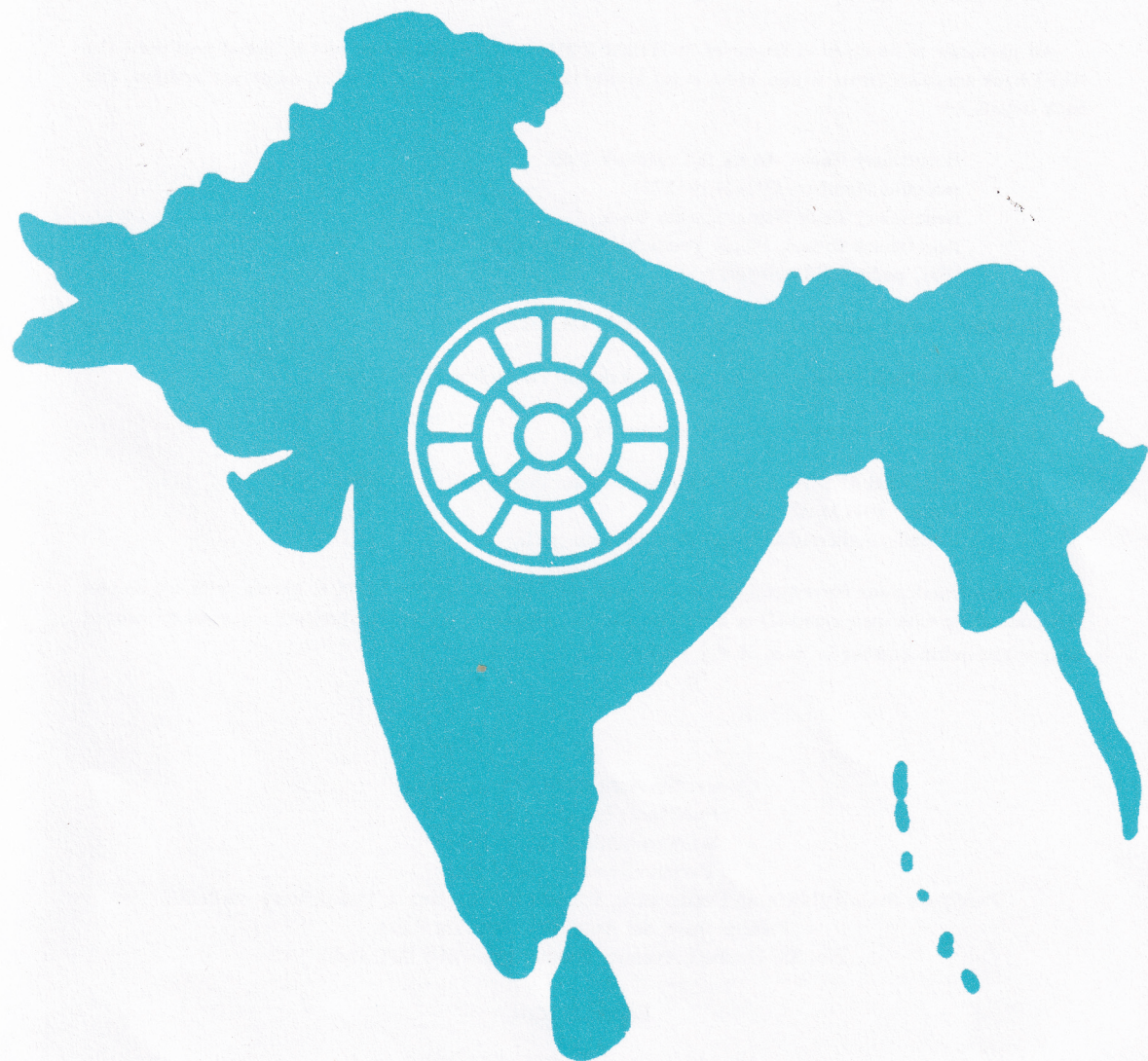


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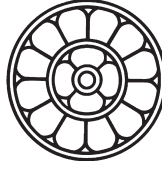
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SEPTEMBER 2023

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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MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXXVI

No. 9

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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‘ADORE AND WHAT YOU ADORE ATTEMPT TO BE’

(From the last scene of *Perseus the Deliverer*)

ANDROMEDA

Perseus,
You give and never ask; let me for you
Ask something.

PERSEUS

Ask, Andromeda, and have.

ANDROMEDA

Then this I ask that thy great deeds may leave
Their golden trace on Syria. Let the dire cult
For ever cease and victims bleed no more
On its dark altar. Instead, Athene's name
Spread over all the land and in men's hearts.
Then shall a calm and mighty Will prevail
And broader minds and kindlier manners reign
And men grow human, mild and merciful.

PERSEUS

King Cepheus, thou hast heard; shall this be done?

CEPHEUS

Hero, thou cam'st to change our world for us.
Pronounce; I give assent.

PERSEUS

Then let the shrine
That looked out from earth's breast into the sunlight,

Be cleansed of its red memory of blood,
 And the dread Form that lived within its precincts
 Transfigure into a bright compassionate God
 Whose strength shall aid men tossed upon the seas,
 Give succour to the shipwrecked mariner.
 A noble centre of a people's worship,
 To Zeus and great Athene build a temple
 Between your sky-topped hills and Ocean's vasts:
 Her might shall guard your lives and save your land.
 In your human image of her deity
 A light of reason and calm celestial force
 And a wise tranquil government of life,
 Order and beauty and harmonious thoughts
 And, ruling the waves of impulse, high-throned will
 Incorporate in marble, the carved and white
 Ideal of a young uplifted race.
 For these are her gifts to those who worship her.
 Adore and what you adore attempt to be.

CEPHEUS

Will the fiercer Grandeur that was here permit?

PERSEUS

Fear not Poseidon; the strong god is free.
 He has withdrawn from his own darkness and is now
 His new great self at an Olympian height.

CASSIOPEA

How can the immortal gods and Nature change?

PERSEUS

All alters in a world that is the same.
 Man most must change who is a soul of Time;
 His gods too change and live in larger light.

CEPHEUS

Then man too may arise to greater heights,
His being draw nearer to the gods?

PERSEUS

Perhaps.

But the blind nether forces still have power
And the ascent is slow and long is Time.
Yet shall Truth grow and harmony increase:
The day shall come when men feel close and one.
Meanwhile one forward step is something gained,
Since little by little earth must open to heaven
Till her dim soul awakes into the Light.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Plays and Stories, CWSA, Vol. 3, pp. 526-28)

In the introductory note to the play, Sri Aurobindo explains:

. . . For here the stage is the human mind of all times: the subject is an incident in its passage from a semi-primitive temperament surviving in a fairly advanced outward civilisation to a brighter intellectualism and humanism – never quite safe against the resurgence of the dark or violent life-forces which are always there subdued or subordinated or somnolent in the make-up of civilised man – and the first promptings of the deeper and higher psychic and spiritual being which it is his ultimate destiny to become. (CWSA, Vol. 3, p. 328)

THE STAGES OF EVOLUTION MATTER, LIFE, MIND, SUPERMIND

[The 171 notes, drafts and fragments were written by Sri Aurobindo over the course of thirty-five years, from around 1912 to 1947. They were not written in the present sequence nor intended by him to form a single work.

None of the pieces were revised for publication by the author.

The editors of CWSA have arranged them by topic and each piece has been numbered.

In reproducing a portion of that collection, we have retained the numbering for the readers' ease of reference. — Ed. Note based on CWSA indications.]

59

The evolution of the earth nature is not finished because it has manifested only three powers out of the seven-fold scale of consciousness that is involved in manifested Nature. It has brought out from its apparent inconscience only the three powers of Mind and Life and Matter.

60

Matter, one might say from a certain viewpoint, is purely a matter of mathematics. That cannot be said of Mind or of Life.

Then again, Matter is a matter of formulas. Everything purely material is created according to a formula.

Again, Matter is a matter of magic. It is a thing of magical and irrational or suprarational formulas.

Lastly, all Matter is *matra*, a thing of degrees, measures, quantities.

*

We find that water is produced by a combination in a fixed quantity of the two first elements, hydrogen and oxygen. We do not know or do not yet know why this should be so. All we can say is that [it] is a fixed law of Nature that when this formula is scrupulously followed without deviation something called water appears, — becomes a phenomenon of material Nature. There seems to be no reason in this miracle. We could partly understand it if oxygen and hydrogen by their very nature

tended to produce in any combination water or something like water, but only in the fixed amounts could bring out the perfect article.

But this is not the case; only by the fixed relative combination can it be done. This formula then is of the nature of a magic formula. Only by pronouncing a fixed combination of words or syllables or sounds can the [. . .] magic result follow and not otherwise. Any variation voids the effect and leaves the incantation barren.

Hydrogen itself is produced by a combination of a fixed number of electrons or electric particles of energy in a fixed relative position in their movement. Oxygen is produced by another such combination. The elements are alike in kind, it is a positional quantitative [*remainder of piece missing*]

61

Ether and material space are different names for the same thing. Space, in its origin at least if not in its universal character, is an extension of the substance of consciousness in which motion of energy can take place for the relations of being with being or force with force and for the building up of symbolic forms on which this interchange can be supported. Ether is space supporting the works of material energy and the symbolic forms it creates; it is, speaking paradoxically but to the point, immaterial or essential matter[.]

62

Matter is but a form of consciousness; nevertheless solve not the object entirely into its subjectivity. Reject not the body of God, O God lover, but keep it for thy joy; for His body too is delightful even as His spirit.

Perishable and transitory delight is always the symbol of the eternal Ananda, revealed and rapidly concealed, which seeks by increasing recurrence to attach itself to some typical form of experience in material consciousness. When the particular form has been perfected to express God in the type, its delight will no longer be perishable but an eternally recurrent possession of mental beings in matter manifest in their periods & often in their moments of felicity.

63

Evolution is the one eternal dynamic law and hidden process of the earth-nature.

An evolution of the instruments of the spirit in a medium of matter is the whole fundamental significance of the values of the earth-existence. All its other laws are its values of operation and process; the spiritual evolution is its one pervading secret sense.

*

The history of the earth is first an evolution of organised forms by the working of material forces.

There follows on this initial stage an evolution of life in the form and an organisation of a hierarchy of living forms by the working of liberated life-forces. The next step is an evolution of mind in living bodies and an organisation of more and more conscious lives by the process of developing mind forces. But even this is not the end; for there are higher powers of consciousness beyond mind which await their turn and must have their act in the great play, their part of the creative Lila.

*

Matter, the medium of all this evolution, is seemingly inconscient and inanimate; but it so appears to us only because we are unable to sense consciousness outside a certain limited range, a fixed scale or gamut to which we have access. Below us there are lower ranges to which we are insensible and these we call subconsciousness or inconscience. Above us are higher ranges which are to our inferior nature an unseizable superconsciousness.

The difficulty of Matter is not an absolute inconscience but an obscured consciousness limited by its own movement, vaguely, dumbly, blindly self-aware, only mechanically responsive to anything outside its own form and force. At its worst it can be called not so much inconscience as nescience. The awakening of a greater and yet greater consciousness in this Nescience is the miracle of the universe of Matter.

This nescience of Matter is a veiled, an involved or a somnambulist consciousness which contains all the latent powers of the Spirit. In every particle, atom, molecule, cell of Matter there lives hidden and works unknown all the omniscience of the Eternal and all the omnipotence of the Infinite.

The evolution of forms and powers by which Matter will become more and more conscious until passing beyond form and life and mind it becomes aware with the supernal awareness of the eternal and infinite Spirit in his own highest ranges, this is the meaning of earth existence. The slow self-manifesting birth of God in Matter is the purpose of the terrestrial Lila.

* *

Matter is at once a force and a substance. Matter is original being, Brahman made concrete in atomic division; Matter is original substance-force, Brahman-Shakti made active in an obscure involution of the spirit's powers, in a self-forgetful nescience.

Matter-force casts matter-substance, material Shakti casts Matter-Brahman into form expressive of its own most characteristic powers. When that has been done, the physical world is ready for the splendid intrusion of conscious Life into

the force-driven inertia of material substance.

Matter is not the only force, nor the only substance. For Life and Mind too and what is beyond Mind are also forces that are substances but of another kind and degree.

Spirit is the original force-substance; all these others are kinds and derivations of force of spirit, degrees and modifications [of] substance of spirit. Matter too is nothing but a power and degree of the spirit; Matter too is substance of the Eternal.

But the Matter that we see and sense is only an outermost sheath and coating; behind it are other subtler degrees of physical substance which are less dense with the atomic nescience and it is easier for Life and Mind to enter into them and operate. If finer invisible physical layers or couches did not exist supporting this gross visible physical world, that world could not abide; for then the fine operations of transmission between Spirit and Matter [could not] be executed at all and it is these that render the grosser visible operations possible. The evolution would be impossible; life and mind and beyond-mind would be unable to manifest in the material universe.

There is not only this material plane of being that we see, there is a physical life plane proper to the vital physical operation of Nature. There is a physical mind plane proper to a mental physical operation of Nature. There is a physical supermind plane proper to the supramental physical operation of Nature. There is too a plane of physical spirit power or infinite physical Being-Consciousness-Force-Bliss proper to the spiritual physical operations of Nature. It is only when we have discovered and separated these planes of Nature and of our physical being and analysed the synthesis of their contributions to the whole play that we shall discover how the evolution of vital, mental and spiritual consciousness became possible in inconscient Matter.

But there is more; for beyond these many couches of the physical existence are other supraphysical degrees, a many layered plane of Life, a many layered plane of Mind, planes of Supermind, of Bliss, of Consciousness Force and of infinite Being on which the physical existence depends for its origination and its continuance. It is higher planes that flood the constantly unfolding unseen energies which have raised its evolution from the obscurity in which it began to the splendour of a light of consciousness to which the highest human mind shall only be the feeble glimmer of a glowworm fire before the sun in its flaming glories.

There is a stupendous hierarchy of grades of consciousness between darkest Matter and most luminous spirit. Consciousness in Matter has to go on climbing to the very top of the series and return with all it has to give us before the evolution can utterly fulfil its purpose.

* *

Matter, Life, Mind, Supermind or Gnosis, and beyond these the quadruple power of a supreme Being-Consciousness-Force-Bliss — these are the grades of the

evolutionary ascent from inconscience to the Superconscience.

Life does not wholly come into the earth from outside it; its principle is there always in material things. But, imprisoned in the apparent inanimate inertia or blind force movement of Matter, it is bound by its movements and unable to manifest its own independent or dominant existence.

Life is there in the earth, rock, metal, gas, atom, electron and the other more subtle yet undiscovered forces and particles that constitute material energy and form. It is in everything, but at first a hardly detectable presence organised only to support secretly material energies, processes, formations and transformations; it is there as an involved power for the building and expression of Form of Matter, not for the expression of Life. It is not in possession of itself, not self-conscious in the form, not pushed towards self-manifestation; a helpless tool and instrument, not a free agent, it is a servant of Matter and a slave of the Form, not the master of the house.

