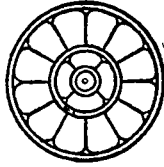


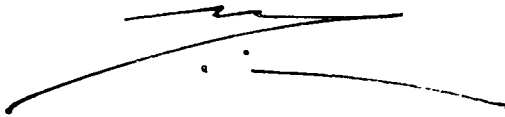
# MOTHER INDIA

August 1958

Price : Re. 1.



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.



# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. X

No. 7

---

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

---

## CONTENTS

|  | <i>Page</i> |
|--|-------------|
| THE MOTHER'S TALKS ...   | ... 1       |
| AVATAR (Poem) ... <i>Amal Kiran</i>  | ... 4       |
| GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO<br>(Unpublished Letters) ...   | ... 5       |
| CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO<br>(Unpublished Letters) ...   | ... 8       |
| SRI AUROBINDO AND THE INDIAN NATIONALIST<br>MOVEMENT (Translated by Tinkari from<br>the Hindi) ... <i>Narayan Prasad</i> | ... 10      |
| THE UNITY OF INDIA<br>(Translated by Chinmoy from the Bengali) <i>Nolin Kanta Gupta</i>                                  | ... 18      |
| INDIA AS SHE WILL BE (Poem translated<br>by Tinkari from the Bengali) ... <i>Atul Prasad Sen</i>                         | ... 21      |
| MY INDIA (Poem) ... <i>Godfrey</i>   | ... 23      |
| INDIA AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ... <i>K. D.S.</i>  | ... 24      |
| SRI AUROBINDO AND A FAMOUS WORDSWORTH<br>LYRIC ... <i>K.D.Sethna</i>   | ... 26      |

## CONTENTS

|   | <i>Page</i>                         |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| THE GRACE OF SRI AUROBINDO<br>Some Reminiscences  | ... <i>Sushula Nagraj</i> ... 42    |
| HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US<br>Reminiscences of Various People in<br>Contact with the Mother : <i>Reported by</i> ... | ... <i>Har Krishan Singh</i> ... 45 |
| REVELATION (Poem)   | ... <i>Norman Dowsett</i> ... 47    |
| ASCENT AND GRACE (Poem)   | ... <i>Romen</i> ... 47             |
| THUS SANG MY SOUL<br>(Poems to the Mother)  | ... <i>Har Krishan Singh</i> ... 48 |

### Students' Section

|   |  |
|---|--|
| APPROACH TO SRI AUROBINDO (Translated<br>by Niranjana from the Bengali) | ... <i>Charu Chandra Sarkar</i> ... 49 |
| SHE IN OUR NETHER WORLD (Poem)  | ... <i>Prithwindra</i> ... 55          |
| FLASHES   | ... <i>Chinmoy</i> ... 56              |
| ANANDA (Poem)   | ... "Aspiration" ... 57                |

## THE MOTHER'S TALKS

*Q. How can one develop the faculty of intuition?*

There are different kinds of intuition and one carries these capacities in oneself. They are always active to a little extent but we do not distinguish them because we do not pay enough attention to what happens in us. Behind the emotions, deep in the being, in the consciousness which is found near about the solar plexus, there is a sort of prescience, like a capacity of prevision, but not in the form of ideas, rather in the form of feelings, a perception almost of sensations. For example, when one is about to decide doing something, sometimes there is a kind of uneasiness or of an inner refusal and generally if one listens to this deeper indication one perceives that it was legitimate.

In other cases, there are, like a thing that pushes, that gives a sign, that insists—I am not speaking of impulses which are all movements coming from the vital or from still lower,—indications which are behind the feelings, the more affective side of the being; there also one can receive a hint sufficiently sure of something that should be done. These are forms of higher intuition or instinct which develop by observation and also by a study of the results. Naturally, it should be done in a manner quite sincere, objective, without bias. If one wishes to see things in a certain way and, for that purpose, brings in this observation, all is useless. One should do it as if one were looking at what is happening outside oneself, in somebody else.

This is one form and, generally, perhaps the first to manifest. There is another, but for it there is a lot of difficulty in the observation because, for those who are in the habit of thinking, of acting by the reason and not by impulse, of reflecting before doing a thing, there is an extremely rapid process from cause to effect in the semi-conscious thought owing to which one does not see the whole line of reasoning and, in consequence, one does not think it to be reasoning and this is enough misleading. It gives you the impression of being an intuition, but it is not an intuition, it is extremely rapid subconscious reasoning which takes a problem and works out the consequences.

We should not confuse this with intuition. Intuition, in the normal functioning of the brain, is something which falls all of a sudden, like a drop of light. If one has the capacity, a beginning of the capacity of mental vision, it gives this impression of something which comes from outside, or from above, and which is like a little shock, in the brain, of a drop of light absolutely independent of all reasoning. This is more easily perceived when one has

come to silence one's mind, to hold it motionless and attentive with a halt in its ordinary functioning, as if the mind has transformed itself into a sort of mirror which turns towards a higher faculty, in a sustained and silent attention. This also one can observe it doing, one must observe it doing—that is a necessary discipline.

When one has a question to solve, whatever it may be, usually one concentrates one's attention here at the centre just above the eyes, which is the centre of conscious will, and there, if one has done this, one cannot be in relation with intuition. You can be in relation with the source of the will, of effort, even of a certain kind of knowledge, but in the outer domain, almost material; if you wish to have a rapport with intuition, it is necessary to keep altogether immobile, the active thought should stop as much as possible and the whole mental faculty form—at the top of the head and, if possible, a little above it—a kind of mirror, very calm, very immobile, turned towards the height, in a silent most concentrated attention. If you succeed, then you can have, though perhaps not immediately, the perception of those drops of light which fall from a region as yet unknown upon the mirror and which are translated by a conscious thought having no relation with all the rest of thought since you have come to silence it. This is the true beginning of intellectual intuition.

It is a discipline to follow. For a long time, you may try it and not succeed, but as soon as you succeed in making an immobile and silent mirror you have always a result, sometimes with a precise form of thought but always with the sensation of a light which comes from on high. And then, when this light comes from on high, you can receive it without immediately entering into a whirling activity; if you can receive it in calm and silence and let it sink deep into the being, then it translates itself afterwards either by a luminous thought or by a very precise indication within that other centre, the heart.

Naturally, you should first come to develop these two capacities; then when you have a result you should observe the result as I have said and put yourself in rapport with what happens, the consequences, see and observe very attentively what gets in, what can deform, what you have added of reasoning more or less conscious, the intervention of an inferior will more or less conscious also and it is by a deepened study—truly speaking, almost at each instant, at any rate daily and very frequently—that you come to develop your intuition. It is long, indeed long and there are snares, you may even deceive yourself, you may take for intuitions the subconscious whims which try to manifest, the indications given by the impulses you have openly refused to receive—in short, all kinds of difficulties. You must expect this, but if you persist, you are sure to succeed and there is a moment when you feel, like an inner direction, something which leads you very perceptibly in all that you do. But then, so

## THE MOTHER'S TALKS

that it may be at its maximum power, it is necessary to add naturally the conscious surrender, you must be sincerely decided to follow the sign given by the higher force. If you do this, you leap over years of study and arrive at the result with extreme rapidity. If you add this, the result comes very soon, but you must do it with sincerity and with a sort of inner spontaneity. If you want to do it without the surrender, you succeed as one also succeeds in developing the personal will in order to make it a very considerable power, but this takes a lot of time and encounters a lot of obstacles, you have to be extremely persistent, obstinate, persevering and you are sure of success but after a great labour.

Whereas, if you make the surrender in a sincere complete self-giving, you rush through the stages, you arrive much more swiftly...but you must not do it with calculation because that spoils everything.

For the rest, whatever one may wish to do in life, one thing is indispensable and at the basis of all : it is the capacity to concentrate the attention. If one manages to gather together the rays of attention and of consciousness on one point and is capable of maintaining this concentration with a persistent will, there is nothing, no matter what, that can resist, from the most material bodily development to the highest spiritual development. But this discipline ought to be followed in a constant way and, so to speak, imperturbably. I do not mean concentration on the same thing always, I mean the knowing how to concentrate.

And, in things material, for studies, for sports, for all development physical or mental, it is absolutely indispensable and the value of the individual is in proportion to the value of his attention.

And, from the spiritual point of view, it is still greater. There is no spiritual obstacle that resists a power of penetrating concentration. For example, the discovery of the psychic being, the union with the inner Divine, the opening to the higher spheres, all can be obtained by a power of intense and obstinate concentration—but one must know how to do it.

There is nothing whatever in the human domain or even the superhuman, whose key is not the power of concentration.

You can be the best athlete, you can be the best student, you can be an artistic, literary or scientific genius, you can be the greatest saint with this faculty—and you may have in yourself just a small beginning of it, it is given to everybody, but everybody does not cultivate it.

July 23, 1958

*(Translated by K.D.S.)*

## AVATAR

“WHO knows the travail of my earthward vow —  
The self-subdued descension of my powers  
For thee, O man! — my daily death that dowers  
Life with immortal relish ? Richly now  
The rooted trance of my perfection flowers  
Into strange-glowing rapturous agony  
Of sacrificial fruit yearning to be  
Plucked by the hungry hands of mortal hours !

Infinity was mine : enhaloed bliss :  
Empire of timeless truth ! And yet I bore  
In my heart's pinnacled ecstatic core  
A dream to join thy soul from the abyss.  
Behold, at last I come thy love to gain —  
Eternal music wearing lips of pain !”

AMAL KIRAN



## GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO

(Unpublished Letters)

*Q. Are you sure that all the sadhakas here are evolved enough for your Supramental Yoga ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : They need not try for the Supramental. If they can give themselves and attain to the psychic and spiritual, that is sufficient for the present. (17.3.1936)

*Q. There are some who seldom get depression and others who get it often. Has it anything to do with the Divine Grace? Why is it that a few escape depression ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : For many reasons, some because their vital has taken the right attitude, some because their psychic is prominent, some simply because they have a more sound balanced and reasonable nature. The Grace of the Divine has nothing to do with it. (20.4.1936)

*Q. You said the other day, "It is not a question of giving equal value to everything you do but of recognising the value of all the different elements of the sadhana." How are we to do it when we are not aware of the inner or subtle processes of the sadhana ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : I was not speaking of giving a correct value or establishing a table of values, but of recognising that each has some importance in the total working, not disparaging as some do and saying "Meditation and experiences have no value, but only work is the thing" — or "What can work do for Siddhi, without meditation and experiences ?" (24.4.1936)

*Q. X told me that the Mother had burnt up some occult being that was troubling him very obstinately for a long time. This she did during one Darshan day. I was happy to learn of it. Now, whenever besieged by some adverse being, can we pray to the Mother for its destruction ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : Such burning gives only a temporary relief if the part that called the being does not reject it. The thing comes back in another form. (26.6.1936)

*Q. X used to press our hands and shoulders as if something had descended in him which he could not contain. Sometimes we used to feel some thrill of love when he made these movements. At other times, they seemed queer. Did he not pull down the descent, with a dangerous result ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : There was no descent; but he felt the universal love and tried to express it in action instead of holding it in himself — so inevitably the vital took hold of it as he had not yet the purification and the peace.

There is no need of physical contact.

He did nothing to bring the feeling of love down—it came of itself. His misuse of what came was not a “dangerous result” of the descent; it was the result of his past nature. 19.5.1936

*Q. Many people think that when we don't meet the Mother we should feel dull and unhappy. They even consciously bring in depression and despair in order to prove that their love is overflowing.*

SRI AUROBINDO : This theory is terrible nonsense. It is applying the formulae of the most vital kind of love to the yoga. This vital idea of love for the Divine has been a great stumbling-block in the Yoga in the Ashram.

(9.6.1936)

*Q. In return for all the Grace given by the Mother to imperfect beings like us, we seem to be acting as drags tiring out both her and you.*

SRI AUROBINDO : It is so—if the sadhakas had been different in their reactions to the Mother's grace, the work in the physical would have been much easier and less perilously subject to hostile attacks, perhaps it would have been done by now. (12-7-1936)

*Q. Does your allowing people to go from here mean that now there is no harm in their doing so ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : No, it does not; it simply means that we can't always be holding back people whose vital says “I want to go, I want to go” and they side with the vital. They are allowed to go and take their risk. (18-3-1937)

*Q. What is the difference between a death in the Ashram and a death outside ? Does one get more benefit in the form of development of mind and other parts on the subtle planes so that one may get a better new birth ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : I am not aware of any “development of mental” etc. in their planes; the development takes place on earth. The mental and other planes are not evolutionary.

