

On Aurobindo's Birth

MOTHER INDIA^{Pondichu}

OCTOBER, 1970

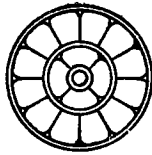
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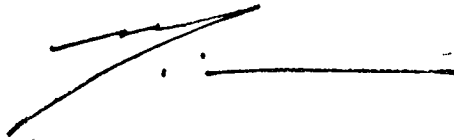


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. XXII

No. 9

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

	<i>Pages</i>
WORDS OF THE MOTHER	... 543
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	<i>The Mother</i> ... 544
A CORRECTION	... 549
AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO: ABOUT A BENGALI TRANSLATION OF HIS POEM <i>In Horis Aeternum</i>	... 550
SOME DOUBTS CONSIDERED	<i>M. P. Pandit</i> ... 551
A MYSTIC HIPPIE (A Poem)	<i>Renukadas Deshpande</i> ... 553
A TALK TO THE STUDENTS AT THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION— INTRODUCTION BY NIRODBARAN	... 554
TALK BY AMAL KIRAN (<i>K. D. Sethna</i>)	... 555
TWO MIGHTY HANDS (A Poem)	<i>Nirodbaran</i> ... 565
THE MEANING OF THE ASIAN AWAKENING	<i>Sanat K. Banerji</i> ... 566
FLOWERS (A Poem)	<i>Jesse Roarke</i> ... 568
AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF AE (GEORGE RUSSELL)	... 569
TWO POEMS OF PONDICHERRY: DARSHAN HOUR: AUGUST 15, 1970 GARDEN OF 42 RUE SUFFREN	<i>Minnie N. Canteenwalla</i> ... 570

CONTENTS

UP THE MOUNT OF TRUTH (A Poem)	<i>Har Krishan Singh</i>	... 572
CONFERENCE IN SEDONA	<i>Richard B. Prater</i>	... 573
A LETTER FROM ENGLAND	<i>Miranda</i>	... 575
ONE-IN-MANY AND MANY-IN-ONE	<i>Kamalendra Ray</i>	... 578
ESSAYS ON <i>Savitri</i> AND <i>Paradise Lost</i> : WHO IS THE HERO IN <i>Paradise Lost</i> ?	<i>Romen</i>	... 580
THE SECRET SELF AND THE YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO : PART II—THE SECOND LIBERATION: 3. ASPIRATION	<i>Norman C. Dowsett</i>	... 583
ASPECTS OF THE MOTHER	<i>Narayan Prasad</i>	... 585

STUDENTS' SECTION

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION:

EIGHTEENTH SEMINAR—23rd NOVEMBER 1969

Compiled by Kishor Gandhi

... 589

NOTE

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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

AUROVILLE ASPIRE À L'UNION.

1970

LA MÈRE

AUROVILLE ASPIRES FOR UNION.

1970

THE MOTHER

How can persons having different values live and work together in harmony?

The solution is to go deep in oneself, and to find the place where all the differences combine to constitute the essential and eternal Unity.

4-5-1969

THE MOTHER

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of August 15)

(This new series of answers by the Mother to questions put by the children of the Ashram appeared for the first time in the Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education but in a somewhat incomplete form. We now give, in a new English translation, the full text as it was taped, with here and there a few special additions or modifications made by the Mother herself at the time of its first publication in French in February 1968.)

February 8, 1956

Sweet Mother, I have not understood this: "At best we have only the poor relative freedom which by us is ignorantly called free will. But that is at bottom illusory, since it is the modes of Nature that express themselves through our personal will; it is force of Nature, grasping us, ungrasped by us that determines what we shall will or how we shall will it. Nature, not an independent ego, chooses what object we shall seek, whether by reasoned will or unreflecting impulse, at any moment of our existence."

(The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 108)

Not understood it? What do you mean by "not understood"? This is a fact, there is nothing to understand, it is like that.

I have explained this to you I don't know how many times. You think it is you who decide: there are impulses which come from outside. You think you are conscious of your will: it is a consciousness which is not yours. And in everything, you are built entirely by something which is the forces of Nature expressing a higher Will of which you are unconscious.

Only, one doesn't understand this except just when one is able to get out of one's ego, though it be only for a moment; for the ego (and it is that which makes its strength) is convinced that it alone decides. But if one looks attentively, one notices that it is moved by all sorts of things which are not itself.

But what then is mental and vital will?

That is an expression of something which is not personal.

If you analyse carefully, you see, for instance, that all that one thinks has been thought by others, that these are things which circulate and pass through you, but you have not produced this thought, you are not the originator of this thought. All your

reactions come from atavism, from those who gave you birth and from the environment in which you have lived, from all the impressions which have accumulated in you and constituted something which seems to you yourself, yet which is not produced by you, but simply felt, experienced; you become aware of it in passing, but it is not you who created it, not you who gave it birth.

It could be said that these are like sounds (any kind of sounds: words, music, anything) recorded by an instrument, then reproduced by another instrument which repeats them, like the gramophone, for instance. You won't say that the gramophone has created the sound you hear, would you? That would never occur to you. But as you are under the illusion of your separate personality, these thoughts which cross your mind and find expression, these feelings which pass through your vital and find expression have come, you think, from you; but there is nothing which comes from you. Where is the "you" which can create all that?

You must enter deep, and find the eternal essence of your being to know the creative reality within you. And once you have found that, you will realise that it is one and the same thing in all others, and then where is your separate personality? There's nothing left any longer.

Yes, these are recording and reproducing instruments, and there are always what may be called deformations—they may be deformations for the better, they may be deformations for the worse, they may be fairly great changes; the inner combinations are such that things are not reproduced exactly as they passed from one to the other because the instrument is very complex. But it is one and the same thing which is moved by a conscious will, quite independent of all personal wills.

When the Buddha wanted to make his disciples understand these things, he told them: every time you put out a vibration, a desire for example, the desire for some particular thing, your desire starts circulating from one person to another, from one to another across the universe and will go right round and come back to you. And as it is not one single thing but a world of things, and as you are not the only transmitting centre—all individuals are transmitting centres—that makes such a complication in there, that you no longer recognise yourself there. But these vibrations move about in a single, absolutely identical field; it is only the complication and interception of vibrations which gives you the impression of something independent or separate.

But there is nothing separate or independent; it is one single Substance, one single Force, one single Consciousness, one single Will, which moves in innumerable ways of being.

And it is so complicated that one is no longer clear about it, but if one steps back and follows the movement, no matter what line of movement, one can find very clearly that the vibrations get established step by step, step by step, and that in fact there is only one unity—unity of Substance, unity of Consciousness, unity of Will. And that is the only reality. Outwardly it is a kind of illusion: the illusion of separation and the illusion of distinction.

Desires and all these things also?

This is not personal. Not at all personal. And that is *very* easy to find out; it is of all things the easiest to discern, because ninety times out of a hundred this comes to you from someone else, or from a certain circumstance, or a set of circumstances, or from a vibration coming from another person or several other people. It is very easy to discern, it is the first thing one can discern: it is a vibration which suddenly awakens something similar in you. You know, something makes an impact on you, and this impact produces a response, as when you touch a note. Well, this vibration of desire comes *and* touches you in a particular way and you respond.

This is not very difficult to discern; even when one is very young, even when one is a child, if one pays attention, one becomes aware of that. One lives amidst constant collective suggestions, constantly; for example, I don't know if you have been present at funerals, or if you have been in a house where there was a death (naturally you must observe yourself a little, otherwise you will notice nothing), but if you observe yourself a little, you will see that you have no special reason to feel any sorrow or grief whatever for the passing away of this person; he is just like many others; this has happened and by a set of social circumstances you have been brought to that house. And there, suddenly, without knowing why or how, you feel a strong emotion, a great sorrow, a deep pain, and you ask yourself: "Why am I so miserable?" It is quite simply the vibrations which have entered you, nothing else.

And I tell you it is easy to observe, for it is an experience I had when I was a little child (and at that time I was not yet doing conscious yoga; I was perhaps doing yoga but not consciously) and I observed it very, very clearly; I told myself: "Certainly it is their sorrow I feel, for I have no reason to be specially affected by the death of this person"; and all of a sudden, tears in my eyes,—I felt like that,—a lump in my throat, and wanting to cry, as though I were in great sorrow—I was quite a child—and immediately I understood: "Oh! surely it is their sorrow which has come into me."

It is the same thing for anger. It is very clear, one receives it suddenly, even not necessarily from somebody: from the atmosphere—it is there—and then all of a sudden it enters, and it usually gets you from below and then rises up, and then pushes you, and so you go. A minute earlier you were not angry, you were quite self-possessed, you had no intention of losing your temper. And this catches you so strongly that you cannot resist—because you are not sufficiently conscious, you let it enter you, and it makes use of you. You...what you call "yourself", that is to say, your body; for apparently (I say apparently) it is something separate from the body of your neighbour. But it is only an optical illusion, because in fact there are constantly what may be called particles, even physical particles, like a sort of radiation, which come out of the body and get mixed with others; and because of this, when one is very sensitive, one can feel things at a distance.

It is said, for instance, that the blind develop such a sensitiveness, so delicate a sense-perception, that when they are nearing an object they feel an impact at a

distance. But one can quite easily experience this. For example, drawing near to someone without making a noise, then putting one's hand quite close—sensitive people feel it at once. You have not put your will for them to feel this, you have not brought in any psychological element, you have made only a purely physical experiment of coming close noiselessly and without being heard—one who is sensitive will feel it at once.

That means that the body only seems to end there, but it is simply the way our eyes are made. If we had a little more subtle vision, with a little more extensive range, well, we would see that there is something which comes out, as there is something which comes out of other bodies,—and that all this gets mixed up and interacts.

What does Sri Aurobindo mean by "oneness in dynamic force"?

That is what I was saying. There is a dynamic force which moves all things, and when you become conscious of it, you see that it is one single Force which moves all things; and as you become conscious, you can even follow its movement and see how it works through men and things.

From the minute you become conscious of the unity—unity of Force, unity of Consciousness and unity of Will—well, you have no longer that perception which makes you seem quite separate from others, so that you do not know what goes on in them, they are strangers to you, you are shut up as it were in your skin, and have no contact with others except quite externally and superficially. But this happens precisely because you have not realised in yourself the perception of this unity of Consciousness, Force and Will—even the unity of material vibration.

It is the complexity which makes this perception difficult,—for our faculties of perception are quite linear and very one-sided; so when we want to understand, we are immediately assailed by innumerable things which are almost inconsistent with each other and intermix in such a complex way that one can no longer make out the lines and follow things—one suddenly enters a whirlwind.

But this is because.... For instance, most men think one thought after another, even as they are obliged to say one word after another—they cannot say many words at the same time, you know, or else they jabber. Well, the majority of men think like that, they think one thought after another, and so their whole consciousness has a linear movement. But one begins to perceive things only when one can see spherically, globally, think spherically, that is, have innumerable thoughts and perceptions simultaneously.

Naturally, till today, if one has wanted to describe things, one has been obliged to describe them one after another, for one cannot say ten words at the same time, one says one word after another; and that is why all that one says is practically quite incapable of expressing the truth, quite incapable. For we are obliged to say one thing after another—the minute we say them one after another, they are no longer true.

They must all be said at the same time, even as they can all be seen at the same time, and each one in its place.

So, when one begins to see like that—to see, to discern, to feel, to think, to will like that—one draws near the Truth. But so long as one sees as one speaks, oh! that's lamentable poverty.

Sri Aurobindo writes: "As long as we live in the ignorant seeming, we are the ego and are subject to the modes of Nature. Enslaved to appearances, bound to the dualities, tossed between good and evil, sin and virtue, grief and joy, pain and pleasure, good fortune and ill fortune, success and failure, we follow helplessly the iron or gilt and iron round of the wheel of Maya."

Yes. There are people who have a happy and comfortable life, and people who have a miserable one. That depends...how shall I put it?—upon individual destiny, that depends on what they have to do upon earth, depends on the stage they are at, on many things. It is quite obvious that it is not they who choose. For, the majority of men would always choose the same thing. If they were asked what they wanted, there would be differences, yes, but not very great ones. It would be quite monotonous.

The majority of men want to be what they call "quiet", what they call "peaceful", to have a small organisation in their own measure—which is generally microscopic—and consists in living a regular routine of almost the same activities always, within almost the same bounds, in almost identical surroundings, and all that repeated without much difference; with a sufficient variety so that it does not become quite boring, but nothing which may disturb this regular round which makes what is called a peaceful life. For the vast majority of men this is the ideal.