But above the material world there is a plane of dominant Life that presses down upon this material universe and seeks to pour into it whatever it can of its own types, powers, forces, impulsions, manifesting creative godheads. When in the material world form is ready, the Gods and Life-Daemons of this higher plane are attracted to put their creative touch upon Matter. Then there comes a rapid and sudden efflorescence of Life; the plant, the animalcule, the insect, the animal appear. A Life-Soul and a Life-Force with its many and always more complex movements are manifested in what seemed once to be inert and inanimate substance. Life souls, life minds, animal existences are born and evolve; a new world appears that is born and contained in this world of Matter and yet surpasses it in its own dynamic nature.

64

At each capital step of Nature's ascent there is a reversal of consciousness in the evolving spirit. As when a climber turns on a summit to which he has laboured and looks down with an exalted and wider power of vision on all that was once above or on a level with him but is now below his feet, the evolutionary being not only transcends his past self, his former now exceeded status, but commands from a higher grade of self-experience and vision, with a new apprehending feeling or a new comprehending sight and effectuating power, in a greater system of values, all that was once his own consciousness but is now below his tops and belongs to an inferior creation. This reversal is the sign of a decisive victory and the seal of a radical progress in Nature.

The new consciousness attained in the spiritual evolution is always higher in grade and power, always larger, more comprehensive, wider in sight and feeling, richer and finer in faculties, more complex, organic, dominating than the consciousness that was once our own but is now left behind us. There are greater breadths and spaces, heights before impossible, unexpected depths and intimacies. There is a

luminous expansion that is the very sign manual of the Supreme upon his work.¹

Mark too that each of the great radical steps forward already taken by Nature has been infinitely greater in its change, incalculably vaster in its consequences than its puny predecessor. There is a miraculous opening to an always richer and wider expression, there is a new illuminating of the creation and a dynamic heightening of its significances. There is in this world we live in no equality of all on a flat level, but a hierarchy of ever-increasing precipitous superiorities pushing their mountain shoulders upwards towards the Supreme.

Plant-life is a most significant progress upon the mineral, but the difference is as nothing compared with the gulf that divides the dumb vitality of the plant from the conscious experience of the animal. The hiatus between the animal and the human is so great in consciousness, however physically small, that the scientists' alleged cousinship of monkey and man looks psychologically almost incredible. And yet the difference between vital animal and mental man is as nothing to that which will be between man's mind and the superman's vaster consciousness and richer powers. That past step will be to this new one as the snail's slow march in the grass to a Titan's sudden thousand league stride from continent to continent.

Evolution on the terrestrial plane, even in the dumbest brute matter is only in outward appearance a progression of physical function and form; in its essential fact, in its inner meaning, in its significant power, it is a progression of consciousness, a spiritual or psychological change.

At each step the spirit heightens its stature, perfects its instruments, organises better its self-expression; a new consciousness comes in, takes up the old and gives it an extended movement and another significance, adds greater, richer, more complex movements of which the first formulation was incapable.

In the sub-vegetal world all movements, all stimulus, all reaction are of a material and if dynamic, of a mechanically dynamic character. Even the life movements that exist there, as in the mineral, are of the most rigidly automatic, unindividualised and mechanical and external nature, birth, formation, fatigue, sleep, death. Mental or psychic powers and significances there are, as an occult knowledge discovers, but of these the form seems not aware; it is something behind the life of the mineral, a consciousness supporting rather than inhabiting it, using but not used by it, that is their possessor.

In the plant world for the first time a true vital consciousness appears in earth Nature.

1. *The following passage from the first draft of this piece was not incorporated by Sri Aurobindo in the present draft:*

Illuminating his creation here and pointing out to it its own significance it suggests the culmination of ever-ascending superiorities in the Supreme and the opening of released ever-increasing widenesses in the Infinite.

65

All the trend and purpose of Nature in terrestrial existence is to manifest the yet unmanifested. Her continual aim is to develop out of what has been evolved that which has not been evolved but is waiting to [be] liberated out of latency. This continual evolution is the whole meaning of terrestrial existence.

What has already been evolved is form of matter with life and mind housed in it, what has yet to be evolved is supermind liberating from their narrow limits and transforming mind and life and matter.

Here on earth and in the material universe matter has been the first term, the basis of things, the condition of all that must evolve here. Life can evolve here only so far as it can persuade or compel matter to give it a form and an instrumentation. Mind too has to accommodate itself to the means given it by an organised living body. There is no reason to suppose however that life in itself is limited in its possibilities to the small range realised by the living animal or human body; or the potentialities [of] mind limited to the field of powers accorded to it by the brain, nerves and physical senses, its ingenious but still very poor and unreliable instruments here.

In a world where life and not matter was the first term, condition and basis, in a vital world life would be free to organise itself in its own way with a free energy in plastic and pliable forms and its ranges of possibilities would be immense and circumscribed by no rigid limits.

66

But what shall be the gain won for the earth-consciousness we embody by this unprecedented ascent out of mind to whatever may be beyond it and what the significance of the supramental change? To what end shall man leave his safe human limits for this godlike but hazardous adventure?

First consider what was gained when earthly Nature passed from the brute inconscience and inertia of the first organised forms in what seems to us inanimate Matter to the vibrant sensibility of the plant range. Life was gained; the gain was the beginning of the mute groping and involved consciousness that reaches out to growth, to sense-vibration, to waking and sleep, to hunger and thirst, to physical pain and pleasure, to a preparation for vital yearnings and a living joy and beauty. That was begun which still is unfinished — the first step towards a conscious consciousness and what shall yet be the divine Ananda.²

In the plant earth-nature achieved a first figure of life, but the creature she made could not possess it, because this first organised life-consciousness had feeling and seeking, woke and slept, hungered and was satisfied, thirsted and drank and grew

2. Not joy or pleasure, but the bliss of existence and its movements from which the world arose.

and flourished, had pleasure of some contacts and suffered from others, but was still externally blind, dumb, deaf, chained to the soil from which it was born, involved in its own nerve and tissue. It could not get out of this primitive formula, could not get behind its nerve-self as does the vital mind of the animal, still less could turn down from above it to know and realise its own motions as does the thinking and observing mind of man and to control them. This was a decisive but an imprisoned gain; for there was still a gross oppression of the original Inconscience which had covered up with the brute phenomenon of Matter and energy of Matter all signs of the Spirit. Nature could nowise stop here, because she held so much in her that was still occult, potential, unexpressed, unorganised, suppressed, latent; the evolution had perforce to go farther. The animal had to replace the plant at the head and top of Nature.

And what then was gained when Nature passed from the obscurity of the plant kingdom to the awakened sense and desire and emotion and the free mobility of animal life? The gain was liberated sense and feeling and desire and courage and cunning and the contrivance of the objects of desire, passion and action and hunger and battle and conquest and the sex-call and play and pleasure, and all the joy and pain of the conscious living creature. Not only the life of the body which the animal has in common with the plant but a life-mind that appeared for the first time in the earth-story and grew and grew from form to more organised form till it reached in the best the limit of its own formula.

The animal achieved a first form of mind, but could not possess it, because this first organised mind consciousness was enslaved in a narrow scope, tied to the first functionings of the physical body and brain and nerve, tied to serve the physical life and its desires and needs and passions, limited to the insistent uses of the vital urge, to natural longing and feeling and action, bound by its own inferior instrumentation, its spontaneous combinings of association and memory and instinct. It could not get away from them, could not get behind them as man's intelligence gets behind them to observe them; still less could it turn down on them from above as do human reason and will to control, enlarge, reorder, exceed, sublimates.

67

Mind emerges out of life in matter; it is incapable of manifesting directly in the material form. It is there, but it acts mechanically in the somnambulism of an original force of inconscience and inertia. This and no more is what we mean by the inconscience of Matter; for although consciousness is there, it is involved, inorganic, mechanical in its action; it supports the works of Force by its inherent presence, but not by its light of active intelligence. This is why material Nature does the works of a supreme and miraculous intelligence and yet there seems to be no intervention of any indwelling Seer or Thinker.

Because man is a mental being, he naturally imagines that mind is the one great leader and actor and creator or the indispensable agent in the universe. But this is an error; even for knowledge mind is not the only or the greatest possible instrument, the one aspirant and discoverer. Mind is a clumsy interlude between Nature's vast and precise subconscious action and the vaster infallible superconscious action of the Godhead.

There is nothing mind can do that cannot be better done in the mind's immobility and thought-free stillness.

When mind is still, then Truth gets her chance to be heard in the purity of the silence.

Truth cannot be attained by the mind's thought but only by identity and silent vision. Truth lives in the calm wordless Light of the eternal spaces; she does not intervene in the noise and cackle of logical debate.

Thought in the mind can at most be Truth's brilliant and transparent garment; it is not even her body. Look through the robe, not at it, and you may see some hint of her form. There can be a thought-body of Truth, but that is the spontaneous supramental Thought and Word that leap fully formed out of the Light, not any difficult mental counterfeit and patchwork. The supramental Thought is not a means of arriving at Truth, for Truth in the supermind is self-found or self-existent, but a way of expressing her. It is an arrow from the Light, not a bridge to reach it.

Cease inwardly from thought and word, be motionless within you, look upward into the light and outward into the vast cosmic consciousness that is around you. Be more and more one with the brightness and the vastness. Then will Truth dawn on you from above and flow in on you from all around you.

But only if the mind is no less intense in its purity than its silence. For in an impure mind the silence will soon fill with misleading lights and false voices, the echo or sublimation of its own vain conceits and opinions or the response to its secret pride, vanity, ambition, lust, greed or desire. The Titans and the Demons will speak to it more readily than the divine Voices.

Silence is indispensable, but also there is needed wideness. If the mind is not silent, it cannot receive the lights and voices of the supernal Truth or receiving mixes with them its own flickering tongues and blind pretentious babble. Active, arrogant, noisy, it distorts and disfigures what it receives. If it is not wide, it cannot house the effective power and creative force of the Truth. Some light may play there but it becomes narrow, confined and sterile. Or the force that is descending is cabined and thwarted and withdraws again from this rebellious foreign plane to its vast native heights. Or even if something comes down and remains, it is a pearl in the mire; for no change takes place in the nature or else there is formed only a thin intensity that points narrowly upward to the summits but can hold little and diffuse less upon the world around it.

69

Reason is a clarified, ordered and organised Ignorance. It is a half-enlightened Ignorance seeking for truth, but a truth which it insists on founding upon the data and postulates of the Ignorance. Reason is not in possession of the Truth, it is a seeker. It is [unable to] discover the Truth or embody it; it leaves Truth covered but rendered into mental representations, a verbal and ideative scheme, an abstract algebra of concepts, a theory of the Ignorance. Sense-evidence is its starting point and it never really gets away from that insecure beginning. Its concepts start from sense-data and though like a kite it can fly high into an air of abstractions, it is held to the earth of sense by a string of great strength; if that string is broken it drifts lazily [in] the clouds and always it falls back by natural gravitation to its original earth basis — only so can it receive strength to go farther. Its field is the air and sky of the finite, it cannot ascend into the stratosphere of the spiritual vision, still less can it move at ease in the Infinite.

70

Mind can never be a perfect instrument of knowledge. For even if it could be free from all positive error, even if it could be all intuitive and infallibly intuitive, it could still present and organise only half truths or separated truths and these too not in their own body but in luminous representative figures put together to make an accumulated total or a massed structure[.]

71

The office of intellect is not to fathom reality, but to fabricate and preside over action; intellect cannot comprehend life and reality. Intellect (logic) goes round the object, intuition enters into the object; one stops at the [?], the other enters into the absolute[.]

72

Intuition, — but what do we mean when we speak of intuition? What is its origin, nature, working, and how is it connected with intelligence and sense and instinct, our other ways of knowing, or what is the difference? Is intuition the one means of true and complete knowledge or does it need intelligence, sense, instinct to complete it? Is there a greater power of direct and absolute and complete knowledge of which intuition is only a special or part action, — some first and last potency, the Alpha and Omega of an all-knowledge, the all-knowledge that we attribute to God or to the Spirit of the universe?

These are the queries it is proposed to answer here; but the answer can come only from intuition itself, from a direct seeing and experience, for if intuition exists, it and its way of working must obviously be something beyond the reasoning intelligence and therefore not entirely seizable by the reasoning intelligence.

I know myself because I am myself, I know the movements of my mind, joy, anger, love, thought, will, because they are myself or parts of myself; I have a direct knowledge of myself, a knowledge by identity. Observation, reasoning there can be as a subsidiary process; but it is not by observation or reasoning that I know them; I feel and know my anger or love as part of myself and have no need to observe or to reason in order to know that I am angry or that I love.

Intuition is a direct knowledge self-existent and independent of means and devices; it is naturally self-existent and founded upon a knowledge by identity; or when it is gained, it is either by identification or by a knowledge arising from some intimate contact made possible by an underlying or occult identity.

73

Nothing has the value of truth for the supramental if it is only thought or understood with the intelligence. That is a shadow or reflection and shadows can always distort, at best only adumbrate; reflections can always misform or mistranslate and at best have not the truth-substance. It is only when the object is entered into, seen with an inner and surrounding vision, possessed in experience, taken into our living universal & identifying individual consciousness, made one with us in the Truth that is, holds, comprehends, actuates all things, — only then is there the characteristic process of the supermind, the way of directness, the sincerity and power, the magnificence and general wholeness of the gnosis[.]

74

But what is supermind and where is it in this world of half lights, in which consciousness is a constructor of ideas, images and sensations that at once inform and mislead, representations that are half truths, half misrepresentations, symbols of things, not things in themselves, relative impressions but nothing absolute. Our senses give us the forms of things as they seem to our senses, not as they are; for they would appear quite different to other senses than ours; our mind builds the great mass of its idea of the world and things on this insecure basis, or if it corrects the evidence of the senses, it is in the light of a reason whose conceptions of Time, Space and Substance are equally imperfect, equally relative, empirically valid up to a certain point, but fundamentally dubious and insecure. Is not this the only consciousness possible, or at least the highest of which we are capable and have we any evidence of a higher

power of awareness and knowledge or any ground to suppose that there are beings greater than man who possess it? Is not this world and must it not be always a world of Ignorance, knowledge partial at the best, all knowledge here relative, pragmatic, indirect and no knowledge either here or anywhere that can be called supreme, direct or absolute? If absolute knowledge there is it must be the sheer consciousness of the Featureless Infinite, the One Self, the void or formless Spirit, and there can be no other.