The one who dies here is assisted in his passage to the psychic world and helped in his future evolution towards the Divine. (14-12-1936)

*Q. People sometimes think that the Mother sanctions whatever the heads of the departments say and that things thus go on as if she acted mechanically.*

SRI AUROBINDO : It was the Mother who selected the heads for her purpose in order to organise the whole; all the lines of the work, all the details were arranged by her and the heads trained to observe her methods and it was only

afterwards that she stepped back and let the whole thing go on on her lines but with a watchful eye always. The heads are carrying out her policy and instructions and report everything to her and she often modifies what they do when she thinks fit. Their action is not perfect, because they themselves are not yet perfect and they are also hampered by the ego of the workers and the sadhaks. But nothing can be perfect so long as the sadhaks and workers do not come to the realisation that they are not here for their ego and self-indulgence of their vital and physical demands but for a high and exacting Yoga of which the first aim is the destruction of Desire and the substitution for it of the Divine Truth and the Divine Will... (9-1-1937)

*Q. There is a belief that Yoga excludes all relations and friendships.*

SRI AUROBINDO : It presents one side of the matter—viewed from the standpoint of a single-minded sadhana. The point is that relations and friendships are usually founded on the vital and are very mixed affairs. That is why they turn out to be obstacles in sadhana. (2-1-1937)

*Q. You say many things that human nature does not find easy and natural.*

SRI AUROBINDO : If I said things that human nature finds easy and natural, that would certainly be very comfortable for the disciples, but there would be no room for spiritual aim or endeavour. Spiritual aims and methods are not easy or natural (e.g. as quarrelling, sex indulgence, greed, indolence, acquiescence in all imperfections are easy and natural) and if people become disciples, they are supposed to follow spiritual aims and endeavours, however hard and above ordinary nature and not the things that are easy and natural. (3-5-1937)

*Q. How is it that X who seemed so quiet, frank and devoted lost his balance of mind ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : It appears that he had a great spiritual ambition which was beyond his powers and he seems to have been indulging in greatness such as not sleeping against which he had been warned as well as others (not authorised) which can put one into contact with the vital beings and lead to lunacy. (5-10-1936)

*From NAGIN DOSHI*

## CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Unpublished Letters)

MYSELF : Everything seems to be queer in this world, this yogic world included. When a fellow works hard at French, medicine, trying to improve his department and himself, and thereby serve the Divine, it is bad. Too much concentration and meditation is worse. When one follows the rule “eat, drink and be merry” it is worst. I am coming to X’s view that your Yoga will always be yours.

SRI AUROBINDO : There is where you miss the truth and he missed it also—he did not try to “improve himself” at any rate in any yogic way—he might try to aggrandise himself, but that is another matter. Self-aggrandisement does not save from collapse.

Well, I never heard that to eat, drink and be merry was one of the paths of Yoga—unless Charvak’s way is one of Yoga.

It is not my Yoga that is difficult to get the head or tail of—it is your and X’s and others’ views about Yoga that are weird and wonderful. If a fellow is brilliant in French and Sanskrit, you think he is a wonderful Yogi, but then it is the people who are first in the Calcutta B.A. who must be the the great Yogis. If one objects to spending all the energy in tea and talk, you say, “What queer Gurus these are and what queer ideas”, as if sociability were the base of the Brahman or on the contrary you think that everybody must shut himself up in a dark room, see nobody and go mad with want of food and sleep—and when we object, you say, “Who can understand this Yoga ?” Have you never heard of Buddha’s maxim “No excess in any direction”—or of Krishna’s injunction “Don’t eat too much or abstain from eating, don’t drop sleep or sleep too much; don’t torture the soul with violent tapasya—practise Yoga steadily without despondency. Don’t abstain from work and be inactive, but don’t think either that work will save you. Dedicate your work to the Divine, do it as a sacrifice, reach the point at which you feel that the works are not yours but done for you etc., etc. Through meditation, through dedicated works, through bhakti—all these together, arrive at the divine consciousness and live in it.” Buddha and Krishna are not considered to be unintelligible big Absurdities, yet when we lay [stress] on the same thing, you all stand and say “What’s this new and unheard-of stuff ?” It is the result I suppose of having modern-minded disciples who know all about everything and can judge better than any Guru, but

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

to whom the very claims of Yoga are something queer and cold and strange.  
Kismet !

MYSELF : Now about tea and butter. All these were, it seems, generously granted by you to X.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not butter—it is tea and talk....They were granted by me as a concession to his nature, because by self-deprivation he would land himself in the seas of despair—not as a method of reaching the Brahman. He was trying to do what his nature would not allow. It was only if he got intense spiritual experience that he could give up tea and talk without wallowing in misery—Is it so difficult to understand a simple thing like that ? I should have thought it would be self-evident even to the dullest intelligence.

Because I allowed him to talk...does it follow that talk and tea were given as part of his Yoga ? If the Mother allowed butter or eggs to Y for his physical growth does it follow that butter and eggs are the bases of the Brahman ? If somebody has a stomachache and I send him to the Dispensary, does it follow that stomachache, the Dispensary, Nirod and allopathic drugs are the perfect way to spiritualisation ?...

*From NIRODBARAN*

## SRI AUROBINDO AND THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

### I

WHEN Sri Aurobindo, at the age of 21, returned to India in 1893 after 14 years of education in England, he found the country firmly gripped by the English. But the English were not the invaders of a really free and flourishing country. For over 900 years the land had been in the hands of invaders and had got lulled into somnolence. Not that there had been no resistance to Muslim rule. The English too had to fight many a battle before they could establish themselves. But the resistance did not spring from any central organic source. The foreign domination was not easy nor uninterrupted for a long time; yet the resistance was only of a feverish body without intrinsic balance and it lacked nation-wide unity.

After consolidating their position, the English started to tighten their hold not only on the body but also on the mind of India. The country was deprived by them of every means that might allow any chance of an all-India movement. Had they stopped with political domination, the situation would not have been so serious. With their astute ruling sense they planned that the nation as a whole should begin to look down upon its own culture. There were many who thought that without being initiated into the Western way of life there was no hope for India.

The leaders had mostly reconciled and resigned themselves to the British rule as a price for the peace and stability that had been brought to the land. They thought there was no way out and hence wanted to base their programme of social and political action almost entirely on the philosophy of 19th century Europe. They further believed that political reforms would gradually be bestowed as a gift from the British, when educated Indians were able to demonstrate India's fitness for such reforms.

Indeed some great figures had arisen, touched with the true Indian spirit. But somehow the national being did not come to full fiery focus nor did it grow sufficiently into a collective force nor become a power of irresistible political regeneration. A beginning had been made when Sri Aurobindo appeared on the scene. That was the period headed, as it was humourously and affectionately said, by Lal, Bal and Pal—Lala Lajpatrai, Balgangadhar Tilak and Bipinchandra

Pal. The most dynamic of the three was Tilak though all of them, as Dr. Theodore Shay of Chicago University has said in a recent study of this great Mahratta, were nationalists not because they merely awakened nationalism but because they based that awakening on India's own cultural values. It was Tilak whom Sri Aurobindo urged his country to follow, and Dr. Shay has rightly put them together as joint makers of a political movement infused with the Sanatana Dharma.

But inasmuch as Sri Aurobindo was more directly in the stream of the ancient spiritual practice, the inner process of Yoga, the deepest soul of India was naturally more manifest in his personality. And it may be said without hesitation that none had quite seen in the geographical form of the country the conscious Mother-Goddess of Sri Aurobindo's vision. But there is more to the story of Indian politics in connection with Sri Aurobindo than has been generally realised. Not only in making the political emancipation the foundation of a new spiritual future is Sri Aurobindo pre-eminent. Even as politician proper, as one who worked for that emancipation, he has played a creative role that is fundamental.

2

It is now an admitted fact that before 1905 there was no political awakening in India and that the partition of Bengal brought about the national upheaval. But who was the leader and awakener of the mind of the masses? In 1908 the political Weekly *Bande Mataram*<sup>1</sup> raised this significant point about the new political philosophy of Passive Resistance that had come to the country: "What brain planned it, what voice first uttered it, history will never be able to discover." But Sri Aurobindo's seven essays entitled *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance* are a standing historical record of his unique contribution to the struggle for India's freedom. He writes in his own characteristic way about this aspect of the creed of Nationalism, "It was in the heart of the country and God revealed it to Bengal."<sup>2</sup> He says again, "The movement was not planned by any human brain, it was not foreseen by any human foresight."<sup>3</sup>

According to one belief, it was Bipin Chandra Pal who first preached this doctrine to Bengal. But Sri Aurobindo has written that Pal was "opposed to the Boycott from its inception because his intellect refused to assent to the economic possibility of Boycott."

It is now well-known that, long before Pal's advent, Parnell had taken

<sup>1</sup> March 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Chaitanya's defiance of the Kazi's order referred to in *Bande Mataram* of April 2, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> *Speeches*, p. 100.

to the policy of organised national resistance in Ireland. "This was the policy initiated by the genius of Parnell when by the plan of campaign he prevented the payment of rents in Ireland."<sup>1</sup>

At the time of the partition of Bengal, people in India could not even venture to think of opposition and revolution against the Government. The very name of Boycott would startle and shock the then leaders of the Congress. Amidst such circumstances Sri Aurobindo chose to initiate the country into the Agni Mantra, the Guiding Word of the Fire. He said, "When it is sought to suppress all chance of breathing by violent pressure, any and every means of self-preservation becomes right and justifiable."<sup>2</sup> He was prepared for any steps, however extreme in nature, that would help to break the shackles of the Motherland.

As far back as the year 1900 Sri Aurobindo sent Jatin from Baroda as his lieutenant to Bengal, then his younger brother Barindra, and he himself visited the various centres of the secret societies during his vacations. Not only that, but he offered his sole property, Muraripukur Garden at Manicktalla, for carrying out revolutionary work and, sitting in the heart of the bureaucratic capital, he radiated the light of Nationalism through his journal *Bande Mataram*.

Without these daring and momentous steps Bengal could not have hoped to rescue the Congress from the favour-seeking policy pursued by almost all its prominent leaders. Through platform-orations and street-processions how long could popular enthusiasm be maintained? Moreover, would the power-blind bureaucracy care to pay any heed to these shows? At the time of the partition of Bengal, public opinion began to make itself felt. Lord Curzon claimed that it was in his favour and Surendranath Banerji claimed that it was in his. On the other hand, by their own sacrifices, the revolutionary youths at once conquered the hearts of the people. Kanailal Dutt was sent to the gallows. The people of Bengal gathered in their thousands and revered and treasured his ashes and sacred relics. This turned the tide of public opinion to the side of Nationalism. The movement firmly and courageously started by Sri Aurobindo at this juncture proved a turning-point in history.

Pal could never persuade himself to adopt the policy and programme of secret societies. He had no faith in it. He feared that it would give the government an excuse for crushing helpless Bengal. Tilak would take no part openly in the revolutionary movement, let alone Surendranath who was a moderate leader. But if there was no such movement how could it arouse such fiery enthusiasm and what else would give the government a handle for repression?

<sup>1</sup> *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.



To the ordinary thinking, such an argument might seem senseless. Who could think that repression would do the country good? If it was peace that Sri Krishna wanted, why did he then engage in war? One could understand Pal, Tilak, Surendranath, but it was difficult to understand Sri Aurobindo.

Even the Maharaja of Baroda who was the first to discern Sri Aurobindo's talents and sense his greatness and genius and about whom Sri Aurobindo himself said, "The present Maharaja is fit to administer a vast state. There are very few politicians like him," could not understand Sri Aurobindo's ways of working. Writes C.C. Dutt in his *Reminiscences*, "No one understood my chief, not even his clever Maharajah. In 1907, when I met His Highness in Baroda, he said to me, 'Try and persuade your friend not to resign his job here...' When I told Aurobindo this he laughed, 'The old man will never understand my policies.'"<sup>1</sup>

If Bengal was not thrown into the blood-bath, could it have the pride and glory of setting an example of a flaming patriotism before the country and dynamise the inert masses?

From the Congress platform of 1905, Lala Lajpat Rai congratulated Bengal "on its splendid opportunity of heralding a new political era in the country." He added, "If other provinces followed the example of Bengal the day was not far distant when they would win."<sup>2</sup>

After the mutiny of 1857, when bomb after bomb began to explode in Bengal it appeared as if we were passing through the first stage of a new French Revolution. The fiercer became the governmental repression, the sterner grew the determination of the revolutionary youths to stake their all for the country.

Tilak also did not shrink from courting the wrath and repression of the bureaucracy, but it seemed that he would not want to go to the extreme limit. Here some subtle difference may be discerned between the thought-processes of Tilak and Sri Aurobindo. Tilak wanted to move with caution so that our men might not be crushed under the governmental steam-roller of repression. "We are not armed," he said, "and there is no necessity for arms either, the military strength of the Government is enormous and a single machine-gun showering hundreds of bullets per minute will quite suffice for our largest public meetings."<sup>3</sup>

It is not that Sri Aurobindo was unaware of the Government's tremendous strength and their policy of the sword. Yet his demand was "Repression, more repression", for he saw in it "the hammer of God that is beating us into

<sup>1</sup> *The Bombay Circle* No. 8, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, p. 422

<sup>3</sup> *Letter to the Versailles Peace Conference 1919*.

shape so that we may be moulded into a mighty nation and be an instrument for his work in the world.”<sup>1</sup> He called upon the youths to bear the brunt of the fire with a glad heart for the liberation of the Motherland. He said in the *Bande Mataram*, “For every stone that is added to the national edifice a life must be given.”<sup>2</sup> We have to be ready even to “manure the soil with our blood” if we want Swaraj : this was the driving thought behind his action.