And again, the details of this ideal in realisation depend exclusively upon the country where they are born, the society in which they are born, and the customs of their environment. Their ideal is fashioned by the manners of the country and society in which they live.

Of course there are exceptions, but they only confirm the rule. Generally speaking, the most common ideal is to be born in an environment sufficiently comfortable to avoid too many difficulties in life, to marry someone who won't give you too much trouble, to have healthy children who grow up normally (again to avoid trouble) and then a quiet and happy old age, and not be too ill, again to avoid trouble. And then to pass away when one is tired of life, again because one does not want any trouble.

Indeed, this is the most wide-spread ideal. There are naturally exceptions, one may even find the exact opposite. But it would be quite monotonous, existence as men conceive it. The differences would come in the details, for in one country people prefer one thing and in another, another; and then, in the society in which one is born, there are certain customs and one ideal of happiness, and in another society there are other customs and another ideal of happiness—and that's all.

If one speaks to Europeans for example, they will say there is nothing more

beautiful than Europe. I knew Frenchmen—not one but hundreds—who used to say that there were no women in the world more beautiful than French women! And I knew a negro who had had his whole education in France and who was asked who was the most beautiful woman, he said: “There is no woman more beautiful than a negress.” That was quite natural, wasn’t it? Well, it is like that. There is no house more beautiful than the one in which you are accustomed to live—the houses of the country one lives in, where one is born—and for the landscape it is the same thing, for food the same thing, for habits the same thing. And provided that this goes on fairly harmoniously, without any very violent blows, one is perfectly satisfied.

That is the general mentality. And one turns round and round and round—and sometimes it is an iron circle, sometimes a gilt one—but one turns round and round and round, and the children will turn in the same round and the grandchildren will also turn round and round—and so it will continue. There you are.

That’s enough for today.

(*To be continued*)

A CORRECTION

DILIP Kumar Roy writes from Poona to the Editor of *Mother India*:

“In your September issue you have published a poem entitled *Aspiration* whose headline is: *An Unpublished Poem of Sri Aurobindo*. But this poem was a translation of a Bengali poem of mine (in Jaydeva’s metre) entitled *Abhīpsa* which means ‘Aspiration’. Besides, it was originally translated by my own humble self in free verse which Sri Aurobindo corrected and revised later. You will find the poem printed in my *Anami*, p. 149.”

The Editor had himself a strong suspicion, which he even voiced to a friend, that *Aspiration* was the translation of some poem in an Indian language, most probably a Bengali piece by Dilip Kumar Roy. But against his doubt there stood the manuscript in Sri Aurobindo’s own hand. It would now seem that the manuscript represented a sort of recast made by Sri Aurobindo of the author’s version.

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

ABOUT A BENGLI TRANSLATION OF HIS POEM *IN HORIS AETERNUM**

Dilip,

I think it is a very fine rendering.

In line 4 however I would note that there is no reference to day as a movement of time but one to the noon, the day as sunlit space rather than time, it is the fixed moment, as it were, the motionless scene of noon. The eye is of course the sun itself. I mark by the dash that I have finished with my first symbol of the gold ball and go off to a second, quite different one.

In the last line your translation is indeed very clear and precise in meaning, but it is perhaps too precise—the “something” twice repeated is meant to give a sense of just the opposite, an imprecise unseizable something which is at once nothing and all things at a time. It is found no doubt in the momentary things and all is there but the finding is less definite than your translation suggests.

One more point. “Caught by the spirit in sense” means “there is a spirit in sense (sense not being sense alone) that catches the eternal out of the perishable hours in these things.”

SRI AUROBINDO

* A far sail on the unchangeable monotone of a slow slumbering sea,
A world of power hushed into symbols of hue, silent unendingly,
Over its head like a gold ball the sun tossed by the gods in their play
Follows its curve,—a blazing eye of Time watching the motionless day.

Here or elsewhere—poised on the unreachable abrupt snow-solitary ascent
Earth aspiring lifts to the illimitable Light, then ceases broken and spent,
Or in the glowing expanse, arid, fiery and austere, of the desert’s hungry soul,—
A breath, a cry, a glimmer from Eternity’s face, in a fragment the mystic Whole.

Moment-mere, yet with all eternity packed, lone, fixed, intense,
Out of the ring of these hours that dance and die, caught by the spirit in sense,
In the greatness of a man, in music’s outspread wings, in a touch, in a smile, in a sound,
Something that waits, something that wanders and settles not, a Nothing that was all and is
found.

SOME DOUBTS CONSIDERED

We in the Ashram are used to many kinds of questions, some flippant, some from idle curiosity, some undisguisedly hostile, some few sincere queries based upon a genuine desire to know. A letter received recently contains questions which may strike one as offensive, but on a second reading they betray the difficulties of a mind, conditioned by beliefs and general *samskāras* of a bygone age, in adjusting itself to the new Time-Spirit that is pressing upon us. It is in this context that these questions are taken up here for discussion which may prove helpful to many others in the same situation.

Question: On the 15th August which was Sri Aurobindo's birthday, no specific celebrations were made for him. Also, during meditation time in the playground, the Mother's slides were shown rather than Sri Aurobindo's. Does the Mother permit this publicity?

Answer: Darshan here does not mean a physical showing of oneself. Right from the beginning of the Ashram, the Darshan has meant a special invocation of the Divine Consciousness and its projection among those who are present. Certain dates have been chosen for this purpose, the choice being governed by various considerations, some of them of an occult character and some with a view to the proper periodicity of the influx. Thus there is little that is personal in the usual sense about the Darshan occasion. Formerly both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother used to receive the devotees. Now naturally the Mother receives them. The celebration is of the Ideal, the Truth they stand for and embody. The occasion marks a special canalisation of that Truth-consciousness to those who seek for it and are present.

The slides are shown at the playground in response to the specific request of devotees who experience a certain spiritual upliftment during that period and hence always look forward to such occasions with eagerness. Sri Aurobindo did not permit any photo slides to be taken during his physical life and hence there are no slides of his to be shown.

Question: For every Ashramite the Mother is not only Guru but God. No other God is worshipped or considered for worship. Is this belief permissible?

Answer: This is not a *belief* enjoined upon anyone admitted in the Ashram. It is a fact of experience on the part of each individual. Every one here who cherishes the Mother as the Divine does so because at some time, in some way, he has deeply felt or seen or realised that She embodies the Divine for him. It is our experience that in our adoration and inner worship of the Divine Mother all the gods and goddesses receive their share.

Question: Does it not increase fatalism by leaving everything to the Mother? Whatever the Mother desires will be done...

Answer: On the contrary. One submits not to fatalism but to the Supreme Will acting in the person of the Mother. A spiritual seeker of the integral path does not resign himself to circumstances and "leave everything" to some extraneous agency. He lifts up his will and initiative for action from the normal subjection to the lower ignorant ego-nature, and gears it to the higher Divine Will. In acting thus, he frees himself from the lower determinism and aims at becoming an uninvolved instrument of the Divine Will. He breathes the freer air of the Spirit. Naturally this is a long process but every step taken on the path is a step away from subjection to fatalism. There is no indifference to result but there is, first, a wide equality to the results whatever they may be; next, there arises a tranquil joy in whatever results are ordained by the foreseeing Will.

Question: Is not the Ashram developing a Personality Cult? If so, what will happen when this Personality will disappear from the external scene of this noble institute?

Answer: There are two aspects of the Divine in manifestation, the impersonal and the personal. Whether one approaches the Divine as a vast Impersonality of Peace, Light, Power or pure Consciousness, or whether one approaches the Divine as formulated in a particular embodiment, depends upon the nature and the goal of the seeker. According as the seeking is, the Divine comes to be experienced and realised. The Personal and the Impersonal are both complementary truths of the Divine. In the history of the creation, the Divine has chosen to manifest in certain personalities who have left an indelible mark in the evolution of the human consciousness. The physical bodies may have been shed in the normal course—according to the rules of the game—but that has not made any difference to the spiritual and occult participation and governance by those personalities in the continued evolution of the human race. The stamp of Rama is as living today as it was thousands of years ago. The call of Krishna is as enchanting today as it was when he was physically present. Divine personalities do not cease to be present with their withdrawal from the physical scene in a physical way. In fact it has been testified all the world over that their impact can even be greater when their workings are not circumscribed by the limitations of the physical instrumentation.

Question: Why are non-vegetarian eating and cooking allowed in Auroville which is going to be developed as a spiritual city?

Answer: What is wrong with non-vegetarian diet? What has it got to do with spirituality? Do you mean to say that all vegetarians are spiritual and all non-vegetarians unspiritual? One takes the kind of food to which one is accustomed. If the spiritual consciousness is helped, promoted and nourished by food at all it is not by physical food. The Upanishad is clear on this point. It is the psychological intake that decides the question. What kind of thoughts one thinks, what kind of influences one is open

to from the environment, what type of emotions one harbours and develops—these are really the factors that help or retard the growth of one's consciousness truthward. Food as such plays a very small part in this context. As long as it serves to maintain the physical body and its life energies in a healthy condition it really matters little whether it is vegetarian or non-vegetarian or mixed. One takes what best suits one's constitution.

Question: Why are there different symbols of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo—when actually there is no difference between their philosophies?

Answer: Though the Truth is One, its manifestations takes many forms; its workings reveal many aspects each of which has its own perspective. Each working is represented by a figure that renders it best to the perceiving eye. Thus the Mother's symbol presents the truth of Creation in terms of the one primal Power emanating out of itself four major Powers which in turn put out twelve subsidiary powers of creation. Sri Aurobindo's symbol represents another aspect of the same Creation. The triple higher truth of Sachchidananda represented by the descending triangle met by the triple truth of the lower hemisphere—matter, life and mind—represented by the ascending triangle, the junction of both forming the perfect creation of the supramental consciousness symbolised by the square.

Thus the two symbols stand for two fundamental facts of this Creation.

M. P. PANDIT

A MYSTIC HIPPIE

I AM the hippie of the High,
 A dreamer of the haloed land,
 Ecstasy's pilgrim without an eye,
 Doped with the wondrous and the grand.

A mystic of soul-drunken vague,
 I am the spring-bud's passion-blaze,
 My token is the purple-gold
 And in my heart a lusted craze.

By the flashing faery of God's Non-sense
 Dissolved are all the secret pacts,
 A deep incomprehensible silence
 Awaits to guide my thoughts and acts.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

A TALK TO THE STUDENTS

AT THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

At the request of a number of people we are publishing a report of the first of the two talks given by Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna) on August 26 and 29, 1970, respectively. The second will be reported in the next issue of Mother India.

INTRODUCTION BY NIRODBARAN

DEAR friends, I am in a dilemma. The speaker does not want me to introduce him, but some of the students do—and naturally the preference goes to the students. I hope he will have no objection if I address a few words, particularly to the younger generation who do not know much about him.

Well, he is our distinguished, (*Amal covers his ears—laughter*) renowned, celebrated Amal Kiran, poet, critic, philosopher, journalist, historian, etc., etc., whom, I am sure, you have seen hopping about with his stick in the Ashram (*laughter*) most conspicuously, and whom I have the privilege to count as a cherished friend. He can talk Relativity with an Einsteinian like Jugal, he can talk politics and communism with my colleague Manoj Das, he can talk history with our Sisir, and certainly he can perorate on philosophy with Arindam and Kireet, and even with Dr. Agarwal he can hold his own (*laughter*)—and with me on Supermind (*laughter*). The other day my friend Champaklal remarked, “When these two persons get together they start talking about the Supermind as though they have put the Supermind into their pockets!” (*laughter*) Well, that is the position. In short, our guest is a versatile genius. Still he said he felt shy to address you: that is why I make this introduction—so that the younger generation may know something of his versatility and that my words may help in breaking his nervousness. Geniuses are always a bit shy; only, I wonder how with so much knowledge packed in his brain the Supermind will find room in it! (*laughter*)

Now, the particular subject—I won't take much time (*laughter*)—I want him to speak about is his association with Sri Aurobindo, on which surely he can dwell at great length. Out of a few of us on whom Sri Aurobindo bestowed special attention in the field of poetry, three survive here today: one, Amal himself; two, myself; three, Nishikanta's self. And the Master has left us. But, before leaving, he commanded: “Stick on!” And my two friends are sticking on literally and I am sticking on psychologically—though all with different movements. Amal has made his movement anapaestic (three-stepped), mine is iambic (two-stepped), Nishikanta's a jumble of both, depending on his inner and outer condition. Also, before leaving, Sri Aurobindo saw to it that, among those he had initiated into poetry with so much special care, one of sn

at least would be able to follow the path he has opened and I must say that my friend Amal has admirably fitted himself to that task, and is capable too of taking us along if we cling to his numerous appendages. I hope you understed what I mean. Then I can say without fear of contradiction that he is the best exegete of Sri Aurobindo's poetry, just as Nolini is the best exponent of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. I can go further and claim that in the vast field of English and European poetry Amal can stand on a par, not only in India but everywhere, with the best of critics.