75

I mean by the supermind a power, a level, an organisation of consciousness which is not only above the human mind, but above all that can be called mind, — another higher and wider essence and energy of consciousness altogether. Mind is that which seeks after truth of any kind or of all kinds within its range, labours to know it, attempts to direct and utilise it. But by supermind I mean a divine awareness which inherently possesses truth, knows it by its own intrinsic identity with it and puts it into action or effect spontaneously by its own sovereign power without any need of endeavour or labour. Mind even though it seeks after knowledge and can sometimes grasp its figure or touch its shadow, is a product of the cosmic Inconscient or of a Half-Conscience-Ignorance; supermind is an eternal Truth consciousness, a divine Knowledge self-maintained for ever and luminous in its own right beyond all Ignorance.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 244-60)



UNITY BY CO-OPERATION

Bande Mataram, Calcutta, March 20th, 1908

Of all the little bodies which we are trying to build up for the regeneration of the country, those are the true centres of strength which come nearest to the ideal of love and justice, which bind their members together in a close and affectionate unity, which form a league of brotherhood and mutual help, which without attempting to absorb all into themselves are always ready to come to the assistance of similar societies and of everyone who is in need of help. The country is a large one, the difficulties of organization are enormous, and no single organization can hope to monopolise the work. What we need is not a single all-embracing organization, but a number of smaller ones harmoniously co-operating together, free from jealousy, willing to give the first place to the others, provided the work progresses. The various Samitis which have sprung into existence in Calcutta are all doing good work, as has been shown by the success of the Ardhodaya Yog arrangements, and they form a source of energy, little units of strength which are bound to become the basis of the future organization of the country. But these Samitis are at present disconnected and without a connecting bond. They join together when some great occasion calls for their united action, but they again fall apart as soon as the call is over, and pursue their isolated path. What is needed now is a machinery which will keep them in touch with each other without permitting any mutual interference; each unit should be independent in its work and its constitution, but the leaders should be in constant communication so that all the Samitis may be cognizant of each other's work and ready to help whenever help is needed. Moreover when occasion calls for united action the leaders should be in a position to take advantage of each other's help without loss of time; they should feel that they can immediately lay their hands on the strength they stand in need of and apply it at the right place and moment. If this can be done, the recent success at the Ardhodaya Yog will be a starting-point for the better organization of the country and for the beginning of a series of similar successes which will gradually make the nation feel the source of strength within itself and learn to utilise it in every department of activity. We are apt to get each absorbed in his own little sphere of action, to set an exaggerated value upon it and try to carry it out by our own unaided and isolated strength, so that the work progresses slowly, is partial, limited and halting in its success and carried on under crushing difficulties which interfere with its perfection and usefulness. There are several Nationalist journals which are doing each in its own line a great work for the country, but they are working in an isolated fashion, each absorbed in its own struggle to survive, each exposed to attack from the same powerful adversary, yet

careless of the other, — a condition of things which gives enormous advantages to the enemy who is already powerful enough to crush them and would have crushed them long ago if there had not been a greater Power which willed that these little flickering lights should not be extinguished. During the Nationalist Conference at Surat it was decided to set on foot a Press Conference for the better preservation of and mutual assistance and constant communication between the papers which are struggling under heart-breaking difficulties, with the constant threat of prosecution hanging over them, to keep the lamp of hope and faith burning in the temple of the Mother. No further step has been taken in this direction, at least in Bengal, and it is time that it should be taken up in earnest and a Conference of the Nationalist Press in Calcutta arranged by which that Press should become a common body associated for mutual assistance and support. A typical instance of the difficulties which result from the absence of such a Conference is the temporary disappearance of *New India* while Srijiut Bipin Chandra Pal was in jail. That disappearance should never have been allowed; as a point of honour, if nothing else, the paper should have been maintained at any cost; but there was no common body, no common action. Each organ of Nationalism was struggling with its own difficulties, absorbed in itself and oblivious of the advantages of co-operation.

There are many other departments of work which are suffering from the same want of co-operation between the workers, and it is unnecessary to enumerate them. Each of them should be organised separately on the basis not of an impossible centralisation, but of harmonious co-operation. When each is united within itself, the higher unity for which we are hoping will naturally come into existence. That organization will be most vital, lasting and sound which comes as a natural growth, developing in answer to growing needs and formed by the closer union of units which have grown up independently and preserved their separate life within the general unity. Life is organic because it evolves from the separate to the united, from the individual to the group, from the cell to the organism, and what we require in India is political life, not a manufactured unity. All our previous attempts at union have been failures because we did not recognise this law of growth.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Bande Mataram*, CWSA, Vol. 7, pp. 941-43)

THE MOTHER AND THE NATION

We have lost the faculty of religious fervour in Bengal and are trying now to recover it through the passion for the country by self-sacrifice, by labour for our fellow-countrymen, by absorption in the idea of the country. When a nation is on the verge of losing the source of its vitality, it tries to recover it by the first means which the environment offers, whether it be favourable to it or not. Bengal has always lived by its emotions; the brain of India, as it has been called, is also the heart of India. The loss of emotional power, of belief, of expansiveness of feeling would dry up the sources from which she derives her strength. The country of Nyaya is also the country of Chaitanya, who himself was born in the height of the intellectual development of Bengal as its fine flower and most perfect expression.

The land of Chaitanya is also the chosen home of the Mother and in Bengal she has set her everlasting seat. Immeasurable ages will pass, revolutions shake the land, religions come and go, but so long as the Ganges flows through the plains of the delta, so long shall the Mother sit enthroned in Bengal as sovereign and saviour. New forms she will take, new aspects of power or beauty, but the soul of her Motherhood will live unchanged and call to her sons to adore her. In the new age she has taken to herself a new form, she has come to us with a fresh face of beauty the full sweetness of which we have not yet grasped. When Bankim discovered the *mantra* *Bande Mataram* and the song wrote itself out through his pen, he felt that he had been divinely inspired, but the people heard his song and felt nothing. “Wait” said the prophet, “wait for thirty years and all India will know the value of the song I have written.” The thirty years have passed and Bengal has heard; her ears have suddenly been opened to a voice to which she had been deaf and her heart filled with a light to which she had been blind. The Mother of the hymn is no new goddess, but the same whom we have always worshipped; only she has put off the world-form in which she was familiar to us, she has assumed a human shape of less terrible aspect, less fierce and devastating power to attract her children back to her bosom.

What is a nation? We have studied in the schools of the West and learned to ape the thoughts and language of the West forgetting our own deeper ideas and truer speech, and to the West the nation is the country, so much land containing so many millions of men who speak one speech and live one political life owing allegiance to a single governing power of its own choosing. When the European wishes to feel a living emotion for his country, he personifies the land he lives in, tries to feel that a heart beats in the brute earth and worships a vague abstraction of his own intellect. The Indian idea of nationality ought to be truer and deeper. The philosophy of our forefathers looked through the gross body of things and discovered a subtle body within, looked through that and found yet another more deeply hidden, and within

the third body discovered the Source of life and form, seated for ever, unchanging and imperishable. What is true of the individual object, is true also of the general and universal. What is true of the man, is true also of the nation. The country, the land is only the outward body of the nation, its *annamaya kosha*, or gross physical body; the mass of people, the life of millions who occupy and vivify the body of the nation with their presence, is the *pranamaya kosha*, the life-body of the nation. These two are the gross body, the physical manifestation of the Mother. Within the gross body is a subtler body, the thoughts, the literature, the philosophy, the mental and emotional activities, the sum of hopes, pleasures, aspirations, fulfilments, the civilisation and culture, which make up the *sukshma sharir* of the nation. This is as much a part of the Mother's life as the outward existence which is visible to the physical eyes. This subtle life of the nation again springs from a deeper existence in the causal body of the nation, the peculiar temperament which it has developed out of its ages of experience and which makes it distinct from others. These three are the bodies of the Mother, but within them all is the Source of her life, immortal and unchanging, of which every nation is merely one manifestation, the universal Narayan, One in the Many of whom we are all the children.

When, therefore, we speak of a nation, we mean the separate life of the millions who people the country, but we mean also a separate culture and civilisation, a peculiar national temperament which has become too deeply rooted to be altered and in all these we discover a manifestation of God in national life which is living, sacred and adorable. It is this which we speak of as the Mother. The millions are born and die; we who are here today, will not be here tomorrow, but the Mother has been living for thousands of years and will live for yet more thousands when we have passed away.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Bande Mataram*, CWSA, Vol. 7, 1114-16)



‘WHY, O LORD, IMPOSE UPON ME THE CALVARY OF THIS CONSTRAINT? . . .’

August 16, 1914

For three days I waited in an ardent prayer, hoping to see the new things . . . and all the obstacles surged up to veil, retard, deform Thy manifestation. And now we do not seem any nearer the goal than before.

O my sweet Master, why hast Thou told me to leave the blessed place in Thy heart and return to earth to attempt a realisation which everything seems to prove impossible? . . . What dost Thou expect of me that Thou hast torn me away from my divine and wonderful contemplation and plunged me again into this dark, struggling universe? When Thy force descends towards the earth in order to manifest, each one of the great Asuric beings who have resolved to be Thy servitors but preserved their nature’s characteristic of domination and self-will, wants to pull it down for itself alone and distribute it to others afterwards; it always thinks it should be the sole or at least the supreme intermediary, and that the contact of all others with Thy Power cannot and should not be made except through its mediation. This unfortunate meanness is more or less conscious, but it is always there, delaying things indefinitely. If even for the greatest it is impossible in the integral manifestation to escape these lamentable limitations, why, O Lord, impose upon me the calvary of this constraint? . . . If Thou willest that it be thus, Thou shouldst rend the last veil and Thy splendour come in all its purity and transfigure the world!

Accomplish this miracle or else let me withdraw into Thee.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 223)

ON THE MANIFESTATION OF DIVINE LOVE

(From a conversation of 31 October 1956)

Mother, someone has asked me to request you to explain one of your sentences. You have said somewhere that one must become divine before one can bear the pressure of Divine Love. It is in the “Diary”.

Oh! you are repeating it a little freely!
Well, what does he want to know?

He is asking whether man must first become divine before Love can spread over the earth.

I don't think this is what is meant. Surely what you mean is that Divine Love cannot manifest until man becomes divine. Is that what you mean?

That is what we understand.

Oh! that's how you understand it! . . . But I don't think this is what is meant.

First of all, we are going to take the historical fact, if there is one. That is to say, through the action of the forces of separation, Consciousness became inconscience and matter was created such as it is, on a basis of inconscience so total that no contact seemed possible between the Origin and what was created. And this total inconscience made a direct descent necessary, without passing through the intermediate regions, a direct descent of the divine Consciousness in its form of Love. And it is this descent of Divine Love into matter, penetrating it and adding a new element to its composition, which has made possible the ascent, slow for us, but an uninterrupted ascent, from inconscience to consciousness and from darkness to light. Therefore, one cannot say that Love can manifest only when the creation becomes divine, for it is *on the contrary* because of its manifestation that creation can become divine once again.

What I said there has nothing to do with this.

I was speaking not of the world in general but of human consciousness in particular; and certainly, I was alluding to the fact that this Divine Love which animates all things, penetrates all, upbears all and leads all towards progress and an ascent to the Divine, is not felt, not perceived by the human consciousness, and that even to the extent the human being does perceive it, he finds it difficult to bear — not only to contain it, but be able to tolerate it, I might say, for its power in its purity, its

intensity in its purity, are of too strong a kind to be endured by human nature. It is only when it is diluted, deformed, attenuated and obscured, so to say, that it becomes acceptable to human nature. It is only when it moves away from its true nature and essential quality that man accepts it, and even (*smiling*) approves of it and glorifies it. This means that it must already be quite warped in order to be accepted by the human consciousness. And to accept it, bear it and receive it in its plenitude and purity, the human consciousness must become divine.

This was what I meant, not anything else. I was stating that a human being, unless he raises himself to the divine heights, is incapable of receiving, appreciating and knowing what divine Love is. Love must cease to be divine to be accepted by man.

But that is a phenomenon of the outer, superficial consciousness; it doesn't prevent Love in its form of Grace from being at work everywhere and always, and from doing its work in an unknown but constant way, to put it thus; and I think, in fact, that it never works so well as when it is not known . . . for even the so-called human understanding is already a deformation.

That is the meaning of the sentence, and nothing else. I was not speaking of a cosmic phenomenon.

THE MOTHER

(*Questions and Answers 1956*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 8, pp. 339-40)



“DE PROFUNDIS” & “INCOGNITA” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

This sonnet began two evenings back under the gaze of the Mother after her walk on the terrace. It was a cry from some immense stony darkness awakened to a keen sense of its own undivinity and frankly offering itself to the Divine for transmutation.

DE PROFUNDIS

I am the agony of glooms that know
loss!¹
At last their own immeasurable dross!
Struck by² Thy superhuman sheen I grow
Unveiled to my self-gaze in all the gross
Betrayal of Thy presence with each breath
That I have drawn apart from Thy soul-rays.
A conscious martyrdom of living death,
A funeral pyre of fallen years, I blaze

Into wide aspiration for new birth!
O quenchless Truth, sorrow shall make my earth
Through this unblinded burning self-shame one
With Thy pure vast — each holocausting hour
Flame-wedded unto Thee shall keep Thy power
Held in the heart like a prodigious sun!

1. I have suggested “loss” to avoid too many combinations of “r” with some preceding consonant, at the end of the lines — “dross, grow, gross, breath, soul-rays”. But perhaps, this frequency is not very noticeable. What do you think?

“loss” is better than “dross”

2. I would like to avoid this “by” but I couldn’t think of an apt expression to replace “struck”. Will “with” instead of “by” after “struck” be as good?

No “struck with” would mean “struck with admiration of, impressed by”.

It is a good sonnet.

29 January 1934

Sri Aurobindo —

A sonnet just finished — with four lines interspersed from poems I have put aside because they had not entirely satisfied you. How do you find it?

I scarce can tell what love's communion
Has made my life miraculously sweet;
All that I know is nameless rapture-heat
Held in the heart like a prodigious sun.

My solitude of inmost hush kneels down
For benediction to invisible feet,
And all my broken splendours grow complete
With some curved palm as my paradisa^l crown.

Although the face I long for never shows
Its rich beatitude of reverie,
On the pale mouth of my mortality
Each song now blossoms like a deathless rose,

As if in answer to the unseen press
Of lips divine upgrew that loveliness.

1. Would “paradisial” sound better?

No.

It lacks a little in spontaneity, but is otherwise successful — the building is good and there is a strong harmony in the diction and rhythm.

25 October 1934

Sri Aurobindo —

If one did not read the whole of your comment on my sonnet one might think your words ironical — “It lacks a little in spontaneity, but is otherwise successful”. Is not spontaneity the very soul of poetic success? But, of course, you meant that the full perfection was not there. Personally I fancy the turn of thought and expression in the poem, but if you mean by a little lack of spontaneity that inevitability is not there — and surely the expression can be original and striking without absolute poetic inevitability being there — I don’t see why it also should not be put aside — like the other ones from which four lines had been transferred into this. If, however, you think that it is somewhere between “good” and “very good” there would be more ground for showing mercy to it. I am giving below a sonnet where the fourth line of this recent effort has already occurred, but which I have rejected. Will you kindly compare the quality of the two, and, if today’s work proves better, indicate the lines or phrases which I should modify in order to bring it up to the level of my best work?

1.

[**DE PROFUNDIS**]

I am the agony of glooms that know
At last their own immeasurable loss!
Struck by Thy superhuman sheen I grow
Unveiled to my self-gaze in all the gross
Betrayal of Thy presence with each breath
That I have drawn apart from Thy soul-rays.
A conscious martyrdom of living death,
A funeral pyre of fallen years, I blaze

Into wide aspiration for new birth!
O quenchless Truth, sorrow shall make my earth
Through this unblinded burning self-shame one
With Thy pure vast — each holocausting hour
Flame-wedded unto Thee shall keep Thy power
Held in the heart like a prodigious sun!