Sri Aurobindo’s bold stand was in complete contrast to the policy of other leaders who were bent much more on the annulment of the partition than on fostering a revolutionary Nationalism. Such a stand singles him out from all. In 1904, while he remained as firm as ever in his belief that nothing could be gained by appeasing or appealing to the British Government and the British people, we find that Tilak seconded a resolution moved by Sir William Weddarburn, in the Banaras Session of the Congress, on sending a deputation from India to England to bring India’s claims before the electors and the candidates during the coming general election. According to Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Tilak urged that “an agitation be made in England, for there the judges sit who would decide our case”.<sup>3</sup>

The special viewpoint of Sri Aurobindo could not escape the notice of H.W.Nevinson, correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* and other English papers, who arrived in India in October 1907. He wrote in his *New Spirit in India* : “Mr. Aurobindo Ghosh. .was now the leader of the Nationalists or young extremists who regarded even Mr. Tilak as touched with the cautious moderation of the past.”<sup>4</sup> He also noted Sri Aurobindo’s attitude to the partition of Bengal : “He regarded it as the greatest blessing that had ever happened to India. No other measure could have stirred national feeling so deeply or roused it so suddenly from the lethargy of previous years.”<sup>5</sup> Ramsay MacDonald, later a Prime Minister of Britain, spoke also of Sri Aurobindo in the same vein : “I called on one whose name is on every lip as a wild extremist.”<sup>6</sup> But he added : “He was far more of a mystic than a politician.”

There was a time when the Bengalis were looked down upon by the whole of India no less than by Britain as cowards. Macaulay, in his essay on Warren Hastings, had said that a war of the Bengalis against the British would be like a war of sheep against wolves, and had characterised “deceit” as their special weapon. Yet it was from the soil of Bengal that rose up valiant bands of youths who became a terror to the Englishman.

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> March, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> *The History of the Congress*, p. 98. *Vide* also Annie Besant, *Op cit.*, p. 402.

<sup>4</sup> P. 221.

<sup>5</sup> P. 222.

<sup>6</sup> *The Awakening in India*, p. 71.

Ramnath, the eminent author of the Hindi book *Rashtriya Nirmata*, in giving the life-sketches of our national leaders, says : "So much were the extremist youths fired with enthusiasm under Sri Aurobindo's leadership that there sprang into existence an armed revolutionary organisation in the country. There were bomb explosions in several places. The influence of the Englishman upon the Bengali mind disappeared. It was a wonder how the Bengali who till yesterday trembled before the European policeman could face death with a fearless heart. In a few month's time things became so changed that the Bengali over whom the European sergeant lorded it so long was now a terror for him."<sup>1</sup>

"Sri Aurobindo," wrote the *Sunday Times* of Madras in an editorial on December 10, 1950, five days after the Master's passing, "was the first of our leaders to claim freedom for India in the widest sense of the word. Till then the ideal that Congress preached was colonial self-government, but Sri Aurobindo went far ahead." Sri Aurobindo himself had said in his Jhalakathi speech : "There are some who fear to use the word 'freedom' ; but I have always used the word, because it has been the mantra of my life to aspire towards freedom of my nation."<sup>2</sup>

Sri Aurobindo strove like a Bhagiratha to extend the anti-partition agitation all over India. The other leaders were unwilling to treat the issue as an all-India question : they regarded it as Bengal's own problem. Instead of using their strength against the bureaucracy they directed it against the "extremists" (that is how they called the Nationalists) in order to get them out of the way. The Moderates sought to avoid direct clash with the rulers and shrank from the storm of terror and oppression to be let loose over the country. Sri Aurobindo infused into the people such a spirit of revolution as made of the alien rule an intolerable deadweight. Rather than accept it he would have the country "brave the fury" of the storm and "feel her strength."<sup>3</sup>

From the core of world-history, as it were, Sri Aurobindo saw that until relations with the rulers were broken, revolutionary thought could not awaken in the land ; until a do-or-die determination seized the spirit of the youths, until a grim tug-of-war with the bureaucracy took place, the blood of the youths would not boil ; until they freely offered themselves in the flame of sacrifice for the country, no movement could make any headway.

Politics, in Sri Aurobindo's eyes, is especially the business of the Kshatriyas and not of the Brahmans. He even went to the length of saying that to break

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 234, 235.

<sup>2</sup> *Speeches*, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 88.

an unjust and coercive law is not only justifiable but under certain circumstances a duty. To shrink from bloodshed and violence under such circumstances was, in his view, a weakness deserving as severe a rebuke as Sri Krishna had addressed to Arjuna when he shrank from the colossal civil slaughter at Kurukshetra.<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's political philosophy attracted the Indian mind because our masses still have a thirst for a little of the immortal wisdom that fills our ancient Shastras. Here is an example of how full of Upanishadic truth were his political sayings : "To win liberty of one's country is the first duty of ours. The work of national emancipation is a great and holy yajna of which boycott, Swadeshi, national education and every other activity, great and small, are only major or minor parts. Liberty is the fruit we seek from the sacrifice and the Motherland the goddess to whom we offer it ; into the seven leaping tongues of the fire of the yajna we must offer all that we have, feeding the fire even with our blood and lives and happiness of our nearest and dearest ; for the Motherland is a goddess who loves not a maimed and imperfect sacrifice, and freedom was never won from the gods by a grudging giver. But every great yajna has its Rakshasas who strive to baffle the sacrifice, to bespatter it with their own dirt or by guile or violence put out the flame. Passive resistance is an attempt to meet such disturbers by peaceful and self-contained Brahmatej ; but even the greatest Rishis of old could not, when the Rakshasas were fierce and determined, keep up the sacrifice without calling in the bow of the Kshatriya ready for use, though in the background. Politics is especially the business of the Kshatriya, and without Kshatriya strength at its back, all political struggle is unavailing."<sup>2</sup>

Thus we see that he firmly held on the one hand the reins of the secret society and on the other those of passive resistance. And here the mystery is revealed why, along with passive resistance, he carried on a revolutionary movement. He held that the nation must be ready for both and that "the nature of the pressure" would determine which of them would be suitable.

Sri Aurobindo's passive resistance admitted no doctrinaire ethical binding. According to him, it was only a policy to free a subject nation from the clutches of its rulers. This is the fundamental difference between his action and Gandhiji's civil disobedience movement.

According to Pal, there was no help for us but to adopt the method of passive resistance. For, if active resistance was resorted to, the reaction of the Government would be so strong that the country would be nowhere.

<sup>1</sup> *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

He wrote : "No one outside a lunatic asylum will ever think or counsel any violent or unlawful methods in India, in her present helplessness, for the attainment of her civil freedom."<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo did not consider the people so helpless. He fully appreciated the force of passive resistance, but the prevailing conditions were to determine whether our resistance should be passive or active. Sri Aurobindo has summed up his attitude : "We do not want to develop a nation of women who know only how to suffer...Passive resistance cannot build up a strong and great nation unless it is ready or knows how to strike."<sup>2</sup>

In a few years—six in all—Sri Aurobindo brought about a radical change in the national mind. Swadeshi became the Swadharma of the country. At a bound India passed from a mere particular grievance to a nation-wide demand for independence. And, as he himself has put it, "the purely political elements of the Nationalist programme and activities were those that lasted.. and kept it recognisably one throughout nearly fifty years of its struggle. But the greatest thing done in those years was the creation of a new spirit in the country. In the enthusiasm that swept surging everywhere with the cry of *Bandemataram* ringing on all sides men felt it glorious to be alive and dare....The old apathy and timidity was broken and a force created which nothing could destroy... and carried India to the beginning of a complete victory."<sup>3</sup>

Let us conclude this all-too-brief account of Sri Aurobindo's active political work with the words of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Ex-President of the Indian National Congress and author of *The History of the Congress* : "Aurobindo's genius shot up like a meteor. He was on the high skies for a time. He flooded the land from Cape to Mount with the effulgence of his light."<sup>4</sup>

NARAYAN PRASAD

(Translated by Tinkari from the original Hindi)

<sup>1</sup> *Bande Mataram*, October 3, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> P. 70.

## THE UNITY OF INDIA

INDIA is one. But where in lies that unity, what is its nature ?

Many are of the opinion that India has no 'unity'; the condition that prevails at present and the possible development may at the most be termed 'union'. Union is the agreement and harmony of many antagonistic entities, but unity is the organic oneness of the same entity. To-day we proclaim India an undivided nation, but as a matter of fact India is not exactly of that type. She is a collectivity of many diverse sub-nations, a continent. Bengal is a state or a sub-nation, the Punjab is a state or a sub-nation, the Tamil Nad and the Andhra-desh are each a state or a sub-nation, but the unity of the whole of India is merely a geographical formula. Or perhaps it can be said that India is one to some extent in her culture, religion, conduct of life and social discipline. Consequently India may at the most be compared with Europe. India is one in the sense that Europe is one,—one country or one nation; not as a homogeneous group of people, like France or Germany or England, but for the commonalty that exists in general in the way of thinking, the mental formation and in the mode of living. No doubt there are Muslims in India. Their genius is trying to strike a different note, still the foundation of India and her original character are the Aryan genius. The Muslims can be admitted in the way Jews have a place even in Christian Europe.

Is this sort of unity all that is there ? It would seem so when we look from a superficial point of view, from the outside. But if we try to look deeper we shall find the true power that is at play behind the external form.

The unity of India lies in her soul-power. The unity that we see in the education, culture, behaviour, conduct and the mould of her character are the outer manifestation of an unsplit unity which is derived from a still profounder living being. Behind India stands the 'One Being'. That is the personality who alone brings about harmony, unity and oneness in the diverse, innumerable and variegated life of India. The unity of India does not lie in the mental plane alone, gradually it is taking shape in the vital and is going to get embodied even in the physical.

It is the descent of the soul-power of India that is pressing to fuse India into a single nation. The political unity of India is not only possible but inevitable, and the secret of that consummation is to be found in this mystic fact. Indeed, if we compare India with Europe from this angle of vision the difference of the two will stand out in bold relief. The political unity of Europe appears to be a very difficult and even an impossible problem. The union of Europe

is an armed peace. One kind of union was attempted at times in the past—but the union which the Czar, Napoleon and Charlemagne wanted to bring about was but the sole supremacy of a particular country and nation; that means the union of the devourer and the devoured. Another type of union too is at present visible in Europe — that is the formation of groups in their self-interest, each group combining to pool its resources against others. None of these unions is real unity. The compromise, the treaty arrived at among different interests are not the infallible unity of the soul — the undivided personality of the collective being has not emerged there.

In fact every European country has a well-developed and distinct personality of its own; each wants to secure a special significance, each is self-sufficient and alien to the rest. There is a mutual give-and-take among them, often they move together for a common cause; but the collective existence of each is separate and boldly and strongly demarcated. Look at England, France, Italy or Germany. The geographical boundary of each stands distinctly like a contour of the human body. The living, wakeful collective being of Europe belongs separately to each of the European countries and nations and cannot be termed the collective being of all Europe.

On the other hand, if we look at India we find that the whole of India possesses a well-defined and distinct geographical outline. But the boundaries of the separate states of India are not so well-marked; their geographical features do not look well-built and complete wholes. No doubt, each of them has its own speciality, but their collective beings do not stand out prominently in contrast to one another. If we think of Asia in connection with India, then the difference between India and Europe will be clearly noticed. In the case of India the wholeness of the state is visibly original and natural, the same cannot be said of the whole of Asia; the countries of Asia like those of Europe have their different ways of life and modes of being. Europe has a similarity to Asia, but not to India.

If India is to be compared at all then the object of comparison cannot be Europe but a country of Europe which is called a 'nation.' India cannot be classed with Europe, but England or Great Britain, for example, can be mentioned for comparison. England is a homogeneous country or nation. Its collective being has a separate living individuality. As in Great Britain there are Scotland, Wales and England itself so in India the separate states like Bengal, Maharashtra and the Punjab etc. are the different limbs of the collective being of India. But the thing is that just as Asia is far larger than Europe, the states of India are larger than the European states. To European eyes China and India appear like continents. Not only is India larger in size but from the point of diversity also India displays a greater profusion that is almost

endless. Those very differences and diversities that are to be found on a smaller scale within any European country are there in India on a larger scale. The divisions which are considered insignificant and therefore overlooked in a nation of Europe stand prominently here because of their amplitude, their immensity in size; such divisions too are accepted as somehow useful.

So it comes to this that the unity of India is vaster and more complex than the unity of any of the nations of Europe. But for that reason it cannot be concluded that this unity is no unity. Rather we know that science is proving the fact that the higher the being rises in the scale of evolution the greater complexity does its individuality acquire. Such diversity and variety are visible in India because a higher and greater synthesis is thus worked out or about to be wrought in a distinct manner and on a larger scale.