Well, my friends, this is no mean achievement for our yoga. There are many other things I could say about him, but I should stop because otherwise it would be my talk and not his. (*laughter*)

TALK BY AMAL KIRAN

By not announcing any subject on our Centre's notice-board, Nirodbaran left me in a quandary. Now, by presenting me as a universal genius and implying on my part a mastery of a great number of subjects, he has again put me in a quandary—as to the direction from which to approach the subject he has proposed in his Introduction. But the gist of his long speech—which is to be followed by my little talk (*laughter*)—is that I should make wonderful revelations. Well, then, I shall start by being startling!

Let me whisper into your ears at the top of my voice an unbelievable secret. It is this: twice in *Savitri*, which is a legend and a symbol, Sri Aurobindo has referred to the present speaker—symbolically, although the speaker is very far yet from being legendary. (*laughter*) The first reference runs:

But Mind, a glorious traveller in the sky,
Walks lamely on the earth with footsteps slow.

Surely the person intended is unmistakable. (*laughter*) The lines indicate an inequality between the intellectual aspiration and the physical achievement. Not that the possibility of physical achievement is denied, but what is implied is that the glorious sky-traveller puts up a pretty poor show on the world-stage. The second reference is also more or less like the first, not very complimentary but on the other hand not altogether unappreciative—and after all to be mentioned in *Savitri* in any way, however veiled or even unrecognisable, is itself a compliment. (*laughter*) The second reference goes:

A limping Yes through the aeons journeys still
Accompanied by an eternal No.

Lest you should misunderstand, I must hurry to say that if the "limping Yes" is Amal Kiran, the "eternal No" accompanying him is not his wife! (*laughter*) I may admit that my wife does have a strong restraining influence on many of my extravagances and recklessnesses; but here I take Sri Aurobindo to be speaking of two sides of a movement within one single person—yes, a person single, even if married! (*laughter*) The lameness mentioned here is also no denial of the possibility of reaching the Divine Goal. In fact the possibility of arrival is more emphasised. By

the word "Yes" coupled with the word "limping", some sort of positive statement is made. But the central difficulty of one who limps upon earth is also brought out. There is all the time some kind of arresting of the onward journey—a negation which keeps on delaying the movement which goes forward, however haltingly. And so I understand here not only a limping but also a stumbling and falling: the "eternal No" involves, in this universe of discourse—or shall I say, discord?—a stumble and a fall often and often.

Indeed my life has been a series of fallings, physical and spiritual—and perhaps some gossipers may add, moral. (*laughter*) However, one has to make the best of one's situation, and so even in the pre-Ashram days I looked out for some word of wisdom to throw light on my rather deplorable state. I followed Dr. Johnson's advice:

Let observation with extensive view

Survey mankind from China to Peru.

And luckily at the very beginning of my survey—in China itself—I found the word of wisdom. It came from the sage Confucius. I would rather be a disciple of Lao-Tse than a Confucian, which is perhaps the Chinese for confusion. (*laughter*) Anyway, here Confucius was quite clear and not in the least confused. His aphorism read: "Our greatest glory lies not in never falling but in rising every time we fall." So this became my life's motto before I reached Pondicherry. After my arrival here, I let Confucius himself drop (*laughter*) and naturally looked for something in *Savitri*. There I found Sri Aurobindo saying that it is not easy for us to remain perched on the heights for long. He writes that "a dull gravitation drags us down" Then he adds:

This too the Supreme Diplomat can use:

He makes our fall a means for greater rise.

Confucius's prose statement was static: he indicated only a recurrence of falling and rising. Sri Aurobindo's poetic pronouncement is dynamic: it points to a sequence in which a greater ascension comes on the heels of a descension to earth or even to hell.

In my early days too the Supreme Diplomat turned to advantage my habit of falling. I shall tell you in brief how. Well, I was educated from my very boyhood in the Western way. I was completely Westernised in thought. Indian philosophy and spirituality came to me at a late period and, before that, I had the typical Western-educated young man's attitude. I developed a keen analytic mind, an independence of temper, a certain intellectual pride and a strong individuality, an unbending individuality. Now, this kind of education does not easily lend itself to accepting supra-intellectual truths, still less to accepting humbly a spiritual Guru. But, thanks to my habit and practice of falling, without very much difficulty I was able to fall—at the feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. (*laughter*)

Now that I seem to have stumbled upon my real subject, though not in a swift manner but rather with "footsteps slow" according to the description Sri Aurobindo has given of me, I may begin at the very beginning of the quest which has led me here. I won't go into great detail, but I may sketch a general outline. As you know from what I have said, I was not by nature inclined to take to yoga. The first opening,

as it were, came through a friend of mine who boasted that he had done some yogic exercises and acquired a fund of inexhaustible energy. I, as a young man, was extremely struck with this. If yoga is a way of getting inexhaustible energy it is the right thing when you are young. (*laughter*) So I pleaded with him to let me see whatever he had read on the topic. He put into my hands a book of Vivekananda's. It was his treatment of Rajayoga, in which you have breathing exercises reduced to a minimum, but to a quite effective minimum, and several other things related to it. I tried to concentrate on merely the part dealing with a mode of harmonious breathing, which, according to my friend, could open you to a world of inexhaustible energy. But I could not stop there. I went on reading and found that there was more to Rajayoga than merely breathing exercises which make you super-young. (*laughter*) And so I was a little intrigued. Here was talk of the mind being stilled and ultimately passing into a higher state of consciousness, as a result of which you acquired various powers, not only having inexhaustible energy but becoming larger, becoming smaller, flying about and doing a lot of amazing things. Furthermore, just to read the book didn't seem enough. I wanted somebody, some example—greater than my friend—of the results of yoga. My friend, except for his unusual ability to be energetic, was a very poor specimen of a yogi. (*laughter*) Hence I started a search, looking out for people who might enlighten me.

The first fellow I caught hold of once when I had gone for a stroll to a fashionable place was a sannyasi in an ochre cloth. I shadowed him and came to the house where he was staying. I went up to him. He was surprised that a man very stylishly dressed should seek out one practically in rags. I asked him: "What have you to teach me?" He said: "Come inside and I shall give you my secret." So I went into his room. Then he said: "I am a worshipper of supernatural beings—gods and goddesses. You have to invoke them, and in order to do so you have to dig a big square hole in your room and light a big fire there." This was a very tough assignment, especially as I didn't have a room of my own, (*laughter*) and I was at the mercy of a very orthodox grandfather. (*laughter*) I just said: "All right, I'll see what I can do"—and left.

Soon after, I read in a newspaper that a Maharashtrian yogi had come to town. His picture was very attractive. He looked remarkably proportionate as if he had done Hathayoga to perfection, and they said he had various powers: he could take away at will the light from an electric bulb and he could make his head as big as that (*gesture with two hands*) whenever he wanted—I had already a swollen head, (*laughter*) but this kind of power would be quite welcome to impress people all the more. I sought him out at the address given. When I went to the house, I found a small crowd gathered there and he was in an inside apartment. In the anteroom was his host, a burly old man who promptly stopped me and said: "Sit here." I inquired: "Why?" "Sit here first," he said peremptorily. "All right," I replied with as much dignity as I could muster, and sat down. His next order was: "Show me your right palm." I showed it to him. He exclaimed: "Look"!—and vigorously shook his head. "No chance," he continued. (*laughter*) "But why?"

I asked. He answered: "You have got to have six children. (*laughter*) How can you ever become a yogi now? (*laughter*) Go back." I was a little taken aback at first; then I said: "But these six children are in the future, (*laughter*) I don't have them now, there is no prospect of my having them very soon, either. (*laughter*) In the meantime please let me go in." Then he grunted: "Very well, go in!"—as if meaning "Go and be damned."

I went in. Several people were sitting on the floor in various postures. The yogi himself was standing. He saw me and said: "Sit down." I obeyed him. He came near me and put a finger on my head. I felt a kind of electric current go up. (*laughter*) I said to myself, "Ah, there is something here! He has more power over electricity than merely taking off light from a bulb." He spoke again: "I shall teach you an exercise which you must do religiously every day. Lie in your bed and try to draw up your being, your whole consciousness, from every part of your body, beginning with your toes, right up to your head." This was very fascinating but seemed rather difficult. And I said: "Is this all that you can teach me?" He replied: "Yes, this is all. But when you sit on the top of your head (*laughter*) you will see a circle of light above. Try to jump into that light and you will be in Samadhi." I had read of Samadhi, the great yogic trance. I said to myself: "Very good. I must give it a trial." So I went home and started planning. At that time my brother and my sister were sharing a room with me; and everybody would have been frightened by my lying in bed every day and trying to do this fabulous exercise. There was an empty room on a higher floor. I managed to coax my grandfather into giving it to me.

Day after day, I went on practising the exercise—and, though I was in a separate room, my grandfather got the wind of what was going on; and he was rather perturbed. Somebody said to him: "This fellow is trying to become a yogi." Grandfather shouted: "Yogi? My God, that's the worst thing possible!" (*laughter*) So he came to a certain decision, and that makes me go back to the period immediately after my B.A. When I passed my B.A. examination, I asked my grandfather to let me go to Oxford. He at once said: "Nothing doing. If you go to Oxford you will bring back an English wife." (*laughter*) I told him: "I promise you that I will not bring *back* an English wife." He smelled the rat all right (*laughter*) and said: "No, I am sorry you can't go to England. Stick on here and study." Well, I had to, because I was dependent on him at that time.... Now when he heard that I was trying to do yoga he came out with an inviting proposition. He very sweetly said: "Why don't you go to England?" (*laughter*) Evidently, in his eyes an English wife was far preferable to the Divine Beloved! (*laughter*) Thus he went on tempting me time and again, and I kept saying: "No, no, I'm not interested now. Leave me alone, leave me alone." But the temptation was indeed great. How long would I be able to hold out? That exercise was going on every day without any result.

Then all of a sudden—I suppose because of the state of desperation, which always brings about a breakthrough—there came something. One night, as I was doing my yoga—trying to pull myself up hopelessly (*laughter*) to the top of my head—I forgot for

a single second, in the midst of my straining upward, that I was doing anything, and in a flash I found that I was hovering above my body! It was at the same time a confusing and an exhilarating experience. I could see my body lying in bed, absolutely paralysed—as if dead—and I was in a subtle form up there in the air and perfectly conscious. It wasn't as if I were dreaming. When you dream, things happen to you, you sort of glide willy nilly upon the stream of events. Here I was in full possession of my faculties. I could think and I could will, and when I willed to move I just went floating to one end of the room and touched the wall and from there I bounded to the other end, touching the wall there. "Hello, this is something really strange," I told myself. Then I began to argue with myself. That is a very bad habit. Arguing with others is bad enough, arguing with oneself is much worse. Here it proved disastrous, because as soon as I started to analyse my condition—"How can I be up here when I am lying down there?"—it was immediately finished and with a rush of sudden warmth in the middle of my chest I felt I was back in my body. I opened my eyes but couldn't move a single limb. I was still totally paralysed. Only, I could see my whole body lying like that. Then gradually the limbs came to life and I got up and said: "Now I have found something. Now in a most concrete way I know I am not merely my body. No materialist can ever argue and convince me that I am only this physical form and nothing more. There is another reality behind the whole show." This brought a great deal of assurance that, after all, yoga was not bunk, there was genuine substance to it.