2.

[*INCOGNITA*]

I scarce can tell what love’s communion
Has made my life miraculously sweet;
All that I know is nameless rapture-heat
Held in the heart like a prodigious sun.

My solitude of inmost hush kneels down
For benediction to invisible feet,
And all my broken splendours grow complete
With some curved palm as my paradisal crown.

Although the face I long for never shows
Its rich beatitude of reverie,
On the pale mouth of my mortality
Each song now blossoms like a deathless rose,

As if in answer to the unseen press
Of lips divine upgrew that loveliness.
up-glimmered

No. 1 is “no good”.

About No. 2 I can only say that it is very good, but the impression about deficient spontaneity continues! I don’t see why it should be put aside. There is much in it that is original and striking and as a whole it is quite effective. I can’t say that such and such lines ought to be altered, for all the lines have a poetic quality and there is no defect in them. All poetry is not necessarily spontaneous, and if all poetry that is not spontaneous were to be put aside, the stock of the world’s poetic literature would be much reduced; so let the sonnet stand.

25 October 1934

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

SAHANA'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO — X¹

(Continued from the issue of July 2023)

It is certainly quite true that the psychic contact can exist at a distance and that the Divine is not limited by place but is everywhere. It is not necessary for everybody to be at Pondicherry or physically near the Mother in order to lead the spiritual life or to practise the yoga, especially in its earlier stages. But that is only one side of the truth, there is another. Otherwise the logical conclusion might be that there was no necessity for the Mother to be here at all or for the existence of the Asram or for anyone to come here.

The psychic being is there in all, but in very few is it well developed, well built up in the consciousness or prominent in the front; in most it is veiled, often ineffective or only an influence, not conscious enough or strong enough to support the spiritual life. It is for this reason that it is necessary for those drawn towards this truth to come here in order that they may receive the touch which will bring about or prepare the awakening of the psychic being — that is for them the beginning of the effective psychic contact. It is also for this reason that a stay here is needed for many — if they are ready — in order that under the direct influence and nearness they may have the development or building up of the psychic being in the consciousness or its coming to the front. When the touch has been given or the development effected, so far as the sadhak is at the moment capable of it, he returns to the outside world and under the protection and guidance even at a distance is able to keep the contact and go on with his spiritual life. But the influences of the outside world are not favourable to the psychic contact and the psychic development and, if the sadhak is not sufficiently careful or concentrated, the psychic contact may easily be lost after a time or get covered over and the development may become retarded, stationary or even diminished by adverse influences or movements. It is therefore that the necessity exists and is often felt of a return to the place of the central influence in order to fortify or recover the contact or to restore or give a fresh forward impulse to the development. The aspiration for such nearness from time to time is not a vital desire; it becomes a vital desire only when it is egoistically insistent or mixed with a vital motive, — but not if it is an aspiration of the psychic being calm, deep and without clamour in it or perturbing insistence.

This is for those who are not called upon or are not *yet* called upon to live in the Asram under the direct pressure of the central force and Presence. Those who must

1. This portion — Part X of the Correspondence — was inadvertently left out, and the July 2023 issue of the journal carried Part XI instead. — Ed.

so live are those called from the beginning or who have become ready or who are for some reason or other given a chance to form part of the work or creation which is being prepared by the yoga. For them the stay here in the atmosphere, the nearness are indispensable; to depart would be for them a renunciation of the opportunity given them, a turning of the back upon the spiritual destiny. Their difficulties are often in appearance greater than the struggle of those who remain outside because the demand and pressure are greater; but so also is their opportunity greater and the power and influence for development poured upon them and that too which they can spiritually become and will become if they are faithful to the choice and the call.

(7.10.31)

*

This is the true reply. To remain within, above, and untouched, full of inner consciousness and the inner experience, — listening, when need be, to X or another with the surface consciousness, but with even that undisturbed, not either pulled outwards or invaded, that is the perfect condition for the sadhana. (8.12.31)

*

It is true that one has to try to keep the inner condition under all circumstances, even the most adverse; but that does not mean that one has to accept, unnecessarily, unfavourable conditions when there is no good reason for their being allowed to go on. Especially, the nervous system and the physical cannot bear an excessive strain as well as the mind and higher vital; your fatigue came from the strain of living in one consciousness and at the same time exposing yourself too much to prolonged contacts from the ordinary consciousness. A certain amount of self-defence is necessary — so that the consciousness may not be pulled down or out constantly into the ordinary atmosphere or the physical strained by being forced into activities that have become foreign to you. Those who practise yoga often seek refuge in solitude from these difficulties; that is unnecessary here, but all the same you need not submit to being put under this kind of useless strain always. You need not waste time and exhaust yourself by chat with M and P and N's being with you for the greater part of the day is excessive. The best thing would be for you to fix a limited time for seeing others and not go beyond it — you can say that the Mother has asked you to do so.

(19.2.32)

*

There is nothing wrong in your experience or insincere in your expression of it; to write is helpful and it is our wish that you should go on doing it. An occasional

sinking of the consciousness happens to everybody. The causes are various, some touch from outside, something not yet changed or not sufficiently changed in the vital, especially the lower vital, some inertia or obscurity rising up from the physical consciousness. When it comes, remain quiet, open yourself to the Mother and call back the true condition and aspire for a clear and undisturbed discrimination showing you from within yourself the cause or the thing that needs to be set right. (4.3.32)

*

It is quite true that rising into a higher consciousness than the ordinary human consciousness is the right way towards transformation. Merely to remain in the ordinary lower consciousness and try to reject from there the wrong movements can produce no permanent or complete result. But there are several points here which you must note or this perception may be accompanied by an error.

(1) As you have yourself subsequently seen, all the parts and personalities that constitute the being must share in the higher consciousness, otherwise the old movements under various pretexts will continue.

(2) You speak of rejecting the lower vital, but it is only the unregenerated lower vital movements that can be got rid of, you cannot get rid of the lower vital itself, for it is a necessary part of the manifested nature, like the higher vital or the mind. It has to be changed in the power of the higher consciousness, not left to itself or dropped from you.

(3) If you do not so change it, if you simply remain content by living in the psychic or other higher consciousness internally then you raise the risk of doing like those who are satisfied to have experiences and some inner quietude or Ananda, but leave the external nature and surface active movements unchanged, either thinking them of no importance or justifying them under the plea that there is the psychic or spiritual consciousness behind them.

I asked you to look for the cause of the abatement of energy or zeal (*utsāha*), because it is evident that there must be some resistance somewhere, otherwise there would not be these constant headaches and this less intense condition. If the physical consciousness is open the headaches should disappear or at least diminish in frequency and force, and if the lower vital is all right, the intensity ought to continue.

Certainly you should go on writing and tell Mother everything that is happening in you. My not answering was due to want of time. (6.5.32)

*

All fear ought to be cast out. This movement of fear belongs to a still unchanged part of the vital which answers to the old ideas, feelings and reactions. Its only effect is to make you misinterpret the Mother's attitude or the intention in her words or looks or

expression. If the Mother becomes serious or has an ironic smile, that does not in the least mean that she is angry or has withdrawn her affection, on the contrary, it is with those with whom she is most inwardly intimate that she feels most free to become like that — even to give them several chidings. They in their turn understand her and do not get afraid or upset, — they only turn to look inside themselves and see what it is on which she is putting her pressure. That pressure they regard as a privilege and a sign of her grace. Fear stands in the way of this complete intimacy and confidence and creates only misunderstanding; you must cast it out altogether. (22.5.32)

*

If you accept your weakness which means accepting the thing itself — some part of your nature accepts it and to that you yield — then what is the use of our telling you what to do? That part of your vital will always be able to say — “I was too weak to carry it out.” The only way out of it for you is to cease to be weak, to dismiss this sentimental and sensuous part of you, to call down strength to replace its weakness and to do it with a settled and serious purpose. If we cannot get you who have had some foundation in the sadhana to overcome this element in you, how do you expect us to get X to do it who says he has no foundation but is still floating? (8.6.32)

*

The experience you write of in today's letter shows clearly the only way of safety against these attacks, to get back to the close and happy connection, the psychic openness to the Mother which had been so long the foundation of your sadhana and the cause of the great progress you were making.

Do not listen to the clamour of the adverse vital force which has been attacking you, its reasonings or its wrong emotional suggestions — it only wants you to fall from happiness, to suffer and to descend into a lower consciousness and lose your progress.

Get back into the true spirit of love and closeness, surrender and confidence and Ananda and remain there — then in due time all problems and difficulties will solve themselves as the light and power of the Truth descend into the still weak and obscure parts of the nature. (13.6.32)

*

It is again the old vain imagination prompted by an uprising of the dissatisfied desires of the vital nature. The Mother had no idea of an ironical smile and there was no reason why she should show any irony. There was nothing that you had written that was wrong and there was nothing that you had done. But evidently the old

wrong attitude of desire must have been waiting for its opportunity and it gave the opportunity also for the old vital to rise and indulge in its accustomed movements. It is this vital that suggested to you the ironic smile and made your mind accept it so that it might have an excuse for its movements. It is also evident that it was the pressure of the desire coming up from below that removed the Ananda. The psychic Ananda and the desire of the complaining and clamouring vital cannot go together; if desire comes up, the Ananda is obliged to draw back — unless you reject the desire in time and refuse to make any compromise with it. Especially when the Mother was giving you wideness and peace and intense Ananda, it was irrational in the extreme to give room to an external desire and sacrifice all that for its sake.

It is well that this time you did not continue to justify the demand and desire and made a movement quickly to recover. But next time it arises — if there is a next time which ought not to be, — you should throw it away at once instead of harbouring it even for a moment. It is only so that you can have a continuous and unbroken progress.

P.S. Of course your experiences were perfectly genuine — there was no exaggeration. (26.12.32)

*

Men are always mixed and there are qualities and defects mingled together almost inextricably in their nature. What a man wants to be or wants others to see in him or is sometimes on one side of his nature or in some relations can be very different from what he is in actual fact or in other relations or on another side of his nature. To be absolutely sincere, straightforward, open is not an easy achievement for human nature. It is only by a spiritual endeavour that one can realise it — and to do it needs a severity of introspective self-vision, an unsparing scrutiny of self-observation which many sadhaks and yogis even are not capable of and it is only by an illumining Grace that reveals the sadhak to himself and transforms what is deficient in him that it can be done. And even then only if he himself consents and lends himself wholly to the Divine working. (30.3.33)

*

It is likely to be fundamental and definite. But in these matters even after the liberation one has to remain vigilant — for often these things go out and remain at a far distance waiting to see if under any circumstances in any condition they can make a rush and recover their kingdom. If there has been an entire purification down to the depths and nothing is there to open the gate then they cannot do it. But it is only after one has been a long time free that one can say “Over, it is all right for ever.” (11.5.33)

*

Why should you decide beforehand that your birthday is spoiled? You have only to throw off all these undesirable ideas and feelings which proceed from a still imperfectly purified part of the external being and take the right attitude which you should always have when you come to the Mother. There should be no idea of what others have or have not — your relation is between the Mother and yourself and has nothing to do with others. Nothing should exist for you but yourself and the Divine — yourself receiving her force flowing to you.

To secure that, better do not spend the time at your disposal in speech — especially if anything of the depression remains with you, it will waste the time in discussing things which cannot help the true consciousness to predominate. Concentrate, open yourself and let the Mother bring you back to the psychic condition by what she will pour into you in meditation and silence. (16.5.33)

*

Nothing had happened between yesterday and this morning, there was no new accusation against you, no fault that you had committed, no displeasure of the Mother against you. There was no bad look of the Mother on you, nor any refusal of her smile. On the contrary, as the Mother told me this morning before getting your letter, she saw that there was something wrong with you, a darkness and depression, and she did her best to remove it, but she could not get any smile from you in response. It is clear that once more you came with a preconceived idea or else an expectation in your subconscious, born of your sleepless night and self-tormenting thoughts and of X's behaviour and saw and interpreted everything according to your expectation. All the surge of doubts and painful thoughts of which you speak have therefore no basis whatever in anything we have thought or done.

As to your going away for a time in order to get rid of your difficulty with X, a difficulty can never be overcome by your running away from it. And if you cannot overcome it with the direct and immediate help we can give you and have always been giving you and the support of our presence, I do not see how you are going to do it at a distance, and without our immediate help and presence.

It seems to me all this comes from your having taken a wrong way with yourself in meeting the consequences of your trouble. It is not by tormenting yourself with remorse and harassing thoughts and sleepless nights that you can overcome. It is by looking straight at yourself, very quietly with a quiet and firm resolution and then going on cheerfully and bravely in full confidence and reliance, trusting in the grace, serenely and vigilantly, anchoring yourself on your psychic being, calling down more and more of the love and Ananda, turning more and more exclusively to the Mother. That is the true way — and there is no other. (20.5.33)

*

It is not a question of ordinary life. In ordinary life people always judge wrongly because they judge by mental standards and generally by conventional standards. The human mind is an instrument not of truth but of ignorance and errors. (25.8.33)

*

It was indeed a microscopically small cause for so strong an upsetting, but really it is the whole difficulty of this raw and unreasonable sensitiveness which cropped up with this very infinitesimally small excuse — and that sensitiveness is one of the most persistent obstacles of many sadhaks here. There are two remedies for it — the psychic's confidence in the Mother and the surrender that goes with it, i.e. "Whatever she wills is best for me" and the vastness which you feel now, — it is the wideness of the true self of the true mental, vital, physical being also, from which such things fall like dust, for they are of no importance to it whatever. . . .

It is the one thing to do, to get permanently into the wideness, peace and silence and let the ego dissolve in it and the attachments fall away. (28.8.34)

*

Yes, this is the time when you have to persist till you are quite settled in the inner consciousness and the persistence of the silence and peace is a sign that it is now possible. When one feels this kind of silence, peace and wideness, one may be sure that that is of the true being, the real self, penetrating into the mind and vital and perhaps also the physical consciousness (if it is complete). The restlessness of the physical is probably due to the peace and silence having touched the physical but not yet penetrated the material or body consciousness. The old restlessness is there in the body struggling to remain, although it cannot invade either mind or vital or even in a general way the physical consciousness as a whole. If the peace descends there, this restlessness will disappear.