The collective union of Europe, its living truth, is not the unity that exists among the countries or nations of Europe. Of course an attempt is being made to bring about a sort of oneness through the length and breadth of Europe; but that oneness is still a conception, still an ideal; not even a living ideal yet. The inner being has not as yet become conscious and alert about its own personality. But in the case of India the awakening of her inner being has stood by far the first. India's personality of collective existence is indeed a living truth. The unity of the whole of India is, as it were, axiomatic and God-given. The oneness that is trying to become awake and conscious in India is not the unity and the personality of the whole of India, that is, the oneness of the different personalities of the states of India. Therefore we notice contrary ways of life-manifestation in India and in Europe. In Europe the collective personality has awakened and the sense of unity has been established first within the limited area of the different countries. Having established these two things Europe is progressing towards the larger unity in its totality. The trend of Europe is the gradual ascension to the total consciousness of the inner being from the consciousness of the external physical parts. But in India what happened is the gradual descent to the external physical parts from the total consciousness of the inner subtle being. India first discovered her own inner being. This being of India is ever awake, so in India the manifestation of that being and the descent of her power are making the different states gradually become conscious and discover their own individualities. Perhaps Europe has had to start from a political union or oneness in order gradually and finally to attain to the unity of the soul, and achieve her own individuality. India has long acquired the unity of the soul and this self-conscious individuality is the last word of India's oneness.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

*(Translated by Chinmoy from the Bengali essay in "Bharat-Rahasya")*



## INDIA AS SHE WILL BE\*

*(Translated by Tinkari from the original Bengali)*

SING, sing, O sing, ye all,  
To the tune of hundreds of lutes and flutes  
That India shall once more win  
Her highest place in the councils of the world.  
Great will she be in Spirit,  
Great as well in action;  
A new Sun of splendour  
Will rise again in this ancient East.  
Even today there stands guard  
The king of mountains;  
Surrounding her on three other sides  
There dance the ocean waves.  
Ganga and Godavari  
Have not gone dry;  
Still do they carry their life-giving nectar,  
Every field, every cave and forest,  
Every inhabited region,  
Holy places unnumbered  
Proclaim her glory.

Illumined Maitreyi, Khana, Lilavati,  
Sati, Savitri, Sita, Arundhati—  
'Tis from these mighty mothers and daughters of heroes  
That we are descended;  
Descended we are from those  
Who, to save their honour,  
Burnt themselves in flames;  
From those who gladly gave away their lives  
For the sake of husband and child.

\* Parts of this Song which was written years before India's Independence will be sung in the original Bengali to the Mother on 15th August in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

MOTHER INDIA

Never will this our land lag behind;  
Not for nothing were born  
Rishis and royal dynasties.  
The mist over her face  
Is but a passing cloud.  
Rise she will, rise she must to her true stature.  
Commerce, industry and wealth  
Will flow to her; crowned she will be  
With knowledge, humility and heroism.  
All these will come, again must come.

Neither has India forgotten  
That from here arose the voice of Ahimsa;  
That Nimai and Nanak made brothers  
Of all her children.  
Forgetting all spite of creed,  
Forgetting all pride of race,  
In million bodies will beat one heart;  
One bond of love will bind them all  
Into a single nation.

Come, ye cottagers,  
Ye tillers of the soil,  
Come, ye Aryans,  
Dwellers of mount and forest,  
Come, O sannyasins,  
Come, ye all, and unite  
Around the Mother's feet.  
Come, ye depressed,  
Come, ye cultured,  
The spirit of service burning in your breast,  
Gather around the Mother's feet.

Come, O Hindu, come, O Moslem,  
Come, O Parsi, Buddhist, Christian,  
Join your hearts, your hands,  
And cluster round the Mother's feet.

ATUL PRASAD SEN

## MY INDIA

THE hour of sunset and dusk,  
And dreaming temples, like pale hands in prayer  
Pointed towards the sky,  
While lulling sounds enhance a hallowed hush...

A lonely bird white-winged against the blue,  
Its exultant song hymning its wide heaven of liberty

The quiet river's flow, soothing, effortless, calm,  
Moving in a glad surrender to an eternal sea;  
And distant lanterns welcoming the night.

'Tis then,

Like the muted sobbing of a child, I hear the beating of your  
heart,

O India, my India.

GODFREY

## INDIA AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

THE question of the English language in India receives some helpful light from recent issues of the *Times Literary Supplement*, one of England's most influential weeklies on Literature. In the number of April 18 appeared a front-page article entitled *England is Abroad*. It warned against a trend towards provincialism which wants to make English a matter exclusively for English writers. It touched on how already by 1910 many of the most accomplished writers in the language had originated on the fringes of the English-speaking world: "the centre of gravity of English literature shifted."

After mentioning the potent Irish character of Yeats's work and how this poet added new cultural qualities to English expression, the author goes on to say: "By the time he did so, other Irishmen, like Synge and Joyce, Americans like Pound and Eliot, and even an Indian, Tagore, had joined him in the task of enlarging the intellectual and emotional context in which the English language took place and of creating new forms and symbols adequate to express this enlarged vision."

Referring to people who talk of "consolidation" of England's own creative work or that of some Americans only, he remarks: "While we are busy 'consolidating', a brand new 'English' literature will be appearing in Johannesburg or Sydney or Vancouver or Madras." A reader of this remark tried to criticise it, as well as other points, in a subsequent issue of the *Times Literary Supplement*. But the writer of the original article replied that instead of absorbing oneself in structural or stylistic peculiarities of recent writing which is nearer home than "Vancouver or Madras" it would be better to emulate the potent independence of men like Joyce and Proust. This independence would naturally inspire study of the new creative spirit everywhere in the world, and as if to spotlight the mention of Madras the *Times Literary Supplement* of May 9 brought out on the whole of one of centre pages a review of R. K. Narayan's work.

The article is entitled *Well Met in Malgudi* and the reviewer notes: "R. K. Narayan, a Madras Indian who writes in English, has few equals among modern novelists...He can be enjoyed for the excellence of his prose; for the unfamiliar society he describes, which soon becomes familiar but never loses its power to interest, charm and surprise; as a comic writer of the most rewarding kind; and as a humanist, who has made his own discoveries about the nature of man-

kind and presents them with a restraint and clarity which give them universal application : what is true in Malgudi is true in the whole world.”

What Narayan has done serves as an important reminder that English, by its spread over a wide area, is no longer the exclusive medium of Englishmen and that it can become a competent and authentic voice for Indian life and mind. We may here note what Sri Aurobindo has written on the same subject apropos of poetic expression of spiritual thought and vision :

“The idea that Indians cannot succeed in English poetry is very much in the air just now but it cannot be taken as absolutely valid...Tagore’s *Gitanjali* is not in verse, but the place it has taken has some significance. For the obstacles from the other side are that the English mind is apt to look on poetry by an Indian as a curiosity, something exotic (whether it really is or not, the suggestion will be there), and to stress the distance at which the English temperament stands from the Indian temperament. But Tagore’s *Gitanjali* is most un-English, yet it overcame this obstacle. For the poetry of spiritual experience, even if it has true poetic value, the difficulty might lie in the remoteness of the subject. But nowadays this difficulty is lessening with the increasing interest in the spiritual and mystic...What you say may be correct (that our oriental luxury in poetry makes it unappealing to Westerners), but on the other hand it is possible that the mind of the future will be more international than it is now. In that case the expression of various temperaments in English poetry will have a chance. If our aim is not success and personal fame but to arrive at the expression of spiritual truth and experience of all kinds in poetry, the English tongue is the most wide-spread and is capable of profound turns of mystic expression which make it admirably fitted for the purpose; if it could be used for the highest spiritual expression, that is worth trying.”

In another context, on being asked whether any Englishman could write *pucca* Bengali and whether it would not sound unBengali, he remarked that “it would if he had not thoroughly mastered the Bengali tongue;” but Sri Aurobindo did not consider that a comparison could quite be made with Indians writing in English. He said : “Few Englishmen have the Indian’s linguistic turn, plasticity and ability.” He also remarked : “Many Indians write better English than many educated Englishmen.” But, of course, Sri Aurobindo did not encourage incompetent self-complacency : English, if it is to be put to creative purposes by Indians, must be studied with thoroughness and used with an intimate sense of its genius.

K. D. S.

## SRI AUROBINDO AND A FAMOUS WORDSWORTH LYRIC

### I

WORDSWORTH has posed many a problem to the students of his life and work—the psychology of his early amour with Annette Vallon, his emotional relation with his sister Dorothy, the identity of his “Lucy”, the extent of Coleridge’s influence on him, the decline of his genius in mid-career, the exact character of his Nature-mysticism, the tension between it and his later orthodoxy, the *volte-face* in his political beliefs, the frequent difference between his theory and his practice of poetry, the “two voices” in that practice itself which J. K. Stephen in a parody-sonnet distinguished as “of the deep” and “of an old half-witted sheep”. But all critics have agreed in general on the meaning of that famous lyric of his :

A slumber did my spirit seal;  
I had no human fears :  
She seemed a thing that could not feel  
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;  
She neither hears nor sees;  
Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course,  
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

The lines have been declared to fall within the set of Wordsworth’s “Lucy” poems. Whether “Lucy” was an idealisation of his daughter by Annette Vallon, as most modern critics hold, or of his sister Dorothy, as it strikes Bateson among the moderns and as it appeared to Coleridge who surmised that in the above stanzas Wordsworth had perhaps imagined in a dejected mood the death of his extraordinary sister—whether “Lucy” be at bottom one or the other actual person, the lyric has been taken as a most moving little elegy and its interpretation has been along the lines indicated by M. L. Rosenthal and A. J. Smith in *Exploring Poetry* :<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 89-90 (1955 edition).

“These two stanzas make an elementary, pathetic contrast between the speaker’s past blind illusion concerning a woman who has died and his present bleak awareness of her physical death. His spirit had been asleep. It had not occurred to him that she might, like more common humanity, be subject to death and decay. But now he is compelled to face this fact—and facing it, he experiences a new and terrible insight that is actually an expansion of his sensibility. He becomes aware as never before of the geographical and astronomical round, impersonal and monotonous, within which we exist. His final helpless vision of the dead woman within the dead globe that carries her endlessly, and meaninglessly, through its daily course is therefore an expression of surrender to the desolate truth.”

On the side of the technique as an organic aid to the significance, Rosenthal and Smith write :

“A simple pattern of sound supports the directness of statement in this poem and its uncomplicated rhymes and stanza-form. The repeated *e*’s, *r*’s, and *s*’s weave a definite design into the poem’s fabric. In the last two lines, the *r*’s become especially important and we find, in the words ‘rolled round’, the only strong variation from the regular iambic sequence of light and strong syllables. This variation corresponds with the heightened emotion—the appalled realisation that the beloved woman, now passive and impervious with the rest of subhuman nature, is after all completely under ‘the touch of earthly years’.”

In the midst of all this reading of manner and matter it must indeed come as a bombshell to know what Sri Aurobindo has said of the poem while discussing the spiritual Vedantic experience, by identity, of the one Self not only in its essential transcendence of all forms but also “in all its manifested existences and becomings,...the action, formation, play of self-conception with which it garbs itself in the world.” He declares:<sup>1</sup>

“It is difficult for the modern mind to understand how we can do more than conceive intellectually of the Self or of God; but it may borrow some shadow of this vision, experience and becoming from that inner awakening to Nature which a great English poet has made a reality to the European imagination. If we read the poems in which Wordsworth expressed his realisation of Nature, we may acquire some distant idea of what realisation is. For, first, we see that he has the vision of something in the world which is the very Self of all things that it contains, a conscious force and presence other than its forms, yet cause of its forms and manifested in them. We perceive that he had not only the vision of this and the joy and peace and universality which

<sup>1</sup> *On Yoga—Part I: The Synthesis of Yoga* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram Edition), pp. 349-350.

its presence brings, but the very sense of it, mental, aesthetic, vital, physical; not only this sense and vision of it in its own being but in the nearest flower and simplest man and the immobile rock; and, finally, that he even occasionally attained to that unity, that becoming the object of his dedication, one phase of which is powerfully and profoundly expressed in the poem 'A slumber did my spirit seal', where he describes himself as become one in his being with earth, 'rolled round in its diurnal course with rocks and stones and trees.' Exalt this realisation to a profounder Self than physical Nature and we have the elements of the Yogic knowledge."

How are we to take this entirely different interpretation by a Master not only of Yoga but also of creative and critical literature? The poem is lifted clean out of the "Lucy" group and put among the Tintern-Abbey lines, the Immortality Ode, the great mystic and pantheistic passages of *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*. Evidently, Sri Aurobindo has seen the two stanzas as not at all a play of contrast, illusion set over against reality, wishful thinking opposed to fact-facing, idealistic life-impression crossed by death's stark signature. They are to him no leap from a mood to its contrary but the progressive development of the same state, the one stanza mentioning the recent occurrence of an inner experience and disclosing the general sense it seemed to bring of the more-than-human within the poet, the other recounting its vivid present pervasion of him and revealing the concrete depth and wideness of a nirvana, as it were, in the earth's inmost self.