Then I commenced reading books and practising other things, going about all the time endeavouring to concentrate and lift my consciousness. But there was no repetition of that crucial experience. So I wasn't quite ready to plunge into anything and the old temptation was still gleaming. However, one day I went to a theosophical meeting. The theosophists are supposed to be in touch with all kinds of subtle Masters. There I patiently heard what they spoke but it didn't go home to me. Before I left, I was introduced to a South Indian who was a critic of painting. We became friends immediately and went out for a stroll. I spoke to him about myself and he kept asking me what I was looking for in life. I said: "I am interested in a host of subjects"—as my friend Nirod has told you, though I am not a master in each as he has said. (*laughter*) Then the art-critic remarked: "Well, for a chap like you who is quite a complexity, a knot of many strings, there is only one person who can help you and be your teacher." I asked who, and he said: "Sri Aurobindo." That was really revealing, coming from a theosophist. Theosophists would want to guide me to Master Moria or Master Kuthumi or some other Master out of the group which has completely monopolised the management of the universe, leaving poor Sri Aurobindo no room at all anywhere. (*laughter*)

✓ The name "Sri Aurobindo" remained in my mind. After some months I came across a booklet. I don't remember whose it was, but the writer spoke about Sri Aurobindo, and two things struck me. One was that he could appear at several places at the same time (*laughter*)—and the other that he could speak half a dozen

languages: Greek and Latin were at his fingertips, he was a scholar in French, he knew German and Italian and, of course, English, which went without saying. Out of the two extraordinary achievements, the second struck me more, because if a man was a yogi I thought he would naturally have a faculty like appearing at several places at the same time; but that a yogi who is usually a renouncer of the world should know so many languages and be a master in them—this impressed me as very super-yogic. (*laughter*) So I said: “Sri Aurobindo is my man.” But that was all. The seed had fallen inside and I thought now and then of him, but he was still only a name and my search still went on. It led me to diverse places.

The most unexpected was a shop! One day I went to Bombay’s popular Crawford Market to buy a pair of shoes. People tell me I need a new pair even now pretty badly, but I undoubtedly did at that time and I bought it. The shoes were put in a box, and the box wrapped in a piece of newspaper. I carried the packet home. No sooner did I come home than I unwrapped my new possessions, and the moment I did so the sheet of newspaper fell back in front of me and I saw in a big headline: “The Ashram of Aurobindo Ghose.” Somebody had been to the Ashram and written about it. At once I fell upon the article, read it most avidly and at the end of it I exclaimed: “I am going there! My mind is made up at last and I have found my goal—or at least the path to my goal.” And ultimately I came here, wearing the same shoes, which became the shoes of a real pilgrim!

Now you know how I landed up here. But I did not have much of an idea of what whole-time yoga could be like, much less that the “integral yoga” was entirely new. Though in that article some indications had been given, I couldn’t quite understand them. But I did feel that the life here was the sort of life I should like to lead—in which all the faculties were given a full flowering and a free field. They were not suppressed and you didn’t have just to shoot up into the circumambient gas!

When I arrived,¹ I first went to Purani’s room because I had written to Sri Aurobindo for permission to come and Purani had replied to me on his behalf. His field was Gujarat and I was from Bombay. Now he had sent somebody to receive me at the station: it was Pujalal. He came and met me and took me to Purani. At that time the Mother used to take a walk early in the morning on the terrace above her own room. I had reached Purani’s room just when she had come up. From a northern window, I could see her. I said: “She is very beautiful!” She was at a considerable distance and it was my first glimpse of her, but the impression of beauty was very definite. She walked for a while and went down. And I stayed on in Pondicherry.

The Mother had engaged for me a house just opposite the Ashram: it was the house on Rue François Martin, in which Vasudha has been staying for nearly four decades. I had the entire place for Rs. 12 a month! (*laughter*) In those days the room where Kamala now stays used to be the Mother’s store-room; and she used to come

¹ For accuracy’s sake I may mention that I did not arrive alone. But that part of the story would have taken me rather off the track, so I did not bring it in.

from her room every now and then to her store-room across the open passage on the first floor, and I used to see her from one of my windows. It went on like that and then I asked for an interview. She gave it to me. She sat on one side of a table and I sat on the other. She asked me: "What have you come here for?" I made a dramatic sweeping gesture with one hand and replied: "Mother, I have seen everything of life; (*laughter*) now I want nothing except God!" (*laughter*) She said: "Oh yes? How old are you?" I said I was 23 (*laughter*) "Oh, at 23 you have seen all of life? Don't be in such a hurry, you must take your time. Stay here, look about, see how things are, see if they suit you and then take a decision." I was much disappointed at this kind of cold water poured over my dramatic gesture. But I said: "All right." When I was talking with her I felt as if from her face and eyes some silver radiance were coming out. I am very critical and sceptical, you know, but I couldn't make out how this was happening—nor could I doubt that it was happening. Apart from this impression of light, there was another—of something out of ancient Egypt.

After our brief talk, the Mother got up. "I am going," she said and moved towards the door. "No, please wait," I urged. Then I started to indulge in my habit of falling. It was taking a new turn, for I was preparing to fall—as I have already told you—at her feet. She seemed a little surprised at a man clad in European clothes, with a neck-tie and so on, wanting to fall like that. Seeing the surprise on her face I made an explanation: "You see, Mother, we Indians always do this to our spiritual Masters." (*laughter*) I taught her what was the right thing to be done. Afterwards I learned that the Mother at that time couldn't move from one room to another without 20 people falling at her feet! (*laughter*) When she found me determined she said: "All right"—and let me go down. Then she put her hand on my head and I got up. At home I thought I had done something very important: I had asserted my Indian-ness, I had shown my Indian-ness in spite of those clothes, and I was sure the Mother must have appreciated it. It seems the Mother went and told Sri Aurobindo: "There is a young man here who came to see me and he taught me how Indians do pranam!" (*laughter*) Sri Aurobindo was much amused.

Days passed in the Ashram. Every night I used to go to the pier. We had the old pier then—a long thing a quarter mile into the sea. I would go there at about 11 p.m. and sit in the dimness at the furthest end and attempt to meditate. I was hoping to see visions, but all I saw was when I opened my eyes at times and found hideous faces of fishermen in front of mine, uncomfortably close. They were peering into my face, seeming to wonder who this lunatic could be, coming at so late an hour all alone, and sitting with shut eyes. I was a little frightened, but I kept my courage up and went on visiting the pier. Nothing very much happened by way of inner experience. Only once I felt as if the waves of the sea were washing into me and washing through me and out of me: I suppose it was some opening to the cosmic forces—though a poor and small opening—a very wishy-washy feeling, I may say. (*laughter*)

Then came my first Darshan Day...but no, I must tell you something else before

that. I reached Pondicherry in the December just before the year in which—somewhere in April—I was to sit for my M. A. examination—or rather I was to submit my thesis. I had the thesis drawn up in outline—in the form of chapter-headings. Nothing had yet been written out to develop the various themes. The two years after one's B. A. are the most enjoyable and one keeps everything troublesome to the dead last. My subject was: "The Philosophy of Art." Now I had to decide whether or not to start writing the thesis. If I didn't, I wouldn't have any M.A. But how after coming here could I start again going round and round in the intellectual mill? I would never be able to take advantage of whatever new consciousness was there in the Ashram, a light beyond the mind. So I decided to let my M.A. go hang...Nor did I know how long I would be staying at the Ashram. Every minute seemed precious. Some circumstance might cut across my stay.

I had come here without telling anybody in Bombay that my destination was Pondicherry. Otherwise I would have been hindered. I shall make now a little digression. I am all the time digressing, but this is a bigger version. I had gone to Calcutta before turning south, and from Calcutta I went to Puri to see Jagannath's Chariot and Temple. I wanted to know what exactly traditional orthodox Hinduism was like. So I stayed in an Ashram in Puri and asked the man in charge whether I could go to the temple. He said, "No. You are not a Hindu." I said, "I am not a Hindu, I am a Parsi, but can't I go? Is there no way?" He answered: "Who says there is no way? Of course there is a way." "Then please tell me what to do." He said: "Just pull your shirt out of your pants, (*laughter*) make it hang over and you become a Hindu!" (*laughter*) I immediately did the conversion ceremony and went to the temple. Nobody stopped the newly made Hindu. I walked right in, saw the image of Jagannath—Lord of the World. He looked pretty frightening. I stood there and watched all the rituals going on. I visited also the place nearby where Chaitanya was supposed to have stood daily at the same spot so long that his footprints had got imbedded in the stone. They were rather outsize footprints, I must say (*laughter*). Going about, I tried to talk with whoever could talk in English and let me learn something of what traditional Hinduism meant. I had the feeling that there was something important at the heart of it, but, as things were, it didn't appeal to me a great deal. And it is from Puri that I came to Pondicherry.

Now in Pondicherry my first Darshan Day was approaching—it was the 21st of February, the Mother's birthday. People were not very encouraging at that time, they left me in doubt whether I would be able to attend the Darshan or not. Up to almost the last minute I didn't know my fate. I had to go and scrutinise the list of names put up. At last I found my name. "Good!" I said, "I am lucky to be allowed." Later I took my place in the queue. Of course in those days the queue was a small one: I think there were only 40 people staying in the Ashram and perhaps as many visitors.

The Darshan used to be in the long front room upstairs. I went in my turn—first, of course, to the Mother because Sri Aurobindo I didn't know, while the Mother I had

seen again and again. I knelt down at her feet, she blessed me; then I went to Sri Aurobindo's feet and looked at him. My physical mind came right to the front: "What sort of a person is Sri Aurobindo? How does he look?" I saw him sitting very grandly, with an aquiline nose and smallish eyes, and moustaches and a beard....I was examining him thoroughly. At length I made my pranam. He put both his hands on my head—that was his way—a most delightful way, with his very soft hands. I took my leave, looking at him again. I observed to myself: "Quite an impressive Guru: (*laughter*) he is very fine in appearance, very grand—I think I can accept him!" (*laughter*)

The next day I met the Mother and asked her. "Mother, did Sri Aurobindo say anything about me?" (*laughter*) She answered: "Well, he just said that you had a good face." (*laughter*) Here was a piquant situation. When I was examining him, he was examining me—on the same level, it seems. (*laughter*) He had come down, as it were, to meet my physical mind. I didn't think the compliment he had paid me was very satisfying or quite sufficient. Only a good face? Then I asked myself: "What did you require of Sri Aurobindo? That he should have a good face for you to accept him. Why shouldn't he accept you for your good face if that's the sole qualification you have got?" (*laughter*)

Round about this time I began writing to Sri Aurobindo. It was the start of a process that went on and on for years—sometimes two or three letters a day! Since he replied to everything, we never felt he had gone into retirement. You see, unfortunately a year before I reached Pondicherry he had withdrawn for concentrated work: the 24th of November 1926 was almost a year earlier. I am a pretty ancient person, you will now understand! (*laughter*) After 1926 we could come into touch with Sri Aurobindo only by writing. I wrote to him my first letter informing him of all my difficulties: I could not do this and I could not do that—how the devil was I to do his yoga? He wrote to me a long letter, very encouraging and helpful. It gave me a lot of hope that I would be able to do everything and go through if I rejected the lower forces, aspired after the light and surrendered to the Divine. a steady will to change and conquer was all he considered necessary to get me through the hard period. Strangely, he dated his letter 1998 instead of 1928! (*laughter*) I was set wondering whether it would take me so long. (*laughter*) Would all the things he spoke of happen after 1998? That letter is really unique—postdated by seventy years! I don't know what exactly it implies. At least on a quick computation the year 1998 falls within the 12-year cycle which is said to distinguish Sri Aurobindo's life. In 1914 he met the Mother and started the *Arya*. 1926 marked what is called the descent of the Overmind Consciousness into his physical being and into the Mother's. The Ashram too was officially started—under the Mother. Next, 1938 is the year—12 years later—about which the Mother has said: "Even in 1938 I could see the Supermind descending into Sri Aurobindo's body: the only trouble was that it could not be fixed down." Then comes 1950—the year of what we call the strategic self-sacrifice of Sri Aurobindo. The result of the sacrifice was not only that his body got filled with the Supramental

Light as it lay in his bed as if in a deep trance for 5 days. Something also happened to the Mother. She has told me that as soon as Sri Aurobindo left his body what he had termed the Mind of Light got realised in her. And the Mind of Light she has described as the physical mind receiving the Supramental Light. So the individual fixation of the Supermind in the physical took place in 1950. The other years in the same series are 1962, 1974, 1986—and 1998!

