

# MOTHER INDIA

MAY, 1970

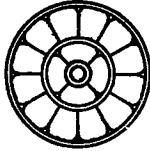
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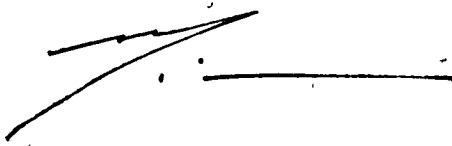


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. 4

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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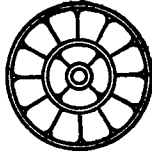
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## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

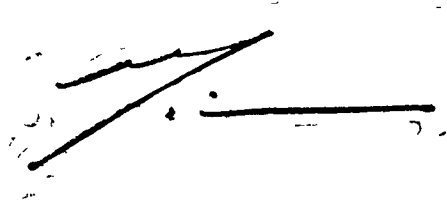
*Q: Criticising a friend's paper on Gandhi I quoted Sri Aurobindo's thoughts on non-violence and some other principles that have become "absolutes" in Gandhism. The friend protested that admiration for Sri Aurobindo should not blind us to other great men: all, according to the friend, have part glimpses of the Truth. I felt it was a mistake to put Sri Aurobindo along with the rest, and I want to reply in some detail on this point. But I shall do so only if you approve. And I would be happier if you gave your own answer.*

IN the effort of humanity to reach the Truth and manifest it, all those who made a discovery, however small it may be, have a place, and Gandhi is one of them.

But the great mistake has always been to oppose these partial discoveries instead of unifying them in a supreme harmony. That is why humanity is still groping in the dark.

Sri Aurobindo has come to reveal that this supreme harmony exists and to show us the way to discover it.

March, 1970



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of April 24)

*(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.)*

**January 11, 1956**

*Mother, "this craving life-force or desire-soul in us has to be accepted at first, but only in order that it may be transformed."*

*(The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 95)*

*But even when one understands that it is a desire and must be rejected, there are difficulties in discerning if it is a desire which leads us to the Divine or if it is purely desire.*

ONE makes a mistake only when one wants to deceive oneself. It is very, very different.

*But within, one understands.*

Good. Well, then that suffices, if one understands somewhere, that's enough. Is that all? No questions?

*Mother, on January 6 you said: "Give all you are, all you have, nothing more is asked of you but also nothing less."*

Yes.

*What is meant by "all you have" and "all you are"?*

I am going to tell you in what circumstances I wrote this; that will make you understand:

Someone wrote to me saying that he was very unhappy for he dreamt of having wonderful capacities to put at the disposal of the Divine, for the Realisation, for the Work; and that he also dreamt of having immense riches to be able to give them, to

put them at the feet of the Divine for the Work. So I replied to him that he need not be unhappy, that each one was asked to give what he had, that is, all his possessions whatever they may be, and what he is, that is, all his possibilities—which corresponds to the consecration of one's life and the giving of all one's possessions—and that nothing more than that was asked. What you are, give that; what you have, give that, and your gift will be perfect; from the spiritual point of view it will be perfect. This does not depend upon the amount of wealth you have or the number of possibilities your nature contains; it depends upon the perfection of your giving, that is to say on the totality of your gift.

I remember having read, in a book narrating the legends of India, a story like this. There was a very poor, very old woman who had nothing, who was quite miserable, who lived in a little miserable hut, and who had been given a fruit. It was a mango. She had eaten half of it and kept the other half for the next day, because it was something so marvellous that she did not often happen to get it—a mango. And then, when night fell, someone knocked at the tottering door and asked for hospitality. And this someone came in and told her he wanted shelter and was hungry. So she said to him: "Good. I have no fire to warm you, I have no blanket to cover you, and there is the half of this mango remaining with me, that is all I have, if you like it; I have eaten half of it." And it turns out that this someone was Shiva, and that she was filled with an inner glory, for she had made a perfect gift of herself and of all she had.

I had read that, I found it magnificent. Well, yes, it is very descriptive, it is that. It is the very thing.

The rich man, or even people who are quite well-off and have all sorts of things in life and give to the Divine what they have in surplus—for generally this is the gesture: one has a little more money than one needs, one has a few more things than one needs, and so, generously, one gives that to the Divine. It is better than giving nothing. But even if this "little more" than what they need represents lakhs of rupees, the gift is less perfect than that of half the mango. For it is not by the quantity or the quality that it is measured: it is by the sincerity of the giving and the absoluteness of the giving.

*But if rich men in ordinary life want to give their riches to the Divine, and the Divine is not before them, then to whom are they to give? They do not know where to put their money!*

Yes, but then the question does not come up. If they have not met the Divine either within or without, it does not come into question. They are not asked to give to something they do not know.

If they have met the Divine within themselves, well, they have only to follow the indication given by the Divine for the use of what they have; and if they follow quite sincerely and exactly the indications they receive, that is all that can be asked of them. But till that moment nothing is asked of anyone.

One begins to ask only when someone says: "Here I am, I want to consecrate myself to the Divine." Then it is all right, from that moment one asks; but not before. Before that, even if in passing you pull out of your pocket a paisa and put it there, it is very good; you have done what you thought you ought to do and that's all; you are not asked for anything at all. There is a great difference between asking the Divine to adopt you, and then making a gesture of good will, but without the least intention of changing anything whatever in the course of one's life.

Those who live the ordinary life, well, if they make a gesture of good will, it is so much the better for them, this creates for them antecedents for coming lives. But it is only from the moment one says: "There, now I know that there is but one thing which counts for me, it is the divine life, and I want to live the divine life",—starting from that moment one asks, not before.

*Mother, there are people who come here, who have money and are very devoted, who show their devotion, but when the question of money comes up, they bargain... Then how shall we keep an amicable contact with them?*

What?

*They are very devoted, they show their devotion to the Divine...*

In what way? By taking from Him all they can?

*...But when the question of money comes up, they bargain, they calculate.*

I tell you, I have answered, it is like that. They come with the idea of taking from the Divine all they can: all the qualities, all the capacities, all the conveniences also, all the comforts, everything, and sometimes even powers, and all the rest. They come to take, they do not come to give. And their appearance of devotion is simply a cloak they have put over their will to take, to receive. That covers a large field: from saving one's soul, having spiritual experiences, obtaining powers; and it finishes with a small quiet life, comfortable (more or less, at least with a minimum of comfort) and without cares, without botheration, far from the turmoil of life. But if they give, it is a sort of bargaining; they know that in order to take all that, it would be well to give a little something, otherwise they will not receive it, so they make a show of being very devoted. But it is only a semblance, for it is not sincere.

The unfortunate thing for them is that it deceives no one. It may be tolerated; but that does not mean that one is deceived.

The bargaining is everywhere, in all the parts of the being. It is always give and take, from the highest spiritual experiences to the tiniest little material needs. There is not one in a million who gives without bargaining.

And the beauty of the story I spoke to you about (moreover there are many others



like that here) is just this, that when the old woman gave, she did not know that it was Shiva. She gave to the passing beggar, for the joy of doing good, of giving, not because he was a god and she hoped in exchange to have salvation or some knowledge.

(Looking at the disciple) There is still some mischief in his mind. Now then, what is it?

*I wanted to say that these desires begin with the desire for the work, and this is guided by the Divine also. But when one has understood that now there ought no longer to be desire but an absolute giving, still that does not become a giving; and this continues indefinitely. Why?*

I don't understand what he means! (To another disciple) Translate!

*One begins by mixing up desire with one's aspiration...*

Yes, that is what Sri Aurobindo has written.

*Then, one recognises that a desire is mixed there, but cannot manage to reject this desire.*

Is that it? (to the first disciple)

No! (laughter)

It is that but it is not that!

*Mother, you said that it may be tolerated, but there is a period of tolerance. When it goes beyond the period of tolerance and does not want to stop—that's the question.*

And so what, what happens?

*He wants to ask what one must do, what should be done?*

Ah! at last.

What should be done?...Be sincere.

It is that; always, always, the little worm in the fruit. One tells oneself, "Oh! I can't." It is not true, if one wanted, one could.

And there are people who tell me, "I don't have the will-power." That means that you are not sincere. For sincerity is an infinitely more powerful force than all the wills in the world. It can change anything whatever in the twinkling of an eye: it takes up, holds it, pulls it out—and then it's over.

But one closes one's eyes, gives oneself excuses.

*The problem recurs all the time.*

It comes back because you don't pull it out completely. What you do is, you cut the branch, so it grows again.

*It takes different forms.*

Yes. Well, you have to take it out every time it comes, that's all; until it does not come any more.

We have spoken about it, where was it?...Oh! it was in *Lights on Yoga*, I think. You push out the thing from one part of your consciousness into another; and you push it again and then it goes into the subconscious, and after that, if you are not vigilant, you think it is finished, and then from there it shows its face. And next, even when you push it out from the subconscious, it goes down into the unconscious; and there too, then, you must run after it to find it.

But there comes a time when it is over.

Only, one is always too much in a hurry, one wants it to be over quickly. When one has made an effort: "Oh! well, I made an effort, now I ought to have the reward of my effort."

Fundamentally, this happens because there is not that joy of progress. The joy of progress imagines that even if one has realised the goal put before oneself (take the goal we have in view: if we realise the supramental life, the supramental consciousness), well, this joy of progress says, "Oh! but this will be only a stage in the eternity of time. After this there will be something else, and then after that there will be yet another, and always one will have to go further." And it is that which fills you with joy. Whilst the idea, "Ah! now I can sit down, it is finished, I have realised, I am going to enjoy what I have done", oh! how dull it is! One becomes immediately old, stunted.

The definition of youth: one can say that it is constant growth and perpetual progress. And growth of capacities, possibilities, of the field of action and expanse of consciousness, and progress in the realisation of details.

Evidently, someone told me, "So one is no longer young when one stops growing?" I said, "Evidently, I do not imagine that one grows perpetually! But one can grow in another way than the purely physical."

That is to say, in human life there are successive periods. As you go forward, there is something finished under one form, and it changes its form....Naturally, at present, one comes to the top of the ladder and comes down again, but it is truly a pity, it is not thus that it ought to be, it is a bad habit. But when one has finished growing up, when one has reached a degree of growth considered as that which expresses us best, one can transform this force for growth into a force which perfects the

body, makes it stronger and stronger, more and more solid, with an ever greater power of resistance, and one will practise physical training in order to become a model of physical beauty. And then, at the same time one will slowly begin and pursue the perfection of one's character, of one's consciousness, knowledge, powers, and finally of the divine Realisation in its fullness of the marvellously good and true, and of its perfect Love.

There you are. And this must be continuous. And when a certain level of consciousness has been reached, when this consciousness has been realised in the material world and you have transformed the material world in the image of this consciousness, well, you will climb yet one more step and go to another consciousness—and you will begin again. There!

But this is not for lazy folk. It is for people who like progress. Not for those who come and say: "Oh! I have worked a lot in my life, now I want to rest, will you give me a place in the Ashram?" I tell them: "Not here. This is not a place for rest because you have worked much, this is a place for working yet much harder than before." So, formerly, I used to send them to Ramana Maharshi:<sup>1</sup> "Go there, you will enter into meditation and you will get rest." Now it is impossible, so I send them to the Himalayas, I tell them: "Go and sit before the eternal snows! That will do you good."

That's all, then.

*(To be continued)*

<sup>1</sup> A sage of South India who left his body in April 1950, and who had a traditional Ashram for meditation and contemplation.

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

*(Continued from the issue of April 24)*

*(These talks are from the notebooks of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others after the accident to his right leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were: Dr. Manilal, Dr. Becharlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshankar. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.)*

MAY 15, 1940

RADIO announced that the C-in-C of Holland had asked the soldiers to cease fire because of the sacrifice of lives.