Certainly there would be a transvaluation of values in the second stanza if its terms were not dissociated from those in the first: the awful aspect of utter loss would vanish. But three objections are likely to be raised against Sri Aurobindo's running of the two stanzas together and reading in the *ensemble* the strange vast seizure of a Yogic trance in which the ego is exceeded and a union with some static Mystery achieved. These objections would be: (a) When Wordsworth speaks of his spirit's slumber, can the trance-state be equated to it? (b) When he uses the third-person feminine pronoun "she", can he be understood as signifying his own spirit? (c) When a thing is passively rolled round, day after day, with the earth's motion, can it be said to continue above "the touch of earthly years"?

We believe it is possible not only to defend Sri Aurobindo's interpretation but also to go over to the offensive and discredit the usual one.

2

The first objection is not serious if it is merely a matter of equating "slumber" to a trance. Besides, the word "seal" is too strong for just a forgetfulness



of the common humanity of the poet's sweetheart, the fond delusion that she might not be subject to death and decay. The word is more than a powerful synonym for a blindness of perception : it is packed with the suggestion of a total inward absorption. The sole hurdle in the way of equating the "slumber" of the present context to a trance is whether Wordsworth ever makes his spirit or soul or mind, rather than his body, fall into a trance. Does he not associate awakening instead of slumber with his soul and restrict the sleep to the physical being in the moment of mystic experience ? There is the memorable passage—the *locus classicus* of Wordsworthian inwardness :

...that blessed mood  
 In which the burthen of the mystery,  
 In which the heavy and the weary weight  
 Of all this unintelligible world  
 Is lightened :—that serene and blessed mood,  
 In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
 And even the motion of our human blood  
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
 In body, and become a living soul:  
 While with an eye made quiet by the power  
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
 We see into the life of things.<sup>1</sup>

No doubt, the experience here cannot be wholly and in every detail matched with what may be read into the lyric. But there is no need to attempt a complete correspondence. There are many sides and shades to Nature-mysticism and the lyric manifests, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, "one phase". But even this particular phase has fundamental affinities with the passage quoted. We shall confine ourselves at the moment to the point about spirit-slumber and body-sleep. Surely, a slumber sealing the spirit and leading it to the experience uttered in "I had no human fears" and "a thing that could not feel / The touch of earthly years" is not far different from "that serene and blessed mood" in which a lightening takes place of "the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world." Mark that the serenity is of the "mood" and not merely of the physical functions : the "living soul" experiences the profound peace, the beatific calm, and what are such peace and calm except a spiritual slumber in which the human limitation and isolation are transcended, the fret of time and the sense of mortality due to that finitude are lost ? The fact is that there

<sup>1</sup> *Wordsworth* (The Pelican Poets), p. 38.

happens a stilling of both body and soul—and what comes first is the stilling of soul : it is the serene and blessed mood which induces the sleep in which the body's breath and the blood's motion are almost suspended. There has to be first a sealing of the spirit by a strange slumber : then alone the corporeal frame is laid asleep and an inner awakening felt. The lyric we are discussing stresses this initial hush of the inner being : it is not introducing a non-Wordsworthian condition, it merely leaves unexpressed the bodily effect and counterpart of the inner tranquillisation, and it transfers, as it were, the bodily effect and counterpart into that tranquillisation by telling us that the inner being no longer has an individual motion or force, a personal seeing or hearing. And, as we shall note later, this is not tantamount to denying that "we see into the life of things". For the present it is enough to dispel the impression of a radical difference in the trance-situation. Sri Aurobindo, as an adept in Yoga, knows more precisely than any other literary critic the psychology and physiology of trance and is not deceived by the prominence given here to the spirit's slumber and the omission of the body's sleep.

We may add that elsewhere too in Wordsworth the trance of the psychological being is made prominent. At almost the start of *The Prelude* (1850) we have some lines which connect up at the same time with the Tintern-Abbey passage and the lyric :

Trances of thought and mountings of the mind  
Come fast upon me : it is shaken off,  
The burthen of my own unnatural self,  
The heavy weight of many a weary day  
Not mine, and such as were not made for me.

Here it is thought, the psychological being, that is visited by trances and thereby the mind is set mounting free above the load of the ordinary human self which is not the poet's true nature and above the drag of time's ordinary wearisome process of earthly days. Again, in the Wanderer-section of *The Excursion* :

In such access of mind, in such high hour  
Of visitation from the living God,  
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.  
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;  
Rapt into still communion that transcends  
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,  
His mind was a thanksgiving to the powers  
That made him; it was blessedness and love !<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 135

Here too we have a trance—but one in which the cessation of thought in Ananda is emphasised : it is the mind, not the body, which is said to be “rapt into still communion...”

We now come to the second objection, the reference by Wordsworth to his own spirit as “she”. We shall be asked : “Is it not unnatural ? And why in one line is he talking of himself—his having no ‘human fears’—and, in the next, of his spirit seeming to rise above the touch of time ?” Provided we grant that “she” stands for his spirit, there is no artificiality : after all, in the first line he not only mentions “spirit” but also uses the first-person possessive pronoun “my”, and what he does in the second line is to talk in the first person in consonance with that pronoun and what he does in the third is to speak in consonance with the “spirit” : an expressive balance in developing the theme is achieved, elaborating in action the double entity implied in the original phrase, the psychological being which is conscious of itself. The real point is merely whether the use of “she” for spirit is Wordsworthian or no.

Let us glance at some passages bringing in words like “spirit”, “soul”, “heart”, “mind”. In the “Residence at Cambridge” in *The Prelude* we have :

A gracious spirit o’er this earth presides,  
And o’er the heart of man : invisibly  
It comes, to works of unreproved delight,  
And tendency benign.<sup>1</sup>

“It” replaces “spirit” here. Then there are the lines in the Immortality-Ode :

Our Soul that rises with us, our life’s Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar.<sup>2</sup>

“It” is there again. The Ode closes with a quatrain whose opening two lines are :

Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears...<sup>3</sup>

The neuter gender is repeated. But from these examples we must not conclude that Wordsworth never departs from this form. In the Ode itself there is a departure to the feminine when the poet in stanza VIII addresses a little child (whose original was Coleridge’s baby-boy) and ends with the words :

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 98.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

## MOTHER INDIA

Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,  
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,  
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life !<sup>1</sup>

Nor is the Soul feminine in the Ode only. *The Prelude* has the lines to Dorothy :

...but for thee, dear Friend !  
My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood  
In her original self too confident,  
Retained too long a countenance severe...<sup>2</sup>

Even when the soul is not directly mentioned but left understood and is replaced by a periphrasis, we have the feminine pronoun, as in *The Excursion* :

...For your nobler part,  
Ere disencumbered of her mortal chains,  
Doubt shall be quelled and trouble chased away...<sup>3</sup>

*The Character of the Happy Warrior* yields :

...By objects, which might force the soul to abate  
Her feeling, rendered more compassionate...<sup>4</sup>

The heart too gets a similar pronoun in the sonnet *Milton* :

So didst thou travel on life's common way,  
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart  
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.<sup>5</sup>

The faculty of Reason is made feminine in a well-known line of *The Prelude* :

And Reason in her most exalted mood.<sup>6</sup>

If we look closely, one thing seems to be clear in the midst of the gender-variations. The "gracious spirit" presiding over the earth and over man's heart and belonging to no particular earthly individual is left somewhat undefined by being neither masculine nor feminine ; "our Soul", which is a generality, and "the human heart", which too is not particularised, are similarly treated. (Perhaps the Star-metaphor to which the words "rises" and "setting", though applied to the Soul, are appropriate suggests all the more

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

the neuter gender.) But "Reason", which is no less a generality, is somehow kept feminine. There does not appear to be quite a rule here for Wordsworth. However, when any one person's soul or heart or even "nobler part" is spoken of, whether that person be the speaker himself or somebody else, he appears to use invariably the feminine gender even if the person be of the male sex (Hartley Coleridge, Wordsworth, the Happy Warrior, Milton). Hence it is absolutely natural for "my spirit" in the present lyric to figure as "she". Even if in regard to a particular person the use of the feminine gender be found to be not invariable, there is sufficient precedent in connection with the personal sentient being to support the "she" for "my spirit" here.

The third objection, based on the supposed contradiction between the non-feeling of "the touch of earthly years" and the rolling round in "earth's diurnal course", is not insurmountable, either. We shall see it dissolve if we continue the mystic reading of the poem from the point where we stopped when explaining the twofold character of the spiritual trance. We mentioned how, in the poem, one side was stressed—namely, the inner—and the inner being comes to have no longer an individual motion or force, a personal seeing or hearing. After that, we remarked that this did not negate a seeing into the life of things. Sri Aurobindo, when he takes the poem to be a spiritual self-expression, is well aware of the inner awakening which accompanies a trance : he directly refers to it. And we can easily affine the experience in the lyric to the experience in the Tintern-Abbey lines. Now too the inner being is "made quiet by the power /Of harmony"—harmony with the whole earth's self—and, by an immergence which is an identity, it is conscious of that self and all the objects—rocks and stones and trees—that are carried inalienably with this self as if they were a part of its life. Surely if, when a slumber seals the poet's spirit—necessarily drawing away his senses from their outer functions, stilling every external activity or initiative and shutting out all feeling of physical time—he is yet conscious of having no human fears and can get the impression that something has passed beyond death's touch, there should be now no negation of an inner awakening. The state in the second stanza does not introduce any term which precludes inner consciousness: the absence of motion or force, of hearing or seeing, and the impervious whirling through the days are inevitably implied already in the first and rule out as little as does the state in that stanza a new wakefulness within. Rather, there is, as far as range and detail are concerned, an increase in such a wakefulness. Do not Rosenthal and Smith themselves tell us that the poet "experiences a new and terrible insight that is actually an expansion of his sensibility" ? Do they not say : "He becomes aware as never before of the geographical and astronomical round, impersonal and monotonous, within which we exist" ? What they do

not perceive is the inwardness of the sensibility : the objects of it are known by Wordsworth within a subjectivity transcending the normal human and gripping and including his own. He “experiences” and “becomes aware” of an inner awakening which expands his sensibility though outwardly his powers are suspended. Rosenthal and Smith employ the epithets “terrible” and “monotonous” because they have cut asunder the second stanza from the first and the insight and awareness are related by them to a “helpless vision of the dead woman within the dead globe.” If we look at the second stanza in the light of the first, the wondrous light of transcendence of human fears and of the death-touch, there is nothing “terrible” and “monotonous” : there is only an expansion of sensibility to an impersonal magnitude, geographical and astronomical, in which something quite other than death with its fearful touch is known : rather a deathless perpetuity of movement is here, a sort of time-eternity constituted by the constant and endless diurnal round : earthly years are robbed of their destructive inference and felt as no more than the rhythm of a mighty earth-process that appears to be for ever in a cosmic immensity. This transmutation of time has the effect put with a most satisfying paradoxical felicity in the Immortality-Ode :

Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
Of the eternal Silence...<sup>1</sup>

The experience is not at all a “surrender” to any “desolate truth” nor is there any “appalled realisation” of a “passive and impervious” and “sub-human nature”. A Nature more than human is before us, a Nature whose spiritual passivity and imperviousness is really a vast peace liberated from finite nerve-quiverings and intensely permeated with the immune and the immortal—and when it rolls round through the days, bearing the poet’s self absorbed in it, it is instinct with what Wordsworth describes himself as feeling in the celebrated passage :

A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :  
A motion and a spirit that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

The last three lines here seem almost to make a positive statement in the very terms employed negatively in the lyric to show the poet's loss of his small entity in the larger being of the terrestrial Pantheos.

3

Indeed, to attribute to Wordsworth the notion of a "dead globe" is absurd. Even if the theme were a woman who has died, she would hardly be imagined as entering a dreadful depth of inanimation on being laid in earth. The separation from one beloved would be poignantly expressed, but there would be no insensitive negation of his most persistent experience—an earth whose "every flower enjoys the air it breathes" and about whose

every natural form, rock, fruit and flower,  
Even the loose stones that cover the highway,

he could use in *The Prelude* the phrase that is one of his most astonishing in bare power: "I saw them feel", and that is followed by the fundamentally significant statement:

The great mass  
Lay bedded in a quivering soul.

He who considered "one impulse from a vernal wood" more instructive of morality than all the sages and whose ideal of life was couched in the verses in the "Song" at a feast in Brougham Castle—

His only teachers were the woods and rills,  
The silence that is in the starry sky,  
The sleep that is among the lonely hills—

could hardly be expected to regard the terrestrial orb as whirling with an endless meaninglessness: rocks and stones and trees and the orb within which they exist were to him aspects of an Eternal Being. They served as inspirers of part of the semi-mystic Nature-moulding undergone by his "Lucy":

And hers shall be the breathing balm,  
And hers the silence and the calm  
Of mute insensate things.<sup>1</sup>

Remember, the "mute insensate things" have a "breathing balm", not a desolate deadness, and their silence and calm are an inner life instructive and illu-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

minative. How could they have been figured so unWordsworthianly in the lyric in question ?