I went on writing to Sri Aurobindo, and all types of questions I used to put him, just as Nirod did, bombarding him with queries. Most of my questions were either philosophical or literary—because, though I had my own share of common difficulties, the real difficulty at the beginning was my Westernised intellect. Once I told the Mother that I found Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine* not sufficiently logical! (*laughter*) She opened wide her eyes—and said: "This is the first time anybody has said such a thing." As with the first pranam, she related the incident to Sri Aurobindo: "Look at what he says. ." Sri Aurobindo, it seems, just nodded and smiled, as he often used to do. He was not given to being very voluble or demonstrative. The Mother, I am told, would go and tell him something or other quite animatedly and he would do nothing but gaze. Then she, thinking she had not made herself clear, would repeat the matter in other words. Then he would say. "I see" (*laughter*)

To come back to my own troubles: the intellect was a great bar. Though I put it off a little by not appearing for my M.A., I still couldn't do without it. And several times I have surprised the Mother by asking for an interview and rushing up to her with my difficulties. Once I said: "How can there be the One and at the same time the Many? Explain this to me. It's a terrible difficulty." And she said: "You read Sri Aurobindo more and more and you will find out how it is possible." Again, a very great difficulty—the supreme crisis of my mental life—came when I began to think of the problem of Freewill: have I freewill or not? I read all the philosophers; they could not enlighten me. Even in Sri Aurobindo I could not fasten upon a clear-cut solution. I tossed arguments to and fro and I got so tangled up in my mind that all the day I was debating with myself. Nothing else mattered in the world. Finally I felt my head was so full of these attacks and counter-attacks that the only way to get rid of the commotion was to knock my head against the wall and break it! In that desperate condition I asked for an interview with the Mother. As usual, she said: "Yes, come." When I went, she asked: "Now what is the trouble?" I said: "Have I got freewill or have I not?" She began to speak. I at once interrupted: "Please don't argue with me, Mother. (*laughter*) I have argued enough with myself. Don't say anything because I am sure to say something to contradict you. Just tell me whether or not my will is free, to however small an extent. Don't say anything more than 'Yes' or 'No.'" (*laughter*) She said: "Yes." I said: "That's enough." And I went away. Our Gurus are so patient with all our vagaries! I told myself: "I must not argue at all now. Once I argue I am lost. I must cling to this one word of the Mother's—until I get some light." And, for 12 years or so, I clung on to it. At the end of that period I felt I could see something, even in a philosophical way, and I wrote out a short essay: *Freewill in Sri*

Aurobindo's Vision. I had the sense that now I had stated something philosophically cogent. I sent my compact piece to Sri Aurobindo and Nirod read it out to him. The comment simply swept me off my feet. He said—well, I should not quote it in public, but now that we are at it, now that I have talked so much of myself, I might as well put a crown to it all—he said: “The article is excellent. In fact it could not be bettered.” That set me on top of the world, of course. (*laughter*)

There are a lot of other things to say, but we don't have the time. For, once I start, it would take another 40 minutes at least, and I don't have the heart to keep you waiting hungry so long. Let me therefore thank you and make a halt. I call it a halt because some time in the future I may resume. So thank you very much, and I suppose I must make a long speech thanking the Chairman in order to stop him from delivering another speech himself! (*laughter*)

NIRODBARAN'S WINDING-UP

Well, this is the preface; so the face you'll see again, he has promised! (*laughter*)

TWO MIGHTY HANDS

Two mighty hands have captured my heart;
 Their summons I cannot but obey!
 Of falsehood all that is a part
 Now turns to the transforming Ray.

Their sweetness breathes not of this world,
 Nor do they lure with mortal dreams;
 As of fresh petals daintily whorled
 Their touch is of embalmed moonbeams.

I press them on my lone heart's beat
 And it sings of a presence beauty-crowned;
 A bliss springs from its chained retreat,
 As if Prometheus were unbound.

I cannot measure the power they hold;
 But when I fall in a tranced sleep
 I feel them lustring fold on fold
 Even down to the inert still Deep.

NIRODBARAN

THE MEANING OF THE ASIAN AWAKENING

THERE are periods in the history of the world when the unseen Power that guides its destinies seems to be filled with a consuming passion for change and a strong impatience of the old. The Great Mother, the Adya Shakti, has resolved to take the nations into Her hand and shape them anew. These are periods of rapid destruction and energetic creation, filled with the sound of cannon and the trampling of armies, the crash of great downfalls and the turmoil of swift and violent revolutions; the world is thrown into the melting pot and comes out in a new shape and with new features. They are periods when the wisdom of the wise is confounded and the prudence of the prudent turned into a laughing stock; for it is the day of the prophet, the dreamer, the fanatic and the crusader,—the time of divine revelation when Avataras are born and miracles happen .

(Sri Aurobindo in *Bandemataram*, 16-4-1907, "The Old Year")

We are today in the midst of one such period. Asia, for a time engrossed in its dreams, has at last awakened. This awakening has come as a rude shock to the West. Its first signs were distracting enough—the collapse of the Russian hordes in face of the Japanese in Korea, the hectic flight of imperial armies from the south-eastern peninsula and archipelago of Asia, and latterly the menace of communist China. The question one has to ask is: to what purpose will Asia turn her newly-acquired gains. On the answer to this question depends not only her own future but also the future of the West.

In the place which is left vacant by the decline of the European nations, Asia young, strong and vigorous, dowered with the gift of immortality and the secret of self-transmutation, is preparing to step forward and possess the future. She alone can teach the world the secret of immortality which she possesses and in order that she may do so, she must reign.

(*ibid.*, 7-7-1907, "Europe and Asia")

The peoples of Europe have carried material life to its farthest expression, the science of bodily existence has been perfected, but they are suffering from diseases which their science is powerless to cure. England with her practical intelligence, France with her clear logical brain, Germany with her speculative genius, Russia with her emotional force, America with her commercial energy have done what they could for human development, but each has reached the limit of her peculiar capacity. Something is wanting which Europe cannot supply. It is at this juncture that Asia has awakened, because the world needed her.

(*ibid.*, 9-9-08. "The Asiatic Role")

We need not be misled by the appearances of the moment. Asia, it might be objected, is at present busy assimilating the European idea, in its political, social and economic life, and much of its cultural growth still seems to look rather to the West than to its own past. But we may safely assume that this is a passing phase, a salutary change needed to make up for lost time; Asia must adjust her external life and the forms of cultural expression to the changes already brought about in the West through its strenuous efforts during the last few centuries. Asia has in her possession the deeper secrets of life which Europe must one day seek.

Asia is the custodian of the world's peace of mind, the physician of the maladies which Europe generates. She is commissioned to rise from time to time from her ages of self-communion, self-sufficiency, self-absorption and rule the world for a season so that the world may come and sit at her feet to learn the secrets she alone has to give.

When the restless spirit of Europe has added a new phase of discovery to the evolution of the science of material life, has regulated politics, rebased society, remodelled law, rediscovered science, the spirit of Asia calm, contemplative, self-possessed takes possession of Europe's discovery and corrects its exaggerations, its aberrations by the intuition, the spiritual light she alone can turn upon the world...

(ibid.)

It is in its capacity to harmonise and effect a grand synthesis of seemingly opposing elements that the strength of Asia lies.

The strength of Europe is in details, the strength of Asia in synthesis. When Europe has perfected the details of life or thought, she is unable to harmonise them into a perfect symphony and she falls into intellectual heresies, practical extravagances which contradict the facts of life, the limits of human nature and the ultimate truths of existence.

It is therefore the office of Asia to take up the work of human evolution when Europe comes to a stand-still and loses itself in a clash of vain speculations, barren experiments and helpless struggles to escape from the consequences of her own mistakes. Such a time has now come in the world's history.

(ibid.)

It will be the role of Asia to show the world once again that salvation cannot come by machinery, a deeper awakening, a soul-touch is necessary; And of this awakening India is destined to be the harbinger.

Mankind has long been experimenting with various kinds of thought, different principles of ethics, strange dreams of a perfection to be gained by

material means, impossible millenniums and humanitarian hopes. Nowhere has it succeeded in realising the ultimate secret of life. Nowhere has it found satisfaction. No scheme of society or politics has helped it to escape the necessity of sorrow, poverty, strife, from dissatisfaction with which it strives for an outlet; for whoever is trying to find one by material means must inevitably fail.... Through all these ages Asia has been seeking for a Light within.... But the grand workshop of spiritual experiment, the laboratory of the soul has been India, where thousands of great spirits have been born in every generation who were content to work quietly in their own souls, perfect their knowledge, hand down the results of their experiments to a few disciples and leave the rest to others to complete.... The work which we have to do for humanity is a work which no other nation can accomplish, the spiritualisation of the race....

(*ibid.*, 29-3-08. "Spirituality and Nationalism")

SANAT K. BANERJI

FLOWERS

VOICE of ether,
Utterance divinely breathing
Through the worlds to bring the truth free,
Promise of the pure transforming
In the fire of Love!

Soft and subtle
Opening and drawing beauty,
Simple fund of vibrant glory,
Synthesis of nature lightly
Lifting to the Source!

All and every,
Form and power and glow sustaining,
Chords that save—be still unfolding,
Take and guide me through the time-throng,
Born eternally.

JESSE ROARKE

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF AE (GEORGE RUSSELL)

41 SUSSEX GARDEN, LONDON, November 4, 1933.

Dear Dilip Roy,

Your letter and the book (*Anami*) have been forwarded to me here. I have been for sometime a wanderer and in a few months I expect to move again, but whether back to Ireland or to America I cannot say. I allow the law of spiritual gravitation to pull me wherever it finds affinities for me.

I wish I could read the poetry in your own language. I could only read what is in English and the letters you print. You should be happy having a guru who can understand and guide you and friends who can discuss with eagerness upon spiritual things. In these islands there is much intellectual activity, but there is little understanding of any state of consciousness beyond the sphere of the argumentative mind, and if one speaks of the spirit to too many it is a void in which nothing is sensed.

I read Sri Aurobindo's comments on my letter. You must remember I was only writing about the craft of a lyric, not about the idea. I can see the difficulty he speaks of, and it is a happiness to be in such a perplexity when the soul has come to a sphere where all is light and how is one to express this? My solution would apply only when the poet had but rare vistas of white light, and that describes my own state and I erred in assuming that the way which was sufficient for myself could be a way for others whose radiance was not so often darkened as mine. But still I think to use great words like 'immensity', 'limitless', 'inexhaustible' etc. too often would make them lose their power in poetry and not even the excuse that the soul of the poet dwells amid limitless things and that it sees infinite horizons justifies the cheapening of great words by over-use. One may use such words but sparingly. Twice used they dull the mind. I once wrote:

Life has no glory
Stays long in one dwelling
And time has no story
That is true twice in telling.

We must, as Sri Aurobindo says, make the English language spiritually adequate. I have no doubt that if one has truly a great vision or a great inspiration the right words will fly up to the mind to make a fitting garment for the thought and if the great God speaks through a mental [medium¹] in whatever language, that language will be made sacred as Sanskrit or any of the holy languages used by the prophets of old. I am sorry I cannot follow your mind through a language I do not know, I know I lose much, for from the letters of your friends which you print I divine a great preoccupation with spiritual things and surmise its best expression must be in *your* verse.

Poetry comes to me but fitfully, for as one gets old the body does not quickly melt

¹ Some word like this appears to have got omitted. (Editor)

at an idea as in youth and, in writing poetry, not the mind only but the whole being must be melted. Here is one of the last of my verses, written in the mountainous region of Donegal in Ireland:

The pool glowed to a magic cauldron
 O'er which I bent alone.
 The sun burnt fiercely on the water,
 The setting sun:
 A madness of fire, around it
 A dark glory of stone.

O mystic fire!
 Stillness of earth and air!
 That burning silence I
 For an instant share.
 In the crystal of quiet I gaze
 And the God is there.

Within that loneliness
 What multitude!
 In the silence what ancient promise
 Again renewed!
 Then the wonder goes from the stones,
 The lake and the shadowy wood.

And here is another, too pensive perhaps for you who live so happily:

The skies were dim and vast and deep
 Above the vale of rest.
 They seemed to rock the stars to sleep
 Beyond the mountain's crest.
 I sought for graves I had mourned, but found
 The roads were blind. The grave,
 Even of love, heart-lost, was drowned
 Under time's brimming wave.
 Huddled beneath the wheeling sky,
 Strange was my comfort there:
 That stars and stones and love and I
 Drew to one sepulchre.

I hope your book will find readers to appreciate your spirituality and poetry. I touch the book which I cannot understand and have the psychic impression that there is something real in it, I hope that Song will follow you to the gates of Silence,

Yours sincerely, A.E.