SRI AUROBINDO: What sort of idea is that? Do they think they can win without any sacrifice? Hitler seems to be right in his opinion of their power of resistance.

P: There seems to be some treason among them.

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably, but the C-in-C is not supposed to be a Nazi.

P: France is fighting hard, especially her Air Force. British pilots seem better than German.

SRI AUROBINDO: Individually they are superior to the Germans. The paper said that 3 Hurricanes fought with 20 German planes and brought down some. The Germans act by mass and drive.

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO: It seems Amery is not a diehard. He has said in an interview that India will soon have to be considered as independent and he has stood against Churchill's attack on India policy. So with his appointment as Secretary of State India may have a chance. Of course Halifax would have been best. It is a remarkable ministry. Most of the ablest men of England are there except Hoare-Belisha and L.G. As I expected, Morrison and Evans are taken. Morrison is one of the best organisers. Their coming in will help to prevent any quarrel with Labour....The Belgian position seems to be better today.

P: There is talk of attack on Switzerland. In that case Italy may take her slice.

S: Then it will be a European war.

SRI AUROBINDO: Moscow radio does not approve of Germany's attack on the Netherlands, Udar was saying. It seems to be some special information.

S: (*gravely*): It is in today's paper.

SRI AUROBINDO: Which paper?

S: *The Indian Express*. (*Bursts of laughter*)

P: If true, Russia may go against Germany.

SRI AUROBINDO: Russia has counted on both sides being exhausted by the war and then Stalin will have his chance. But if Germany wins she will be too powerful.

P: America seems to be changing her tone now and thinking in terms of war.

SRI AUROBINDO: She thinks she will be able to keep out of the war if the Allies win. But if they go down she will have to come to their help.

MAY 15, 1940

N: Dilip has received a letter from Sri Francis Younghusband asking him to be a member of the Fellowship of Faiths. It is an irony when he has lost all faith in fellowship.

SRI AUROBINDO: Hitler is uniting all into a fellowship of nations. (*Laughter*)

N: Dilip says the Mother will have to put forth more force to save France.

SRI AUROBINDO: What an idea! He thinks that the Mother has a special concern for France?

S: Many people say that she does not care what happens to the British but France she will save.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): How can it be possible to do that without saving Britain also? They are allies.

S: Yes, but Hitler is trying to divide them. His wrath is against England. He is likely to attack also England directly.

SRI AUROBINDO: What about their fleet? Do they think that the Italians will come and destroy them?

N: The Mother will save France and Sri Aurobindo India.

S: People think that Sri Aurobindo is not interested in India.

N: He is a world citizen now.

S: He is too great to be busy over India. He is busy with the problem of life.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who says that?

N: X. He is still very much upset over the Indian problem.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Pakistan scheme is not of much interest.

N: Not Pakistan. He speaks of Indian freedom.

SRI AUROBINDO: Indian freedom? India will be inevitably free if Hitler and Stalin are removed. Otherwise I can't give a guarantee.

N: They will be removed when the Supermind descends. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: What did you say? They will be removed when the Supermind descends or it will descend when they are removed?

N: It is the same thing.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after a while*): The Dutch seem to be good fighters but they don't seem to have brains. They have lost about a quarter of their army without holding any position.

S: Their C-in-C has asked them to cease fire.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is in the central part. In Zeeland they are fighting still. He has asked them to cease fire because the army was being attacked from the rear. Instead of ceasing fire they could draw back into the Belgian line.

S: They may do that.

SRI AUROBINDO: They are only thinking. That's why I say that they don't seem to have brains.

N: The Allies could not send any help to Holland.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, there was no time. They have taken the strategic line from Antwerp to Namur and sent an advance army in front. If there had been any previous arrangement they could have gone to their help in time.

N: The Assistant Secretary of Vishwa Bharati has written to Sisir that the Committee has decided to present Tagore's works to the Ashram.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is his name?

N: Kishori Mohan Santara.

SRI AUROBINDO: Santara? Where is he swimming? <sup>1</sup>

N: In his atheism. He is a staunch Brahmo and at the same time an atheist.

Sri Aurobindo: How is that? Brahmoism is supposed to be theism or rather Deism—no, more than Deism because Brahmos pray to God for help.

N: He writes that after reading your books he finds a new light.

Jatin Ball has written a letter, putting some questions to you:

(1) Do you think physics and chemistry will ever be able to know the truth of the phenomenon of life?

(2) There is a passage in *The Life Divine* (p.272): "Science cannot dictate..." Do you mean to say that there will never be any conciliation between science and metaphysics?

(3) Will science do well to take into consideration the spiritual view of things or keep strictly on its own lines?

(4) Einstein does not deny metaphysics but asserts that science will show him the truth. How far is he right?

(5) To a friend Einstein said: "It is my inner conviction that the development of science itself seeks in the main to satisfy the longing for knowledge which psychologically asserts itself as religious feeling." Is he not right?

(6) He also says that for misapplication of science human nature is to blame and not science which is a search after pure knowledge and truth. Can it be said that science is solely responsible for all the evils of the world and religion alone stands for

<sup>1</sup> In Bengali, "santara" means "swimming".

our good? Can we even say that religion is superior to science or *vice versa*? Is not each great in its own sphere?

SRI AUROBINDO: Physics can know the truth of the phenomenon of life and that also when combined with biology, but not the essential truth of life. Such truth means consciousness, basic reality, and how shall scientists know it by their science? Science is concerned with the process of things. If science wants to know the fundamental truth, it has to go beyond the process. That is why the continental scientists do not agree with Jeans and Eddington. They say that it is not within the scope of science to be busy with the metaphysical aspect of things. It is concerned, as I said, with process; if it goes beyond that, it is no longer science. Do you understand? I have dealt with all that in *The Life Divine*, Part II.

2. Conciliation? There is no opposition between science and metaphysics. Each is concerned with its own sphere and the connection between the two may be established.

3. How can science take the spiritual view? It is not its business and, if it takes that view, it will be no longer science.

4. Truth? Which truth? If he means ultimate truth, how can science show him that? If it is the truth of things, that is another matter.

5. What is meant by religious feeling and pure knowledge? Ultimate knowledge?

6. That science is concerned with discovery is true, though partially. For application also science is responsible. Just see how the scientists are engaged in devising various methods of destruction in Europe. So how can it be said that science is not responsible for application?

Science and religion are both great in their own respective spheres, but in a sense religion is superior in that its appeal is wider and deeper than that of science. If it is admitted that man has a soul, an inner consciousness, then religion is the best means for this consciousness to develop into a higher state of being.

Even scientists in Europe don't make the statement that religion is the root of all evil. Such a statement would invite the opposite that science is the root of all evil. Science has made humanity materialistic in attitude and given tremendous powers in its hands which it abuses. You may say science is not responsible for the misuse, its business is discovery. Then it can be argued that it has given humanity these instruments without making it prepared and ready for their use.

#### EVENING

C: It seems Dr. R says that Hitler is winning because Sri Aurobindo is helping him with his force. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: What? Does he believe that I want to be a subject of Hitler's?

S: He must be pulling somebody's leg. America is warning all Americans to leave Italy.

SRI AUROBINDO: They expect perhaps that Italy will come in.

S: Yes. If there are any American casualties, they fear their country might be dragged into the war. They want to avoid the war.

SRI AUROBINDO: They seem to be able only to talk like their Kellog Pact.

P: Or they may come in when it is too late.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, everybody is too late except Hitler. Narvik is coming in again. The Allies seem to have taken a town. (*Laughing and pointing a finger*)—and that too because of French troops who have landed.

*(To be continued)*

NIRODBARAN

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# SRI AUROBINDO AT EVENING TALK

## SOME NOTES OF 1921-1926

(Continued from the issue of April 24)

(These notes were not taken on the spot. They are recollections of the talks at which their author, V. Chidanandam, was present. Whatever in these talks seized the young aspirant's mind was jotted down the next day. Neither complete continuity nor absolute accuracy could be maintained. But in reconstructing from memory the author sought to capture something of the language no less than of the thought-substance. In places, later editing has been found necessary in order to clarify notations which had served merely as signposts.)

*Q. What is your philosophy?*

A. Philosophy answers to the mind. It is certain mental concepts. To express supermind in mental concepts is like attempting to write a grammatical treatise on a poem, which takes away all its poetry. Supermind would be better expressed in poetry like the Upanishads where you do not get mental concepts, but the life itself that is lived finds expression. The expression, of course, cannot be complete, and it conveys its full meaning only to the seer who can get to the thing behind that is sought to be expressed. You may express the supramental in music also, but that would not convey anything to the ordinary man.

My philosophy—as in *The Life Divine*—is not the basis of my Yoga, but the result of it. If I had to write a book of philosophy now, I would preface it by saying that it is only one aspect of the Infinite.

The Vedas and the Upanishads are not philosophy.

If you still the mental activity, you enter into a higher state of consciousness. The being that is you, which was before in the mental consciousness, climbs up to another state. Unless you open the mind—that is, unless you open the outward consciousness, which is not aware of the higher state, to that level and establish a connection with it—you may touch another level but your mind would not be taken up there. Hence the mind knows nothing about the higher consciousness except in a vague way. How much of the higher consciousness one can contact, how much of it can be made available to the mind depends on the capacity of the individual. Not only the mind, but the vital being must be open, and all the centres down to the lowest must be connected with the higher consciousness. In some cases the connection of these centres down to the lowest with the higher consciousness is established without

the knowledge of the sadhaka, behind the surface. When the sadhaka passes into a higher state, not only can he feel it from the inside but the very expression of the face changes.

Pratibodha is the act of receiving the Truth in a sort of image or reflection in the mind, when the mind is not itself taken up into the Truth. It is probably what the Buddhists meant by Bodhi.

The four supramental shaktis are above the ordinary nature. They are reflected in the several lower planes, mental, vital etc. What is manifest is not the supramental, but merely a reflection of it. The supramental acts in a manner suitable to the plane concerned. In Napoleon it was the reflection of the Mahakali power; he had also the Mahasaraswati power, the knowledge of exact detail. In Augustus Caesar it was the Mahasarawati power. In Julius Caesar it was the Mahalakshmi power, with a force of personality, a magnetic charm. People follow those who have the Mahalakshmi power, not for their knowledge or force, but for their personal magnetism.

The Mahalakshmi power you frequently find in men of religion: for example, Chaitanya, St. Francis. There is often a mixed movement of these powers. It is not that only one single power works in a particular individual: thus Julius Caesar had, besides the Mahalakshmi power, the Mahasaraswati power. Beethoven had the Maheshwari power—majesty and grandeur. Wagner had the Maheshwari power as the foundation and the Mahakali power as the general movement. He broke the traditional forms of music.

The Kshatriya had the fighting force, the Brahmin knowledge, the Vaisya represented the Mahalakshmi power, not in the personality but in the harmony which he manifested.

Mitra and Varuna are powers of the supermind. They are different aspects of it. Indra is the God of the illumined mind. He is thousand-eyed—that is to say, he sees all clearly. Krishna's flute symbolises the call of the Ananda.