The sex-sensation came from the subconscious. When it is unable to manifest in the waking consciousness, it appears from the subconscious in sleep. The mind must not allow itself to be disturbed — it will go out with the rest. (20.9.34)

*

It is good that you were able to observe yourself all the time and see the movements and that the intervention of the new consciousness was frequent and automatic. At a later stage you will no doubt get a guidance in the mind also as to how to do things you want to get done. Evidently your mind was too active — as well as the minds of the others also — and so you missed your objective, owing to the excessive multitude of witnesses! However — (4.10.34)

*

Yes, it is a very encouraging progress. If you keep the wideness and calm as you were keeping it and also the love for the Mother in the heart, then all is safe — for it means the double foundation of the yoga — the descent of the higher consciousness with its peace and freedom and security from above and the openness of the psychic which keeps all the effort or all the spontaneous movements turned towards the true goal. (10.10.34)

(To be concluded)

SAHANA

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

The Divine is infinite and a single experience or poise of experience cannot exhaust all the truth of the Divine. The seers have experienced each some aspect or aspects of the Divine Reality. Their mental differences have been illustrated in the apologue of the blind men who all felt the elephant and described it in different figures according to the part they felt. One must go beyond mind altogether, even beyond the spiritualised mind, to have the real complete experience. "Rare", says Sri Krishna, "are the few among the seekers who know me in my totality in all the truth of my being." In fact, it is only in the supramental light that all opposition disappears and the aspects are indivisibly united in the Whole. One must go on enlarging knowledge, adding experience to experience till all the limitation disappears.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga – I, CWSA, Vol. 28, p. 7)

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

Born on 21 June 1913, the Gujarati disciple Jayantilal Parekh joined the Ashram on 28 December 1938 at the age of twenty-five. A talented artist, he made hundreds of paintings and drawings under the Mother's guidance during his first decade in the Ashram. Then for most of the next fifty years he worked at the Ashram Press. In the early 1970s he organised the publication of the thirty-volume Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, and in 1973 he founded the Ashram Archives and Research Library. He lived for sixty years in the Ashram, until his passing on 26 January 1999 at the age of eighty-five.

Jayantilal's correspondence with the Mother covers the period from 1936 to 1970.

Mother,

I am sending you some art books for your opinion. I want to know your opinion about Cézanne and Van Gogh because they are praised so much by modern critics, especially Cézanne. One very good English critic, Roger Fry, calls him a divine artist, meaning perfect in some of his works.

The pictures by Cézanne and Van Gogh in the books you have sent are very beautiful (especially those of Cézanne). I shall return the books in one or two days — I want to look at them carefully.

12 March 1936

*

Such people are capable of turning towards the spiritual life; but their path is never without danger.

What you seek is always there ready for you. Let the psychic turn grow complete and it will of itself bring you to that for which you aspire.

My love and blessings

15 February 1939

*

Mother,

What is the rationale of Divine Grace? Is not the Supreme Mother always ready with Her Grace for those who can call it down?

Yes.

Is it not true that most of the seekers after God cannot call the Divine Grace down, and yet they can receive it if someone, a guru or avatar, has once called it down within him?

Yes.

Can we conclude that the Divine Grace works best when it is established in the earth consciousness? Is it the aim of your endeavour to establish it permanently?

Yes.

Please explain to me the whole principle.

The Divine Grace cannot be explained through words and mental formulas.

Blessings

7 April 1939

*

If you feel no true urge to paint, I see no necessity of your painting.

Blessings

c. April 1939

*

Mother,

For some time I have been feeling that I ought to concentrate on some work. I feel like drawing and painting, so I have decided to devote some time daily to this work. The rest of the time I intend to devote to study. I will be always prepared to do whatever work you give me.

The drawing you sent is very nice. It is good that you have taken up again drawing and painting. If ever I need you for some work I will tell you.

Blessings

12 May 1939

*

You can go to the lake. I like your sketches very much, some of them are extremely nice.

If I forget, remind me this afternoon of the pocket money.

Blessings

1 June 1939

*

Jayanti,

Your way of approaching art is the right one and if you continue, keeping an absolute sincerity in your attitude and your attempt, you are bound to succeed.

There is something correct in your appreciation of oriental art, but it is incomplete. However we shall leave the subject for the moment, for I have no time to explain all that just now. As for Léonard de Vinci, Michel Ange and Raphaël, I cannot put them on the same level. The two first are far greater than the last. They both belong to the world of creative force, Léonard with more subtlety and quiet, deep vision and purity, Michel Ange with more force and power especially in his sculptures which are incomparably magnificent. Raphaël is more mental and superficial.

Blessings

30 June 1939

*

Last night when I was about to sleep, my body from the heart above was filled up by some energy. I did not do anything but just observed. It lasted for only a few seconds. Two or three times it has happened to me and on the previous occasions it lasted for some minutes. I would like to know what this is. Is it an experience of the Kundalini Shakti? What is the best attitude to be adopted when under such pressure?

The best attitude is to be quiet and calm, and let the experience follow its course, observing it *without thinking about it*.

Blessings

4 July 1939

*

S told me that you have given permission for the decoration of the meditation hall. I had intended to decorate only the room where you used to sit for Pranam, but I heard that you would like the whole hall and the area up the staircase to be done. This is a very big scheme. But K also intends to do the work and, if asked, S may join.

What I wish to tell you is this: to make the work harmonious and quiet, only one person should design the whole thing, and all others should work in the same manner. I would like to know if you have any subject in mind and how the thing should be done.

I agree that one person alone must design the whole thing, the others can join in the execution only.

I have no subject or scheme. I only wish that the decoration should be *quiet* from the point of colour and also of composition.

Do some sketches and projects, and send them to me.

Blessings

31 July 1939

*

Mother,

Would it be good for me to devote more time to meditation than I am giving at present. I spend about two hours, morning and evening together. I am as yet not quite successful in meditation. My physical mind disturbs me a lot. It is so painful to find the mind working like a mad machine and the heart sleeping like a stone. Mother, let me feel your presence within my heart always.

The increase of time given to meditation is not very useful unless the urge for meditating comes spontaneously from inside and not from any arbitrary decision of the mind.

My help, love and blessings are always with you.

17 October 1939

*

Mother

The house I have taken up for my people belonged to a T.B. patient. I came to know this only after I had already paid for the house. But then we got the whole house washed and burnt sulphur in some rooms. In any case the thought that a T.B. patient lived here does not trouble me because he went away nearly six months back. But as some people have come to know about it and the suggestion of disease has been thrown out, I pray to you for the protection of those who will stay there.

As the house has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected, there is no danger at all.
People need not fear.

My blessings

19 February 1940

*

Mother,

I wish to devote my time to decoration work, but before that I want to have a clear vision of the theme. Can you tell me how to meditate upon it? Who are the angels? What is their function in the cosmos? How can one come in contact with them? Are there books which can give a starting point?

Your questions are impossible to answer in brief.

I know no books that say anything of value on the subject.

My love and blessings

2 June 1940

*

Jayanti,

I think it is better if you concentrate on painting only as you have already made some good progress on that line.

If you do not like the atmosphere created by taking food with others I do not see why you should do it.

With my love and blessings

13 September 1940

*

Mother,

My parents very often ask me to keep a few rupees for pocket money, but I have been refusing it because I did not want them to feel that I suffer here for want of anything. Do you think it desirable for me to keep a few rupees for some small expenses?

You can keep a few rupees as pocket money.

My love and blessings

25 September 1940

*

Mother,

It seems that Dr. A has expressed his desire to take the painters of the Ashram to Gingee fort. I wish to let you know that I am not anxious to go; it is not with me a desire. I always wish to do what pleases you and so I kindly seek your advice. I wish you to express your opinion without reserve or hesitation. It is with me a greater pleasure to fulfil your wish and follow your words than to satisfy a desire.

It is better not to go; this kind of trip is not very wholesome for spiritual life.

With my love and blessings

24 December 1940

*

Mother,

At times I seriously think about what my being wants. Why do I not feel the sense of a real being which has the delight of being and becoming? Why do I not feel any real interest in any creative activity? At times I feel an urge of the heart to seize something which can really satisfy my self, but the urge does not last long. What do you think my real being wants?

THE DIVINE.

I also feel that you are not quite satisfied with me.

Nothing of the kind. Each one has his difficulties and I am here to help him out of them.

My love and blessings

25 February 1942

*

Mother,

Perhaps you have not found time to answer my letter. There was something in your look which I could not fathom today; it looked like a rebuke. If it is so, I do not know what the reason can be.

Nothing of a rebuke. I had sent what I considered as the most important answer through N and I expected you to acknowledge it — hence my look.

I may add that in all human relations there is always such a coating of vital attractions and impulses over what can be hidden there of a psychic movement that

one is never too much on one's guard.

Blessings

11 January 1944

*

Mother,

For the last three days I have not been able to read the expression in your eyes when I come for Pranam. I feel you are displeased with me. I may be wrong, but if there is anything I wish you to tell me.

I am not aware of any change in my attitude towards you and also there is no reason for a change. The only thing I see is that I was thinking of S when you came and I was wondering how far you are informed of the state of affairs. As for being displeased with you, there is no sign of it anywhere and I can safely say that *I am not displeased.*

With my love and blessings

5 September 1945

*

Mother,

My father wishes me to go and see him for a few days. He is an invalid and cannot leave his bed. Both his legs have become stiff and gradually the hands are also becoming like that. I have an idea that he may live only a few months more. In my mother's case too I have a strong feeling of her coming death. I am very grateful to my father. He has proved an ideal father for me. He has given me the best of everything and has asked for nothing in return.

When I came to you, I had the idea that I would see my parents once before they pass away and that too to satisfy them. I am neither desirous nor anxious nor would anybody question me if I did not go, but this idea propels me. I will be very happy to do your wish.

You can go to see your father — but I would like you to go only when the school closes, that is to say after the 2nd of December, and come back before the first of January when the school reopens — as the lessons must not be neglected.

c. 1946

*

My dear Mother,

I feel I have displeased you. I am very sorry for whatever may be the reason for it. I am feeling very bad about it. I hardly need to tell you about my growing affection for you.

My dear child,

Don't feel bad and don't worry — *I am not at all displeased*. Others may have been a little upset by what seems to be a somewhat light talk, but I do not hold you responsible for it. It has become a habit in the Ashram to speak lightly and inconsiderately of many things that are beyond the usual understanding of people. It would need a great strength and endurance to resist successfully this influence. However I have hope that this strength and endurance will grow in all those of goodwill. Meanwhile my love and blessings are with all.

Be sure that I am quite aware of the growing love and devotion in you and they meet with the full response they can duly expect.

With my love and blessings

22 September 1947

*

Mother,

I have come to a point when I do not seem to understand anything. I do not lack understanding in terms of words. What I lack is a sense of Reality, a force of Being and a direction. It is not at all a happy state of affairs.

You told me all that last night between 10 and 11, and as you were somewhat restless, I told you, "First of all *you must be quiet*." The whole thing was *very vivid* and I appreciate the power of your thought — but I insist on the necessity of being *calm* and *quiet*. *It is indispensable*.

With love and blessings

21 June 1962

*

Mother,

R says he does not know anyone who can do the exhibition work. He wishes to send out a notice informing the exhibitors that the exhibition will not be held.

I am very sorry for it.

It is a *defeat* of the *will*, much more than of the circumstances and it throws discredit on the Ashram.

Blessings

14 February 1963

*

Mother,

May the Divine Mother give me the necessary force so that the following prayer of mine may become effective.

As a son of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, my greatest interest is in Truth. Let not the mountain of pride hidden in my nature distort in any way the movements of this Truth — the Glorious Sun. Lift me above smallness.

Do not let the view of the part hide the perception of the whole, and the details of one step obstruct the concentration on the Goal.

14 May 1963

*

Mother,

The world being what it is, we have to work under the existing conditions. Why not use the available conditions, gather strength and then endeavour to manifest the Divine Will in its purity?

But the very fact of living upon earth means that we “are using the available conditions”, otherwise it would be impossible to live.

Blessings

18 March 1965

*

Mother,

Here are some of the painting proofs received from Calcutta. They are not very good. I am asking for some corrections to be made. A few more paintings are left to be sent to Calcutta. Can I ask P to carry them?

These proofs are *not good*. Why do you want them to do some more? They are simply spoiling the work and it is a big loss of time and money. Almost all of these pictures are unusable as they are and have to be remade.

I cannot agree to your giving them any more work to do.
Blessings

12 January 1966

*

I have been feeling for quite some time that I should limit my outward activity and confine myself to quiet work where I do not have to do so much running about.

I am facing some kind of inner crisis. My life is becoming aimless. A persistent dream warns me of my inner instability. It is an urgent necessity that I should achieve some inner poise and stability. The obscurity and heavy inertia should diminish.

If the Mother would permit me, I would like to be free from Press work. However I shall do as the Mother directs me. Kindly guide me.

If you leave the Press, the work will be ruined! As soon as I have a moment free I shall call you in the morning and we shall talk it over.

The more I go, the more I know that it is in work that Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga is *best done*.

Love and blessings

9 October 1966

*

Mother,

My mind is greatly perplexed; I do not know where I stand. The work we have taken up is huge, the commitments are many. What I have to do is not clear from outside or within. Every day the decisions are altered, new questions posed, the ego confronted with unacceptable situations.

I pray to the Mother that I may be released from the Press work till such time as I have some clear guidance or the Mother's definite directions as to the work I have to do.

This is a personal crisis. I have no quarrels or complaints about people. I wish to keep my mouth closed and wait and learn to read the message of light that should appear before me. I pray for the Mother's light.

It would be so good if you were not affected and continued the work just now that there is so much to do and the help of all is so badly needed.

If you want to see me, I shall be glad to see you, but you know that I am never alone and it is difficult to speak.

In any case, be sure that my love and blessings are with you always.

7 August 1969

*

Mother,

I am facing a personal problem and I pray for the Mother's guidance. As yet, I do not have any sense of inner guidance. My days are not well spent. I am sticking on with the centenary work although I often feel I am not wanted or trusted, but I do not wish to be guided by any ordinary thought or feeling. I crave for isolation at times. I pray that I may have a surer feeling that I am doing what my Master wishes of me. Let my personal likes, dislikes and egoism not tarnish the purity of action or word. "Mother" has been my mantra and I take refuge in Her.

You are not only wanted but *indispensable* for the centenary work which would not be done properly without you. So I ask you to be patient and not to attach importance to the difficulties on the way.

Love and blessings

3 May 1970

*

I feel very sorry that I have created the impression that I am pulling at money and diverting it from where it should go — the Mother. My attitude is that all wealth belongs to the Mother and we must use it as directed by Her. Wherever I have a say I do this, and I feel sorry that I have created the opposite impression. I write this to take a certain burden off my mind.

I do not know who has spread this rumour, but I can assure you that I know it is not true. So, do not worry and let peace settle in your heart.

With my blessings

Undated

(New Correspondences of the Mother – I, pp. 337-50)

THREE POEMS

AT THE SAMADHI

Put your stillness into me,
A rock of delight.
Pour your sweetness into me,
Ecstasies Divine.
Call your Light into me,
Incandescent and Pure.
Play your notes on me your stringèd harp.
Feel your joy in me, brimful of nectar.
Throw all wants from me, far into the blue yonder.
Bring All-Love to me O blessed Mine,
Cleanse all doubts in me, fill me with conviction.
Crown me definitively,
With a heart Divine!

THE SAMADHI

Hushed whispers . . .
Wisps of incense
Spiraling . . . circling
With hidden messages . . .
Lifting, . . . assailing the senses
With ecstasies untold.
Bursts of colour,
Floral luminescence
bedazzle the eyes,
Over your molten stone.

DESCENT*(Sri Aurobindo's Room Darshan)*

Soaring into the limitless blue,
 Shedding our past lives,
 A rapturous inspiration of frozen hues,
 Gazing into those melting eyes,
 Felicity beckons, its unheard song . . .
 Seraph & Seraphim play on their fluted lyres
 Celestial hymns of an unknown plane.
 Peeping into an enchanted forest of glowing inhabitants,
 Drawn into the luminous echo of a hidden lair,
 Where the windsong keeps its crystalline feathers
 And harmonies deep . . .
 O Stillness' fire, be still my sweet,
 And discover the poetry in ourselves.