TWO POEMS OF PONDICHERRY

DARSHAN HOUR: AUGUST 15, 1970

YOUR Face depicts the perils of the ageless seas;
The hazards lurking on mountains high;
The turmoils eased for mortal beings;
The dangers hung between earth and sky.

You take up and solve our every sorrow,
And the vexations in our beings depart;
The joys inhabiting our human breast
First rise in your universal heart.

You suffer—Your precious dear body in pain—
Sweet One, that burning how can we behold?
Oh come out of the shadow, Queen of our depths,
We await the heaven of Your smile as of old!

GARDEN OF 42 RUE SUFFREN

THE ageless silence upheld by boughs—
With the cool sap a rising peace—
A quiet in-gathered by every shadow—
A vast meditation, the tracery of trees.

Each leaf a tremulous prayer to the light,
A soothing whisper for the troubled heart.
The rich brown earth, exhaling coolth—
Of tree-trance a vital part.

All round and above, deep domes of green
Filling our hungry heart with tranquillity—
Gentle giants of colossal strength,
Custodians of an ancient secrecy!

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

UP THE MOUNT OF TRUTH

STEP by step shall I strive on
Up the mount of Truth,
And the vigour of my youth
Win the Light enticing yon.

My curveless unhorizoned Will
Shall never rest or stop
Till heart has hugged the Top
Or tightly held its sacred frill.

The steepy path, the devouring delf,
Gusts and corroding chills,
The freezing snow that stills—
All these shall brave my hero-self.

Nature's cold adversity,
The glare that blinds and sears,
The lonely height, the jeers
Of life shall not discourage me.

Despondencies that cruelly tend
To kill my push, to dull
And blear all freshness, shall
Not snap from me my journey's end.

No weakness, nor protection-call
From earth shall lure me down,
Hell's pull nor heaven's crown
Frustrate my force or force my fall.

Drawing from sky exhaustless breath
High up shall I ascend
Till I a victor stand
Or half-way overtakes me death.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

CONFERENCE IN SEDONA

I HAD been planning for months to go to the annual Sri Aurobindo Conference in Sedona, Arizona, anticipating the event with a degree of expectation arising from a deep spiritual intuition. I was filled with the light of Sri Auroindo's vision, and eager to meet others on the Path of what has become an ever expanding, ever new adventure in consciousness.

As we set out on the long eighteen hour journey by car, loaded with enough provisions to outfit a small army, it was with the excitement of small children who are going on a journey to some distant place, traveling with visions of a magical future. Travelling south from the lush green of Northern California and the buzzing vibrations of huge population centers, we rode through spring-touched deserts, and tiny weatherbeaten towns, into Sedona and the golden force of a relatively untouched land.

The Crescent Moon Ranch, at which the Conference was held, proved to be a delightful natural setting, with its quiet brooks and green pastures, nestled among the stark red cliffs which stood like giant monoliths against the blue sky. But beyond the power of nature to inspire, there was a kind of force permeating the atmosphere, which seemed to be moving me subtly beyond myself to a higher station.

The memory of Lois Duncan was in the air, as if this Conference, her last major effort on earth, had an important purpose to fulfill. As I participated in the various events of the Conference, both formal and informal, I found myself continually trying to get beyond the physical, vital and mental realms, and to sense and experientially bring down in some way the Presence which dwelt here and which seemed to be moving events meticulously towards a powerful conclusion.

Dr. Carl Jung once remarked that the external events of his life were often unimportant, but that the inner events of consciousness, the transformations he underwent, were the milestones of his evolutionary journey. Similarly, at Sedona the external events continued as people came together, got acquainted, and began to build the energy of interaction, while at the same time a subtle force was working internally, opening doors, casting down walls and dissolving old patterns of thinking and acting.

The energy level seemed to be steadily rising. The meditations in the morning and evening, the get togethers over lunch, the talk by Joan Price on the attributes of the Divine Mother, Bob Dane's slide-talk on Auroville, informal social interaction over breakfast or by a gentle stream, the tapes, the books, the old memories rekindled, the new decisions formulated, all contributed to the sense of unity and concentration which was continuously building.

Saturday night was to be the multi-media presentation by Bob Bainbridge. The room was packed with one hundred people. Nick Duncan gave the introduction in his own inimitable style, the epitome of western hospitality. He affirmed the basic intention of the Center to carry forward in spite of Lois' transition. Bob Bainbridge

was introduced. Light banter with the audience and the introduction of Diane and David to sing folk songs. Light music, some pretty melodies, and someone (Osti Bainbridge) jumps up from the audience and offers to sing. A few quick tuneups on the guitar, and he launches into a beautiful rendition of "Home on the Range". We are beginning to feel that something is happening, that people are coming together. The mood is becoming more and more concentrated, more open, more loving, a Force is beginning to make itself felt. Then the multi-media production starts.

Slide after slide of beauty, joy, pathos, laughter, the gamut of human emotions flood us. Music. We watch a shot of the earth from Apollo 7. We are watching the earth rise, leaving our conceptions behind as a wave of music carries us up, up, up....Perhaps we are really on a space ship? Even the cells of our bodies are beginning to feel what is happening. Sri Aurobindo's vision is coming through in compact high energy prose. We see world after world of human possibilities. Man is on the verge of something grand and glorious and we are asked to examine ourselves, and to rededicate our lives to this momentous transformation. Norman Dowsett reads on tape from the Eighth Canto of *Savitri*, "On a height he stood that looked towards greater heights"....We are carried aloft on words of light. Gazing upward at worlds as yet unreached by Man, we hear the tribute to Lois Duncan, read by Norman. We see her laughing, we feel grateful for the many years of service she has given so that at last tonight people can experience, can touch, if however briefly, other realms. The energy is building, barriers are being broken, the vibration is becoming ever more compact and concentrated. THE END. We are suspended while Multhi Lingam lights a single candle with a yellow rose in front of it, the beauty and light of the Divine. A tremendous Love Force is pouring down into the room. A man comes up with tears in his eyes, saying that he has been coming here for years trying to understand Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, and that tonight he finally understands.

I leave quietly, a force of great Love, very dense and powerful, pouring into my consciousness, making an opening there through which I feel and see and sense and know another dimension which is coming down into time, being translated into terms of our everyday existence. I sit quietly here in the forest at Sedona, Arizona, holding on to that Force and Awareness. I am holding on to the very Force of the Universe, while here and there all over the planet, quietly, carefully, with an infinite wisdom, the Force is coming down. The "sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn" are awakening from their two billion year sleep of parturition. Perhaps there were a few here at Sedona who belong to that future race, and perhaps even right here they drew their first breath of life and made that initial faint movement towards some future possibility which even now sends down its light into "the little room of mortal life."

RICHARD B. PRATER

A LETTER FROM ENGLAND

THERE are some sounds so evocative of an English summer that they seem, however small, to contain its whole essence—the coo of wood pigeons, a bumble bee blundering into the room, the hum of a moving machine and—almost the most potent of all—the crack of a cricket ball. I have often thought that if the English have a sacred animal, it is the horse; if they have a ritual (other than their state ceremonies) it is cricket. Even if you do not play it, even if you are not a ‘fan’, you cannot escape the mystique of this most English game which has gone to the four corners of the earth. The impression it has made on the national character can be measured by the potency of that awful judgement—it is almost a damnation—when something is pronounced ‘not cricket’—the nadir of unworthy behaviour. For the devotees, therefore, a large part of the expectation with which summer is awaited, lies in the announcement of the national and county teams, the overseas visitors, such as the Australians, the Indians, the West Indians, New Zealanders and so forth, and the anticipation of watching first-class cricket. Throughout the length and breadth of the land, in villages, towns and cities, velvet green cricket pitches and white flannelled players, professional and amateur, will provide one of the most English of scenes. Those of us who are not devotees, learn to live with long broadcast commentaries and television coverage; we even learn to memorise the latest score for the acolytes in our vicinity. Willy-nilly, we are all drawn into the orbit of this peaceful game, which, with the sole exception perhaps of horse racing, draws together in a common interest, people of all levels of society.

Imagine everyone’s dismay this year when cricket—the most unpolitical, innocent and blameless of activities—was suddenly and violently pitched into the middle of a national controversy. The precipitating agent; the proposed visit of the South African team and the nettle of apartheid; the contestants, the Cricket Council, who had arranged the tour, and a group calling themselves the Ban the Seventies Tour, led (to the chagrin of many natives) by a non-national. This body threatened demonstrations at all forthcoming matches with the South Africans. In the present state of society, here, there, and everywhere, this meant that the demonstrators, even if professedly peaceful, would soon become the tool of the agitators who cash in on this kind of thing, with the usual violent results.

Within weeks, the country seemed to be split from top to bottom, with the anti-tourists on one side, who believed South Africa’s policy on race would be encouraged by our sanctioning their all-white team in our midst; and on the other, those who considered that banning the South Africans would not only damage the cause of sport throughout the world, but was not the right way to go about converting the South Africans. Between these two positions there proved to be many subtle shades of opinion. There were also thousands of no-opinions, just boiling to see their beloved

game being booted round the political arena. As long as the dispute remained polemical it seemed harmless enough, though the intensity of the passions it aroused did seem rather disproportionate to the issue, about which (one could not help feeling) very few people had expert knowledge. The pros and antis seemed equally balanced and equally eloquent. Their thunder was released through all the mass media, where politicians, bishops, authors and other distinguished citizens exploded their salvoes. A moment of comic relief was provided by one young man who announced he was rearing locusts to devour the pitches when the appropriate moment arrived. This operation must have proved more difficult than anticipated, for it was abandoned while still in the paper stage. A quiet, unvocal, stubborn majority of ordinary citizens throughout the country felt that it should be left to the individual to decide. Those who disapproved of apartheid could stay away from the tour and ban it in this way without spoiling the enjoyment of those who did not agree with the manner of their disapproval. It was vital to our freedom and the working of democracy that a lawful activity should not be abandoned in face of pressure from a minority.

At this point, the late Prime Minister publicly announced his support for the demonstrators. The bogey of possible violence began to rear its ugly head more visibly and baseless rumours were put about that the police could not ensure law and order. The custodians of the game were not to be stampeded. The game would go on. The green and pleasant pitches where thousands were to enjoy their favourite sport would be guarded by barbed wire and patrolled—the very antithesis of what this amiable pastime represents in the national outlook. Whatever the wisdom of the outcome, the finale was a shameful business to most people—pressure from the late Government on the Cricket Council to cancel the tour. At the eleventh hour it was called off.

The whole thing from start to finish had been a staggering exhibition. Those of us who are not English, value the English for their sanity and good sense. What had happened? Just how stupid could people become? The contemporary world is full of fevers, of hysterical and exaggerated attitudes—and here were the English, past-masters at moderation and choosing the middle way, joining in the fray! How much had it all been exacerbated by radio, television and the press? All these things allow attitudes to be spread, emotions to be caught. People are made to participate in problems for which they have neither knowledge nor experience and the problems become the projections of all the tensions within society.

Feeling depressed and dismayed and wondering whether I had better say goodbye to another illusion, I was drawn at this point into the festivities of a neighbouring village, which was staging various activities in aid of funds to restore its ancient church. Amongst the festivities was a gymkhana—a term partly derived from a Hindi word but now sacred to our sporting traditions. These functions are for the very young equestrians, who converge upon the chosen spot—usually a rather bumpy field—on their ponies, to jump, to race, or compete in various mounted games. None of this would be possible without a supporting team of parents, mostly mothers, who come along with picnic lunches, hold ponies, encourage, and generally perform the chores. Given good

weather, a gymkhana can be one of the most delightful, colourful and amusing events of the English countryside. This day was beautiful, sunny and hot; the organisation happily erratic, and the occasion well attended. Children of all ages, on ponies of all sizes, cavorted gaily about, the winners with rosettes—coveted prize!—fluttering from their bridles. When the lunch break came, we all sat thankfully in the cool long grasses and the shade and the ponies, as usual, ate the children's sandwiches. It was all blissfully relaxed, peaceful, happy—the English country scene at its most characteristic. Over the trees the tower of the little church, a thousand years old, looked down upon us. From behind a distant hedge a rhythmic surge of stout male voices betokened the exertions of the tug o'war, mingling with the rather uncertain strains of the village Silver Band in a rendering of the Men of Harlech. And suddenly, heart-warmingly, as if to say that whatever temporary aberrations might come and go, here, in the heart of rural England where so much begins and ends, all is still well, there came the beautiful fat whack of a cricket ball being well and squarely bashed.