There is no warrant in any "Lucy" poem for such a treatment. Everywhere we discover personal poignancy at her death or at the thought of it but never any vision of Nature, of Earth, as dead or as devoid of significance. We read :

'O mercy !' to myself I cried,  
'If Lucy should be dead !'...<sup>1</sup>

or

But she is in her grave, and, oh,  
The difference to me !...<sup>2</sup>

or, in an apostrophe to England,

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed,  
The bowers where Lucy played ;  
And thine too is the last green field  
That Lucy's eyes surveyed—<sup>3</sup>

or, in the poem on Nature's education of "Lucy",

She died and left to me  
This heath, this calm and quiet scene ;  
The memory of what has been,  
And never more will be.<sup>4</sup>

The theme in each of these quotations is the intense feeling of loss—irremediable loss—at the absence of the beloved embodied being of "Lucy". Wherever the earthly surroundings of her in either life or death come in, they are still as the poet has always known them : the last field surveyed by her eyes is still called "green", the scene left by her to the unforgetting lover is still "calm and quiet". The impression of Nature and of Earth which would result if our lyric were interpreted as a "Lucy" piece—the impression as of something terrible in its impersonality, monotony and imperviousness—would be utterly at variance with Wordsworth's experience and with his poetic practice in the undeniable "Lucy" poems. Such stark variance would itself be a formidable argument against the inclusion of this lyric among them.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.



Here we may offer a criticism of the remarks by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Pen Warren in *Understanding Poetry*<sup>1</sup> on the view of Nature in the lyric. They admit that to Wordsworth Nature "is not merely a mechanism to be analyzed by the intellect, and then manipulated by man to his own benefit. It is no mere machine, but is alive ; it is not merely operated on by man, but moulds and influences man ('there are Powers / Which of themselves our minds impress')." They also quote Wordsworth's own testimony about his experience of the world around him when he was a child. He wrote: "nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being." He went on to say : "I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature." All these words are another way of putting what Sri Aurobindo reads in our lyric. But Brooks and Warren approach the lyric through a sonnet of Wordsworth's and argue that his poems "show a certain flexibility in his treatment of man's attitude towards natural objects and natural scenes" and that it was not inconsistent for him to look on Earth as he is interpreted by Brooks and Warren to be doing in the lyric. They write :

"In 'Michael', Wordsworth alludes almost casually to the 'dissolute city' as if its dissoluteness were common knowledge and could be assumed. In 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge' he gives us a vision of such a dissolute city, but sees it as something very different. Is there any contradiction here ? No, for this sonnet is actually very closely related to Wordsworth's conception of beauty and truth. The silent city at dawn reveals itself to him as something that is not merely dead and mechanical. Asleep, it shows itself alive ; with the pall of smoke lifted, it reveals itself as truly a part of nature as any 'valley, rock, or hill' of Cumberland. At this moment of the day (and of insight), the distracting activity which ordinarily reduces the city to jarring atoms has not begun, and the observer is able to see the city as a whole and as an entity—as an organic thing, not cut off from nature, but a part of it, related to the world above it and about it ('Open unto the fields, and to the sky').

"We are not then to apply Wordsworth's love of nature mechanically and superficially as if he were only interested in rural scenes and natural objects : he can feel the beauty of London. And conversely, we must remember that he can sometimes use natural objects to suggest mechanism. 'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal' is a case in point. The body of the dead girl is said to be 'Rolled round in earth's diurnal course, / With rocks, and stones, and trees.' We may argue that at least some of the things with which she is associated

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 633, 637, 638 (1952 edition).

are alive—the trees, for instance—and that she is pictured here as merged with ‘nature’; but the effect given by this poem is far different from that at the end of ‘Lucy Gray’ where the child seems to live on as part of the spirit of the place. In this poem, it is as if the earth itself were seen as a mighty wheel, mechanically spinning, and carrying with it, along with other objects lacking motion, the inert body of the girl.”

Once the poem is taken to mean Lucy’s death breaking the poet’s dream of her as above mutability, Brooks and Warren are right in holding that she cannot be pictured as merged with Nature. If the “she” of the third line is Lucy and not the poet’s spirit, the second stanza presents a pathetic contrast and the stress on inertness and inanimation cannot be avoided. A compromise between Sri Aurobindo’s reading and the usual one is impossible, or at least too forced to make the poem an organic unity. But there is no need to let the two stanzas stand over against each other. And the consideration brought in about “trees” has some weight though not ultimately a telling one in the context of the usual reading. The “trees” do import a small jarring note: in a scene of utter deadness they are not quite in place. They are inert, no doubt, but very obviously not inanimate. Either the poet has committed a slight error of imagination and deprived his work of the complete felicity and inevitability that constitutes a masterpiece or else he has intended the central effect to be not inanimation but only inertness—a living inertness which can be nothing save a trance-state in touch with what he has called, in a fragment brought to light by Earnest de Sélincourt, “one interior life”. If a living interior inertness is the main theme and if it cannot be that theme with a girl stark dead in contradiction of the poet’s fond illusion about her, then the “she” of the third line must be the poet’s own spirit and no sweetheart of his.

Further, there is no real argument from the sonnet *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge* to turn us away from this interpretation and to weaken our contention that Nature was always to Wordsworth a secret Spirit and that the picture yielded by the usual reading gives the lie to the essential Wordsworth. This contention is not tied up with believing the secret Spirit to be present merely in country scenes. Those scenes certainly were his chief nourishers and in them he found the Spirit most often manifest. But no mystic of Pantheism ever asserts that God ceases at city-boundaries. What happens is that once those boundaries are crossed the clear voice of the one interior life is difficult for the non-adept to catch. But it can be caught none the less at certain moments. And a rare revealing moment is poetised in the sonnet where the universal Nature suppressed and overshadowed in a metropolis like London comes into her own and renders the city integral with the fields and the sky. The poetic surprise this sonnet holds is precisely that nowhere

is an utter absence of the eternal beauty and truth which is felt most intensely within "valley, rock, or hill". It cannot actually make room for the converse proposition that "valley, rock, or hill" can sometimes and somewhere be devoid of the eternal beauty and truth.

Brooks and Warren do not go so far as to say explicitly that the possibility of the converse discovery is involved in the sonnet. But they do subtly lead us on to think that we need not be amazed if, after the sonnet's revelation of the seemingly mechanical as truly natural, what appears to be truly natural is shown us by Wordsworth as a mere mechanism. Every piece of evidence available proves that Wordsworth, at least in the period during which he wrote the lyric (1799-1800), could never have figured the earth "as a mighty wheel, mechanically spinning", with his dead and inert sweetheart carried along with other similar objects. And the sonnet, which unveils Nature's glorious presence even where most unexpected, clinches the evidence : it bars any interpretation of the lyric that would deny this presence in some degree anywhere and in supreme measure within what are called natural objects, especially those that are fixed in a profound peace.

The play of contrast, the opposition of moods on which the usual interpretation is based gets contradicted by even the sheer technique marked by Rosenthal and Smith of the two stanzas. They speak of uncomplicated rhymes and of a definite design woven into the fabric of the poem by the repeated *e*'s, *r*'s and *s*'s. But the lack of complication in rhyme arises from a certain continuity of assonance from first to last : the long *e*'s of "seal" and "feel" in the opening stanza are kept up by those of "sees" and "trees" in the closing. The terminal combination of *r* and *s* in "fears" and "years" in the second and fourth lines recurs in "force" and "course" of the fifth and seventh. The very variation in the placing of similar terminal sounds welds more closely the two stanzas. The occurrence of the *rs* in the first and third lines of the closing stanza, instead of in the second and fourth, as in the opening, makes "years" and "force" come in consecutive lines : thus the end of one stanza joins up immediately to the commencement of the other. Likewise, the occurrence of the long *e*'s in the first and third of the one and in the second and fourth of the other ties up the prelude of the poem with its finale and makes the eight lines all the more a single whole. A subtle sound-effect connecting the first half with the second is the word "hears" in the middle of a line in the latter to echo directly the "fears" and "years" of the former. The *e*'s and *r*'s and *s*'s have also to do with the internal rhythms and not only with the terminal, though the internal scheme is less regular. The one note which is new in the second stanza is the reiteration of the long *o* ; but the word in which it is most noticeable—the "no" twice in the fifth line—has already been heard once in

the second line of the earlier stanza. The strong change from the regular iambic rhythm, which Rosenthal and Smith point out in the words "rolled round" of the penultimate line, is not the only modulation, as they think. Indeed the spondee is very emphatic here, but "no motion" and "no force" of the fifth line prepare it and even the first stanza has already a preparation in its "no human". The variations whether rhythmic or metrical, which are natural in any poem however homogeneous in the totality, are nowhere such as to disturb the fundamental harmony of technical expression in which the different parts of the lyric sway together, answering to the single mood that is sustained behind the differences brought by its development and by the presentation of now one aspect, now another.

## 4

All things considered, Sri Aurobindo's reading is the more organic no less than the deeper. The common reading is the more tragically moving and can be regarded as not impossible, but if we are to favour it we must plead in an extreme sense that the intention of the poet is not always the final creator. Of course, a successful poem exceeds the poet's conscious purpose, it has undertones and overtones the writer himself may not have known very well, but mostly the transcendence is along the line that was the author's and does not abrogate it. Thus Wordsworth may not have been fully aware that a sovereign spiritual afflatus from some superconscious mystery which the normal mind is unconscious of has invaded him in the verse—

The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep.<sup>1</sup>

He may have tended to deem it just an intensification of the fine Nature-reverence and Nature-enjoyment at the very start of *The Prelude* (1805) :

Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze  
That blows from the green fields...

But he surely knew that his line was not merely another way of saying :

The Winds come to me from the sleeping fields.

The "fields" are not unconnected with the actual ones of the landscape in which he places himself, any more than are the other features mentioned in the lines preceding this—

*Wordsworth* (The Pelican Poets), p. 72.

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;  
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;  
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng ..

But we can hardly doubt his intention to express a mystical feeling, a communion with subtle far-away secrecies breathing towards him to soothe and strengthen through the ministries of Nature. The actual line is not expressive entirely of something of which the poet was innocent. If *A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal* is taken as a "Lucy" poem we shall have to imagine the "subliminal" of the writer as creating in sheer opposition to his cognised aim. Such a phenomenon is conceivable, but it would be a real rarity.

It may be suggested that the situation can be put the other way round : Wordsworth set out to write a "Lucy" poem, but his "subliminal" converted it into a mystic and pantheistic statement. This is more possible, for the "subliminal", in great flights of poetry, works at a higher and deeper level than the conscious poet. Yet, since the lyric was written at a time when Wordsworth was already a mystic of pantheism and since it would be out of accord as a "Lucy" poem with the attitudes of his other "Lucy" pieces, we should do well to reject the usual reading despite the implication of even Coleridge's surmise, accept the Aurobindonian and take Wordsworth to have penned in tune with his own "subliminal" a little masterpiece of semi-Vedantic mysticism.

K. D. SETHNA

## THE GRACE OF SRI AUROBINDO

### SOME REMINISCENCES

#### HOW I FOUND SRI AUROBINDO

IT was in 1949 that one night I had a dream in which I saw my husband rowing a small boat in the sea. The boat was full with sea-water up to its brim. On the mast of the boat was playing a Krishna-like boy of five with plump and rosy cheeks. He was doing acrobatic feats on the top of the pole. He had only a *putambar* (yellow dhoti) on his body. He had no crown on his head. I was struck with its absence. I wondered why Krishna had not put on his crown, perhaps he thought it might fall down into the sea. I was terribly afraid to find that as the boat full of water inside was tossing on the waves it might go down to the bottom of the sea any time. I therefore with great anxiety beckoned my husband to row to the south where he would find the landing-place and the shore. When I looked above at Sri Krishna on the pole, I was relieved of my anxiety for my husband; but, when I looked down at the boat and my husband, fear caught hold of me. The vision repeated itself for three successive nights. On the third night at long last I saw the boat reaching the shore at Apollo Bunder. At this time my daughter, dressed in a yellow sari, was with me and I was in a red one. I saw my husband wiping the water from over his body with his hands as he was all wet from head to foot. He had no clothes on his body except the loin cloth (*langoti*). Sri Krishna stood between me and my daughter, smiling at each of us. I took him for Krishna though his face, features and hair were unlike the portrait of him presented to us.

Within a few days of this dream, as I sat by the side of my husband to hear what he wanted to read out to me from Sri Aurobindo, a photograph slipped down from the book and to my great surprise I found that that portrait of Sri Aurobindo exactly tallied with the Krishna-boy of my vision. Since then I have been his devotee. The portrait was immediately put in a frame, the first of its kind in our house. The vision is still vivid before me in its details. I now see why he did not put on the crown: his work of bringing down the Supermind was not completed at that time.