Adrishta is that which is intended, which is decided above. The decision does not work itself out like a miracle, like: "Let there be light and there was light." The decision is thrown into the working of living forces, not mechanical forces—and your will also counts, it is an element in the forces which work out the decision. The decision uses your will to work itself out. The common idea of Fate is that even if you simply sit quiet, Fate works itself out. It is a stupid idea. Fate does not allow you to sit quiet like that. If you argue that you can simply sit quiet and thus set aside your will, or that you can go against Fate like that, one can reply on the same ground that it is again Fate that is doing all that. The mind wants logic, but logic is not Reality. The mind wants to bring facts under one law: liberty or determinism. Similarly one may argue that all is Maya and that his actions are also Maya and that therefore they do not matter, or that all is Narayana. It is the way of the mind. It applies the

knowledge falsely. That is why the knowledge, the decision is kept hidden from it. From the highest point of view nobody is responsible for anything, but living as we do on the human plane we cannot evade responsibility. When we rise to the supermind we know the decision and with the knowledge also comes the power to work it out. The mind may also get a glimpse of the decision but it does not matter in the least for the practical purposes of life, because the mind has not the power to work out the decision. Therefore, if you bring the knowledge down to the mental plane or vital plane (*e.g.* the Theosophists' reading of past lives or the clairvoyant's knowledge of the future) it is not much help, sometimes it may obstruct, for one may be tempted to follow a past line of evolution. It is only a mental curiosity. The real knowledge is the knowledge of your central personality and the way of its further development.

The sadhak may concentrate in the heart or in the mind (crown of the head) or in the centre of life (vital centre, navel). If he concentrates in the heart he feels as if he were looking above; if in the mind he feels himself at the crown of the head and looking from there at the thoughts and movements below, there is dissociation from the outward movement and he feels that he is up there, not simply that he is concentrating there. By long Abhyasa he must keep this attitude of separation always. He must feel the higher consciousness behind and act from that. If he forgets himself in the outward movement—as, for instance, in talking—he must revert to the attitude of the witness. If in this movement the heart centre is not opened, he must concentrate in the heart, keep up the aspiration, till there is the opening. He has to connect the two centres (sometimes having one movement and sometimes the other, if not both together) and then open the vital centre and connect it with these.

At the beginning of a new movement in consciousness, one feels that he has risen very high, but he does not know where he has gone. The experience has not become stable and normal and even when he tries to explain the experience to himself he has to do so in the terms of mind, and the mind does not know anything of it except that it is something vague and high above the mind. When the experience is normal and the higher Consciousness is always behind, it is a different matter, the mind may then know what the experience is. When the mind is also taken up there, it knows more about it. Mrs P cannot give a mental account of her remarkable experiences and active visions. Consciousness is one thing and knowledge another; knowledge is a formulation which may come later.

The ideals of man are mental constructions which he foists upon his impulses and emotions; some of them are reflections of the Truth, some are perversions. For example, the spiritual ideal of Unity is the unity or oneness of the Atman and the ideal of Humanity is differently conceived by different people. Reflection of the Truth on the mental plane is one thing and realisation of the Truth on the mental level is another. One may not have the realisation on the mental level but

get something of the glow of Truth there, and this is what is meant by reflection. Realisation of the Truth on the vital plane is the realisation of unity with all life, of the infinite in life (as Tagore express it, "The life that courses in my veins dances in the stars"), or one may have the realisation on the mental level of the infinite in life. Physical love is meant to be the counterpart, on the physical plane, of spiritual love. Under the stress from above, and the urge from within, physical love can get transformed into spiritual love. The Divine Love must not only come down but transform the lower love.

As far as I can see there is no evidence in the Veda to show that the Vedic Rishis attempted to bring down the supramental into the body and transform it. They brought down only sufficient for their own ascent and that had only an indirect influence on the body. Openness is one thing and transformation another. One may open down to the physical and the subconscious, but what is he open to? The question is whether not only the physical, which includes the physical mind, but the material body itself is open to the supramental and transformed by it.

Certain forms of supramental thought do not need words to make them precise. Even in the mind certain thoughts take the form of pictures; some cannot be expressed in words, but in the mind this process—namely dispensing with words—is not organised. Thus you cannot present a whole philosophy to yourself like that. The supramental movement is more direct and swift, as the thoughts are not bound down to words.

*(To be continued)*

V. CHIDANANDAM

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## LIGHTS ON THE PATH

### PASSAGES FROM SRI AUROBINDO SELECTED BY THE MOTHER AND SOME DISCIPLES

*(It was the year 1931. At that time there was a special Soup Distribution by the Mother in the late evening in the place now known as the Reception Room. About an hour before it, the Mother used to come to the Prosperity Room, the General Stores, just above. A fixed number of disciples would collect there, and the Mother would spend the time giving talks (later put together by a disciple present and published as the Third Series of the Mother's Talks) or she would play "guessing-games" in which the disciples' powers of intuition would be tested and developed. At a certain period there was a reading of passages from Sri Aurobindo's works. Each day one or other of the disciples would choose a passage. The Mother herself also made her choice. This reading went on from March 18 to May 2. A copy of the passages remained with the Editor of Mother India who was one of those attending the happy soirées. We are now publishing them in a series, both for their intrinsic value as lights on the path of Yoga and for whatever side-lights they may throw on the mind and inner movement of those who picked them out.)*

THE image of the Beloved has to become visible to the eye within, dwelling in us as in his mansion, informing our hearts with the sweetness of his presence, presiding over all our activities of mind and life as the friend, master and lover from the summit of our being, uniting us from above with himself in the universe. A constant inner communion is the joy to be made close and permanent and unfailling. This communion is not to be confined to an exceptional nearness and adoration when we retire quite into ourselves away from our normal preoccupations, nor is it to be sought by a putting away of our human activities. All our thoughts, impulses, feelings, actions have to be referred to him for his sanction or disallowance, or if we cannot yet reach this point, to be offered to him in our sacrifice of aspiration, so that he may more and more descend into us and be present in them all and pervade them with all his will and power, his light and knowledge, his love and delight. In the end all our thoughts, feelings, impulses, actions will begin to proceed from him and change into some divine seed and form of themselves; in our whole inner living we shall have grown conscious of ourselves as a part of his being till between the existence of the Divine whom we adore and our own lives there is no longer any division.

*The Synthesis of Yoga, Arya, Vol. V, pp. 217-218.*

*(Selected by Nolini—March 18, 1931)*

To break out of ego and personal mind and see everything in the wideness of the self and spirit, to know God and adore him in his integral truth and in all his aspects, to surrender all oneself to the transcendent Soul of nature and existence, to possess and be possessed by the divine consciousness, to be one with the One in universality of love and delight and will and knowledge, one in him with all beings, to do works as an adoration and a sacrifice on the divine foundation of a world in which all is God and in the divine status of a liberated spirit, is the sense of the Gita's Yoga. It is a transition from the apparent to the supreme spiritual and real truth of our being, and one enters into it by putting off the many limitations of the separative consciousness and the mind's attachment to the passion and unrest and ignorance, the lesser light and knowledge, the sin and virtue, the dual law and standard of the lower nature. Therefore, says the Teacher, devoting all thyself to Me, giving up in thy conscious mind all thy actions into Me, resorting to Yoga of the will and intelligence be always one in heart and consciousness with Me. If thou art that at all times, then by my grace thou shalt pass safe through all difficult and perilous passages...

*Essays on the Gita, Second Series, pp. 417-18.*

(Selected by Chinmayi—March 19, 1931)

An integral union of the individual's being with the Divine Being is the condition of a perfect spiritual life. Turn then altogether towards the Divine; make one with him by knowledge, love and works all your nature. Turn utterly towards Him and give ungrudgingly into his hands your mind and your heart and your will, all your consciousness and even your very senses and body. Let your consciousness be sovereignly moulded by him into a flawless mould of his divine consciousness. Let your heart become a lucid or flaming heart of the Divine. Let your will be an impeccable action of his will. Let your very sense and body be the rapturous sensation and body of the Divine. Adore and sacrifice to him with all you are: remember him in every thought and feeling, every impulsion and act. Persevere until all these things are wholly his and he has taken up even in most common and outward things as in the inmost sacred chamber of your spirit his constant transmuting presence.

*Essays on the Gita, Second Series, pp. 494-5.*

(Selected by the Mother, March 19, 1931)

The faith in the divine Shakti must be always at the back of our strength and when she becomes manifest, it must be or grow implicit and complete. There is nothing that is impossible to her who is the conscious Power and universal Goddess all-creative from eternity and armed with the Spirit's omnipotence. All knowledge, all strengths, all triumphs and victory, all skill and works are in her hands and they are full of the treasures of the Spirit and all perfections and *siddhis*. She is Maheshwari, goddess of the supreme knowledge, and brings to us her vision of all kinds and wide-nesses of truth, her rectitude of the spiritual will, the calm and passion of her supramental largeness, her felicity of illumination; she is Mahakali, goddess of the supreme

strength, and with her are all mights and spiritual force and severest austerity of tapas and swiftness to the battle and the victory and the laughter, the *aṭṭahāsyā*, that makes light of defeat and death and the powers of the ignorance; she is Mahalakshmi, the goddess of the supreme love and delight, and her gifts are the spirit's grace and the charm and beauty of the Ananda and protection and every divine and human blessing; she is Mahasaraswati, the goddess of divine skill in works, *yoga karmasu kauśalam* and the utilities of divine knowledge and the self-application of the spirit to life and the happiness of its harmonies. And in all her powers and forms she carries with her the supreme sense of the masteries of the eternal Ishwari, a rapid and divine capacity for all kinds of action that may be demanded from the instrument, oneness, a participating sympathy, a free identity, with all energies in all beings and therefore a spontaneous and fruitful harmony with all the divine will in the universe. The intimate feeling of her presence and her powers and the satisfied assent of all our being to her workings in and around it is the last perfection of faith in the Shakti.

*The Synthesis of Yoga, Arya, Vol. pp. 608-9.*  
(Selected by Duraiswami, March 20, 1931)

The One who eternally becomes the Many who in their apparent division are still eternally one, the Highest who displays in us this secret mystery of existence, not dispersed by his multiplicity, not limited by his oneness,—this is the integral knowledge, this is the reconciling experience which makes one capable of liberated action, *muktasya karma*.

This knowledge comes, says the Gita, by a highest *bhakti*. It is attained when the mind exceeds itself by a supramental and high spiritual seeing of things and when the heart too rises in unison beyond our more ignorant mental forms of love and devotion to a love that is calm and deep and luminous with widest knowledge, to a supreme delight in God and an illimitable adoration, the unperturbed ecstasy, the spiritual Ananda. When the soul has lost its separative personality, when it has become the Brahman, it is then that it can live in the true Person and can attain to the supreme revealing *bhakti* for the Purushottama and can come to know him utterly by the power of its profound *bhakti*, its heart's knowledge, *bhaktiyā mām abhijananti*.

*Essays on the Gita, Second Series, pp. 412-13*  
(Selected by Dara, March 21, 1931)

Here and not elsewhere the highest Godhead has to be found, the soul's divine nature developed out of the imperfect physical human nature and through unity with God and man and universe the whole large truth of being discovered and lived and made visibly wonderful. That completes the long cycle of our becoming and admits us to a supreme result; that is the opportunity given to the soul by the human birth and, until that is accomplished, it cannot cease. The God-lover advances constantly towards this ultimate necessity of our birth in cosmos through a concentrated love and adoration by which he makes the supreme and universal Divine the whole object of

his living—not either egoistic terrestrial satisfaction or the celestial worlds—and the whole object of his thought and his seeing. To see nothing but the Divine, to be at every moment in union with him, to love him in all creatures and have the delight of him in all things is the whole condition of his spiritual existence. His God-vision does not divorce him from life, nor does he miss anything of the fulness of life; for God himself becomes the spontaneous bringer to him of every good and of all his inner and outer getting and having, *yaga-kṣema-vahāmyaham*. The joy of heaven and the joy of earth are only a small shadow of his possessions; for as he grows into the Divine, the Divine too flows out upon him with all the light, power and joy of an infinite existence.

*Essays on the Gita*, Second Series pp.104-5.