NIKI LAWYER

Note:

I was always curious as to why the expression 'frozen' came down, in relation to Sri Aurobindo when Sri Aurobindo's countenance is anything but.

Some years later I came across a snippet in the *Indian Express* newspaper dated Thursday December 16th 2004 which I found quite interesting. It was written under a column called 'Divine Thoughts'. And it shed some light on the mystery:

"The Body is the frozen thought and frozen energy of God, man cannot realise this until he knows that thought is frozen into Energy & energy is frozen into the body of man.

"Many people try and explain away the body delusion. First, it must be realised that the body is made of invisible electrons, and that electrons are made of the invisible Thought of God." — Paramahansa Yogananda.

NL

REMEMBERING SIMANTA-DA

Simanta Narayan Chatterjee, my friend and mentor for more than twenty years, passed away quietly on 3 April 2011 in the Ashram Nursing Home. He was eighty-eight years old. A Bengali gentleman of the old school, Simanta was a high-minded Brahmin, poor materially but rich in culture. He had an inborn nobility, an unassuming dignity, a natural gracefulness. When he was young, what mattered to him most was the freedom of the country, in middle age the uplift of the poor, and in the end the finding of his true self and God. I know only the broad outlines of his life, but I have cobbled together a brief sketch of it, along with a few things he told me over the years.

Birth and Upbringing

Simanta was born on 23 December 1922 on his grandfather's estate near Arrah in Bihar. He grew up in a village in the Nadia district of Bengal. His father, Satyendra Narayan, was a teacher of mathematics at Shantiniketan from 1914 to 1919 and then became an electrical engineer for the Indian Government; often away from home, he worked on construction projects under his British superiors. His wife, Mukulrani, was a homemaker who became deeply devoted to Rabindranath Tagore during the time her husband taught at Shantiniketan. When Simanta was five, his mother sent him to school there and he loved it. During his six-year stay, he imbibed an appreciation of Nature, a love of beauty and a passion for Rabindra Sangeet. Up till the end, he sang Rabindranath's songs with soul-stirring pathos and exaltation, for they evoked in him the yearning of the soul for the Beloved.

When Simanta was eleven, his mother died. Devastated by her loss, his father fell into a deep depression, lapsed into indifference and became unfit for work. Heeding his sister's advice, he withdrew young Simanta from Shantiniketan. When Tagore heard that the boy was leaving, he exclaimed, "But he is one of my children!" Thus in one year Simanta lost both his mother, whom he adored, and the school he loved. Where he went to school after that, he never told me; his thoughts were always of Shantiniketan. He also had nostalgic memories of his vacations on his grandfather's estate in a forest area of Bihar.

College and Politics

Simanta was good at studies and went to college in Calcutta, majoring in mathematics. Then, like so many students at the time, he became involved in the struggle for India's independence and the non-cooperation movement of Mahatma Gandhi. His

father gave him the choice between politics and studies. Simanta chose politics, so his father withdrew his financial support. Now on his own, Simanta dropped out of college and immersed himself for years in political activity. Like many in Bengal he became fascinated by Marxism and plunged into left-wing politics. For his anti-British activities he never went to jail, but many of his friends did, some for years, and several of them later rose to top positions in Communist Bengal.

When Simanta learned of the brutal excesses of Stalin, he became disillusioned with Communism. Though he admired its ideal, he saw that it didn't work in practice. When I knew him, he vehemently denounced the Communists of Bengal as narrow, authoritarian and vulgar; he held them responsible for the decline of Bengali culture. After his disenchantment, Simanta remained on the fringe of the political movement, but never actively involved himself again; rather he moved towards non-violent social reform and worked for years on educational uplift with the Bengal Social Service League.

Books, Eastern and Western

Simanta cared deeply for the country and the poor. He himself lived in poverty for decades, earning a living with piecemeal work as a proofreader at a couple of Calcutta publishing houses. As a young man he largely read Western literature, especially the English and Russian writers, but in childhood and adolescence he imbibed the Indian tradition. Growing up in a Brahmin environment in a village, he got a good grounding in Sanskrit and loved to recite the Vedic verses he knew. Closer to his heart were the austere philosophy of the *Upanishads* and the many-sided wisdom of the *Gita*, whose slokas he knew by heart. He also knew dozens of stories from the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* and *Puranas*. Later, when his life took a spiritual turn, he studied Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* and the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Thus this man of the intellect filled his mind with the greatness of Indian culture. But a commitment to the life of the spirit had not yet beckoned.

Pondicherry and the Mother

As mentioned earlier, Simanta's father, distraught by his wife's demise, fell into a prolonged depression. Searching for meaning, he started visiting holy places and seeing holy men. Finally he found what he needed in Pondicherry, where he met the Mother, head of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Accepting him in the community, she gave him a room and a work and a reason to live. Years later, sick in bed and close to dying, he called his son Simanta to come down from Calcutta to see him. Simanta came, visited with his father a few days and then said he was returning to Bengal. Indifferent to the Ashram, he had not even bothered to meet the Mother. "Won't you at least see her?" his father asked. "Just go and stand beneath her balcony when she

comes out tomorrow at sunrise to see the disciples.” For his father’s sake, Simanta agreed. The next day, when she appeared on the first-floor balcony, the Mother gazed on the faces of the sadhaks gathered below. When her eyes fell on Simanta, he felt that she was looking at him alone. Soon her gaze turned elsewhere, but she had captured his heart for ever.

Simanta returned to Bengal and took up his life there, but he could not forget the Mother. He began reading her works and those of Sri Aurobindo. *The Life Divine* was a revelation to him, for in it he found the answers to philosophical questions that had haunted him for years. In this book Sri Aurobindo sets forth an exalted conception of human existence, including the possibility of a divine life on earth. Simanta soaked his mind in this new vision of life. And four times a year he took the long train-ride south to Pondicherry to see the Mother and have her darshan. Sometimes he was also able to see her in her room. When he went to her, she laughed away his troubles and poured her love into him. He began to live for her and thought of her constantly. Back in Calcutta, Simanta wrote regularly to those he knew in the Ashram. His main contact was Nolini-da, whom he respected. He also wrote to Janina, the Polish disciple, who liked this earnest young man. She explained to him how to practise the Yoga in daily life.

So might Simanta have continued to live, his body in Calcutta, his mind and heart in Pondicherry, but one day he received a letter from Nolini asking him to come to the Ashram to help him. Nolini had translated *Savitri* into Bengali and needed someone to review his work and see it through the press. Simanta came down to Pondicherry and threw himself into the task. When it ended a few months later, he told Nolini that he wished to stay on. Nolini gave his consent, but advised him not to join the Ashram because he would feel stifled by the Ashram discipline. Thus for the rest of his life he lived in Pondicherry, in a flat on the second floor of ‘As You Like’, an apartment building not too far from the Ashram. There he spent his time writing articles for Bengali journals, setting down memories of Shantiniketan, maintaining a diary of his sadhana, teaching Rabindra Sangeet and an evening class on Sri Aurobindo’s letters. Early each morning he swept his room and walked to the Ashram for an hour of concentration in the Meditation Hall — the best hour of the day, he called it. Once or twice a year he took the train to Calcutta to visit old friends and sometimes he visited a niece in New Delhi.

My Studies with Simanta

I have no memory of when Simanta and I first met — it was probably in the middle or late 1980s. In time he became a mentor to me. Every Thursday morning we met together in his room for a long talk. I would show up about 9.30 to find him preparing tea for me. Simanta was proud of his tea. He always had a stock of superb Darjeeling tea leaves procured in Calcutta. What a brew! Two cups of boiling water poured into

a warmed teapot, two heaping spoonfuls of tea and another half-spoon to top it up. Cover the teapot with a cozy and let the tea steep for fifteen minutes — not four or five minutes but fifteen! Simanta made a kind of Darjeeling truckdriver's tea and what a fine taste it had! One big mug set me sailing for the morning. Fortified by this Himalayan elixir and transported by Simanta's hypnotic talk, I flew with him high into the skies of the Spirit. Week after week, companion souls, we managed to rise into a sublimer air. Sharing the same interests, we resonated together. "The most important thing," he told me over and over, "is to find the Divine. All other things are peripheral. We must take the plunge within and find God. That is the only journey worth taking."

Simanta had the heart of a bhakta, but being a man of the intellect, he naturally inclined towards the Yoga of Knowledge. He had a way of making the Self seem real and accessible. "There is one Self," he declared, "and we are part of it. Our true self (which is not the ego) is one in essence with the Self above. Become aware of the Self and you are free." How to do it? "Calm the mind and concentrate it on the Self," he advised. "Then the Self will reflect itself in your mind and purify it. In time you will become fit to go beyond the mind and dwell in the consciousness of the Self." Simanta himself practised this process and it gave power to his words.

My own predilection was towards the Mother. Live for her, remember her, put yourself in her hands. "Isn't surrender to the Mother the true secret of the Yoga?" I sometimes asked him, just to tease him. "Well, yes it is," he would answer without hesitation, and in fact he liked it when I reminded him. He himself had come to the Yoga through the Mother, and while she was alive he felt her love filling him with love for her. After her passing, however, he could not feel this love as strongly. Faced with an arid inner condition, he felt that his love for the Mother was no longer enough to sustain his sadhana. Then he turned to Vedanta for support. "The way of Bhakti does not last," he would tell me. "One day the heart is full of love, the next day it is dry; the mind is more reliable." But of course, sometimes (especially on his birthday and darshan days) the Mother would pour down her light and love into him. Then when we met, he would relate his experience with the delight of a child.

How did we fill our Thursday morning hours? Usually, after desultory conversation, we took up the study of some book. Most often it was the *Gita*. Simanta revered its slokas, loved to recite them and repeat them in his mind; I found his English translations of these slokas admirably clear and fluent. Next in regularity came the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. From the original Bengali, Simanta would translate the text to me and soon we seemed to be in Ramakrishna's presence, sitting in the room where he had charmed his listeners, imparted his wisdom and showered his love. Then came the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. Simanta had an elaborate commentary on the Sutras by a Bengali savant, but it was way over my head. The sense of the Sutras really came to life for me when we began to study *Antaryoga*, a little Bengali book on Raja Yoga by the Bengali yogi and savant Anirvan, whom

Simanta knew personally. All these books and more we studied over the years.

Our base line, of course, was Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Simanta loved the Master's letters and read them out to me with deep understanding; his very reading seemed to reveal their import. From time to time we dipped into other books, such as *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. Of the Mother's works he liked the *Questions and Answers* series of talks in the 1950s. "Listen to this," he would say, excited as a child; "Mother really catches the thing here," and then he would read out a passage from one of these talks.

Politics

As a young man, Simanta threw himself passionately into the freedom movement to end British rule in India. For many years he did little else, living a chaotic life, arguing the issues, eating whatever came, sleeping on the floor. Then when Stalin's atrocities were revealed, Simanta became disenchanted with Marxist practice. He left active politics and turned instead to social reform and the uplift of the poor. In the end the divine hand grabbed him and placed him in Pondicherry. But even here the political man was not yet dead. In the early years and for a long time after, he could not remain cool when it came to politics. Mention of the Communist Party in Bengal immediately aroused his ire and led to a spirited denunciation of the party's misled policies and vile tactics. The only alternative at the time was the Congress Party. Simanta credited the Congress with holding the country together, but he could not accept its outlook; its secular socialist policy could never satisfy his spiritual idealism and the hope of a return to India's spiritual greatness.

Then, towards the end of his life, Simanta grew detached from politics; his assessment of the unfolding national drama became unemotional. From a ranter he became a commentator. In the final few years of our weekly talks, he rarely spoke about the burning issues of the day; if I wanted his opinion on a hot topic, I had to ask for it. He is one of the few persons I have known who has managed to extricate himself from the thrall of politics.

The Final Years

With the passing of years Simanta grew weary. His energy flagged, his eyesight grew worse, he suffered from frequent fevers. Inwardly too he drooped; he began to feel that he wasn't doing enough. I told him not to judge himself so harshly. We really know very little, it is hard to assess our progress; we should just leave it in the Mother's hands. He accepted this, but it was hard for him.

In time his health and strength declined further and he suffered a few bad falls. He was given a room in 'Care', one of our homes for seniors. I would visit him every week, as before, and he looked forward to it. Sometimes we would rise beyond the

ordinary outlook, up-buoyed by the perception we shared of a higher way of life. Then the boy in him came forward, the dreamer of a better world. One day I went to see him and found he had been taken to the Nursing Home. Simanta was still conscious, but he was retreating. His once penetrating eyes had a far-off look; yet sometimes, yes, there was recognition and a look of love in them.

One evening Simanta went to sleep and never woke up. The next day his worn-out body was cremated in a quiet ceremony of simple dignity, and early the next morning as the sun came up at the Tennis Ground, I pitched a little bag of his ashes into the sea. For him the going was good, I think, and for us too, a new day had dawned.

BOB ZWICKER

The Psychic Being and the Ego

There is individuality in the psychic being but not egoism. Egoism goes when the individual unites himself with the Divine or is entirely surrendered to the Divine.

*

It is the psychic inmost being that replaces the ego. It is through love and surrender to the Divine that the psychic being becomes strong and manifest, so that it can replace the ego.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga – I, CWSA, Vol. 28, p. 124)

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

(Part 38)

(Continued from the issue of July 2023)

Section 4: FORTHRIGHTNESS WITH THE MAHARAJA

When Sri Aurobindo joined the Baroda State Service the Maharaja instructed him to learn the local language — Gujarati. Sri Aurobindo did not comply for he preferred to utilise his personal time for his literary pursuits. The Maharaja was not one to give up easily and for the next several years he pressed Sri Aurobindo to prepare and appear for an examination in Gujarati.

The day Sri Aurobindo joined service, 18th February, 1893, the Maharaja issued an order stating that Sri Aurobindo was “to learn the Gujarati language within six months.”¹

Two years later, a Huzur Order (Royal Order) dated 4th April, 1895, was issued “to direct Mr. Ghose to pick up the Vernacular language (Gujerati) by appearing for the said examination within six months. If he does not pass the examination within the prescribed period, he should be given an additional period of six months within which period at least he should obtain the necessary knowledge of the Vernacular language and pass the examination. If he does not obtain the required knowledge within this period by appearing in the examination, Rs 50/- per month should be cut from his pay. H.H. the Maharaja Saheb has been pleased to pass the above order.”²

A further three years down the line, Huzur Order No. 109 dated 4th May, 1898, stated: “H.H the Maharaja Saheb has been pleased to pass the Mulki Tippan No. 94 dated 17.9.1895 and the correspondence thereunder and ordered that Shri Ghose should be given understanding for the second time that he should appear for the Vernacular Examination and intimate to this office the result thereof.”³ Following this order a tippan (formal proposal) was issued on 29th September, 1898, which stated:

As per Tippan, Revenue Department No. 94 dated 17.9.1895 and correspondence thereunder which has gone through, H. H. the Maharaja Saheb has been graciously pleased to order that as per first order, Mr. Ghose should be again

1. Sourced from papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

instructed to appear for the Vernacular language examination and the result should be communicated to His Highness.

Huzur Order was passed as above. Accordingly, as Mr. Ghose was serving in the Education Department, the Principal, Baroda College, was informed to intimate Mr. Ghose about the order. Mr. Ghose was informed. Thereupon Mr. Ghose gave his reply which is enclosed with the correspondence.

In his reply Mr. Ghose has stated that most of his time is spent in teaching and so he finds no time to prepare for the examination. This, he has written in English, which is attached here with as Ex. 2.

The reply which Mr. Ghose has given, also contains the information that much of his time is spent in the working of Education Department and that he is not in a position to study Vernacular language and appear for its examination unless and otherwise much of the College work is left, the study of the Vernacular language “can not” be undertaken.⁴

For five and half years the Maharaja put constant pressure on Sri Aurobindo but Sri Aurobindo’s reply put the Maharaja on the back foot. The Maharaja, in his wisdom, responded with Huzur Order dated 19th October, 1898, which read:

Mr. Arvind Ghose should appear at the Vernacular Language Examination as per order passed by His Highness the Maharaja Saheb. But as it was not carried out, a Tippan to this effect was submitted to His Highness the Maharaja Saheb whereupon, His Highness the Maharaja was pleased to order as follows:

“There is no necessity of appearing at the above examination by Mr. Ghose until and by the time he is working in the Education Department. But when he will be transferred to Revenue Department, he will have to appear for the above examination.”

His Highness the Maharaja Saheb has passed the above order.⁵

After this the Maharaja apparently discontinued his endeavours. In any case Sri Aurobindo continued to work at Baroda College (with an interim gap for a few months in 1903 and 1904).

Sri Aurobindo, however, had familiarised himself with the two official languages of Baroda State, Gujarati and Marathi. In addition he had knowledge of a Marathi dialect called Modi which was an older and a rarely-used script of Marathi. Marathi was the mother tongue of the Maharaja while Gujarati was the language of his subjects. Champaklal once asked Sri Aurobindo: “Did you learn Gujarati in Pondicherry?” He replied, “No. I picked it up in Baroda, as I had to read the

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

Maharajah’s files.”⁶ Afterwards, in Pondicherry, some of the disciples used to write to Sri Aurobindo in Gujarati and he used to reply in English.

Sri Aurobindo was not one to be intimidated by anyone even if it was the Maharaja himself. The Maharaja had once issued a circular requiring all officers to attend office not only on working days but also on Sundays and other holidays.⁷ Referring to this incident Sri Aurobindo said, “I refused to attend office on Sundays and holidays, so he fined me Rs. 50. I said, ‘Let him fine me as much he likes’, and when he heard about it he stopped fining me.”⁸

While narrating the above incident during a lecture, Nirodbaran remarked:

So, there you see a little bit of Sri Aurobindo: he refused to attend though he was serving the Maharaja. That’s the personality. Some of you might remember, I think I have told you, his eldest brother’s remark about Sri Aurobindo, when he was young. His brother said Sri Aurobindo was very nice in every way, but he was very obstinate. So, this obstinacy came now and then to manifest itself, as in this case. The Maharaja must have found him a very hard nut!⁹

That Sri Aurobindo was dauntless with the Maharaja is again revealed in a letter, dated 20th December, 1907, where Mrinalini Devi reminds Sri Aurobindo of an incident when his salary got considerably delayed and he bluntly told the Maharaja, “Am I to beg?”¹⁰

Georges Van Vrekhem narrates an anecdote which illustrates Sri Aurobindo’s forthright humour:

Aurobindo never let himself be daunted by his royal employer. His Bengali teacher had this anecdote: “The Prince of Baroda was going to be married [sometime in 1904-05]. In those days monogamy was not particularly insisted on. Sri Aurobindo was then the Vice-principal of the Gaekwad’s College. When the distinguished guests had assembled for the wedding dinner, the royal bridegroom came up to him dignified and demure. The grave Vice-principal, revered by all, shook hands with ‘the cynosure of neighbouring eyes’ and wished him ‘Many happy returns of the day’!”¹¹

Rajaram Patkar mentions that although Sri Aurobindo’s interest lay in Sanskrit and literature he was very conscientious in his work. He writes that in service Sri

6. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 387.

7. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, p. 47.

8. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 2, 2013, p. 951.

9. *Talks by Nirodbaran – December 1969 to July 1970*, edited by Sunayana and Maurice, 1st Ed., pp. 145-46.

10. Sourced from papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

11. Georges Van Vrekhem, *The Mother*, 2000, p. 103.

Aurobindo “never felt anything like dependence. Though this work was not to his taste he had a supreme sense of duty, which he felt he must discharge to the best of his ability and conscience.”¹² Dinendra Kumar Roy adds: “Aurobindo accepted a very high post in the Maharaja’s Gaekwar’s state at the Maharaja’s request. It is true that he was serving as a professor in the college, but in the beginning the Maharaja assigned him to the Dewan’s office. He discharged that work with great competence. Aurobindo did not enjoy official work and so he quite willingly became a professor. The Maharaja fulfilled his desire.”¹³

Georges Van Vrekhem notes that often the Maharaja made demands on Sri Aurobindo’s time which fell outside the purview of official work:

The Maharajah wanted to put his scholarly civil servant to good use and invited him to the palace time and again, often to a working breakfast. Aurobindo had to compose the Maharajah’s correspondence with the British, his speeches for all occasions, the narratives of his travels, a history of Baroda and, of course, his biography. Aurobindo was never his official secretary, but everybody was aware from where the Maharajah’s exquisite English came.¹⁴

Sri Aurobindo notes in third person:

He was called very often for the writing of an important letter, order, despatch, correspondence with [the] British Government or other document; he assisted the Maharaja in preparing some of his speeches. At one time he was asked to instruct him in English grammar by giving exact and minute rules for each construction etc. It was only miscellaneous things like this for which he was called for the occasion . . .¹⁵

Amongst the other miscellaneous things was a “compilation of a book (supposed to be by the Maharaja about his travels in Europe)”,¹⁶ and preparing a concise report on an important, complicated and long-drawn-out legal case.¹⁷ Sri Aurobindo also notes that he was given the task of a “special work studying a sort of official history of the Administration (Guzerati manuscript) perhaps for summary in English.”¹⁸ On another occasion Sri Aurobindo was asked by the Maharaja to advise on travel after consulting the time-tables of European railways, but this was quite informal.¹⁹

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

13. Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1st Ed., 2006, p. 42 (Dinendra Kumar Roy, *Aurobindo Prasanga* – Translated from Bengali by Maurice Shukla).

14. Georges Van Vrekhem, *The Mother*, 2000, p. 103.

15. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, pp. 37-38.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

17. See A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 38.

18. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 41.

19. See K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, p. 47.

Amongst the other miscellaneous tasks that Sri Aurobindo was given included the important role of tutoring the children of the Maharaja from his second wife. The Maharaja's first wife Maharani Chimnabai, whom he loved dearly, died very young in 1884; their sole son, Fatehsinghrao, was the heir apparent. From his second wife, Maharani Chimnabai II (1872-1958) he had three sons and one daughter. The Maharaja's tutor for these children was an Englishman. When he went on vacation for a short period in 1901, the Maharaja entrusted the tutoring of the three princes and the lone princess to his Cambridge scholar. Dr. Karan Singh mentions in his book that the Maharaja's only daughter Indira Devi (1892-1968), who later became the dowager Maharani of Cooch Behar, gave the information that Sri Aurobindo used to come to the Palace to teach her and her brothers, but he was too immersed in himself to pay much attention to them.²⁰ About the Maharaja's children, Sri Aurobindo once told his disciples:

Jaysinghrao was dull. Shivajirao was intelligent. I taught him French; he was a good student. Dhairyashil showed signs of premature development of lust. It was due to the servants of the palace. Indira was more interesting and there was something sturdy in her. She had the most of her father, Sayajirao, in her.²¹

Indeed, Indira was the most bold amongst the Maharaja's children; in a daring act she, to the great anguish and disapproval of her parents, broke off her engagement to the respectable Maharaja of Gwalior to marry the younger brother of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar. Later the Maharaja's displeasure towards Indira melted, who by now was the Maharani of Cooch Behar, whilst he became estranged from Jaysinghrao and Dhairyashil, due to their misdemeanours and spendthriftiness. The middle son Shivajirao was looked upon by the Maharaja as one who showed the most promise and was the Maharani's favourite.²²

Sayajirao, who was distantly related to the Baroda Royalty, was brought to Baroda in early 1875, as a twelve-year-old boy, to be adopted by Maharani Jamnabai as the heir to Baroda State. Mr. F.A.H. Elliot, an extraordinary I.C.S. officer and an educationist with a fine temperament, was brought in to educate Sayajirao and became a father-figure to Sayajirao whose frequent letters, in later life, to Elliot were invariably addressed as “My dear Sir” and were replete with affectionate sentiments.²³ Sri Aurobindo once referred to Elliot being the Maharaja's tutor.²⁴

While the Maharaja in his letters to Elliot addressed him as “My dear Sir”, when

20. *Ibid.*, p. 47 (fn).

21. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 700.

22. See Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, *Sayajirao of Baroda – The Prince and the Man*, 1989, pp. 230-56, 298, 320-25.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-58.

24. See A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 210.

writing to Sri Aurobindo, it was always “my dear friend”.²⁵ “The Maharaja Gaekwar respected and loved him very much”, writes Basanti Mitra.²⁶ Dinendra Kumar Roy observed: “Many business people respected Aurobindo highly. They were cordial with him not because of his genius, I think, but because he was especially loved and trusted by the Maharaja.”²⁷ In his biography of Sri Aurobindo, Nirodbaran writes that “. . . Sri Aurobindo had a very good relationship with the Gaekwad and his family. . . . and that the Maharani had a profound regard for Sri Aurobindo is apparent from the fact that in later years she wrote to him at Pondicherry seeking his spiritual help and guidance.”²⁸

Sri Aurobindo generally never sought favours from anyone. In this regard Dinendra Kumar Roy notes:

Aurobindo did not wish to influence the Maharaja in order to get someone a job. The Maharaja too was well acquainted with Aurobindo and respected his dignity. He knew that in his very large office there were many pot-bellied officers earning two to three thousand rupees a month, but there was only one Aurobindo. . . . I thought that the Maharaja would have refused Aurobindo nothing but Aurobindo never asked him for anything!²⁹

The only time that Sri Aurobindo asked a favour from the Maharaja was to secure a job for Barin, out of concern for his long unemployed and rather erratic younger brother. Interestingly, the Maharaja’s affection for Sri Aurobindo gets revealed when Sri Aurobindo himself admits in his request letter to “the uniform kindness and indulgence” which the Maharaja has shown him right from the very beginning of his service. The letter, dated 29th March, 1905, exemplifies utter courteousness:

May it please Your Highness,

Last December Your Highness was graciously pleased to grant my request that my brother might be entertained in Your Highness’ service and directed me to remind Your Highness of the matter subsequently.

Owing to my brother’s ill-health during the last two months, I have not thought it right to do so as yet, but now that Your Highness is leaving for Europe, I am obliged to take advantage of Your Highness’ kind permission, hoping that Your Highness will consent to his joining whatever work may be assigned to him in June after he has recovered his health by a change.

25. Basanti Chakravarty (*née* Mitra), ‘Our Aurobindo’, *Srinwantu*, April/August. 1984, p. 83.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1st Ed., 2006, p. 49 (Dinendra Kumar Roy, *Aurobindo Prasanga* – Translated from Bengali by Maurice Shukla).

28. Nirodbaran, *Sri Aurobindo For All Ages*, 1994, p. 25.

29. Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1st Ed., 2006, p. 27, (Dinendra Kumar Roy, *Aurobindo Prasanga* – Translated from Bengali by Maurice Shukla).

. . . Your Highness is aware of the circumstances which oblige me to request this kindness at Your Highness’ hands and it will be a great obligation to me if Your Highness will graciously keep them in mind when deciding this point.

. . . If Your Highness will give him this start, it will be only adding one more act of grace to the uniform kindness and indulgence which Your Highness has shown to me ever since I came to Baroda.

I remain
Your Highness’ loyal servant
Aravind. A. Ghose³⁰

Barin was then living with Sri Aurobindo in Baroda, having just returned from Bengal, where he had been helping, over the past two or three years, to organise the revolutionary secret society that Sri Aurobindo, Jatin Banerji and others had set up. The Maharaja acceded to the request to give Barin a job, but there was a change of plans and Barin returned to Bengal.³¹

We have on record another gracious letter that Sri Aurobindo wrote from Kashmir, this time on behalf of the Maharaja, offering the Maharaja’s condolences to the family of his personal physician:

Gulmarg
July 10 1903

My dear Dr. Sumant,

I am desired by His Highness to write to you expressing his sorrow at the death of your father and his sympathy with you in your great and sudden loss. This sympathy cannot come to very much, but His Highness hopes you will accept it as a tribute and expression of the regard he entertained for your father. Even when Dr. Batukram was in the State service, before he entered on personal duties, he came much into contact with His Highness, and afterwards when he was in personal service, His Highness had special occasion to become acquainted with his character and personality. In that character there were some fine qualities which His Highness can never afford to forget. One of these was the sincere and steadfast interest he took in the welfare of His Highness and the State; he was a friend with whom His Highness could always converse and interchange views freely, a thing which is very rare amongst our countrymen and particularly in these days when the personality of the Raja is being detached from the administration and the interests of the servants being secured by

30. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, pp. 164-65.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 574.

rules and regulations. As to his professional abilities His Highness has not the requisite knowledge which would entitle him to say anything, but as a personal physician His Highness had great confidence in him; he was, he thinks, prudent, sympathetic and strong, able to withstand influences, which are not uncommon in a palace and surroundings, such as obtain in a Native State. His Highness feels that it would be long before his place can be filled, if indeed it can ever be filled at all.

His Highness would like to do something which would show in a slight degree his appreciation of the good qualities and services of Dr. Batukram and since your father has left two young sons and a little daughter, His Highness intends to give a scholarship of Rs 25/ to each for ten years while they are being educated, by which time, he hopes, they will be able to look after their own interests. If at the expiry of this period a farther continuation of the scholarship is necessary, His Highness will take into consideration a request to that effect.

I am forwarding this letter through the Minister who will give effect to its contents unless you wish anything different.

Yours sincerely

Aravind A. Ghose.

Secretary³²

To escape the stifling stark summers of Gujarat the Maharaja often spent these months either at a hill resort or in Europe. Besides Kashmir in 1903 Sri Aurobindo joined the Maharaja, during his summer work-cum-holiday, at a few other hill stations; for instance Ooty in 1895, Nainital in 1901 and Lonavala in 1902. Once Sri Aurobindo recounted an incident to his disciples; one can sense the Maharaja's concern for him: “I had a mild attack of small-pox in Baroda and at that time there was no such illness there. A judge prepared some mango drink and asked me to take it and transferred his small-pox to me in the process. The Maharaja asked me to go to Mussouri but the illness prevented me. When I got cured, I went there but the Maharaja sent me back quickly.”³³

Sayajirao's speeches for important social or state functions were drafted either by Sri Aurobindo or Dr. Govind Sakharam Sardesai (1865-1959), a famous Marathi historian. Both accompanied the Maharaja during his 1903 Kashmir tour. Sardesai, regarded as Sayajirao's inspired find, became quite close to the Maharaja. Thirty-five years later, when he was about to leave Baroda service, Sayajirao implored him to stay on to tutor his grandchildren. But Sardesai was determined to go his own way and this may have caused some unpleasantness to creep into their relationship.³⁴ In retrospect one can see that although the Maharaja was fond of Sri Aurobindo the

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 160-61.

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

34 See Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, *Sayajirao of Baroda – The Prince and the Man*, 1989, pp. 135-36.

latter always kept his independence. During the time Sri Aurobindo took unpaid annual leave, followed by his resignation from Baroda service, the Maharaja was extremely anxious that he might lose him and made every effort to somehow retain him. However, the Maharaja would not dream of coercing Sri Aurobindo to stay as he did with Sardesai.

An interesting incident occurred at Lonavala when the Maharaja received an invitation from an institution in Bombay to preside over its opening ceremony to be held at Ahmedabad. The Maharaja needed a speech and urgently summoned Sri Aurobindo and Dr. Sardesai from Baroda. A speech was drafted by Sri Aurobindo and was reviewed by the Maharaja, Sri Aurobindo and Dr. Sardesai. The Maharaja listened to the whole draft in rapt attention. The speech was a detailed analysis of the ills ailing India's socio-political economy and how to take remedial measures. The speech was of such brilliance that the Maharaja softly told Sri Aurobindo: “Aurobindo Babu, the speech is indeed very beautifully written. But it is written in a style so sublime and scholarly that my subjects will never believe that I have written it. Could you not make it a little simpler and less learned?”

Sri Aurobindo immediately answered, “I cannot do it.” He then pointed to Dr. Sardesai and directly said, “He will do it for you.”

After a minute's silence Sri Aurobindo spoke again: “Do you really believe that by simplifying a little the language of the address you can make people think it is written by you? Whether the speeches are good or bad, people do know that Indian kings' speeches are always written by others for them. Only for the ideas expressed do they praise you. And you have to be satisfied with that only. This draft of the speech is all right as it is.” After this reply the Maharaja read out the speech verbatim at the inauguration ceremony. Such was the regard that the Maharaja had for Sri Aurobindo.³⁵

About this incident Nirodbaran remarked: “You see how Sri Aurobindo maintained his ‘freedom and dignity’.”³⁶

This speech was delivered by the Maharaja of Baroda on 15th December, 1902, at the opening of the Industrial Exhibition at Ahmedabad, which was held in conjunction with the 1902 session of the Indian National Congress — it was here that Tilak sought out Sri Aurobindo and talked at length with him about the oppressive British rule. From the speech one gets an idea of Sri Aurobindo's encyclopaedic knowledge, whether it be economics, politics, Indian and world history, sociology, trade, agriculture, irrigation or other topics. Sri Aurobindo's ability to collect and assimilate information and facts on a wide range of themes is phenomenal and includes subjects like, agricultural produce, soil fertility, cattle-breeding, tanning, irrigation, drought, glass, paper, handicrafts, protectionism, free enterprise, science,

35. See Trambaklal M. Sukal, ‘Such was Sri Aurobindo and such the Maharaja’, *Mother India*, February 1963, p. 38 (Translated by Nagin Doshi from the Gujarati Annual *Navabharat*, Volume VI, 1962).

36. Nirodbaran, *Sri Aurobindo For All Ages*, 1994, p. 24.

technology etc. Furthermore his understanding and analysis of India’s socio-political economy and national psychology is so insightful, deep and methodical that it would surpass the experts in their field. The speech commences by going to the root of India’s problem — the grave economic crisis that Indians are facing:

Famine, increasing poverty, widespread disease, all these bring home to us the fact that there is some radical weakness in our system and that something must be done to remedy it. . . . this economic problem is our last ordeal as a people. It is our last chance. Fail there and what can the future bring us? We can only grow poorer and weaker, more dependent on foreign help; we must watch our industrial freedom fall into extinction and drag out a miserable existence Solve that problem and you have a great future before you, the future of a great people, worthy of your ancestors and of your old position among the nations.³⁷

Sri Aurobindo then expounds on the superficial theory that the white races are superior to the coloured ones:

There is a theory which affects to regard the races inhabiting the tropical and subtropical regions of the earth as disinherited by some mysterious law of Nature from all hope of originality, enterprise and leadership. These things belong to the temperate regions; the tropics are to be for ever no more than the field for the energies of the superior races, to whom alone belong empire, civilisation, trade and manufacture. At first sight there seems to be some justification for this theory in existing facts. Our trade is in European hands, our industries are for the most part not our own, our railways are built, owned and managed, by European energy and capital. The Government is European and it is from Europe that we imitate all that we call civilisation. Our immobile and disorganised society compares ill with the enlightened energy and cohesion of Europe; even at our best we seem to be only the hands that execute, not the head that originates.

Yet even if we accept this picture of ourselves without the necessary modifications, we need not accept this interpretation of inherent inferiority.

. . . this was once a great commercial people. We see a very wealthy nation with organised guilds of artisans, a flourishing inland commerce, a large export and import trade. We hear of busy and flourishing ports through which the manufactures of India flowed out to Europe, to Arabia and Persia, and from which, in those early times, we sent out our delicate cotton textures, our chintz and muslin, our silk cloth and silk thread, a fine quality of steel; indigo, sugar, spices and drugs; diamonds, ivory and gold. In return we received brass, tin

37. *CWSA*, Vol. 1, p. 694.

and lead, coral, glass, antimony; woollen cloth and wines from Italy, and also specie and bullion.

All through the Middle Ages, our manufactures and industries were at a very high level. Every traveller attests the existence of large and flourishing towns (a sure index of industrial prosperity), and praises the skill and ingenuity of our workmen. It was on the Eastern trade that Venice built her greatness, for then we were indeed the “Gorgeous East”. Notice, that it is especially in the manufactures which required delicate work, originality of design, or instinctive taste that our products were famous; our carving, our inlaid work and our gossamer cloth.³⁸

Sri Aurobindo then reveals that the two main reasons for India’s economic decline were a) the East India Company gained political power and b) Indian industry losing much of its vitality. He elucidates:

Coming now to the earlier part of the last century, what do we find? The carrying trade had passed from the Arabs to the East India Company and with it, too, the control of nearly all our exports, especially those in indigo, iron and steel, and the newly imported industries in tobacco, tea and coffee. But there was still a large body of trade in Indian hands; even then our manufactures held their own and were far superior to those of Europe; even then there were thousands of skilled artisans; and we supplied our own wants and exported enormous quantities of goods to other countries. Where, then, has all this trade gone and what has caused our decline?

The most obvious answer is, as I have said, the difference between Europe and India in industrial methods and appliances. But this is not quite sufficient to explain it. A deeper examination of the facts at our disposal shows that the life had almost left Indian industry before Europe had brought her machines to any remarkable development, and long before those wonderful changes which the application of chemistry and electricity have more recently wrought in industry. . . . If we go a little deeper into the matter we find that there is a further reason which does not depend on the natural working of economic laws but which is political in its nature, the result of the acquisition of political power by the East India Company and the absorption of India into the growing British Empire.

As Mr Dutt shows in his able *Economic History of British India*, this political change had the gravest effect on our economic life. In the first place we had the economic policy of the East India Company which, so far as its export trade was concerned, accepted manufactures indeed, but paid an equal, if not

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 696-99.

greater, attention to raw materials. Even our internal trade was taken from us by the policy of the East India Company; there were heavy transit duties on all inland commerce and there were commercial Residents in every part of the Company's possessions, who managed to control the work of the local artisans, and so thoroughly that outside their factories all manufacture came to an end.

On this came the protective policy of the British Government, which, despite the powerful interests of the East India Company, crushed Indian manufactures by prohibitive duties. Then came the application of steam to manufacture. It is scarcely to be wondered at, if with all this against us at home and abroad, our manufactures declined and with the great advance in the improvement in machinery and the initiation of a Free Trade policy, this decline was hastened into ruin.

Moreover, a country not exporting manufactures is necessarily stagnant, and commercial progress and self-adaptability cease. Once the manufacturing superiority of India had been transferred to England, it was impossible for the weaker country to recover its position without some measure of protection. Not only was the struggle in itself unequal but the spectacle of a mighty commerce, overshadowing and dominating ours, flooding our markets and taking away our produce for its own factories, induced a profound dejection, hopelessness and inertia among our people. Unable to react against that dominating force we came to believe that the inability was constitutional and inherent in ourselves . . . If, therefore, I have dwelt upon our old manufactures and commerce and the way in which they were crushed, it is not with the unprofitable object of airing an old grievance, but in order to point out that there is no reason for this discouraging view of ourselves. We were a trading and manufacturing country from ancient times down to the present century, and if our manufactures have fallen into decay, our commerce languished, it was under a burden which would have crushed the most flourishing industry of the most energetic people.³⁹

Sri Aurobindo then goes to the psychological root of the problem when he states:

Our weakness lies in this that we have for many years lain prostrate under a fictitious sense of our own helplessness and made no adequate attempt to react against our circumstances.⁴⁰

He then goes on to offer solutions:

The restriction against foreign travel is one of the most serious obstacles in the way of commercial success and must be utterly swept away, if we are not

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 699-701.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 701.

to go on stagnating. . . . It is this state of things which must cease before we can hope to revive our own manufactures, to establish firmly and extend those which exist, and to set on foot any new industries which our needs demand, and for which the conditions offer sufficient opportunity. Then India may again be what she was in the past and what she is so admirably fitted by nature to be, a self-sufficing country; famous for artistic and useful industries. To raise her again to this should be the ideal of every patriotic citizen. But in order that the ideal may be realised we need, first: knowledge of our possibilities, of the means and facilities necessary to success, and of the lines on which activity would be best repaid; and secondly: belief in ourselves and in each other so that our knowledge may not fail for want of co-operation.

If we get these, if we realise the progress of Science and mechanical invention and resolutely part with old and antiquated methods of work, if we liberate ourselves from hampering customs and superstitions, none of which are an essential part of our religion; if, instead of being dazed in imagination by the progress of Europe, we learn to examine it intelligently, and meet it with our own progress, there will be no reason for us to despair; but if we fail in this we must not hope to occupy a place in the civilised and progressive world.⁴¹

When the Maharaja completed the full speech there was a fabulous applause by the audience. Sri Aurobindo later wrote that the Swadeshi movement “laid the foundations of an industrial India (not of course wholly industrial, that was not our intention) which is however slowly growing today.”⁴²

Manoj Das in his *Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi* writes:

The principal aspects of his vision for a free and resurgent nation were rarely understood. At the pragmatic plane it called for radical changes in the economic and industrial condition of the country. It was a most pleasant surprise that he could make Sir Sayajirao Gaekwad pronounce such ideas at the inauguration of an Industrial Exhibition at Ahmedabad that preceded the Eighteenth Conference of the Indian National Congress in that city. The speech written for him by Sri Aurobindo squarely blamed the acquisition of political power by the East India Company and “the absorption of India in the growing British Empire” for the misery to which India had been reduced. The audience was also told, “. . . until you realise that the ultimate remedy lies in your own hands and that you have to carry it out by yourselves, no external reform can help you.” There is no example of any other contemporary prince of India having uttered anything that could come closer to such open criticism of the ruling establishment.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 701-702.

42. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 20.

We can appreciate how daring was the proposition if we compare and contrast it with the spirit of the Presidential Address at the Congress delivered a week later by Sir Surendranath Banerjee: “We are already sufficiently loyal, sufficiently attached to the British connection. But we are anxious for the permanence of British rule — for our permanent incorporation into the great confederacy of the Empire.”⁴³

About this speech that the Maharaja delivered at Ahmedabad, Dr. Manilal once told Sri Aurobindo: “A speech he made at the Industrial Exhibition was marvellous.”

“Which Industrial Exhibition?” asked Sri Aurobindo.

“At Ahmedabad”, replied Manilal.

Sri Aurobindo responded: “That was the speech I prepared for him.” (*Roar of laughter*)⁴⁴

(To be continued)

GAUTAM MALAKER

43. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, March 2013, p. 230.

44. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 2, 2013, p. 952.

In their blindness men leave the Light and go to the darkness to obtain knowledge!

The Mother

(Words of the Mother – III, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 15, p. 69)

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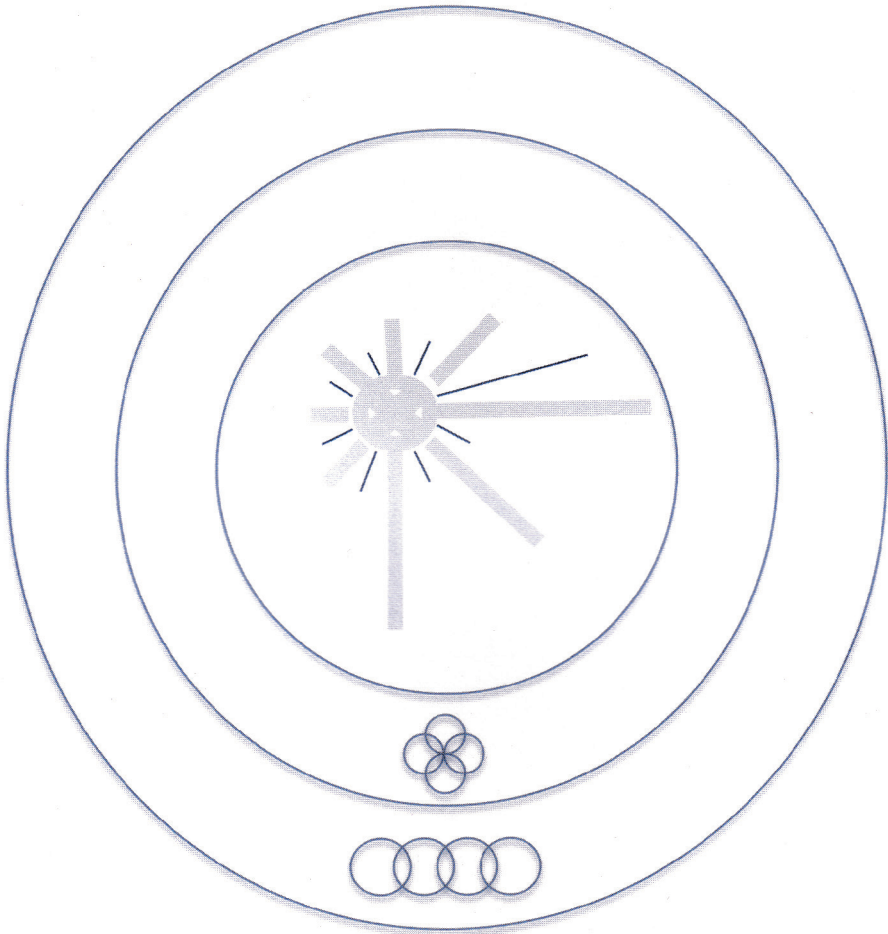
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