## THE GRACE OF SRI AUROBINDO

### THE MIRACULOUS RECOVERY

IN 1950 my son had an attack of diphtheria. As the family doctor's bill for arrears was long outstanding, we felt shy to approach him for treatment, though we were conscious that he would not refuse to treat our boy. We therefore tried other cheap remedies, mainly relying on the Divine Grace. The child survived the attack but his throat was paralysed, making it very difficult for him to gulp even drops of water. His father therefore one morning took him to the throat-expert in a big charitable hospital for diagnosis and treatment.

The expert examined him and advised an immediate Trichotomy operation. His father was taken unawares : he had no idea that it was a case for operation. He consented to the expert's proposal, and word to that effect was sent me through the doctor who had accompanied the patient to the hospital. I was shocked to hear the news; I bowed down before the portrait of Sri Aurobindo—the Mother had not at that time secured a place in our house — and prayed to him from my depths for help and protection. While thus praying I heard a voice saying, "Don't worry, I am his doctor, I am his prana." Immediately I felt a great courage to meet the situation.

My son was operated upon, a hole was punctured at the bottom of his throat and a tube inserted in it for breathing. When I reached the hospital he was brought out of the operation theatre and put into my hands. I could not bear the sight and the condition he was in after the operation. Immediately a big oxygen cylinder was placed near his cot for the supply of oxygen to him. He was laid on the cot and the cap of oxygen put on his nose.

All the while I was repeating the name of Sri Aurobindo. I saw by the cylinder Sri Aurobindo's figure cloaked in white transparent cloth with his hand on the nose of my son supplying to him the prana-vayu, the life-breath. This gave me great relief. But when the hospital doctors and nurses showed anxiety for the patient, indicating by their looks that even the worst might happen any time, my human nature came into play.

Next morning I saw the same figure with a basin, sponge and towel, giving a towel bath to the patient with His hands. For many days the doctor gave glucose through the veins as the child could swallow not even liquid food. No signs of recovery appeared. The doctor himself was diffident. After a few days, when I asked him about the condition and the prospects of my son's recovery, he said it would take about 8 or 9 months and a tube for breathing would have to be ordered from overseas and might even remain permanently in the throat. He added that when the boy wanted to speak he would have to put his finger on it.

## MOTHER INDIA

The ward in which my son was placed had been used in the British regime for European children. On the walls had been painted Cinderella's shoe, Pussy-cats, Jack and Jill, etc. On the 9th day I saw in one of the pictures Sri Aurobindo playing with my son with bat and ball. This vision gave me great relief and satisfaction in spite of the doctor's statements about the patient.

On the 10th morning my son woke up and uttered his first word "dhuta" (milk) after the lapse of about a month. The doctor in his usual morning round saw his throat and found a great improvement therein. He said he would be released from the hospital within 5-6 days. I felt bewildered and could not believe him in the face of his previous statement that the patient would take 8-9 months for recovery.

On the 21st day the tube was removed from his throat and we were allowed to go home the same evening.

Within a few days of his coming home, the boy got an attack of 21 days' typhoid fever from which also he recovered by the Grace of the Master.

What else than the Grace of Sri Aurobindo which is the same as the Grace of the Mother could work this miracle though I did not see Him or the Mother till some time later ?

SUSHILA NAGRAJ



## HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US

REMINISCENCES OF VARIOUS PEOPLE IN CONTACT WITH THE MOTHER

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

### THE SUPRAMENTAL SUN

WHENEVER it was the day of the Mother's general blessings I sat near her in the first or second row and remained there till the end.

One day, when the Mother was distributing blessing flowers, suddenly I felt that there was no Ashram, not a soul present around me and not even the Mother on her chair-throne. I saw instead a huge rising sun before my wide open eyes. I saw the Mother inside, wearing a golden crown. The sun cast its brilliant light on her face and body.

When I told the Mother what I had seen she replied it was not I alone who had seen that sunrise. "Others also saw it," she added. "I was trying to bring the rays of light from the supramental Sun." Then the Mother told me the name of at least one other witness.

I met that person and spoke to her of her vision. She asked me how I had known about it. I related to her what the Mother had said, adding, on the basis of her last sentence, that it was "Gayatri" that I had seen by her Grace.

#### "I AM EVERYWHERE"

I WAS just a boy, a new-comer to the Ashram, who knew little of Yoga. I had just the common religious feelings about Avatars and saints.

In my early days in the Ashram, I used to have fear, particularly fear of ghosts. One day I told the Mother about it.

After that, whenever I went to the Mother for blessings, she used to enquire what dreams had come to me the previous night.

"Did you fear last night?" she would ask me. I used to relate to her how the night had passed.

One night I saw a dream which was something unusual. It was like this : "I was going to my room, looking up. I saw the Mother there in the window. I had flowers, most probably those signifying faithfulness, in my hand. I took these to the Mother and offered them to her. As I was going to give them

## MOTHER INDIA

into the Mother's hands, suddenly I saw thousands of Mothers, all in full physical form as if everywhere around me."

Then I woke up.

When I went to the Mother next morning at 9 o'clock as usual just before the general blessings at 9.30 a.m., I narrated to her my dream.

"So you see," she told me with a loving but serious emphasis, "I am everywhere. Then where is the reason for fear?" Then she blessed me with a few flowers and her photograph.

Ever since, I have had not a single frightening dream, nor felt any kind of fear at home even when alone.

## GRACIOUS INSIGHT

ONCE I was to cover a distance of about 100 miles in a train. It was raining heavily.

There was only one person in the compartment where I got in. It was very cold and the wind blew on the face through the windows with such force that it almost froze us. We shut all the windows from the inside. During the journey I started concentrating on the Mother and feeling a little heaviness. When I got up, I saw that every bit of my luggage was gone.

When I reached my destination, without any belongings, a sadhak friend of mine at the Sri Aurobindo Circle in the city told me that I had no right to lose my things in such an oblivious manner and that I should have been more conscious of my belongings which should be considered the Mother's, left in my custody, and that I was expected to look after them with all the care of a trust property.

When I next saw the Mother I reported to her what I had been told by the aforesaid sadhak. She, with a most gracious look, said, "At that time you were doing meditation on me and were deeply concentrated in me. There is no fault of yours if you lost those things in this manner."

*Reported and Compiled by HAR KRISHAN SINGH*

## REVELATION

THROUGHOUT the halls of my heart thy echoed Name  
Went rapturously singing in the blood;  
And thy remembered Smile rose as a flame  
Upon the vibrant winging of my love.

Such were my days that I was full content  
And thought this all the measure of thy Grace  
Until I saw — through other channels went  
Thy love and other eyes revealed Thy Face.

Ah then, my sight extended far and wide,  
My soul upbore the burden of a Bliss  
Unknown before, my mind — a giant stride —  
Embraced the Joy of thy eternal Kiss;  
My heart, filled with thy Love's own ecstasy,  
Bathed in the wonder that was only Thee.

NORMAN DOWSETT

## ASCENT AND GRACE

WASHED by Thy descending tides of light and peace,  
We rise mystical to Thy shore of the All,  
Invading with our heart's silence the Light  
Enclasp'd in the hold of Thy Unattainable.  
Dispelled, the night's void-ways are below and nude.  
The skies of mind are vagrant robes that pass,  
The seas of thought a lesser world's star-dance.  
Here Thy large all-reviewing flame is supreme  
Topping the creation's hush with a great sun-crown  
And wrapping with arms of splendour the cosmic whole.  
The tired strides of fate dog our heels no more.  
Our wings are magical with Thy blessing's boon.  
Our limbs are perfume-incantations of clay  
Stainlessly rising towards an unrealised dawn,  
Towards an infinite ocean of fall-less noon.  
One wave-surprise from Thy eternal crest  
And our body's earth shall merge with Thy body's sky.

ROMEN

# THUS SANG MY SOUL

## SONGS TO THE MOTHER

(7)

### IV. THE NIGHT OF SOUL AND SELF-OBLIVION

*(Continued)*

#### THE WAY TO HER VICTORY

ON a dale's lower edge I crouch alone,—  
As a new-born child abandoned to his fate,—  
Compelled to leave the calm and luminous state  
And share life's grief and suffering and moan.  
Forced to explore vales blackened and unknown,  
My progress is condemned to face hell's hate,  
Its gloom and pain, its pit-lusts insatiate—  
That love and life shine in a new God-tone.  
Weights pull my feet to balance my huge heights.  
I know not what goal destiny stores for me,  
Whither shall lead this journey of sombre nights.  
Reluctant I drift deeper and deeper down,  
Dark underneath and grey clouds over my crown  
Perchance this sole way wins Her Victory !

#### THE VOID OF SOUL

O what dead quiet on my heart's front;  
No longing stir,  
No aspiration-tide,  
My being's wings verveless and blunt,  
No prayer, no call, no brunt  
Of life gives this stark drowsiness a spur—  
As if my being's very soul has died.  
In this void stunned,  
In passive pensive mood, dumb I confide  
In Thee my wishlessness, and not avow  
The end of my soul-stride,  
I wait and keep awake my consciousness wide  
In faith, O Mother, without demur,  
So that my earth-bound mind may not deter  
Thy new dawn on my desert brow.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

# *Students' Section*

---

## APPROACH TO SRI AUROBINDO

*(Translation by Niranjan of a Bengali letter written to Sri Aurobindo by Charu Chandra Sarkar in 1925. After reading this letter, Sri Aurobindo gave him permission to come to the Ashram.)*

IN 1907 I was a student of the Intermediate Arts at Ripon College, Calcutta. In our house, we used to receive the paper "Bandemataram". We knew that Sri Aurobindo Ghose was its editor. One of us read it aloud to the others. There was a young man who was preparing for his Master's degree in English literature. In order to improve his English, he would read over and over again from this paper. I realised that the editor was a very learned man.

An article appeared in this paper about the incident at Muzaffarpur and Khudiram's ascension to heaven. The writing was most profound. I realised that Aurobindo was also a Seer.

Soon action was taken against the paper, and Aurobindo was arrested. On the day when the case opened at Lalbazar, the Superintendent and gate-keeper tried to stop us leaving the college. Without paying any attention to them we brushed past and made for the police court. Mounted police chased us with canes. We all took cover, and returned without seeing Aurobindo Babu.

A subscription was being collected for the cause of Aurobindo Babu. One of my classmates asked me for a donation. I replied, "I have not seen him. I do not know his ways and principles. I have no relationship with him. Why should I subscribe?" But he was most persistent and would annoy me every day with his request. Once I was very irritated and told my classmate, "Why does he do such a thing that he has to go to jail? I will not give anything." Some gave ten rupees, some five, some one rupee and even eight annas. I knew this boy very well and he used to ask in such a piteous tone every day that one day I said, "Well, since you have tried so hard to win me over, as a

reward I will give you one anna. If you are not satisfied, you won't get anything at all." That was all I gave.

Being students of Ripon College, we had a great reverence for Suren Banerjee, especially as he was our professor. The incident at Midnapur produced a cleavage in the Congress. So our class also split up into two parties. Most of us were on the side of Suren Banerjee, who supported Rashbehari Ghose.

There was some friction between the two parties of the Congress about the selection of the President. Rashbehari Ghose and Tilak Maharaj were the two candidates. Both the parties held their meetings in the College Square. One day I went to one of these meetings. By a happy coincidence Aurobindo Babu was also present. When all the other speakers had finished he rose. He spoke softly for about four to five minutes. I could not make out anything except "Vast Majority", two words which have stayed with me ever since. I guessed that Tilak Maharaj would be elected President of the Congress, as he had the support of the majority.

At sight of Aurobindo Babu my heart was filled with devotion, more so owing to his outward appearance—there was no sign of luxury anywhere. He was dressed all in white. I can still remember his twill shirt and chadder. His words were soft, calm and quiet. I felt there was a great force behind them. The speech of Suren Banerjee was passionate and fiery. But the words of Aurobindo Babu were deep and moved the soul. It seemed to me as if he were one of us, very near and dear, a Hindu youth without any ostentation, free from the bonds of pleasure and luxury.

From that day, I began to turn towards him. From that day started a struggle within me when I compared Suren Banerjee with Aurobindo Babu. I began to dislike luxury. To be in the midst of luxury in Calcutta, and not to be caught in its current, well, here was an authentic example. In my heart I thanked Aurobindo Babu. But all the same, Suren Banerjee was still my practical Guru.

Before I returned home for the holidays I bought pictures of Suren Babu, Aurobindo Babu, Brahmabandhava Upadhyaya and others. I had the picture of Suren Babu beautifully framed (ten annas), because he was the Guru of the nation. On the frame of Aurobindo Babu I spent only three annas. Below his picture these words were printed, "Aurobindo sacrificed a salary of Rs. 800/- to come to Calcutta on a salary of Rs. 100/-". From that time the image of his sacrifice started shaping my life.