(Selected by Dyuman, March 21, 1931)

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# WASTE IN NATURE

## A NEW LOOK AT AN OLD PROBLEM

ONE of the most burning issues in the controversies about God is Waste in Nature. Philosophies that do not admit a Divine Being as the source and support and goal of the world, or only admit a rudimentary consciousness fundamental to Matter and attaining higher intensities according to the growing complexities of physical structure, or at most admit a non-perfect *élan vital* progressing through repeated trial and error—such philosophies can have no quarrel with Nature's huge amount of waste. But the plethora of blind and useless expenditure of energy we notice all around seems to give the lie direct to the presence of a secret Divine Consciousness.

How would the world-view of Sri Aurobindo face the objection. In his first glance at the problem Sri Aurobindo says: "...obviously this is an objection based on the limitations of our human intellect which seeks to impose its own particular rationality, good enough for limited human ends, on the general operations of the World-Force. We see only part of Nature's purpose and all that does not subserve that part we call waste. Yet even our own human action is full of an apparent waste, so appearing from the individual point of view, which yet, we may be sure, subserves well enough the large and universal purpose of things. That part of her intention which we can detect, Nature gets done surely enough in spite of, perhaps really by virtue of her apparent waste. We may well trust to her in the rest which we do not detect."<sup>1</sup>

All this certainly has cogency, but there is a note of "trust" and "perhaps" and "we may be sure", and it does not tend to carry conviction quite home. Something is left unsaid, which possibly is premature at the stage where the problem is tackled. And Sri Aurobindo returns to the subject in another context which touches upon his earlier reference to "our own human action". He writes: "A narrow selection, a large rejection or reservation, a miserly spendthrift system of waste of material and unemployment of resources and a scanty and disorderly modicum of useful spending and utilisable balance seems to be the method of Nature in our conscious becoming even as it is in the field of the material universe. But this is only in appearance, for it would be a wholly untrue account to say that all that is not thus saved up and utilised is destroyed, becomes null and has passed away ineffectually and in vain. A great part of it has been quietly used by Nature herself to form us and actuates that sufficiently large mass of our growth and becoming and action for which our conscious memory, will and intelligence are not responsible. A still greater part is used by her as a store from which she draws and which she utilises, while we ourselves have utterly forgotten the origin and provenance of this material which we find ourselves

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine* (American Edition), p. 84.

employing with a deceptive sense of creation; for we imagine we are creating this new material of our work, when we are only combining results out of that which we have forgotten but Nature in us has remembered. If we admit rebirth as part of her system, we shall realise that all experience has its use; for all experience counts in this prolonged building and nothing is rejected except what has exhausted its utility and would be a burden on the future. A judgment from what appears now in our conscious surface is fallacious; for when we study and understand we perceive that only a little of her action and growth in us is conscient, the bulk of it is carried on subconsciously as in the rest of her material life. We are not only what we know of ourselves but an immense more which we do not know; our momentary personality is only a bubble on the ocean of our existence.”<sup>1</sup>

A deeply helpful gloss on Nature’s waste is here, suggesting pointers from what happens in our conscious becoming to what must be happening in the field of the material universe. But here also is not an entirely satisfying statement. Once again, waste is essentially denied, and the appearance of it attributed to our limited human view. But have we not to realise that our human view is limited because we are living in a certain sort of universe and are evolving portions of a particular kind of cosmic movement? If the universe, the cosmic movement, is such that a limited human view must inevitably occur in it, surely Nature is working under conditions that are imperfect. And, though we may assert that only her individual items are faulty but her sum-total is faultless, we still do not quite get rid of our conclusion. To hold that in the divine reason of things there is a key beyond us to all the waste we witness is no sufficient answer. Sri Aurobindo himself starkly observes: “A Divine Whole that is perfect by reason of the imperfection of its parts, runs the risk of being only perfect in imperfection, because it fulfils entirely some stage in an unaccomplished purpose; it is then a present but not an ultimate Totality. To it we could apply the Greek saying *Theos ouk estin alla gignetai*, the Divine is not yet in being, but is becoming.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus the cosmic movement, not possessed of the Divine, proves to be capable of real waste. And to reconcile this aspect with the one noted earlier we must say in extenuation: “The amount of real waste is the least possible, since a Divine Intelligence managing an imperfect world is making the best ever of a pretty bad job. This amount is the minimum necessity for that Intelligence to accomplish its plan. Indeed, everything is being made use of—but in the manner and the measure conforming to the type of manifestation that this world is. The type is such that—speaking figuratively—to reach the target once we need to expend a hundred arrows instead of just a single arrow, even though the hundred are the smallest number under the inauspicious circumstances, for a supreme Intelligence pits itself against the difficulties and is able to take the greatest advantage of them.”

The light in which we see waste here is the same as that in which we see with Sri

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 495-96.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 356

Aurobindo the oppositions he makes between the Divine and the Undivine. Under the latter head he puts "grief, pain, error, falsehood, ignorance, weakness, wickedness, incapacity, non-doing of what should be done and wrong-doing, deviation of will and denial of will, egoism, limitation, division from other beings with whom we should be one, all that makes up the effective figure of what we all evil."<sup>1</sup> These, he says, are "facts of the world-consciousness, not fictions and unrealities."<sup>2</sup> Of course, he is careful to add: "they are facts whose complete sense or true value is not that which we assign to them in our ignorance"—but he also continues. "Still our sense of them is part of a true sense, our values of them are necessary to their complete values."<sup>3</sup>

Sri Aurobindo affirms the undivine as an ingredient of cosmic existence. Although he does not specifically name waste in this connection, waste is undoubtedly one of the aspects of the undivine, it is a result of "error" and "incapacity" which Sri Aurobindo does name and it can be subsumed also under "non-doing of what should be done and wrong-doing." The waste in our human activity is but an example of all waste in Nature: it is due to insufficient knowledge and insufficient power. When conscious man is liable to such a lot of error and incapacity, what should we not expect of phenomena in which Nature has no surface consciousness at all or at best a very restricted one?

On looking at "evil" as a component of world reality, Sri Aurobindo is not standing on a universal or transcendent height which corrects our human outlook. Now his earlier treatment of the problem of waste becomes no more than half the answer of his spiritual philosophy. That half is part of the vision of the world as perfect from the standpoint of the Supreme Consciousness, the vision that all is Brahman. There is another vision which is more typically Aurobindonian on the whole: according to it, perfection has to emerge and evolve, Brahman has to manifest from non-Brahman and anti-Brahman. Both visions have their validity and the latter is indispensable to the Integral Yoga with its insistence on transforming all that is erring and false and feeble in our nature into the Divine. In this vision waste, featuring as a reality to be confronted, is not seen to be there because we are short-sighted: a ground for it has to be discovered in the cosmic scheme just as much as for suffering and falsehood, a formula that would make it possible in God's universe without impugning God's supreme Intelligence.

The required ground and formula in Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy is God's "involution". Out of the infinite possibilities of manifestation the possibility that has been made the key-note of the present manifestation is that a sovereign Consciousness has used its power of variable self-play to find itself through a process beginning from an utter concealment of itself in what it puts forth. A complete involution is effected of all its divine figures: then a reverse movement takes place to evolve those figures in the terms of their negation and achieve a greater, a unique intensity of Light and Power and Bliss. But, when slowly the involved divinity is re-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365,

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

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

leased from the chaos of the Inconscient, there is bound to be the brutal and the blind, the cruel and the wasteful. An irrational and useless expenditure of energy is inevitable if evolution starts from a plan to manifest God's innermost truth through diverse symbols of an entire contradiction of that truth.

With God becoming the Inconscient and then growing out of that abyss towards His summit of Superconscience, so few would be the holds and vantage-points, so much would slip into the yawning chasm! Could there be anything save real gigantic waste? And this waste would exist and not be a mere seeming though a supreme Intelligence were at work. But in spite of this waste that Intelligence would not be called in question. For, it has itself settled the conditions of a paradoxical self-consummation and afterwards goes converting to the utmost utility possible the constraints and checks of those conditions so that the vast number of misfires is actually the smallest in a world of total initial darkness where, by the law of probability nearly every move should be a misfire.

So one of the most burning issues in the controversy about God would be completely and convincingly met in the Aurobindonian world-view without our blinking any of the facts.

K. D. SETHNA

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## ON REVOLUTION

IT is one of the burdens of human history that political revolutions have been, and continue to be, essentially narcissistic—lamentably, but necessarily so:

If the primitive fervor which characterizes political revolution is to be sustained, the fervent ones, the puritans, must constantly renew their conviction of purity. This they can do only if they conscientiously ignore or condemn all viewpoints other than their own, so as to keep their frame of ideological reference and its rhetoric pure.

Once the revolution begins, however, the revolutionary finds himself bound to imperatives to action: fervor becomes a weapon, rhetoric translates into tactics, ideology turns to blood.

The essential, the critical modality, then becomes power. And at that point, the purity of vision, of intellectual construct, is transformed into the arrogance of self-assertion and self-justification.

Within our traditional historical framework, there are no pure revolutions. They all devolve into contests of and for power which perpetuate themselves like a crimson spiral through human time. Until we undergo a revolution of consciousness, revolutions in circumstance can only further debase us until, in anguish and fury, we decree a final conflagration.

AARON MILLER

# MEDITATION

## A FEW GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Meditation is the practice of feeling inwardly quiet and peaceful, and ultimately free from all vagrant ideas and insistent thinking activity.

2. Normally we live in external things and are scattered and divided among them. Our impulses are insistently rushing out and running after them.

3. To gather these impulses together and to train them to feel joy in an inner quietude and gathered state is the object of meditation.

4. But this training is not easy for the outward-going impulses. They have to be brought to their in-gathered poise with great patience. It is like reclaiming a spoiled child to good behaviour. Variable methods are needed, now severity, now encouragement, now disapproval, now indifference. But to quarrel with them and get disturbed by them is no sign of strength. It is weakness.

5. In the beginning, it is easier to meditate at a time when the outgoing impulses are by themselves in a quiescent condition. The periods after waking from sleep in the morning or after rest during the day may be tried in this connection. Mornings and evenings are the traditional timings for meditation. But one can meditate more often and for such durations as convenient.

6. If on sitting for meditation sleepiness seems to come, then one may open the eyes, and meditate while keeping them open. If it is necessary, one may change bodily posture in the middle of a meditation. And if ideas become insistent and unmanageable, one may resort to some inspiring reading. Some find it helpful to have such a reading or an uplifting song as a preparation for a meditation.

One should remember the purpose of the meditation and not follow it as a mechanical daily performance. Then one can adjust these details and have the best possible meditation each time. The purpose is a good inner quietude. The rest is a matter of means. Any convenient posture is all right, whether on the ground or bed or in the chair.

7. We should keep an eye on the progress of our meditations. We should watch whether our meditations are becoming more quiet and peaceful or not. Duration of the meditations should be increased as our capacity to remain quiet and peaceful increases. Coercion will not be proper.

8. When quietude tends to become fairly easy, then one should try to go deeper in the heart or rise above the head. These processes ultimately lead to the experience of the soul and God respectively, which are, in fact, the final objectives of meditation.

9. Meditation is primarily concerned with creating a mental condition of quietude and silence, the condition preparatory to a perception of soul and God. For

that, in the beginning, 'Japa' is a useful means to check the vagrancy of ideas. So also is contemplation of different spiritual truths. Japa and contemplation, when sincerely done, can induce and evoke higher states too.

10. Attitudes of 'struggle' and 'strain' in meditation lead to difficulties. The right attitude is to 'stand back', to feel separate from, to be a 'witness' to, the causes of trouble.

11. An awakensness of the heart is a help in meditation. Meditation as purely a mental action is more difficult.

12. It will be useful to ask oneself the following questions and find their answers in one's experience, while practising meditation:

- (a) When spontaneously I feel gathered within myself, where is the consciousness centred? Is it in the heart or the head or elsewhere?
- (b) What causes of trouble have I experienced in meditation?
- (c) What remedies have been more effective in dealing with them?

13. Some find meditation almost impossible. It is as though their nature and temperament did not permit it. They can avail themselves of action and Bhakti. But these too can lead them to the same objective or prepare them for meditation at a later stage. Actions done as offering, because they are right and good and proper, for their own sake, whole-heartedly, tend to create a meditative state. Action done half-heartedly, fearfully, with the mind divided between expected gains and losses is distracting. Bhakti, love adoration, dedication, self-giving easily induce an inner concentration and joy.

14. Possibly one should mobilise all the three—meditation, action and devotion—for a more effective and speedy progress on the spiritual path.

15. Prayer, aspiration and concentration are allied to meditation and can be fully availed of when the mood calls for them.

INDRA SEN

### References for Original Reading

1. Sri Aurobindo: Letters, *On Yoga II*, Tome One, Section: "Sadhana Through Meditation."
2. The Mother: Talks of the Mother as reported in *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part Seven by Nolini Kanta Gupta, Talks XVIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI.

## THE SAMADHI

O SACRED spot, most holy pilgrim-place,  
Athrob with Parabrahman brought to birth,  
O home of God's immortalising grace,  
And blessedness embracing yearning Earth,

Samadhi of the Lord of life and death,  
The dweller on the peak of the Golden Mount,  
The sun-crowned Seer of the Brahmīc breath,  
Distant divinity's unceasing fount!

Thou art the conscious core of slumberous clay,  
The highest height inclined to the lowest layer,  
The everlasting dark-dissolving day,  
Love leniently responsive to our prayer!

The one support of all, supported here  
On a bed of dust that has now grown divine  
By His all-divinising touch so near,  
So deeply sought for by hearts hyaline.

Thou art the central self of all that is:  
How all awakened souls to thee now swarm;  
For thou art light and love and life and bliss,  
In the midst of deadening cold the embrace all warm.

The old, the young and even the unborn ones  
Have fixed their eager hearts upon thy name;  
They kiss the unseen ray of the golden suns  
That have become the cells of His earthly frame.

The seasons come to wait upon thy pleasure,  
And adoration crowds to give its all,  
This Service Tree sheds all its golden treasure  
For a smile from thee to break through the blank wall.

Earth's life divine o'erflows from this one spot;  
Here He, the heaven-hearted, waits unseen;

All-giving, He for our mean clay is bought  
To fill our fortunes with His self serene.

Our Master, Father of aspiring souls,  
Is here preparing that which never dies,  
Herein is wrought the Goal of greatest goals,  
And are imprisoned freedom's freest skies.

May He for ever be within, below,  
Above and round us, be His Presence close;  
Released from dark delusion let us grow  
For His sole service life's divinest rose.

PUNJALAL

3-4-1970

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## THE IMMORTAL DAWN

### 4-4-1910: THE DAY SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO PONDICHERRY

A DAY lives eternally in the life of man,  
And keeps an enduring stamp upon the soil.  
The date is deep-decreed in the divine plan  
Which crowns the cycle of the cosmic toil.  
A rift in the dark clouds inundates the earth,  
The lightnings flash to illuminate the Way.  
The thundering harmonies announce the birth  
Of the One Eternal in our mortal clay.  
Beneath the vigil of the vernal sky  
In calm disguise He sailed to a shore unknown;  
In secret the high fates had whispered, 'Fly';  
A Fire came with him; that ever shone.  
The caravan of nights and days goes on:  
There in the East breaks the Immortal Dawn.

VITHALDAS



## PAVITRA : A HOMAGE\*

ONCE I wrote to the Master : "Is the strong will inborn or can it be developed? Was Buddha's will innate or developed?"

Sri Aurobindo replied : "If Buddha had the will only after tapasya how was it that he left everything without hesitation in the search for truth and never once looked back, regretted nor had any struggle? The only difficulty was how to find the Truth. His single will to find it never faltered, the intensity of his tapasya itself would have been impossible without that strength of will." (31.10.1938)

To what extent will-power can be developed, in our time, can be seen in the life of Pavitra—one who breathed purity, sweetness and sincerity in every aspect of his life. He came to this divine land of our soul, after spending four years in quest of Light, wandering about China, Japan and Mongolia

His connection with the Ashram began from the period when the Ashram was not yet officially born and he was one of the very few at the time to take a hand in the material shaping of the Ashram according to the Mother's dream.

One of his outstanding later achievements was the organisation of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, of which he was the Director from the beginning. It was he who introduced, under the Mother's guidance, the Free Progress System of education which is growing popular as the days pass. He inspired the teachers in various ways to prove the efficacy of this system.

Pavitra was a versatile scholar and a great educationist. He was often invited as an examiner by the local French College and as a juror by the French High Court in Pondicherry during the French regime.

Even before the Ashram school was born he undertook the coaching of a group of children who had the privilege of entering the Ashram very early in their life. A part of himself he has left in his pupils like Naren and Abhoy Singh<sup>1</sup> who are carrying on some of the departments founded by him. They recall with gratitude how they were made by his hands. He was ever ready to give a lift to a deserving student and extend his helping hand to those who obtained the Mother's blessings to go to foreign countries for higher studies. He admitted even the son of his driver<sup>2</sup> to the Ashram school and was instrumental in getting him admitted to the French Military School of Saint-Maixent.

To many, Pavitra's life was a benediction and an inspiration. Let one of them speak :

\* Pavitra was the name given by Sri Aurobindo to P B. Saint-Hilaire. He was born in France on January 16, 1894 and passed away in the Ashram on May 16, 1969

<sup>1</sup> There are now eleven departments under his charge having more than a hundred employees.

<sup>2</sup> Five generations of this driver's family have been in touch with the Mother in one way or another. It was Pavitra who taught him driving.

"The first thing that would strike anyone who came in contact with Pavitra was the softness of his heart, his sensitiveness, simplicity, sincerity and extreme humanity. No one, I am sure, had the least idea of the mastery he had attained in many fields of knowledge both practical and theoretical. He was a perfectionist and would therefore consecrate cheerfully hours and hours of hard work to whatever he undertook to accomplish. His sincerity and absorption were a joy to watch.

"He remained for us always a teacher in the truest sense of the word and as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo. He took the greatest pains to correct our notebooks and always taught us with loving care. It is only due to him that we know what the joy of learning is. Not only that but what perhaps is more important, he taught us how to handle material things and be aware of the consciousness that is behind them....

"He who had reached so high in spirituality considered all of us his equals and never treated anyone otherwise. Is it any wonder that all of us loved him as our elder brother to whom one could always turn in moments of difficulty? However busy he might be, he had a moment to spare and one would invariably come back full of cheer and faith.

"For him life was sacred, a precious gift of the Divine, and he never wasted a single moment of it. He always tried to do things to the best of his ability and as a humble offering at the Feet of the Divine Mother. A perfect yogi, he left the results to Her.

"'Love and what you love attempt to be.' He loved the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and under their compassionate guidance marched ever happily forward to his final destiny."

Meditating on Pavitra's life one cannot fail to marvel at his all-conquering will-power. His sadhana, his devotion to work, his zeal for precision and perfection, his battle with the body will challenge attention in the coming days. To the end he kept on repeating, "All that happens is for the best" And he kept resolutely to the Path—"Victory's Star" guiding his "desperate road".

One has to seek God even 'when hurled to the point of the sword' and this we saw in the person of Pavitra. He began his career as a soldier and remained a soldier—a soldier of Truth—to the last day. No suffering could disturb his inner immobility, equilibrium and tranquillity.

The path of Yoga is not always without suffering. In the last years of his life a disease stole into his body, the very mention of which strikes one with terror. He bore its onslaught so quietly that even those coming in contact with him daily did not know that he had been suffering from such a painful ailment as cancer.

Pavitra left us in May 1969. On his last birthday, January 16, 1969, a girl teacher spoke to him in a lovingly moving tone, "How long will you take rest? When will you come out? So many new teachers and students have been admitted this year. Won't you favour us with a visit?"

A note of cheer broke through his lips as he said, "Yes, I shall come. From time

to time, please call on me and give me all the news of the school." Obviously, this girl teacher had no idea of the seriousness of Pavitra's illness.

When the same request was made to him by another person at another time, in a serene tone he said :

"Perhaps the disease is a blessing in disguise. I want to go into a deeper relation with the Mother."

More astonishing than all this is how Pavitra could keep his mind composed and fixed in the face of such a terrible ordeal. Can anyone in his state of health hold a pen, frame sentences and devote so much energy to writing a book of 436 pages, *The Yoga of Bhagvad Gita*, a book requiring mental exercise of the highest order?

From the very year he came to know the nature of the disease, it seems he kept aside all thought of the body<sup>1</sup> and the body's illness and looked upon it as a mere garment.

Strikingly apt here are the lines in *The Synthesis of Yoga*<sup>2</sup> :

"...we must not care essentially about its (the body's) sleep or its waking, its movements or its rest, its pain or its pleasure, its health or ill-health, its vigour or its fatigue, its comfort or its discomfort, or what it eats or drinks. This does not mean that we shall not keep the body in right order so far as we can..... Thus disciplined the mind will gradually learn to take up towards the body the true attitude of the Purusha.... This will come to be so much a normal attitude of the whole being to the physical frame that the latter will feel to us as if something external and detachable like the dress we wear or an instrument we happen to be carrying in our hand... This division is a great means, a great step towards mastery."

This division cannot be achieved in a day. Let us turn to the material available in this respect, I mean the conversations Pavitra had with the Master as far back as the year 1926 :

Question : I have succeeded in keeping my mind absolutely empty of thought for a few minutes. If I could have stopped my breath, I would have surely changed the consciousness.

Answer : This is what Yogis seek and strive to attain. Everybody cannot do it. In my opinion, it is not necessary to seek this state at present. For instance, one should breathe normally.

No, you have touched the state of perfect silence... make it last steadily for a longer time and let it envelop gradually all that surrounds you.

Question : The best method I have found consists precisely in climbing as high as possible—then the lower being is calmed.

<sup>1</sup> He never disregarded the body. He kept himself clean-shaven, neatly dressed, took exercises to keep the body fit, and all in a cheerful spirit.

<sup>2</sup> Pp 317,19

Answer : When the detachment is complete, the waves will gradually become less powerful and will die away.

Question : These last few days were better—the concentration easier and the detachment of the mind more happy. I can separate myself from the mind and observe its action. But when I try to make it dead-still, I cannot do it except by concentrating near the *Sahasrāra*, trying to separate myself from the body.

Answer : There are two ways of becoming aware of a higher world. One is to send a part of oneself there, whilst remaining at the same time in one's physical consciousness. The other is to leave this physical consciousness and to enter into a sort of trance, which may come very near catalepsy or coma.

The deeper peace cannot come till the "lotuses" are open and the force descends to take possession.

Thus we are admitted to a glimpse, in his own words, as to how Pavitra's sadhana began.

In the period during which he came, there were only a few inmates of the Ashram. With one of them, he used to mix a little more freely. This person said, 'The Mother used two words about Pavitra. One was: 'polite.' The other I don't remember.'

Speaking about his politeness this sadhaka said, "Once Pavitra surprised me by himself bringing out and spreading my bedding in the sun, saying it should be put in the sun." According to my informant he treated all as his equals. My informant further said : "Pavitra had seen the rigorous life of Mongolian monks. At times he was seen praying with upraised hands towards the sun, thrice a day in his room."

From the time he set foot on the soil of Pondicherry, he never went out of the town and the Ashram became his universe.

In the course of a casual talk to one of the teachers, he said, "I say what I feel and I do what I say."

When this girl was installed as a teacher he asked her out of fun, "What prompted you to give a ready consent to be a teacher?"

"To learn," was her cryptic answer. This brought a smile of satisfaction to his lips.

There are many things to learn from his life. First of all, his unshakable will-power and his conquest over the fear of pain. Did he not draw nourishment from the following illuminating words of the Mother?—

"You must not have a will that is extinguished like a candle. Will, concentration must be cultivated. It is a question of method, of regular exercise. If you will, you can.

"...the will can be cultivated and developed even like the muscles by methodical and progressive exercises...

"What you have decided to do, you must do, come what may..."

Next,

“If you teach the body how to bear pain, it becomes more and more enduring and is less quickly disorganised. In people who know how not to be completely upset whenever they have a pain anywhere, who are able to bear quietly, to keep the poise, the capacity of the body to bear the disorder without dislocation increases. The body can bear much more than it is believed to do, if, to the pain, fear and anxiety are not added. If this mental factor is removed, the body left to itself, having no fear or apprehension or anxiety for what is going to happen, is able to bear a great deal.

“When the body has decided to bear, when it makes this decision, then immediately, the sharpness, what is acute in the pain, disappears. If you have the inner calmness, then the pain changes into an almost pleasant sensation—‘pleasant’ not in the sense as ordinarily understood, but almost an impression of ease. And in the last stage, when the cells have faith in the divine Presence and in the sovereign divine Will, when they have this trust that all is for good, then comes the ecstasy—the cells open, become luminous and ecstatic.”

Mastery means, says the Mother, “the capacity to do what one has willed.”

Pavitra has left nothing undone that he wanted to see done. He himself attended to all the proof-reading that came from France and had the satisfaction of seeing his book published by Tchou, Paris, just a little before he bade farewell to us all.

Up to 1968 he went on making additions and alterations. The publisher was highly pleased with the artistically arranged typescript. In February 1969 when a copy came by air-mail he made corrections and left instructions on what changes were to be made in the next edition.

We know very little about his inner life but what could be read in the pages of his outer life is enough to give a glimpse of his inner riches, his power of endurance and the height he scaled in his inner journey.

It is said a *jīvanmukta* is he who has gone beyond suffering. Had he reached the stage of *gatavyathā* (free from suffering) of the Gita? Will it be wrong to apply the Upanishadic term *Yogāgnimaya śarīram* (body filled with the flame of the Yoga) in his case? The Mother alone can say.

In between there came a time when it looked as if he had almost recovered. He resumed even his daily exercises and to the joy of those around him it seemed that he would come out of the ordeal.<sup>1</sup>

Age did not quench his thirst for learning. He began to learn Hindi with a Hindi-speaking inmate of the Ashram with whom he spoke in broken Hindi. He often had his Hindi lessons from tape-records.

Children carry heaven in their hearts. How to bring that heaven into play, how to give a shape to the Mother’s vision seems to have been Pavitra’s sole occupation.

Everywhere in the Ashram, in the school, in the courtyard, in the playground, on the footpath one can see the happy laughter of children. With children Pavitra

<sup>1</sup> “Be grateful for all ordeals, they are the shortest way to the Divine.”—The Mother

played like a child but was quite different in the classroom. Today his name is music in the ears of those who came in close contact with him. This brings to my mind a saying :

“Treat people in such a way and live amongst them in such a manner that if you die they may weep over you and when you are alive they crave for your company.”

One thing not to be missed here is that in the midst of all his ordeals Pavitra never lost his spiritual cheerfulness. He gave a patient hearing to those who came to see him and always greeted them with a smile.

Even two days before he left his body, he gave directions about educational problems of the Centre of Education to X, got a letter drafted to another.

When he saw me joining the gymnasium after a near-fatal disease, he remarked with his eyes beaming with joy :

“So the Mother cured you? Ours is a Yoga of fighting old age and decomposition.”

Pavitra was not a man of an iron constitution. He had a bad digestion and had often to live on meagre meals and yet what a fight he gave even at the ripe age of 75.

There are people who are born to set an example for others. Pavitra came to know about the nature of his disease in 1965 and after that lived for four years. Generally one cannot put up with such a disease so long. The diagnosis of the doctor did not leave him terror-stricken nor did it make him run after medical treatment, rather he gave himself wholly and fully to the work undertaken. Almost to the end he did not suffer himself to remain confined to bed. It was no exulting in suffering for its own sake, no dancing over the hood of the Serpent of Evil, as it were, but meeting it calmly and firmly towards the way to mastery of spirit over matter—the heart and soul of the Master’s teachings.

A few days before his passing away he asked X to lift his legs to an arm-chair. The moment X touched his feet Pavitra felt a shock as if touched by a current. This shows how acute was his pain. Daily he used to go up to the Mother to receive Her sacred touch. To climb the few steps he would take half an hour but would take no help of anyone. “Leave me alone. I will go the Mother alone,” he would say in a soul-stirring voice. According to the version of those who met him, his face hardly exhibited the burden of old age or looked broken. Only a few of us knew that he was ailing; what the rest thought was that he was weak and so taking rest.

Thus he did not only write a book on the Gita but translated it into his life. There cannot be a greater illustration of the saying of the Gita: *jasmunsthite duḥkhena gurunāpi na vicālyate* (a state in which one is not moved by any trouble however great).

Pavitra was one of the first to give the Ashram an international character. It is said of him that he was European in mind but Indian in soul. Do we not find Indian culture raised to an international sphere in his life and works? He was a pioneer of the world Sri Aurobindo and the Mother want to create.

NARAYAN PRASAD

## STRATEGY FOR SURVIVAL

It has become the fashion to talk promiscuously about 'research'. And research is supposed to lead to 'development' and even to 'progress', bringing about a general diffusion of happiness. Research—individual, group or institutional research—is being carried on the world over, with divers degrees of concentration in the several countries. Even in the humanities and the social sciences, modern research is becoming more and more sophisticated, involving a scale of expenditure that only the most affluent nations can now afford. The pace of research is so fast that the doubling-up period of knowledge is a mere decade, or even less. Disciplines are getting fragmented, and specialisation is being taken to absurd lengths. Are there polymaths like an Aristotle—or a Leonardo da Vinci—today who can hold in the marvellous human computer of their brains both the infinite variety and the essential integrality of modern knowledge? A piece of very valuable research might win the Nobel Prize for the savant, but can even he see his findings in relation to the totality of knowledge? Can even he visualise all possible uses to which his discovery might be put by future politicians and war lords? The smashing of the atomic nucleus, the cracking of the genetic code—whither ultimately will these take humanity? Never before have so many tens of thousands of researchers been engaged in decoding the mysteries of Nature, bending Nature's processes to supposed human needs, incidentally using up the earth's resources faster than replenishment can take place, and perversely poisoning the earth's atmosphere. Can the line be drawn between what is legitimate in research and what is not? Are there any means of projecting possible future applications of particular discoveries and thereby preventing in time research becoming an unconscious tool for the destruction of the race?

There is much talk of 'planning', and there are 'Yojana Bhavans' to specify goals, forge processes and regulate speeds. But can we posit clearly enough the choices implicit in current trends in research and development in the different disciplines, and help the rulers of the world to fasten upon those options only that are likely to contribute to a general betterment of the human condition? Further, is there any consensus regarding what 'human betterment' must mean, as distinct from the betterment of some sections only of the global human community? Is speed in travel such an absolute benefit to the human race that more and more astronomical sums must be spent on research towards achieving faster yet faster speeds? Is military hardware of such paramount value that in exchange for it an impoverished nation should be ready to barter away the bananas, sugar, silk and shoes it can ill afford to lose? Must priority be given to getting our airports ready for the jumbo-jet or the supersonic age instead of eliminating—or at least improving the conditions in—our proliferating slums? Drive from Bombay to Santa Cruz, and watch on either side of the motorway the squalid hutments in their thousands located amidst the festering drains. Must these

slums remain—or multiply—and only the airports be given periodical face-lifts?

In medical science, there is the trend in transplants (eye, kidney, heart, brain... what else?)—must we not draw the line somewhere? The current craze for computerisation—will it not render brain and sensibility alike superfluous? When the heart or brain is transplanted with the same ease as spectacles or dentures are changed, what will happen to the human 'personality'? Are we at the end of things—or a new beginning? Herman Kahn and Anthony J. Wiener have recently speculated about *The Year 2000*, and their anticipations include manned moon-stations, space satellites, interplanetary travel, inhabited undersea colonies, seabed farming, totally harmless methods of birth control, genetic interference with unborn babies, biological manipulation of human beings, human hibernation (on a par with dormice and bats), programmed dreams, paper underwear, domestic robots, easy change of sex (like change of clothing), and centralised computer consoles. Must we enthuse about such a future? We have also been warned that it would be the veriest illusion to entertain the hope that this technocratic future will necessarily usher in Utopia. It might conceivably be Nightmare Island instead, where one is preserved like flies in amber—for ever !

We hear complaints often enough about the lack of correlation between research and application, and again between application and human values. Such complaints are heard within the university, or within the nation, and also in international gatherings. Sometimes 'pure' research—research for the sake of research or for sheer Truth's sake—is advocated, but how 'pure' is 'pure'? Can discoveries be completely insulated from all danger of misapplication? Conversely, how can we ensure that knowledge—especially 'new' knowledge—is not only not misused but also not left unutilised or underutilised where full utilisation could be really beneficial to the mass of humanity? In one part of the world where labour is scarce, sophisticated machinery is necessary; in another part where labour is abundant, mechanisation and computerisation may throw millions out of employment. In an unequal world that but witnesses the gap between the affluent and backward nations widening yet further, how can we advocate the same policy of technological innovation or rationalisation everywhere? What is meat for one nation may prove to be no more than poison to another. The maldistribution of the benefits of research and development in the world, far from decreasing with the advance of knowledge, seems only to achieve newer and grosser disparities. The backward nations are the worst sufferers because, on the one hand, they are out-distanced by the affluent and, on the other hand, while the few rich in the Afro-Asian 'underdeveloped' nations are anxious (and are usually able) to reach very high standards of affluence even when compared with the standards in the West, the overwhelming majority have to be content to diet on cold desperation. Is this the fiat of global 'karma' that the poor (whether among individuals or nations) must race towards greater poverty, while the rich cannot help scaling further heights of affluence? Is 'brotherhood' no more than a myth? 'Is 'community' no more than an electioneering bait?



There is no dearth of 'research projects' and research publications. There are research wings and research cells in every industry, in every department of Government, and in almost every field of national and international activity. Yet the left hand doesn't seem to know what the right hand is doing—and even the two eyes and the two ears seem to be seeing or hearing different things. There is so much gadgetry and hectic activity, yet nobody can say whither exactly we are going. At the rate at which 'R & D' is going on, can anyone visualise the shape of things in 1980—let alone 2000! Don't we need today a science that can make with reasonable certitude future projections so as to warn us in time, or sustain us with hopes of a better world? What we need is a global system of human values transcending the political, economic and racial 'isms', the linguistic divisions, the credal antagonisms and the 'colour' confrontations. International conferences and seminars are no doubt being held from time to time, but as yet there hasn't been established an intellectual, moral and spiritual base of sufficient strength for tackling effectively problems of human survival and unity.

Our present-day attempts to solve these problems are born of defective sensibility and we bring to the task partial knowledge only, and the result is that we often debate whether it is not more advisable to fall on this or that side of the road, not how we should forge forward and reach worthwhile goals. The meaningless proceedings of our legislative and academic Bodies! Shall we increase the duty on cigarettes by a paisa? Shall we lower the pass minimum from thirty-five to thirty-three? Shall we devise one more language formula? The everlasting futility of it all! Two legs of the matter-life-mind tripod are being raised higher and higher, but 'mind' has remained where it was—and how much longer can the tripod preserve its precarious balance? The 'big change' we need is a growth in consciousness that is commensurate with the revolutions in the physical and biological sciences. Can there not be a break-through in 'consciousness' so that our future apprehensions may exceed our present range of understanding and include the soul-dimension—or spiritual dimension—as well? We urgently need a strategy for human survival and unity, and such a strategy can be based only on spiritual foundations. If surface variety is both to be accepted and exceeded, one must look within for the unifying and sustaining sap. The need, then, is for some men of good-will—more and more of them—to re-establish links with this sap, this inner reality, this key to human survival and unity. That is the 'big change' that the seventies must opt and strive for,—not for competitive economic growth-rates that only beggar increasingly the less favoured neighbours. Marx exhorted the proletariat of all nations to unite and build a free new society. Marxism has however failed, because any separative identification and glorification (even on a majority or working class basis) must be a defective foundation to build a healthy new society. A more elemental revolution in thought and practice that infers from the fatherhood of God the brotherhood of man, that seeks the lever of change and transmutation *within*, can alone end the current divisions and cement the deepening cracks in the global human community. If we are not to career towards the abyss but canter towards the Truth, the wheel of our terrestrial life must now be geared

to a spiritual centre, so that although the numberless spokes of research and development may revolve unceasingly, all may nevertheless be held together by the spiritual hub and move towards the goal on the integral felly.

Without the science of the soul or the spirit, all other frantic exercises in research and development are foredoomed to failure. The break-through in the physical and biological sciences occurred when the riddle of the infinitely small atom and of the infinitely obscure DNA was read at last, and the way made clear for the revolutions in the sciences of matter and life. A like break-through in the science of the mind will be achieved when 'mind' surpasses itself—leaps over its limitations—and creates out of the wreck the engine of its own transformation, making our present divisive impotent consciousness grow into the integral knowledge that is the integral power at the same time. That is the 'big change' we are after, and that will become manifest when this inner spiritual revolution comes about and man is at last able to perfect himself, and thus discover the clue to the perfection of the race as well. There are two eternities, said Yeats, that of race and that of soul; and man oscillates between them knowing no rest, no peace. This should cease, and by realising the eternity that is his soul, man should clear the way for the emergence of the new race, the race of the 'Sons of God'.

K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

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## HOMER, HOMERIC POETRY AND THE *ILIAD*

(Continued from the issue of April 24)

OF course objections are made to everything, and I will not try to head off every possibility. But should anyone maintain that, if an acceptable hexameter version of Homer were possible, it would be only a *tour de force* I should strike out the word "only": and add that I have never been able to see the force of *tour de force* as a term of disapprobation. Perhaps it applies in French, a language in which verse is so much like prose that it is hardly worth while to make a distinction, where "*vers libre*" has some meaning and where the standards of prose prevail: that is, a clarity for ordinary purposes, and a general viability and availability to many hands: the conditions against which Mallarmé struggled so hard. But what of that? A great poem (and do the French have one?) is necessarily unique and beyond the general capacity. What is *Paradise Lost* but a *tour de force*, the power of which has beguiled many to fumble? Indeed why else did Mr. Eliot so fatuously belabour Milton, except for having a particular power, or many particular powers, denied to lesser poets and to would-be poets? He may have done it cleverly enough, but that kind of cleverness is a kind of fatuity; and what is *Paradise Lost*, even if one may say a legitimate thing or two against it, but one of the great poems of the world? Mr. Eliot may have recanted somewhat after he felt his own reputation to be secure; but meanwhile he had helped to spread the unfortunate seeds of our contemporary distrust of greatness, and radical inability to see wherein it lies: in this unfortunate age when our plentiful "giants" are getting smaller and smaller.

But Homer is a giant indeed, and he is a prince of the *tour de force*; and it is in fact characteristic of a great poem that it shall be unique, and if great poems are few, it is because the force to carry one off is a rare possession or visitant among poets. One may in fact say that it must come to them, they cannot make it or generate it of themselves. That great light to the race, poetry, is a divine gift, and either one finds it relatively easy, or one does not find it possible at all. Milton has told us plainly enough how his major work was written: a goddess employing the fit instrument that he had been cultivating and developing all those years. Sri Aurobindo also has told us how he wrote *Savitri*, listening for the words that came to him from above ("whence is every good and perfect gift"). Many in these times may doubt the very fact of inspiration but none can doubt it who can read poetry; and Homer, with his triumphant power, was and is one of the great intermediaries between divinity and mankind.

Sidney Lanier once complained that a new tribe was coming into evidence, spawning many a singer who took the minimum of poetic substance and worked around it till it was a barely visible speck in his own gelatinous glory. That was a century ago, and this kind of poet and would-be poet is with us still: progress not

being uniform, as I think the statisticians have discovered. But Homer is at the opposite pole to this kind of thing, and one who would translate him must respect his kind of poetry, and be able to do something with it.

Prompted as I was years ago by Matthew Arnold and Sri Aurobindo, I have undertaken this perhaps audacious project of translation and have brought it through to at least some kind of conclusion. I have thought it worth attempting, and persisting with, even though I am by no means a master of the Greek. I am not entirely ignorant of it, and I have been able to follow the text and use a lexicon; but I could not have done the work without the help of translations. I have made use of at least a dozen of these, including Voss's justly celebrated one in German hexameter. I have had no compunction against such a proceeding because I have considered the hexameter to be the main thing; and I have in fact been as much concerned with exploring different possibilities of the use of the hexameter in English, as I have been with Englishing Homer. And merely another *translation* of Homer is hardly very urgently needed. Several are easily available and no one who reads English need be ignorant of Homer's bare minimum meaning. But the whole point is that something of his fuller meaning can be given only in really adequate verse. One cannot reasonably expect a translation to rise above adequacy; but one can expect that much. Homer is the clearest of poets, and while his meaning may be in some doubt in many places, they are quite minor, and by no means hold up the ongoing story, or seriously vex one whose interest is primarily in the poetry. The poetry is the thing; and at the risk of being wearisome I may say again that what is needed is an acceptable, a readable rendition in really heroic verse, a version that does justice to the *Iliad* as a poem.

For this version of mine I shall make no exalted claims. I shall only invite the competent reader to read, and to make his own judgment, taking the many factors into consideration. There may be some who can see better than I the limitations and weaknesses of what I have done but they will not be plentiful. Certainly I have not often given the hexameter the full strength and subtlety it is capable of; for a translator in verse always has the problem, that if he wants to make a translation and not a paraphrase, he must often sacrifice rhythm and sound to the hard, prosaic meaning. But I have always kept a certain minimum standard of verse in mind, and of course there are inequalities in Homer himself.

It is true, however, indeed a truism, that no literal word-for-word dictionary-bred transposition can be adequate, or even readable; and I have remembered that a translation of a poem must itself be a poem. Thus to some extent I have paraphrased, though I think not to a falsifying extent; and I have considered adjectives and phrases put in mostly for the meter to be subject to excision at will, and likewise suppliable. This is not a mechanical proceeding: for, be it said again, the meter is of the utmost importance, a living growth and body, and not just an arbitrary framework enslaving the matter and stultifying the life. When meter becomes this, it is the poet's fault alone, and a sure sign that the Muse is not with him.

It is true again that a translation must be to some extent an interpretation. But if one wants to give what he considers the spirit of a work, without close regard to its actual words, he will do better to write an original poem than to attempt or affect translation. To give the words of the poet as literally as one can, though they may not have quite exact equivalents, either in meaning or sound or rhythmical or metrical value, in the translator's language, may give more of the spirit of the work than a hasty bias to disjunction would suppose. And Homer, being so concrete, so physical, is a better subject for literal rendering than most.

Though nobody really knows how Homer's Greek sounded, I am reasonably certain that my English does not come close to it on very many occasions. But this does not trouble me, because I accept without hesitation or regret the fact that English and Greek are two different languages. I have aimed to write as good and fitting verse as I could manage, and achieve a readable poem in English: a language that need not blush before any in the world, when it comes to poetical capacity.

The style of Homer being a leisurely and expansive one, and verbally ample (though concise enough on occasion), the style of a man who works largely and for all his swiftness is never hurried; also the Greek being, overall, less compact than English; it might be possible to give (in hexameter) the whole sense of the *Ihad* while cutting by one tenth the number of lines. On the other hand, amplification might just as well be employed, without seeming incongruous or detracting from the power of the whole. I have both contracted and expanded, making no attempt, overall, at a line-for-line version. I trust that in my contractions I have cut out nothing essential, and that in my expansions I have added nothing extraneous or otiose. My finished work is very nearly the same number of lines as the most generally accepted Greek text.

The ideal translator, it has been said, will make such a poem as the original author would have made, were he writing in the translator's time and language. I respect the ideal, but have had to keep it at a respectable distance. I simply cannot conceive a Homer writing an *Ihad* in English in the twentieth century. Nor do I know how Homer reborn to English, if such is conceivable in any meaningful way, might employ the language: whether he might not invent an entirely new meter suitable for a great epic utterance, whether he might recognize at all the English hexameter as being Homeric. Be all this as it may, I have thought it sufficient to try to render the *Ihad* in a meter as close as possible to the original as we understand it or perhaps misunderstand it: this I have considered a task worth any labour that might be necessary. The meter as we understand it is a great one, and should eventually take its great place in English.

But we know the proof of the pudding; and perhaps I have said more than enough, in this time of disintegration, when nobody listens because nobody really cares. If the time however is becoming one of reintegration, then poetry will regain its high place and will play a major role.

(Concluded)

JESSE ROARKE

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*Note:* The *Iliad* and the *Savitri* of Sri Aurobindo, and K. D. Sethna's book, *The Poetic Genus of Sri Aurobindo*, are unfortunately still scarce in the United States. They may be obtained from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, India.

# THE SECRET SELF IN THE YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of April 24)

## CHAPTER V

### GRATITUDE

GRATITUDE is a Power. It is the source of all true action offered to the Divine; the well of our accumulated love for the Divine; the very altar upon which we lay our prayers and offerings and, when utterly sincere, it is the speediest path of communication and the most open way towards union with the Presence, the quickest means of invoking the Divine in the heart centre.

It is the true opening prayer of the Bhakti which stems from a constant *Vyākulatā*, that quality of eagerness and yearning which grows with perseverance into that other necessary quality of the vital will—*utsāha*, the will to find union with God at all cost. It is the true state of receptivity for intuitive knowledge—the aspiration of the Raja-Yogi.

It is the attitude to work of the Karma-Yogi. It is that dynamic affirmation of action when the time for action is at hand as it is the true depth of silence, when it is the time for contemplation, concentration or meditation.

Gratitude is a state of consciousness wherein one is aware of one's relationship with God or the Divine Presence. Apart from the tremendous sense of satisfaction and well-being there is the great depth of Peace together with the overwhelming bliss of privilege. Privilege of being allowed to take part in this terrestrial hour in the bloom of its manifestation. Privilege of being allowed to witness the marvel of the divine drama, the miracle and wonder of each dawn of a new creative force and power that sustains all life in its infinite possibilities. Privilege of being allowed to be part of the awareness of this unfolding Splendour.

One's insignificance bows down in worship to That which makes all possible, to That which was and is and ever will be. To That which was before Time and is of Time and yet is beyond all Time. To That which creates all, fosters all, manifests all and brings all to fruition. To That we bow down.

In Gratitude we remember the Divine, so our work and our actions are an offering, a giving of ourselves to the best of our ability. So all our actions are positive towards good and so we succeed and continue in a state of Grace.

In Gratitude our energy is channelled towards positive ends for we delight in our creation and joy in our handiwork, for there is only true happiness in giving—and the greatest happiness is in giving to the Source of all Life, the Divine.

Gratitude is a spiritual attribute which marks the first important step beyond religion. When Gratitude is established in the being as an experience, then one has passed beyond mere religion, as such, into the regions of spirituality, beyond mere hope and belief into the higher worlds of concrete experience.

There is a characteristic difference between religion and spirituality—true spirituality—which can be clearly seen in the attitude to prayer. In all the ordinary religions, prayer is mostly a petition, asking for something, or a propitiation endeavouring to assuage grief or catastrophe, pain or punishment; at the best asking for blessings or benefice. The characteristic attitude of spiritual prayer is, on its lowest level, an aspiration for union with the Divine and, on its highest level, complete and absolute surrender. The fundamental difference, then, is seen to be a demand to get something for oneself on the one hand, and an aspiration to give oneself on the other.

Gratitude marks the stage where one changes from wanting to giving. It is when we pass this stage, where out of sincere Gratitude to the Divine we long to give and give and give, that the subtle demands of life and the bondage of desire fall from our shoulders like a heavy, dirty old garment which we suddenly realize we need no longer bear, for it is “Spring”! The sun shines and the world around us is full of New Birth!

*(To be continued)*

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

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# *Students' Section*

## **THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION**

SEVENTEENTH SEMINAR: 27th APRIL 1969

*(Continued from the issue of March 1970)*

### **I. WHY IS OUR YOGA AN ADVENTURE?**

#### **II. THE POWER OF FAITH**

THE passages from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, pertaining to the two subjects of the Seminar, which were read at the end, are reproduced below:

#### **I**

##### **(1)**

Our yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(On Yoga II, Tome One, p. 108)*

##### **(2)**

When the physical substance will be supramentalised, to be born on earth in a body will not be a cause of inferiority, rather the contrary, there will be gained a plenitude which could not be obtained otherwise.

But all that is of the future, a future that has begun but will take some time before realising itself integrally. In the meanwhile, we are in a very special situation, extremely special which has had no precedent. We are attending on the birth of a new world, altogether young, altogether weak—weak not in its essence, but in its external manifestation—not yet recognised, not yet felt, denied by most; but it is there, it is there endeavouring to grow and quite sure of the result. Yet, the road to reach there is a new road, that has never before been traced; none went by that way, none did that. It is a beginning, a universal beginning. Therefore it is an adventure absolutely unexpected and unforeseeable.

There are people who love adventure, and to them I give a call and I tell them:

I invite you to the great adventure, and in this adventure you are not to repeat

spiritually what others have done before us, because our adventure begins from beyond that stage. We are for a new creation, entirely new, carrying in it all the unforeseen, all risks, all hazards,—a true adventure of which the goal is sure victory, but of which the way is unknown and has to be traced out step by step in the unexplored. It is something that has never been in the present universe and will never be in the same manner. If that interests you, well, embark. What will happen tomorrow, I do not know.

You must leave behind whatever has been foreseen, whatever has been designed, whatever has been built up, and then on the march into the unknown. Come what may!

THE MOTHER

(*Bulletin of Physical Education*, November 1957)

## II

### (1)

Faith is the soul's witness to something not yet manifested, achieved or realised, but which yet the Knower within us, even in the absence of all indications, feels to be true or supremely worth following or achieving. This thing within us can last even when there is no fixed belief in the mind, even when the vital struggles and revolts and refuses. Who is there that practises the yoga and has not his periods, long periods of disappointment and failure and disbelief and darkness? But there is something that sustains him and even goes on in spite of himself, because it feels that what it followed after was yet true and it more than feels, it knows. The fundamental faith in yoga is this, inherent in the soul, that the Divine exists and the Divine is the one thing to be followed after—nothing else in life is worth having in comparison with that. So long as a man has that faith, he is marked for the spiritual life and I will say that, even if his nature is full of obstacles and crammed with denials and difficulties, and even if he has many years of struggle, he is marked out for success in the spiritual life.

(*On Yoga II, Tome One*, p. 547-48)

SRI AUROBINDO

### (2)

The faith in spiritual things that is asked of the sadhak is not an ignorant but a luminous faith, a faith in light and not in darkness. It is called blind by the sceptical intellect because it refuses to be guided by outer appearances or seeming facts,—for it looks for the truth behind,—and because it does not walk on the crutches of proof and evidence. It is an intuition, an intuition not only waiting for experience to justify it, but leading towards experience. If I believe in self-healing, I shall after a time find out the way to heal myself. If I have faith in transformation, I can end by laying my hand on and unravelling the process of transformation. But if I begin with doubt and

go on with more doubt, how far am I likely to go on the journey?

(*On Yoga II, Tome One, p. 179*)

SRI AUROBINDO

(3)

Anything else one may doubt but that he who desires only the Divine shall reach the Divine is a certitude and more certain than two and two make four. That is the faith every sadhak must have at the bottom of his heart, supporting him through every stumble and blow and ordeal. It is only false ideas still casting their shadows on your mind that prevent you from having it. Push them aside and the back of the difficulty will be broken.

(*On Yoga II, Tome One, p. 562*)

SRI AUROBINDO

(4)

The way to get faith and all things else is to insist on having them and refuse to flag or despair or give up until one has them—it is the way by which everything has been got since this difficult earth began to have thinking and aspiring creatures upon it. It is to open always, always to the Light and turn one's back on the Darkness. It is to refuse the voices that say persistently, "You cannot, you shall not, you are incapable, you are the puppet of a dream,"—for these are the enemy voices, they cut one off from the result that was coming, by their strident clamour and then triumphantly point to the bareness of the result as a proof of their thesis. The difficulty of the endeavour is a known thing, but the difficult is not the impossible—it is the difficult that has always been accomplished and the conquest of difficulties makes up all that is valuable in the earth's history. In the spiritual endeavour also it shall be so.

(*On Yoga II, Tome One, p. 553*)

SRI AUROBINDO

(5)

And yet faith is necessary throughout and at every step because it is a needed assent of the soul and without this assent there can be no progress. Our faith must first be abiding in the essential truth and principles of the Yoga, and even if this is clouded in the intellect, despondent in the heart, outwearied and exhausted by constant denial and failure in the desire of the vital mind, there must be something in the innermost soul which clings and returns to it, otherwise we may fall on the path or abandon it from weakness and inability to bear temporary defeat, disappointment, difficulty and peril. In the Yoga as in life it is the man who persists unwearied to the last in the face of every defeat and disillusionment and of all confronting, hostile and contradicting events and powers who conquers in the end and finds his faith justified because to the soul and Shakti in man nothing is impossible.

(*On Yoga I, The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 883*)

SRI AUROBINDO

(6)

Doubt is not a sport to indulge in with impunity; it is a poison which' drop by drop corrodes the soul.

(*Words of the Mother*, p. 227)

THE MOTHER

(7)

This faith we must have and develop to perfection that all things are the workings under the universal conditions of a supreme self-knowledge and wisdom, that nothing done in us or around us is in vain or without its appointed place and just significance, that all things are possible when the Ishwara as our supreme Self and Spirit takes up the action and that all that has been done before and all that he will do hereafter was and will be part of his infallible and foreseeing guidance and intended towards the fruition of our Yoga and our perfection and our life work. This faith will be more and more justified as the higher knowledge opens, we shall begin to see the great and small significances that escaped our limited mentality and faith will pass into knowledge. Then we shall see beyond the possibility of doubt that all happens within the working of the one Will and that will was also wisdom because it develops always the true workings in life of the self and nature. The highest state of the assent, the *śraddhā* of the being will be when we feel the presence of the Ishwara and feel all our existence and consciousness and thought and will and action in his hand and consent in all things and with every part of our self and nature to the direct and immanent and occupying will of the Spirit. And that highest perfection of the *śraddhā* will also be the opportunity and perfect foundation of a divine strength: it will base, when complete, the development and manifestation and the works of the luminous supramental Shakti.

(*On Yoga I, The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 893)

SRI AUROBINDO

(8)

If you keep your faith unshaken and your heart always open to me, then all difficulties, however great, will contribute to the greater perfection of your being.

(*Words of the Mother*, p. 236)

THE MOTHER

(9)

Faith, even an intellectual faith, must always be a worker of miracles.

(*The Ideal of Human Unity*, p. 364)

SRI AUROBINDO

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI

## MY CLASS

I SAT before the children's class  
And gazed at their lovely liquid eyes,  
That were eloquent with love for me  
And silently spoke of golden ties.

Each face reflected a living soul  
That had to be handled with utmost care,  
Each being was a little living plant  
Aspiring to grow and fill the air.

I felt like an ignorant gardener  
Who knows not when to water the seeds,  
But who loves them dearly and serves them well,  
Trying his best to meet their needs.

I felt like a new and awkward maid  
Clearing the crystal vases all,  
She admires their bright transparency  
But fears to touch them lest they fall.

Their faces shone with eager love  
Looking on me as their guiding star,  
I sang with joy, then quivered with fright,  
Remembering the goal so far!

Were they the tender embodiments  
Of humanity's earnest prayers to God  
That all creation may evolve and grow,  
to shining souls from dullest sod?

One looked at me with piercing eyes,  
His heart was stamped with an iron will,  
He argued, announced his 'theories and creed',  
Delivering as though a Sermon on the Hill!

A little girl, such an innocent thing,  
Personification of sweetness and mirth,  
Her black and beautiful doe-like eyes  
Were drinking in all the bliss on earth.

A dark tall girl had shot up her hand,  
Bubbling to babble some news to me,  
Just as I nodded towards her side  
The words rolled out like waves of the sea.

Then the boys rebuffed and shouted aloud,  
With a serious air they put her down;  
It was their turn now to speak of war  
And soldiers, captains and deeds in town.

I have tried to cut and polish all well,  
For every child was a precious gem,  
To be made my soul-offering to Her,  
For Her I'd make a crown with them.

A TEACHER

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## CELEBRATION OF THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY THE SCHOOL FOR PERFECT EYESIGHT

MAY 5, 1970

“THE MORE THE MIND IS QUIET, THE MORE THE SIGHT IS GOOD.” With this profound message of the Divine Mother THE SCHOOL FOR PERFECT EYESIGHT was opened on May 5, 1968. Since then its progress and expansion has been quite fast. Its unique feature is to treat cases of defective eyesight and many other so-called incurable eye troubles by means of eye education and mental relaxation.

Almost every eye specialist of the world believes that for such defects as myopia and hypermetropia there is not only no cure but practically no preventative also. From such a belief any rational mind will conclude that ophthalmic science is in a very imperfect stage. What some Ophthalmologists wrote about two hundred years back on the incurability of the refractive ailments is continuing as a dogma even today, in the days of advanced science. We are so much hypnotised by the assertions of the old authorities that we do not care to make any experiment or do some research on the subject. And if anyone comes forward to say that cases of errors of refraction can be improved without glasses, we begin to doubt and without any study discard his explanation. Such is the condition of our mind which is supposed to be scientific. A scientific mind is always open to admit a truth or a fact.

Dr. Bates of New York developed through many experiments and clinical observations a new system of eye education and made many discoveries to correct the errors of refraction. The most remarkable discovery of Dr. Bates is that fine print reading is extremely beneficial to prevent and cure most eye troubles.

Often it is surprising how quickly the vision begins to improve by Dr. Bates's simple methods of eye education. For example, a girl student at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, whose eyesight had failed both for far and near, recovered normal eyesight in about a week's time. The editor of *Mother India*, Mr. K. D. Sethna, has discarded his plus glasses after using them for about 20 years and reads fine print daily. Mr. Chandradip feels cured of his incipient cataract. Recently two cases of night blindness have been cured.

Strange as it may seem, Dr. Bates's system of eye education is almost dead in the land of its origin—America—but it lives and grows in India. We have developed a synthesis of all the systems for practical working. To train more doctors on these lines a four-year medical course in Ophthalmic Science has been started in this School where further researches will continue.

Last year on the August Darshan an exhibition on eye education was organised in the School. Since then it has taken a permanent shape and many visitors come to see it.

DR. R. S. AGARWAL