MIRANDA

ONE-IN-MANY AND MANY-IN-ONE

1. THE above two expressions have been used by Sri Aurobindo in many places of his philosophical writings, the term 'One' being used to denote an undefined something which is the only reality and which is indivisible and therefore undivided; *Brahman* is the name given to that unique something by Vedanta and accepted by him. By the term 'Many' is indicated all the multitude of different things in the creation that are perceptible by our senses and seizable to our intelligence. It has been asserted that both the aphorisms are simultaneously true.

2. The following deductions among others can be made from the above and all of them must therefore be simultaneously true—

(a) *Brahman* is the sole existent, the only reality indivisible and undivided;

(b) The 'Many' are also realities and existent; it is *Brahman* that has become the 'Many';

(c) *Brahman* is in all things; and

(d) All things are in *Brahman*.

Human intelligence may argue that—

Firstly, (a) and (b) above cannot be simultaneously true; for if (a) is true, the 'Many' must be fictions, chimeras, mirages, unreal, an illusion. If, on the other hand, (b) is true, (a) cannot be, for it is a direct contradiction of (b).

Secondly, (c) and (d) cannot be simultaneously true, for one of the inevitable conclusions that can be drawn from them is that the macrocosm is in the microcosm, which is impossible.

3. The truth contained in (a), (b), (c) and (d), and, for that matter, in the two aphorisms from which they follow, cannot be proved to human intelligence even at its highest, for it is not a provable proposition: it is knowable by direct knowledge, by realisation we may call it, which comes only through spiritual *sādhana*. Still, a feeble attempt may be made with the help of an analogy to give just a faint idea of the possibility of (a), (b), (c) and (d) above being simultaneously true.

4. Imagine a vast expanse of water, say the water in the sea. Imagine also that some very small portions of it have frozen into bits of ice of different shapes and sizes, while some other small portions have become bubbles of aqueous vapour of different shapes and sizes, all the bits and bubbles floating inside it. Looking at the whole thing in one comprehensive view, we find that—

(1) There is 'water, water, everywhere,' with the bits and bubbles floating here and there.

(2) Those bits and bubbles look entirely different from the water they float in, although they are essentially nothing but water, or to be precise, nothing but that undefined indivisible and therefore undivided *one* (not numerically, but in essence) substance to which we loosely give the name 'water', and which may simultaneously

exist in three states—Solid, liquid and gaseous. What is popularly known as water is that *one* substance in its liquid state. Call that undefined *one* substance 'X'. Thus we find 'X' as the bits of ice, 'X' as the bubbles of aqueous vapour, 'X' as the water in which they float.

We conclude therefore that—

- (i) Everything we see there is 'X',
- (ii) 'X' is in all of them,
- (iii) they all are in 'X',
- (iv) 'X' is everywhere, i.e., nowhere is 'X' not there.

Now, putting '*Brahman*' for 'X' and 'Many' for the bits and bubbles, we get at (a), (b), (c) and (d) of para 2 above and therefore to the conclusion that the two aphorisms 'One-in-Many' and 'Many-in-One' being simultaneously true may not be an impossibility. Like 'X', *Brahman* is One, not numerically, but in essence; like 'X', *Brahman* is everything and everywhere; but, unlike 'X', *Brahman* may exist in innumerable states.

5. You may immediately remonstrate that analogy is no proof. Quite so; but analogies assist an intellectual approach to a thing which cannot be proved to human intelligence, and *Brahman* cannot be proved to such intelligence even at its highest, as already stated in para 3 above. Further, absence of proof of existence of a thing is not proof of its non-existence.

KAMALENDRA RAY

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1969)

WHO IS THE HERO IN PARADISE LOST? (Contd.)

THERE is another setback to Adam's claim to herohood. The preparations, the conflicts, the narrations of heavenly struggle, and earthly becomings of history are given larger emphasis to give Adam scope to reveal his importance. The events that precede the presentation of Paradise to the reader are singularly dramatic and, in contrast, the placid role of Adam appears insignificant. A fuller presentation of Adam would have justified all these dreadful revolts and preparations; just as in *Savitri* full three books precede her birth and not only justify the necessity of her birth but also prepare the reader. But in *Paradise Lost* the elaborate beginning seems futile when we meet the passive and insignificant Adam. Perhaps Milton wanted to adhere to the biblical text; but his faithfulness has cost him his greatness, for without it the dispute regarding the character of a hero would not have existed.

Further, if Adam is the hero, the depicting of his fall must be on heroic lines, his weaknesses, failings, must be given a dramatic turn, a poetical greatness. But instead Milton has painted his shortcomings in a harsh and condemning light. The poet's moral nature is too stubborn to admit any poetical upliftment of his hero's basal and natural faults. For Milton starts as a moralist and ends as one, the sheer poet in him plays a subordinate part. He allows poetry to rule only in the sphere of diction and style, reserving his own autocratic decisions regarding all issues other than these. Thus whether his Adam be hero or not, he cannot tolerate (except in himself) any baseness or weakness. This has a deteriorating effect on Adam's character. To be a hero in Milton's light means the fulfilment of demands totally impossible for any human person. The Greek or ancient English kings perhaps could have served his purpose; but these were in the first place myths not real persons, and, secondly, they were not Christians. Hence he has painted his ideal man Adam in a purely puritanical light, and allusions to Hellenic themes are more incidental than essential. But to be the ideal man did not mean to be the hero.

Adam reveals to us only two aspects, that of a puritanical idealist before the fall and a debased heretic after it. But other trends that might enrich and give a fuller tone to the character are singularly absent. Such a statement may be applied to God as well, where God reveals his justice and his height. A hero must show many aspects, statuses of nature, of moods, of temperament. For example, Romeo is not only a passionate lover; he reveals his anger, his courage, his will as well as his all-devouring love. Similarly, Antony is not only a brave general; he is a capable lover, a cynic, a strategist and on occasion a coward. The total effect we get is that of a complete human person with different sides of nature which lend colour, depth, significance to the hero—making him a superior person, a great character. All these are absent in Adam. Even if he were a hero he would be a pale monotonous being with just one string to his lyre, a picture with a single colour.

Painting any character with any set or preconceived notion regarding conduct, belief and character, limits the depiction and falsifies the aim of art. Milton never gave precedence to literary or artistic ideals, but was led by his theological concepts which had no bearing on life. Hence characters of his like God, Christ and Adam, are puppets of his own rational, ethical ideas. They are not living, they do not give the impression of a possible being, a feasible entity.

There is one unseen element in the whole of the epic—it is the ego, the mentality, the personality of the poet himself. It is the one element that rules, that is the conducting voice, the chief and recurring theme. It is this that overshadows all other characters and determines all else in the tale. This governing idea does not allow the voice of God or Christ to become predominant, the character of Adam to come out in the forefront. This moral ego could be regarded as the chief instrument—the latent and bodiless hero. We have to examine this possibility, because he makes all else insignificant before his force, vision, personality. For never before has the mind of the author, with its unmistakable stamp of personality, its ripe and considered decisions about things, objects, events, men, religion, opinions and ideas, come out with so great a force. When we read Shakespeare, Dante, Vyasa, Valmiki or Homer, the personality behind that created these works is almost absent. We hear the current opinion of the men of the time, or the ideas of the century, but certainly not the living personality that breathes life into its thoughts and concepts. Again, these ideas are not concepts of a nation or an age, these are the thoughts of a single man, whose mind imbibed the possible human knowledge of the period and gave to it his own interpretation. It is this single man's opinions and knowledge coming above the mass of opinions and knowledge of all other people, that makes us suspect that the author's creative mind was too great either as an ego or as a personality to be ticked off as a passing element; on the contrary, it must be given the most comprehensive consideration.

Certainly the mind of the poet plays a great role in his creation—specially in smaller, contemplative or subjective pieces. But in a larger creation involving a fixed theme, an attainable purpose, the possibility of a mission to be executed, this personal element must remain a vague and distant factor, for the goal is impersonal, the mission too is for humanity as a whole; the executing spirit, the way of presentation also must be impersonal. If we allowed a personal opinion, idea, idiosyncrasy to govern the theme, the theme would be vitiated and the mission remain unfulfilled. The mind of Milton is too strong to remain unobtrusive and silent. Its character is too independent to remain under the shadow of a veil. So his characters reveal something that is in him. And, above all and greater than all his characters, is his own image, stamped on the epic as his opinions, his intellectual convictions. If he should abstain from this, he would cease to live or cease to be in his poetical creation. Ego is his life-breath; his character is his most vital possession. So, with his poetical reputation at stake and the possibility of transgressing his right, he continues to thrust himself upon his work.

Does this necessarily mean that he is himself the hero? With the main three

contestants—God, Christ, Adam—gone, the question lies between the author and Satan—the two remaining possible holders of the title. If we consider Satan to be the projection of Milton's unrational element, then his saner and rational parts are expressed in other ways than through his characters.

Milton, we have seen, has no capacity to portray a character; what he successfully can do is to throw his mental, moral and ego-formations into the mouths of his creations that pose as individuals. Apart from these, there is a huge bulk of text that expresses his views and knowledge, and this bulk stands out most prominently, for he has gathered a great deal of information regarding the world around him. In this he is free to express himself, whereas he is bound by his characters and limited in the scope of what they can express. Hence this mass of writing, except those parts that express his characters, is the real heart of Milton; in the long passages of similes, of musings, thoughts, we find a strong personality coming out greater than all the speeches or actions or characters.

But such musings or similes or impressions remain what they are; they cannot assume a name or become a vivid character to which we can look forward to lead or reveal something exceptional. No doubt they influence the poem. They reveal to us the standpoint the poet wants us to assume. The responsibility of heroship is too much for this bulk of opinions, ideas or impressions to bear. For a character is not only a set of opinions, he transcends all mentalisations, to become a living entity. What we have of Milton is too fluid, too amorphous to solidify into the pattern of a personality, although behind all these we do feel the keen intellect, the sadistic emotional being and the dogmatic, inflexible moral person. But the life element is absent; the person that calls himself 'I' is absent too. If the too protruding ego had expressed itself in terms of its personal ideas, its personal reactions, then its claim to herohood would have been more feasible. The ideas Milton puts forth give the semblance of a neutral opinion or at best the reactions of the élite. This saves it from becoming too nakedly egoistic. His refinement, his learning debarred him from this course.

If he had been the witness (as he is, behind the veil), like Dante in the *Divina Commedia*, then his character could have been established. Or if he had got entangled in the theme, then too we could have felt his personality. But he does neither, in fact he wants to influence from behind, through his characters overtly and through his impressions and thoughts secretly. Hence his witness-spirit does not become a manifested fact but only a strong impression. A character is more than an impression, it is a fact which can stand any challenge from any quarter. Further, the final authority seems (in spite of his egoism) to be the Bible. This, to a large extent, negates his personal influence. A hero must be able to refer all things, at least all major things, to himself. Here the final element of reference is not his personal ideas, but those of the Bible. His living mind takes the biblical ideas and gives them a vivid form. Thus, standing greater than his mind, is the spirit of Christianity.

(To be continued)

ROMEN

THE SECRET SELF AND THE YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

PART II—THE SECOND LIBERATION

(Continued from the issue of September)

3

ASPIRATION

PEOPLE in adversity mostly bemoan their fate, putting the blame on circumstance. They see no purpose in their labour against difficulty, no challenge to conquer, no demand on the higher reaches of their consciousness. Whereas those who have organized themselves around their central being—those who have become, by virtue of constant effort and perseverance, individuals—somehow manage to see that aspect of the difficulty which points to progress. They are the optimists, sensitive to the 'light' and the 'dawn' in things. They are the children of the sun, playing on the shores of New Birth. They are the believers that have faith in the Goodness of God. Whether fully or partially conscious, they live a life of aspiration. They breathe—*aspirare*—while others merely gasp.

Aspiration is a dynamic force. It is the longing of the pure scientist for the truth. It is the constant search for beauty in the artist. It is the desire for perfection in the artisan. It is the yearning for the divine Beloved of the bhakta. It is a force, that once put into action, overcomes all obstacles to accomplish its object. It is a force that transcends all personal prejudice because it concentrates on the work to be done, not the person who does the work. When steady and constant, it has the power to achieve where, without it, there would only be ultimate sanction of the Divine Law in things. The Mother says: "Let the sun of aspiration dissolve the clouds of egoism."