Later I inwardly supported the action of Tilak Maharaj at the stormy session at Surat, as I had heard before that he was a genuine Hindu and had written on the Vedas and a commentary on the Gita. Naturally I felt more

inclined towards the National Party, now that I found in it two powerful genuine Hindus, Aurobindo Babu and Tilak Maharaj. There was another reason. I had read in the paper, "Jugantara": Trust only these seven—a maiden, a professor, one who is not in the employment of others etc. But do not trust a lawyer, a doctor, a snake, a woman, a machine etc. Rashbehari Babu was a lawyer, therefore he could not be trusted. For this reason the party of Tilak Maharaj appeared to me to be trustworthy.

When Aurobindo Babu was imprisoned, I saw an astrologer, Shashi Acharya of Calcutta, and put the question to him, "A friend of mine is in prison. Will he be set free?" He answered in the affirmative and was very anxious to know the name of my friend. As I would not tell him, he took me into another room and persuaded me to reveal his name. I said, "Aurobindo Ghose." "Why didn't you tell me before? He will be set free." I understood that he had guessed the name even before I mentioned it. This convinced me more firmly that Aurobindo was a great man.

Soon after his release from prison, Aurobindo Babu started the paper "Karmayogin". I went to Shyambazar and became a subscriber. From the sales department of the Kalpataru Agency I bought a few reprinted numbers of the "Bandemataram" and went home. I was fascinated by the picture on the front cover of the Karmayogin, Sri Krishna and Arjuna in a chariot on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Below the picture there was the quotation from the Gita, "Giving up thy works to Me with thy consciousness founded on Self, free from desire and egoism, fight, delivered from the fever of thy soul," which I tried to fathom but did not succeed. From that time I started reading the Gita daily. When I saw the announcement in a paper about the publication "Dharma", I decided to become a subscriber as I had always felt the need of living a spiritual life and also it was written in Bengali which I could understand more easily.

At this time I was at home, so I was able to read both the "Karmayogin" and the "Dharma." One day during a conversation with a relative the topic of Aurobindo Babu and Suren Banerjee came up. Soon a furious discussion arose as to who was the greater. The wrathful battle of words continued until two o' clock in the morning, and we almost came to blows. "You are a fool," he cried, "You do not know who brought Swadeshi (the National consciousness)." I replied, "You are ignorant, Sir, you have not recognised Aurobindo Babu; in the matter of sacrifice he is greater." Then I started wondering whether my assertion had been right. The more I pondered over it, the more I became convinced of his greatness. Was it not written under his picture that he sacrificed a salary of Rs. 800/- to come to Calcutta on a salary of Rs. 100/-? My heart told me that Aurobindo Babu was an ascetic.

An elementary school was started in our village, and I was made the teacher. While I was in Calcutta, Suren Banerjee had raised a sum of Rs. 10,000/- at the District Conference held at Agarpara, in the 24 Parganas. I was present at the conference. The money was to be spent for the improvement of villages. I was eagerly awaiting it. But the money never arrived. I became very angry with Suren Babu. I was also told that the money for the construction of the Federation Hall was also with him. There was no sign of the Federation Hall as yet. So my faith and trust shifted from Suren Babu to Aurobindo Babu.

In our school every Saturday after 2 p. m. there used to be a discussion on spiritual matters. Sacred books like "The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna" were read. It is written in the Gospel that if you repeat the word Gita—Gita—Gita—it becomes Tagi (Tyagi), an ascetic. At once Aurobindo came into my mind. I understood that the essence of the Gita was renunciation. One who is an ascetic need not read the Gita. So I decided to renounce and discontinue my study of the Gita. I do not know how far I have been able to realise the renunciation in my life, but I lessened my study of the Gita. According to the instructions given in the "Gospel" I started meditating regularly.

About this time, a Congress meeting was held in Calcutta. I came to know that by the effort of Aurobindo four resolutions were carried out, one of them being 'Schools to be under National control'. From that moment the idea not to hand over our school to the government took firm root. The school must be run by our own efforts and sacrifices. Aurobindo was teaching without a salary in the National School, I would do the same. All others except me tried to get government aid, which could not be obtained as the headmaster had to be an I.A. (Intermediate Arts). I explained to them that government aid would not amount to more than twenty or twenty-five rupees; I would work without a salary and even give a monthly subscription of two or three rupees. Though outwardly they expressed sympathy with me, inwardly they did not agree with my ideas. From that time I carried on my work inspired by the ideal of Aurobindo.

It was mentioned at the end of the paper "Dharma" that Aurobindo had gone to a lonely place to do Yoga. I was very much surprised at his sudden departure. It seems that he has written somewhere, "Such a force can be put behind a simple paper that it will achieve the impossible." After reading in one of the reprinted numbers of the "Bandemataram" an article entitled "Let us Feel", I felt that if he ever put such a force behind me,—then I too could become a genuine man. From that time I started doing Japa of his name,—Aurobindo, Aurobindo, Aurobindo. I used to read the "Hymn to Durga" published in the "Dharma". It gave me strength.



During one of our weekly meetings I read an article, "The Dharma of the Gita", but could not explain it to the students. I asked the boys to copy out the "Hymn to Durga" and learn it by heart.

The article on Hathayoga in the "Dharma" I understood a little and saw that Hathayoga was not an indispensable part of Yoga. Then what Yoga could Aurobindo be practising? I could not come to any decision. I was under the impression that he had gone to a foreign country. Someone said that he was in Germany. For a long time there was no news of him.

I read the life of Aurobindo written by Dinendra Kumar Roy, in a Bengali monthly, "Supravat". It was mentioned there that to repeat the "Hymn to Durga" when in danger was very auspicious. Also I learnt that Aurobindo had great faith in "Astrology". From that time I started having faith in horoscopes and astrology, even today I still believe in them.

When the school was over for the day, I would send away the teachers even if some work remained to be done. Behind closed doors, we, the students and I, recited all together the "Hymn to Durga". It was a time when the mere mention of Aurobindo's name could be dangerous.

At that time the government was following a policy of wholesale internment of young and old alike. The intense suffering of the people made me long to find a Rishi, to tell me what was to be done under these conditions. Soon I received my answer: Aurobindo was the Rishi. But there was a great conflict within me. If he was a Rishi where was his matted hair or why did he not wear the bark of a tree, an ochre robe, a garland of rudraksha seeds round his neck, and why no Kamandulu (water-pot) and blanket? He was dressed like an ordinary person in a shirt and dhoti. After a period of uncertainty the former conviction returned and doubts vanished completely. It became clear to me that the Rishis of this age would not require any such outward show. Aurobindo was the only Rishi of this present age, thus to Aurobindo I offered my heart's devotion.

Once there arose the question of the ideal man. I remarked that the ancient Rishis were our ideal men. One of the students wanted to know where to find them in this age. I replied, "The Rishis of the present day do not have matted hair, they do not wear the bark of a tree, a lion-cloth or carry a water-pot." Then each one named his favourite hero, and the first questioner wanted to know mine. I would not say but he insisted. Before going home he showed me a piece of paper on which was written "Aurobindo". I smiled and nodded.

A series of articles under the title of "National Education" by Aurobindo appeared in the "Karmayogin". I determined to embody his ideas in my work. But as soon as I tried to put them into practice, I found that it was

impossible to do so. The life of the teacher must be the very basis of the students' education. If the teacher did not fulfil this ideal, such an education was out of the question. I felt that one cannot impart the knowledge of the Brahman unless one himself is a knower of the Brahman. So this method of teaching had to be deferred.

A long time afterwards, quite accidentally I read in the paper "Basumati" that Aurobindo Babu was in Pondicherry and would soon publish a monthly called the "Arya". Immediately I got the address and subscribed for one year. I was delighted when the paper arrived, but, Good Heavens, it was all 'Greek' to me. There was not a single sentence in his writing which I could understand. It was a little disappointing. Still I entertained the hope that later on easier articles would appear. But it was not to be. There were words from the Vedas in the journal, so I realised that he was a Knower of the Vedas. Therefore he could be accepted as the Spiritual Guru. And henceforward I looked upon him as such.

It became difficult to obtain the "Arya" in our part of the country and rather risky. Whenever anybody that knew English came to our house I asked him to explain the articles, even then some with high university degrees were unable to do so. I then realised that a university degree could not explain these articles, it was experience that was necessary. From the start of the National movement I had not much attraction for a university degree, now I had a greater disdain for it.

In the "Arya", the words of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda were often quoted in English. A very high place was given to them also in the "Dharma". So I started reading their books. Often I used to have discussions with my friends. Many of them knew very little about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. They were not very much interested in spirituality as they were planning to join the revolutionary party. Quoting from the "Dharma", I explained to them : first we have to establish Dharma in ourselves, then only are we fit for Karma (Work). They did not listen. One of them was a teacher in our school. He gave work a higher place, but I taught the boys that Dharma was superior to Karma. The others pulled the students towards work, I tried to attract them towards Dharma. Excepting one or two, most of the teachers were not on my side.

Later on some of them, along with the leaders of the secret committee, came to seek my co-operation. They remained in the foreground and I continued to help them behind the scenes.

One of my friends received some photos of Aurobindo Babu from Pondicherry. There were not sufficient to go round, so we wrote for more. A gentleman named Amrita Babu, replied that there were no more in hand

at the time but he would send some as soon as possible. After a month or so we received them. We were very grateful to him for remembering us.

When I studied the photo of Aurobindo standing upright, I felt in my heart : "Aurobindo has no pride".

Receiving photos from Pondicherry was itself rather dangerous, and we were a little nervous because some time ago a few of my friends had been arrested and interned. Soon our home and the garden house where we lived were searched by the police. There was a photo of Aurobindo in the meditation room. One of the people who were against me pointed this out to the Sub-Inspector. The Sub-Inspector did not attach any importance to this and remarked that this photo was sold in the market. This showed that he was sympathetic towards me.

There were two bound volumes of the "Karmayogin" and the "Dharma" in my room which did not escape the vigilant eyes of the Sub-Inspector. Before leaving, he took me aside and asked me to remove those two volumes. A member and a teacher of our school were interned.

I was saved by the Guru and from then onwards, in my heart, I accepted Aurobindo as my Guru.

---

## SHE IN OUR NETHER WORLD

O CHILD of grace and love immaculate  
 Whose eyes aspire for purer farther skies,  
 Here where Judas laughs while Jesus dies—  
 You've come, assumed the iron yoke of Fate  
 And suffer envy's slash and have<sub>2</sub> for mate  
 Brute-life that knows not flames, can never rise  
 To see what marvels and what God-surprise  
 Exist beyond its haggard crofter's gate :  
 Your priceless heart no crofter ever bought  
 Save He whose kingdom is your heart sublime,  
 Whose distant gleams we gather when in thought  
 We cross the crystal-peaks of Space and Time :  
 Myself in yoke, I came to know your gaze  
 That speaks of Moon-deep nights and Sun-vast days !

PRITHWINDRA

## FLASHES

MORALITY is preparatory to spirituality. Spirituality is preparatory to surrender. Surrender is preparatory to union. And what is this union ? Union is that which has no need of the first personal pronoun.

\*

Desire alternates with aspiration. Light alternates with darkness. Ignorance alternates with knowledge. But there is something which does not alternate with anything. It is our complete unification with the Absolute.

\*

What is penury ? Penury is the fulfilment of desires. The more we slake the thirst of desires the bigger we become a round zero like an insatiable belly.

\*

Neither a mighty nor a puny action can dare to claim love. It is the desirelessness that has ever the right to claim love from God.

\*

My desire has given birth to 'I and mine'. My surrender has given birth to 'Thou and thine'. 'I and mine are more transitory than a rope of sand. 'Thou and thine' are more permanent than the everlasting hills.

\*

Who is God ? God is the Father of the beginningless beginning and the son of an endless end.

\*

What is God ? God is the ceaseless forgiveness. Man will never suffer perdition since God's forgiveness is infinitely mightier than all other qualities of His.

CHINMOY

## ANANDA

CLEAR sky, Poornima night,  
Moon with golden halo glided  
    Above the waters, calm and stilled;  
Brightness increased, night decreased,  
With light the horizon filled,  
    A white rose shone on the height.

An intent look fell on the moon,  
The glory was imaged in the heart's mirror,  
    Ecstasy arose, strength grew apace;  
The soul gazed at the shining disc  
As after a sojourn a lover meets  
    The Deity's illumined face.

A voice from the wondrous zenith came,  
"O Pilgrim, concentrate passion-flame",  
    Ananda cascaded beneath;  
A torrent of bliss touched all the earth,  
Rivers of wine flew in various curves,  
    Flooded the material sheath.

Drowned in bliss, tranquil in countenance,  
Absorbed in heavenly trance,  
    The being enjoyed Brahman's delight;  
Mouth melted, music rose,  
Yearning fulfilled, no more of thirst,  
    Thoughts and passions burned white.

Sweetness attracted the tiny creatures,  
Pain transformed into ineffable rapture,  
    Man stood in deathless ecstasy;  
Sorrow for ever dropped from his heart,  
All Nature was enamoured of his love,  
    The "I" dissolved in Divinity.

"ASPIRATION"