Aspiration is not an overt faculty. It is not a quality of the consciousness that one can put one's finger on. You can probably see the difference between the life of an individual with it and that of one without it, but thus you could not prove to the pragmatist. Dialectical materialism would find it difficult to include it in its vocabulary because it does not breathe the same air, and it uses no propaganda to proclaim its place in the world.

One might desire and hope for many things, many achievements, even many ideals—but aspiration is part of an inner development, leading one progressively on to a union with the Divine Light.

With aspiration an environment is established favourable to the flowering and growth of the individual. In education, such a climate of learning is quite indis-

pensable if the interest is to be stimulated towards a spirit of discovery. To stimulate this urge to uncovering hidden truths, to search for new peaks of perfection one must communicate to the children the fire in one's own heart.

If any human being wants truly to grow,
he must aspire.

If any human heart wants truly to love,
he must aspire.

If any human mind wants truly to transcend his intellect,
he must aspire.

The one thing necessary is aspiration. As the Mother says :

“In the silence of the heart burns the steady fire of aspiration.”

(*To be continued*)

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

ASPECTS OF THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of September)

THERE is something more of interest about the visitor referred to in the previous issue. He had his grandson studying in our Centre of Education. He had done his utmost to prevent the boy from joining the Ashram, when the boy had been at his native place. He had argued that he was too young to stay in the Ashram, and asked him why he should deny himself the joys of life when he was to inherit a big property. Questioned as to which place he liked the best, Bombay, Calcutta, or his native place, without the least hesitation the boy had given the answer: "Pondicherry", and no persuasion could make him change his attitude.

In the last resort, the great grandmother of the boy was sent to use her influence and bring about a change in his mind, by showering on him her love and affection. Even this was of no avail. She herself liked the Ashram so much that she stayed for months but could find no chance to speak out her mind.

On my asking if she could succeed in her attempt, she spoke in a quiet but moving tone:

"How can I ask him to go when I find him so happy here?"¹.

This story of the boy's coming here is linked with another:

Finding him mischievous, his mother inclined to think of putting him to a boarding school either at Ajmer or at Gwalior. When the news came to the ears of the boy, one fine morning he inquired whether there were facilities of physical education in the Pondicherry school. On having an affirmative answer he said firmly, "If I am to put up in a boarding school I would go only to Pondicherry and nowhere else."

This came as a big surprise to the parents for the boy had been to Pondicherry when he had been only three years old and for six long years there had hardly been any occasion for him even to hear the name of Pondicherry.

After a few months' stay in the Ashram the boy was laid up with severe dysentery. On hearing of the illness some relatives rushed here from Bombay. One of them sarcastically said to the boy's mother: "Who is there to look after him here? You are all alone. Had he been in Bombay we would have also attended on him and shared your burden."

In the meantime the Divine Mother was informed. Giving a blessing-flower she said, "Along with this flower the dysentery should stop." And actually it stopped that very day.

¹ A friend of mine, employed in Kanpur in a firm whose directors are men of crores, passed a casual remark:

"For each of the sons of the proprietors of my firm there are two servants and a car but the cheerfulness that is seen on the faces of flower-like children here is nowhere visible."

In reply to the relatives' argument the boy's mother said, "All you say is all right but could you have cured the boy of his illness?" This silenced them at once.

In the course of time the boy's sister showed her inclination to take up the Ashram life.

One day the boy's father expressed his desire to join the Ashram but gave full freedom to his wife to choose her own course of life. Even when she resolved to follow him, they had to pass through many hurdles to extricate themselves from worldly ties.

Now the whole family is like a bunch of dedicated flowers.

After his last interview with the Mother our visitor (the grandfather of the boy) was a changed man. On the day of his departure his heart went out to the Mother in a great prayer, "I seek from Thee one favour. Pray help me to get rid of my attachments."

After a year or so he passed away. This change of attitude brought a great satisfaction to his son. He felt that it was the greatest service he could render to his father.

To pursue our theme further:

All is possible by the Mother's Grace. The one thing needed the most is faith. This is amply demonstrated in the life and acts of M, though he was living far away from the Ashram.

He had been passing through a bad time. He did not know to whom to look for help. His off-hours he spent in praise of various gods. One day a friend threw out a hint: "Why not go to Pondicherry?" "Pondicherry! What is there now? Sri Aurobindo is dead," he spoke bluntly.

"Why, the Mother is there. She is all love. People adore her as the Divine."

"I don't believe in all this. How can I believe that she is divine?" There was still roughness in his tone.

"If you aspire for faith in the Divine she will give it to you."

"We shall talk about it after twenty-four hours." Now there was a change in his tone.

Fifteen hours after, there rose in him a feeling that if there was anything like the Divine, the Mother or the Shakti, it was she alone. Then and there he prostrated himself on the ground, and there appeared before his eyes the glorious figure of the Mother as he had seen it once in a photograph in a quarterly magazine. The very next day he installed a picture of the Mother in his house, and a new chapter opened in his life.

Two years passed without any notable event. Some negotiations were going on for an agency. He prayed for the Mother's Blessings and they were granted. The Mother's Blessing served as a seed for the soil that was being cultivated for the two preceding years. One day in 1961, he happened to read for the first time:

"It is not necessary for everybody to be in the Ashram....to practise the Yoga especially in early stages. But...the psychic being...in most is veiled...It is for this reason that it is necessary for those drawn towards this Truth to come here in order that they may receive the touch which will bring about to prepare the

awakening of the psychic being—that is for them the beginning of the effective psychic contact.”¹ ↵

This roused in him the longing to visit the Ashram. On hearing this his wife insisted upon accompanying him. He dissuaded her, saying that he had no money and might have to travel by third class. “Third class! What does it matter? Must go with you.”

The very next day something unexpected happened.

There came a letter from a government department asking him to collect Rs. 1300. The beauty of it is that six years earlier the government had flatly refused to entertain his claim and today it was accepted even without his knowledge.

On his return from Pondicherry within a couple of months he got the agency for which there had been very keen competition. No one had believed that M had had any chance, for his competitors had been men of means and power. But there had been no repercussion in M’s mind. He had been firm in his faith that the Mother’s Blessings could not fail, and he believed that this had won him the victory.

Slowly his inner relation with the Mother grew so close and intimate that once when all correspondence with the Mother was stopped and none could go to her except Pranab, the Mother called him and gave a birthday card in her own handwriting.

He says that a piece of the Mother’s Blessing flower has the power to bring the impossible within the domain of the possible. It is not a flight of imagination, not an emotional outburst but a fact confirmed by hundreds of experiences.

X of my native place had to wait for nine long years before he was granted the first touch of the Mother. But he did not lose patience and kept on knocking at the Divine’s door on his visit to the Ashram almost every year. Whenever he approached the Mother through Nolini, the Mother would keep silent or say ‘Oh!’ From the time he returned graced by the Mother’s touch, people flocked to him to hear him speak something on *Savitri* the one book he loved and studied the most.

Swept off my feet by the force of his emotion, when I said, “Your faith is wonderful!”, he retorted:

“Not mere faith, sir! It is a concrete and living experience verified by day-to-day events. Faith does not drop from the sky nor can it be developed by effort. A call from the heart and the response are there. It is this that generates faith.”

Pursuing the subject further he said: “The Mother is on the lips of everybody in my province. People do not go to Puri, so dear to their hearts, but rush to have a glimpse of the Mother—even those who can hardly afford to bear the expense of a railway journey.”

He was frank enough to add, “Do not think they always come here out of the fullness of devotion to the Mother?” He solemnly continued:

“How full is the world today of misery! Man does not know to whom to cry for help in his hour of crisis. When there is nothing but the roaring sea of troubles they

¹ *A Practical Guide to Integral Yoga* (1955), p. 198.

find the Mother with her outstretched hands of help, to give a lift to all who seek her shelter and beseech her guidance and protection. How many have flourished by their simple reliance on her Grace! The number cannot be counted on the fingers."

"The great work of the Avatar is to manifest the Divine Grace upon earth" (The Mother).

The more M came in touch with the Mother, the greater grew his faith in her Grace. The saying goes: "Faith can move mountains." M is an example in himself. This we shall see in the following instance:

Once a girl came running to him, seeking help for her dying father. He gave her a packet of Blessing flower and some *Prasad*.

The patient took a new turn and lived two years more. On his recovery, he used to say, "This body is alive due to the Mother's Grace." The day he was to breathe his last he heard a train whistle (he was a railway officer) and exclaimed, "The Train has come, I must go to Pondicherry." With these words on his lips he expired.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

EIGHTEENTH SEMINAR

23RD NOVEMBER 1969

(Continued from the issue of August 1970)

THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD LIES IN UNION AND HARMONY.
HOW DO YOU CONCEIVE THIS UNION AND THIS HARMONY?

THE following seven passages from the writings of Sri Aurobindo, pertaining to the question in the subject of the Seminar, were sent to the Mother for approval for reading at the end of the Seminar. She was also asked to give her own answer to the question. She read all the passages and, while returning them with her approval, wrote: "There is nothing to add to what Sri Aurobindo has written on the subject. Blessings." These passages are reproduced below:

(1)

The perfect solution of the problem of Life is not likely to be realised by association, interchange, and accommodations of love alone or through the law of the mind and the heart alone. It must come by a...status of life in which the eternal unity of the many is realised through the spirit and the conscious foundation of all the operations of life is laid no longer in the divisions of body, nor in the passions and hungers of the vitality, nor in the groupings and the imperfect harmonies of the mind, nor in a combination of all these, but in the unity and freedom of the Spirit.

(The Life Divine, American Edition, p. 190)

SRI AUROBINDO

(2)

A spiritual oneness which would create a psychological oneness not dependent upon any intellectual or outward uniformity and compel a oneness of life not bound up with its mechanical means of unification, but ready always to enrich its secure unity by a free inner variation and a freely varied outer self-expression, this would be the basis for a higher type of human existence.

(The Ideal of Human Unity, p. 379)

SRI AUROBINDO

3

It is the divine love...that, extended in inward feeling to the Divine in man and all creatures in an active universal equality, will be more potent for the perfectibility of life and a more real instrument than the ineffective mental ideal of brotherhood can ever be. It is this poured out into acts that could alone create a harmony in the world and a true unity between all creatures; all else strives in vain towards that end so long as Divine Love has not disclosed itself as the heart of the delivered manifestation in terrestrial Nature.

(*On Yoga I, The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 188)

SRI AUROBINDO

(4)

It is only a divine love and unity that can possess in the light what the human forms of these things seek for in the darkness. For the true unity is not merely an association and agglomeration like that of physical cells joined by a life of common interests; it is not even an emotional understanding, sympathy, solidarity or close drawing together. Only then are we really unified with those separated from us by the divisions of Nature, when we annul the division and find ourselves in that which seemed to us not ourselves. Association is a vital and physical unity, its sacrifice is that of mutual aid and concessions. Nearness, sympathy, solidarity create a mental, moral and emotional unity; theirs is a sacrifice of mutual support and mutual gratifications. But the true unity is spiritual; its sacrifice is a mutual self-giving, an interfusion of our inner substance.

(*On Yoga I, The Synthesis of Yoga* p. 122)

SRI AUROBINDO

(5)

After all, the spiritual and cultural is the only enduring unity and it is by a persistent mind and spirit much more than by an enduring physical body and outward organisation that the soul of a people survives. This is a truth the positive western mind may be unwilling to understand or concede, and yet its proofs are written across the whole story of the ages....

But spiritual unity is a large and flexible thing and does not insist like the political and external on centralisation and uniformity; rather it lives diffused in the system and permits readily a great diversity and freedom of life.

(*The Foundations of Indian Culture*, American Edition, pp. 415-16) SRI AUROBINDO

(6)

Harmony is the natural rule of the spirit, it is the inherent law and spontaneous consequence of unity in multiplicity, of unity in diversity, of a various manifestation of

oneness. In a pure and blank unity there could indeed be no place for harmony, for there is nothing to harmonise; in a complete or a governing diversity there must be either discord or a fitting together of differences, a constructed harmony. But in a gnostic unity in multiplicity the harmony would be there as a spontaneous expression of the unity, and this spontaneous expression presupposes a mutuality of consciousness aware of other consciousness by a direct inner contact and interchange.

(*The Life Divine*, American Edition, p. 922)

SRI AUROBINDO

(7)

In the founding of human life upon the supramental realisation of conscious unity with the One and with all in our being and in all its members humanity must seek its final good and salvation.

(*The Life Divine*, American Edition, p. 200)

SRI AUROBINDO

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI