

MOTHER INDIA

JANUARY, 1972

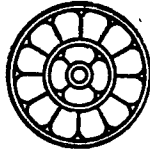
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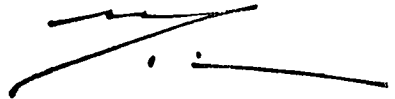


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. XXIII

No. 12

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail".

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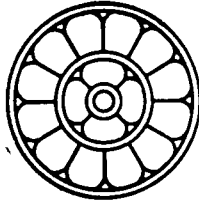
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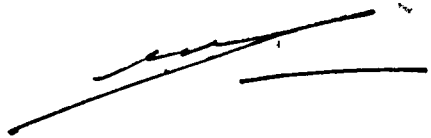
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THE MOTHER'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE

1972

Let us all try to be worthy
of Sri Aurobindo's centenary.



WORDS OF THE MOTHER

You are here to contact your soul, and that is why you live.
Aspire persistently and try to silence your mind.
The aspiration must come from the heart.

11-6-1971

You have my love, my grace and my blessings.
But in order to feel them, you must be disciplined, attentive and concentrated,
and specially you must not listen to all your desires and fancies.
In life you must choose between a disorderly and futile life of desires and the
ascent in the light of aspiration and of the domination of the lower nature.

16-6-1971

*
**

Auroville must not tell lies. One who aspires to be an Aurovilian must resolve
never to tell a lie.

All fancies are vital movements and most undesirable.
Liberty does not mean to follow one's desires but on the contrary to be free from
them.

28-8-1971

*
**

Q: What is obstinacy? How can one use it best?

It is the wrong use of a great quality—perseverance.
Make a good use of it and it will be all right.
Be obstinate in your effort towards progress and your obstinacy will become
useful.

MAY, 1971

*Q: About every ten days I have an attack of fatigue and exhaustion which has a
tendency to turn into inertia and discouragement.*

Take no notice of it and go on with your programme as usual. It is the quickest
way of getting rid of it.

It is the ego that gets depressed.

Do not mind it. Go on quietly with the work and the depression will disappear.

18-8-1971

*
**

For each problem there is a solution that can give satisfaction to everybody, but for finding this ideal solution each one must want it instead of meeting the others with the will to enforce one's own preference.

Enlarge your consciousness and aspire for the satisfaction of all.

28-8-1971

You see only *your side* of the question but if you want to widen your consciousness it would be better to look from all sides impartially. Later you will discover that this attitude has great advantages.

17-9-1971

Harmony is my aim and all that leads to harmony makes me happy.

When we have to work collectively, it is always better to insist, in our thoughts, feelings and actions, on the points of agreement rather than on the points of divergence.

We must give importance to the things that unite, and ignore as much as possible those that separate.

Even when physically the lines of work differ, the union can remain intact and constant if we keep always in mind the essential points and principles which unite, and the Divine Goal, the Realisation which must be the one unchanging object of our aspiration and works.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1971)

(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.)

May 23, 1956

Sweet Mother, what is the difference between Yoga and religion?

Ah! my child... it is as though you were asking me the difference between a dog and a cat!

(Long silence)

Imagine someone who, in some way or other, has heard about something like the Divine or has a personal feeling that something of the kind exists, and begins to make all sorts of efforts: effort of will, effort of discipline, effort of concentration, all sorts of efforts to find this Divine, to discover what it is, become acquainted with Him and unite with Him. Then this person is doing Yoga.

Now, if this person has noted all the processes employed and constructs a fixed system, and sets up all that he has discovered as absolute laws,—for example, he says: the Divine is like this, to find the Divine you must do this, make this particular gesture, take this attitude, perform this ceremony, and you must admit that this is the truth, you must say: “I accept that this is the Truth and I fully adhere to it; and your method is the only right one, the only one which exists”—if all that is written down, organised, arranged into fixed laws and ceremonies, that becomes a religion.

Can one realise the Divine by this method (of religion)?

Those who carry within themselves a spiritual destiny and are born to realise the Divine, to become conscious in Him and live Him, will get there, no matter what path, what way they follow. That is to say, even in religion there are people who have had spiritual experiences and found the Divine—not because of the religion, generally, in spite of it, notwithstanding it—because they had the inner urge and that

urge led them there despite all obstacles and through them. Everything was good for them.

But if these very people want to express their experience, they naturally use the terms of the religion in which they were brought up, so they restrict their experience and perforce limit it greatly, they make it so to say sectarian. But they themselves may very well have surpassed all the forms and all the limitations and all the conventions and had the true experience in its pure simplicity.

Sweet Mother, in the world today most people follow some sort of religion. Are they helped?

Not much.

Perhaps they are beginning again now, but for a long time towards the beginning of this century, they had repudiated religion as something opposed to knowledge—at least all intellectual people had. And it is only recently that there has begun a movement of return to something other than a thorough-going positivism.

People follow a religion by social habit, in order not to be ill-spoken of by others. For instance, in a village, it is difficult not to go to religious ceremonies, for all your neighbours will point their finger at you. But that has absolutely nothing to do with spiritual life, nothing at all.

(*Silence*)

The first time I came to India I came on a Japanese boat. And on this Japanese boat there were two clergymen, that is, Protestant priests, of different sects. I don't remember what sects exactly, but they were both English; I think one was an Anglican and the other a Presbyterian.

Now, Sunday came. There had to be a religious ceremony on the boat, else they would have looked like pagans, even as the Japanese! There had to be a ceremony, but who should perform it? Should it be the Anglican or should it be the Presbyterian? They all but missed quarelling. Finally, one of them withdrew with dignity (I don't remember which one now, I think it was the Anglican) and the Presbyterian performed his ceremony.

That took place in the saloon of the ship. We had to go down a few steps to this saloon. And that day, all the men put on their suits—it was hot, I think we were in the Red Sea—, they put on their waist-coats, collars, leather shoes, neckties well set, hats on, and they went down, a book under their arm, almost in a procession from the deck to the saloon. The ladies had their hats, some carried even a parasol, and they too had their book under the arm, a prayer-book.

And so, they all crowded down into the saloon, and the Presbyterian gave a sermon, that is to say, preached, and everybody listened very religiously. And then,

when it was over, they all came up with the satisfied air of someone who has done his duty. And naturally, five minutes later they were at the bar drinking and playing cards, and their religious ceremony was forgotten. They had done their duty, it was over, there was nothing more to be said about it.

And the clergyman came to ask me, more or less politely, why I had not attended. I told him: "Sir, I am sorry, but I don't believe in religion."

"Oh! oh! you are a materialist!"

"No, not at all."

"Ah! then why?"

"Oh! if I were to tell you, you would be quite displeased, it would be better not to say anything!"

But he insisted so much that I said at last: "Just this, that I don't feel you are sincere, neither you nor your flock. You all went there to fulfil a social duty and a social custom, not at all because you really wanted to enter into communion with God."

"Enter into communion with God! But we can't do that! All that we can do is to say some good words, but we have no ability to enter into communion with God."

Then I said: "But it was just because of that I didn't go, for that doesn't interest me."

After that he asked me many questions and confided to me that he was going to China to convert the "pagans". At last I became serious and told him: "Listen, even before your religion was born—it is not yet two thousand years ago—the Chinese had a very high philosophy and knew a path leading them to the Divine; and when they think of Westerners, they think of them as barbarians. And you are going there to convert those who know more about it than you? What are you going to teach them? To be insincere, to perform hollow ceremonies instead of following a profound philosophy and a detachment from life which lead them to a more spiritual consciousness?...I don't think you are going to do a very good thing."

Then he felt so suffocated, the poor man; he said to me: "Eh, I fear, I can't be convinced by your words!"

"Oh!" I said, "I am not trying to convince you, I only described the situation to you, and how I don't quite see why barbarians should wish to go and teach civilised people what they have known long before you. That's all."

And that was the end of it.

Mother, in the Buddhist traditions it is said...

Oh! Oh! you are becoming a Buddhist! It's the fashion.

Yes?

...They say that two thousand five hundred years after the Buddha's birth...

Yes, he will return to preach a new Buddhism, is that it?

It seems his teaching will come to an end, and be replaced by something new.

Yes, it is that gentleman, what is his name...X, who told you that?

But that is his theory. He told me also that he thought that it was Sri Aurobindo who had realised the teachings of the Buddha. Is that it? You did not go to his lecture?...No, then what did you want to ask?

Because it is now—tomorrow is the day the two thousand five hundred years will be over—does this correspond to the new thing?

What new thing?

The new Supramental Manifestation.

Oh! Listen, this seems to me just the type of discovery one makes when one wants something sensational.

There are always many ways of interpreting texts, and one does it according to what one likes them to say.

(Silence)

That reminds me of something: *(turning to a professor)* have they found the sounds with which hieroglyphs are to be read?

Egyptian?

Yes, hieroglyphs, they are Egyptian!

I think so.

That means they have found the spoken language of five thousand years ago?

I think so. And there are hieroglyphs which are phonetic also.

Phonetic! Where can this information be had?

It is in the library, Mother, there is something.

Oh!... Because I was asking myself how they had restored the names of the Pharoahs and Gods. Naturally, more recent peoples have spoken about them, the

Greeks mention them, the Phoenicians speak of them; *they* had phonetic writing. But older than that? The first Pharaohs and all those names of the Gods, who has found these?

Tradition says it is Champollion, with the Rosetta Stone; they found a stone with writings in Egyptian, Greek and Coptic, which helped to solve the problem.

He was sure it was the same thing written in Egyptian and in Greek? How did he make sure of that?

There was a vague idea, there were guiding references and cross-checking.

But that was for the meaning, not for the sounds.

Yes.

What language was spoken in the Schools of Initiation? How did they communicate, those people?

I know that sounds are given for the words. Now, whether they know the exact pronunciation or not is another matter. They don't even know the pronunciation of old Greek.

Greek? They don't know the pronunciation?

They don't know how it used to be pronounced.

Is the language of ancient Egypt contemporaneous with the earliest Sanskrit, or is it older still? And then, yet another thing: was the cuneiform inscription of Assyria phonetic or hieroglyphic?

I believe that there too it is possible to read the sounds, for quite a number of names given in the Bible have been set right and it has been found that there were deformations: Nabuchodonosor, for example.

Yes. Oh! that has been changed.

Now, whether they are absolutely sure of having found the sounds?...

Yes, that seems strange to me. For a book came to my hands in which the names were restored, and had become a little funny! But still, there must have been a cer-

tain way of pronouncing them. I mean, does any other human language go further back than the oldest Sanskrit?

I don't know the dates of the oldest language.

And one thing more, is this hieroglyphic Egyptian related to the Chaldean line or the Aryan? There are Sanskrit roots in all the languages. It is precisely that I wanted to know.

I read somewhere that the priests of Egypt used to give initiation with mantras.

Sanskrit mantras? But that must be in a novel, surely!

Some Sanskrit words.

There are Sanskrit roots (a little deformed) in all languages. And there is a very old tradition claiming to be older than both the bifurcating lines, Aryan and Chaldean. But Greek, for instance, which is relatively recent, is it a language of Aryan or Chaldean origin?

Greek is altogether Aryan.

Altogether Aryan.

Egyptian is of Chaldean origin.

Chaldean, yes. But everywhere there has been a mixture of Egyptian and Greek.

The Phoenician language was older. From the point of view of the written language, it was earlier than Greek.

But Phoenician is phonetic, it is a phonetic language.

And hieroglyphs were written from top to bottom and from right to left, or was it from left to right?

Right to left.

Right to left. Chaldean languages are written like that. Chinese and Japanese also. Only Aryan languages are written from left to right.

(Meditation)

Much later, at the time of publication of this Talk, a disciple asked the Mother what gave rise to these questions on the hieroglyphs.

It used to interest me very much, once, to know about them. I tried to recall to memory things which existed at that time, but I could not get the answer. There was a complete gap.

Did you hear sounds?

(After a silence) Look, I'll give you an instance. Nearly two years ago, I had a vision about Z's son....She had brought him to me, he was not quite a year old, and I had just come from seeing him there, in the room where I see people. He gave me the impression of someone I knew well, but I could not tell who. And then, in the afternoon of the same day I had a vision. A vision of ancient Egypt, that is to say, I was someone there, the great priestess or somebody (I don't know who, for one doesn't tell oneself "I am so and so": the identification is complete, there is no objectifying, so I don't know). I was in a wonderful building, immense! so high! but quite bare, there was nothing, except a place where there were magnificent paintings. So there I recognised the paintings of ancient Egypt. And I was coming out of my apartments, was entering a kind of large hall. There was a sort of gutter all round the bottom of the walls, for collecting water. And then I saw the child (who was half naked) playing in there. And I was quite shocked, I said: "What's this! it's horrible!" (but the feelings, ideas, all that was translated into French in my consciousness). There was the tutor who came, I had him called. I scolded him. I heard sounds. Well, I don't know what I said, I don't remember the sounds at all now. I heard the sounds I was articulating, I knew what they meant, but the translation was in French, and the sounds I could not remember. I spoke to him, told him: "How is it you let the child play in there?" And he answered me (and I woke up with his reply) saying (I did not hear the first words, but in my thought it was): "Amenhotep likes it." Amenhotep I heard, I remembered. So I knew the child was Amenhotep.

Hence I know that I spoke; I spoke a language which I don't remember now. I remembered "Amenhotep" because I know it in my waking consciousness: "Amenhotep." But otherwise, the other sounds did not remain. I have no memory of the sounds.

And I know I was his mother; at that moment I knew who I was, for I know Amenhotep is the son of so-and-so (besides, I looked up the history). Else there is no connection: a hole.

I always admire those mediums (usually very simple people) who have the exact memory of the sound, who can tell you: "Look, I said that and that." In this way

one would have the phonetic notation. If I could remember the sounds I pronounced, we would have the notation, but I don't.

I remember this conversation: suddenly I said to myself: "It would be so interesting if one could hear that language", and then, from curiosity: "How have they discovered the pronunciation? How?" Besides, all the names we were taught as children, in ancient history, have been changed today. They say they have discovered the sounds, or at least they claim to have found them. But I don't know.

It is the same for ancient Babylon: I have extremely precise memories, completely, but when I speak I don't remember the sounds I utter, there is only the mental transcription.

I have no memory of the sounds.

I was wondering what had prompted all your questions.

It was just that, it is that I am aware I have no memory of the sounds. There are people who remember the sounds, I don't have that memory. So I was interested in knowing that. Otherwise I have always been able (when there was something of the past which was doubtful for me, or interesting or incomplete), I have always had the means of making it come back to my consciousness. But sounds don't come. It comes as a state of consciousness which is translated mentally, and so it is translated mentally into words which I know. So it is not all interesting.

Even now, even while I was playing music, the memory of the sounds was vague and incomplete. I remembered the sounds I heard in the "source of music" (*gesture upwards*), and then, when the material music reproduced some of these sounds I recognised them; but there is not that precision, that exactness which could make it possible for me to reproduce with the voice or with an instrument the exact sound. That is not there, that is missing. Whereas the memory of the eyes was... it was stupefying. A thing I had seen but once, it was fixed, never forgotten.

Several times in this way in visions ("visions", actually memories: memories relived), I have spoken the language of that time, spoken it, heard myself speaking, but the sound has not remained. The *sense* of what I said has remained but the sound hasn't.

It is a pity.

ARE SRI AUROBINDO'S OLD POLITICAL WRITINGS APPLICABLE TO CURRENT PROBLEMS?

On the 23rd November 1971, someone wrote to the Mother as follows:

Mother,

Now that You have extended Your work to cover the whole of India and the world (through "Sri Aurobindo's Action" and otherwise) there is a great demand from outside people to know Sri Aurobindo's views on and solutions for all the current perplexing problems in political, economic, social, educational and other spheres.

To meet this demand the usual tendency is to look back into the old writings of Sri Aurobindo and to propose his views expressed in them as his solutions to the current problems. This is often done in our Ashram journals....

In the following letter written in 1937 to X apropos of a review of his book *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*¹, Sri Aurobindo has given a clear warning against this tendency. Thirty-four years after this warning was given it has become still more important to remember it and to stop doing what he had forbidden then.

Sri Aurobindo's Letter

Q: Have you seen my review of *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*?

A: Yes, I have seen it, but I don't think it can be published in its present form as it prolongs the political Aurobindo of that time into the Sri Aurobindo of the present time. You even assert that I have "thoroughly" revised the book and these articles are an index of my latest views on the burning problems of the day and there has been no change in my views in 27 years (which would surely be proof of a rather unprogressive mind). How do you get all that? My spiritual consciousness and knowledge at that time was as nothing to what it is now—how would the change leave my view of politics and life unmodified altogether? There has been no such thorough revision; I have left the book as it is, because it would be useless to modify what was written so long ago—the same as with *Yoga and its Objects*. Anyway the review would almost amount to a proclamation of my present political views—while on the contrary I have been careful to pronounce nothing—no views whatever on political questions for the last I don't know how many years.

21.4.1937

Sri Aurobindo

¹ This book is a collection of Sri Aurobindo's articles published in the weekly review *The Karmayogin* during 1909-20.

On reading the above letter the Mother remarked:

“C'est très important. Ça c'est très important.” (*The Mother repeated this several times.*)

“Je savais mais personne ne croyait. Il avait changé complètement son point de vue.”

“It is very important. It is very important.” (*The Mother repeated this several times.*)

“I knew it but nobody believed. He had completely changed his point of view.”

23.11.1971

“SAKUNTALA”

A POEM FROM SRI AUROBINDO'S MANUSCRIPTS AND ITS CURIOUS HISTORY

(We are publishing for the first time, in its proper context of correspondence, a poem sent as being Sri Aurobindo's to Mother India for the Special Number of August 15, 1949. Subsequently Sri Aurobindo said that it could not be published as his. And we are not publishing it now as an entirely original piece by him. But it would be a pity to suppress altogether a composition of 45 beautiful lines in which Sri Aurobindo's hand has certainly been at work, even if it is not the sole worker. The letter which accompanied the lines and the two that were exchanged soon after make an interesting account of a literary incident both curious and significant. One of the letters is Sri Aurobindo's own, hitherto unpublished. At the end we give, along with a comment by him, another poem—a disciple's—written 16 years before 1949 and connected with the still earlier event that had served as the starting-point of Sri Aurobindo's lines. It will be seen to provide a further reason why these lines should not be withheld from publication; for Sri Aurobindo was under a mistaken impression that it resembled them very closely. More than three-fourths of it differs completely from them and from the old longer treatment of the same theme, which was set aside.)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF “MOTHER INDIA”

Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 29.7.1949

Amal,

Here is the long-awaited poem of Sri Aurobindo—“Sakuntala”—for the special number of *Mother India*. We thought of adding a note to it indicating when it was written. But the Master does not remember all that. So the poem goes as it is.

Sri Aurobindo has thoroughly revised the poem and added some new lines here and there. Isn't it a marvellous thing?

RANJU

SAKUNTALA

O last of many lovely forest moona,
And you, lost playmates, winged dawn-worshippers,
Singers of the hieroglyphics of the light,
Blooms touched by the sun's scouts, and lotuses
That gleam like faery footsteps on the lake,
You too! O antlered heads raised high to greet

My aimless wanderings with your wild brown stare!
 Your thought brings me the nectar of swift tears
 For happy yesterdays that can dawn no more.
 Oft have I lingered near you in your home
 Beneath the stir of faint high-tossing leaves.
 A glory of Sirishas overhead,
 I awaited the slow dusk and grew aware
 Of each calm moment like a friendly eye
 Regarding me out of the deepening night.
 But now I go for ever from your gaze.
 Thy beauty passes through my aching sense
 Into my soul, O forest; thou hast held me
 A loving prisoner in thy ample shade;
 But now I shall exceed thee; I shall hold
 Thy myriad secrets in my opulent thoughts;
 Nor shall my memory fail you, fragile buds
 Of poor wild wayside nameless fragrances,
 Thin grasses with unrecognised small discs
 Of humble colour, you too shall be mine!
 Nothing of you shall I forget, though far
 Taken from all. A hero passion's will
 Draws me from all this wealth of natural joy
 To dense rich pleasure-peopled hours of ease
 And spacious royalty and sceptred love.
 But even there shall your companionship
 Be close to my heart's voiceless memory,
 And bring back to the yearning inner eye
 This forest dream of bright and lovely things.
 Nature's free innocent loveliness shall dwell
 Like a religion native in my breast
 Transforming the splendour of those unborn nights
 Into a virginal dream. My wordless prayer
 Shall count great moments of identity
 With the deep Mother's heart in whom you live,
 On an everlasting rosary of moon-dawns,
 And you move with me, a charm within a charm,
 A tranquil incense in love's burning flame,
 A hidden treasure in the wealthy years,
 All the old joy in the new life survive.

LETTER TO SRI AUROBINDO

Bombay, 31.7.1949.

Sri Aurobindo,

I have received "Sakuntala". But how am I to print it as it is? There has been a capital confusion. What you worked upon was not your own poem but mine!

Years and years ago I made a first attempt at blank verse. It was a failure. You called it Tennyson and water. But it contained a few good lines. These bodily and some others which you have greatly improved upon are now in the poem you have sent me—together with some lines that are entirely your own, though perhaps born out of some hint in my verses.

I wrote:

Lost playmates, birds and quiet lotuses
 And antlered heads that met her, half-amazed
 Yet buoyant, mid the patient, heavy trees
 Beneath whose leaves she had often stretched herself
 And, spite of deepening darkness, grown aware
 Of each calm moment as a friendly eye.

You have transfigured these lines—and there is enough of transfiguration to make your version stand as an independent passage, but the penultimate line in it would be called plagiarism. Transfigured into originality is also my passage:

...how could

I know that he whose sceptred will was law
 And royally with pleasure peopled his
 Vast hours of wealth could be like me who never
 Had seen a world beyond these avenues
 Of verdant shadows and tranquillities.

But look now at these lines from my poem:

...No longer shall my feet explore
 These haunts; but blessed sorrow! now that I
 Must soon relinquish their companionship,
 Thy beauty passes through my aching sense
 Into my soul, O forest; thou hast held me
 A willing prisoner in thy ample shades;
 But henceforth I exceed thee, for I hold
 Thy myriad secrets in my sweet, dim thoughts!
 Nor shall my memory fail you, fragile buds
 Of poor wild wayside nameless fragrances,
 Thin grasses with unrecognised small discs
 Of humble colour, you too shall be mine!

In your version the best lines are almost *verbatim* the same as here and I have used them in a poem I made later and showed you. It was called "Sakuntala's Farewell". It won your approval and I have published it in *The Secret Splendour*. You must be having with you a copy of my book.

The last fifteen lines of your "Sakuntala" seem to be entirely your own, except perhaps that the last line,

Like a religion native in my breast,

wakes up a semi-remembrance in me of something I have written somewhere.

What do you advise me to do? Your transfiguration of my attempt can be printed. But the four lines, from "Nor shall my memory fail you" to "you too shall be mine", are already in print in my book in as good as the same form and will be condemned in your poem as pure and sheer plagiarism! So too the phrase:

Thy beauty passes through my aching sense

Into my soul, O forest,

which reappears in my "Sakuntala's Farewell". Now that you have taken so much trouble and created such a beautiful piece, I feel rotten about keeping it out of the Special Number. But if these lines stand, what else can I do? If you can drop them and fill whatever gap is made I shall be very happy to include the poem. The four complete lines can, of course, be easily dropped, as also the line about the forest's beauty passing into the soul. What you have to do is to take the line,

Into my soul, O forest! thou hast held me,

and replace the first three words. You have also perhaps to see whether the "you" in the line "Nothing of you shall I forget..." harmonises with the "thou" here.

Kindly send me your instructions.

With love, AMAL.

A LETTER FROM SRI AUROBINDO

Pondicherry, August 3, 1949.

Amal,

My version of Sakuntala's farewell had, since it was written, lain neglected, written on two sides on a small piece of paper, unsigned by me and with no indication of its origin. Nolini found it, thought it a beautiful poem and wanted to publish it in one of our journals. I myself had no recollection of the poem or the history of its origin and no one recollected your poem on the subject in *The Secret Splendour*. Under the circumstances I made some alterations in it in order to remove all weaknesses and defects and allowed Nolini to send it to *Mother India*. Now that I know from you all about the matter, it is obvious that the poem cannot be published as mine. You need have no scruples about it; my version has its beauty and is even perfect in its own way but it is not such a masterpiece that it must be published at any cost. Besides, although it is not Tennyson and water, for I have wrung out all the water, still

Tennyson is its spiritual author; it has the metrical fashion and rhythm of Tennyson and a certain character in the basis of the style which is his, even though both you and I have put in in the lines which are your own and those which are my own more poetic strength than Tennyson ever had, but especially the development of the subject is in his manner. Two poems of this kind are hardly justifiable especially when they resemble each other so closely;¹ besides, the common lines which are the best are yours and I would have to alter them entirely and I don't think I will be able to manage it without more trouble than I am disposed to take. So there let it rest.

SRI AUROBINDO

SAKUNTALA'S FAREWELL

A huge sky-passion sprouting from the earth
 In branchèd vastnesses of leafy rapture,
 Thy beauty quivers through my aching sense,
 Into my soul, O Forest, like a fire!
 Nor shall my memory fail thy fragile buds
 Of poor wild wayside nameless fragrances,
 Thin grasses with unrecognised small discs
 Of humble colour—they too shall be mine!
 For through the widening silence of my thought
 The warrior wind, the tall tree's gorgeous cry,
 The chilling slashed monotony of rain,
 The frog's barbaric wail, the sedge's sigh
 Pass like one mystic splendour... O pure Spirit,
 Love for thy beauty has made even my slumber
 The smile of an invisible great light
 Upon each limb; but thou hast also taught me
 From the profundities of voiceless calm
 To wake with an ever simple gay child-heart—
 As when the white emerging dawn first falls
 On thy large wood-gloom green and murmurless,
 The solemn meditation of slow night
 Breaks into glimmering bird-melody!...
 My whole self flames and flowers, an eternal
 Wonder impregnate with thy paradise;

¹ As pointed out in the Boxnote, this impression of Sri Aurobindo's is a mistake. What his version resembles closely in several thematic details is not the poem published in *The Secret Splendour* but the original over which he worked and which had never got into print when he wrote his letter. (Editor)

Each hue has kindled here an ecstasy,
 Each swaying shadow left a benison.
 I kneel, O Master: all my life is thine!

28.6.1933

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

Sri Aurobindo's Comment: "It is very good poetry and there are many fine lines. Each line is a cut gem by itself and there is sufficient variation of movement or at least of rhythmic tone."

UNSOWN SEEDS

THROUGH the grim ravages of a hostile world
 Peopled with slander, jealousy, gossip and hate—
 A Ray of Truth-Light piercing the eye of the sun
 Came pouring down into a dying Fate.

My heart was closed to the clamour of the crowd,
 Yet in my hand a Lamp of purest Gold
 Burned on the altar of my aspiring soul
 And yearned to love, this higher Light enfold.

A hundred thousand lives merged into One—
 The Rishi-Dawn, the Sacrificial Fire
 Aspired to meet the Supramental Sun:
 The fate of aeons born of man's desire

Leaped to the future hours yet unborn
 To walk untrodden paths of worlds unknown,
 To face with courage the Dawn of the Golden Day
 And reap the Harvest here from seeds unsown

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of October 1971)

(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.)

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1971)

MAY 30, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO (*addressing P and smiling*): Have you heard of the great and glorious British victory?

P: Conquest of Narvik? Yes. The Germans also admit it now.

N: We can say now that Hitler's decline has begun. (*Laughter*)

P: Dunkirk is still in the Allies' hands. There is a great concentration of navy. Perhaps the B.E.F. will be able to escape.

SRI AUROBINDO: They seem to be very clever in retreat (*laughter*)—the French are not.

S: It will be a great feat if they can escape.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it can be called a great military feat.

P: The Germans are leaving a great number of dead in this campaign.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, they are always reckless.

P: Shaw says that what Russia has not been able to do in 23 years England has done in 2½ years.

SRI AUROBINDO: What?

N: State Socialism.

SRI AUROBINDO: Russia has not done it.

P: No—only according to him. And then he says that when the British people are frightened they flare up. The Kaiser frightened them and he was defeated. Hitler also will have the same fate.

SRI AUROBINDO: Is he defending war now?

P: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has been frightened himself then? (*Laughter*)

P: He asks Ireland to join with the Allies, otherwise they will have the same fate as Poland at German hands.

MAY 31, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO (*beginning the talk*): So they are getting away from Dunkirk!

P: Yes. It seems the fog helped the evacuation.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes . Fog is rather unusual at this time.

(By saying this, it seemed Sri Aurobindo wanted to hint that the Mother and he had made this fog to help the Allies.)

Now they have let out King Leopold who was in sympathy with Germany for a long time. The Belgian ambassador in Spain said that he had always sympathy with Totalitarianism.

S: This fight has given some confidence to the British Expeditionary Force.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the British were becoming used to quiet and comfort.

P (*after some time when the others had gone*): Adwaitanand (a visitor) says that wherever he has travelled in India he has found a living current of spirituality and he is very glad. Even people who have been atheists and materialists are now turning to spirituality or having a regard for it.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): Even Subash Bose when depressed talks of spirituality. (*Laughter*)

P: He has met Congress leaders and they are also changing, he says. Rajendra Prasad he found a very good man.

P (*after a while*): This Muslim delegation for the All India Muslim Education Conference has arrived.

SRI AUROBINDO: Delegation? It is not a delegation.

P: Hasn't it been sent by Calcutta University? The Vice-Chancellor of the university is the President.

Sri Aurobindo: Calcutta University? I thought he had done it in his own capacity. Does he want to Mahomedanise Calcutta University?

N: Dilip says he is not impressed by them. Almost all look "stolid", he says.

P: I don't see why they have come to Pondicherry for their purpose.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after some time*): The British are preparing their defence now.

P: Wells considers that the German threat to invade is a myth to keep British forces in England instead of letting them come to France.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't think the invasion is likely or possible.

S: They can only make air-raids.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

N: (*addressing P*): Jinnah has come out. So he is not ill.

SRI AUROBINDO: He says practically to the government, "You side with us and we will see—"

P: What can the Congress do?

N: If the government concedes to the Congress, can the Muslim League do anything effective against them?

S: What can they do?

N: Non-violent non-cooperation?

P: Non-violent? By the Muslims?

SRI AUROBINDO: They can start some Khaksar agitation.

EVENING

P: The Germans claim to have sunk three warships and many troop-ships of the Allies.

SRI AUROBINDO: Three warships?

P: Two battleships and one cruiser.

SRI AUROBINDO: Two sloops probably. Difficult to believe German claims even when they say what is true.

After some time Sri Aurobindo lay in bed.

SRI AUROBINDO: I was reading this book of Amiya Chakravarty, "*The Dynasts*" and *Post-war Poetry*. The quotations he gives from Hardy and Auden etc. are most of them what I said of Ramesh Dutt's poetry: execrable. (*Laughter*) Give me the book, I shall read out some.

(*After reading from the book here and there*) Each one is worse than the other. Compared to the modern ones, Hardy is better though he does not hesitate to write flat prose. (*Laughter*)

P: *The Dynasts* is about Napoleonic times.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it is a caricature of Napoleon. It makes him a tyrant—it is pacifist poetry.

JUNE 1, 1940

P: The Muslim delagation was very pleased with Dilip's music last night—especially so when Dilip said that the Muslims have made a great contribution to music. (*Laughter*) That pleases them very much but they are not so pleased when any Hindu contribution is spoken of. It is quite apparent. It was Aurangzeb who banned music among the Muslims, and the Koran also forbids it.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Koran also?

P: Yes, that is why other Muslim countries like Persia have no music. After Akbar, in India music dwindled among the Muslims and by Aurangzeb's order all court musicians were thrown out of employment.

SRI AUROBINDO: What about painting?

P: Painting also.

SRI AUROBINDO: Do they think that birds and animals can be represented as God?

P: Perhaps they consider it a luxury.

SRI AUROBINDO: But that is inconsistent. They can have many concubines: is not that a luxury?

P: Yes, four are sanctioned and that only in Arabistan. It may be due to a disproportionate number of men and women.

SRI AUROBINDO: This has not been recorded.

P: In this visiting Muslim group there are only one or two who are open and interested in spiritual things. One is a professor of mathematics in Aligarh and another of Murshidabad, Secretary of the Assembly. The others are all closed. But the Vice-Chancellor was taking pride in the Ashram because it was started by a Bengali.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): The Bengali Muslims have some such feelings. Nazimuddin said that the Congress has done injustice to Bose and it was an insult to Bengal.

S: Italy is coming into the war.

P: Demanding Corsica!

SRI AUROBINDO: France can as well claim Sicily saying that France conquered it at one time, and Sardinia because it is near her.

P: It seems Roosevelt is standing for the third time.

SRI AUROBINDO: Is he? Is it decided?

P: Almost; somebody whom Roosevelt was to back for Presidentship has given a hint that Roosevelt will stand. Absence of precedence is no reason, he says. Some American admiral has said that instead of waiting to deliver 4000 air planes after some years, America should send 1000 planes straight away to the Allies

SRI AUROBINDO: Roosevelt would have done that except for this election affair. Wilson took his stand because he had already been elected.

P: The President has unlimited powers.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh yes, except to get money from the Congress he can do practically anything.

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO (*starting the talk*): The French are not clever at retreat. The Germans seem to have separated the French army from the B.E.F., the main part of which is now evacuating. The French were covering the B.E.F. By this separation two divisions seem to have been lost. They claim that they have captured General Prioux. The paper says that the Germans have divided the line from Lille and

Dunkirk and there are some natural hills in Belgium which afford natural defence lines. The Germans were trying to occupy these hills, one of which, Mount Cassel, they have captured. By that move they have been able to separate the French army. (*After a time*) I was thinking why the Allies were not erecting something like trenches around Dunkirk to defend it more effectively against mechanised tanks, and I now find that they have done exactly that.

S: Yes, they have dug moats and flooded the area. What news about Narvik? (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, now we find that Narvik was taken by the French, Poles and Norwegians. The British helped with their Navy only.

P: Sisir told me to ask from Azizul Hoque the Calcutta University publications for our Ashram. Hoque consented to give them. It seems he was only an ordinary pleader at Krishnanagar. It was because he was somehow connected with Fazlul Hoque that he got a lift.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh, he belongs to the Hoque dynasty?

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

NOTE

Nirodbaran says his memory has made a slip when he makes Sri Aurobindo remark on p. 685 in the *Mother India* of December 5, 1971: "About Holland, everybody knows that it sided with Hitler." Historical facts prove the opposite and Sri Aurobindo could not have been unaware of them.

SRI AUROBINDO AT EVENING TALK

(These notes were not taken on the spot. They are recollections of the talks at which their author, V. Chidanandam, was present. Whatever in those 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.)

SOME NOTES OF MAY-TO-NOVEMBER 1926

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1971)

TABLE-tapping is of two kinds: (1) the legs rise and fall making a tap; (2) a sound comes from the table itself.

There is a force of which our ordinary minds are not aware, which manifests itself in such phenomena. Once Mirra¹ concentrated on that force for half an hour and by her will-force (magnetic force) made it move a table across the room; the table came jumping to her like a kitten. In another experiment she willed that a certain thing should make a certain sound after half an hour, and precisely after that time it did so.

Apart from such a precise will as to what things shall do or shall not do, there is a general will in the people assembled and in the atmosphere something that attracts the force. Also it is not the normal consciousness that is awake at that time but the lower vital and physical consciousness. Little beings of a lower world (vital and subtle-physical) take advantage of the expectation of the people and amuse themselves. They come and tell you (by tapping) that they are spirits of the dead.

I do not deny that spirits sometimes come; they may linger on earth for three years after death, and may come within that period; but it is difficult to prove that it is they that have come. To say that the spirit of Mahavira or someone like that is knocking about is absurd. If you call on Brahma and Vishnu, they also will come!

As for automatic writing, it is not easy to show that it is really the spirits who are making this kind of manifestation, for it is a proved fact that the subliminal mind has a very wide range of knowledge: it can tell you what is written on such and such a page of a book, it knows events beyond the knowledge of the mind, it is also a tremendous dramatist. Even beautiful poetry can come from it. When Victor Hugo was in a

¹ The Mother was known as Mirra at that time. (Editor)

group assembled to experiment in automatic writing, striking poetry was written. When he went away there was very poor stuff produced. The general subliminal mind contributes to the phenomenon. In England, in an experiment of automatic writing, spirits told the assembly that there is no reincarnation. That was because in the Bible there is no idea of reincarnation.

In France, however, where the idea is prevalent in spite of the Bible the spirits told the people that there is reincarnation. In 95% of cases of wonderful and mysterious experiments, it is the fake of the subliminal mind and no genuine spirit. The range of the subliminal is vast and it knows many things past or future.

I wrote the book *Yogic Sadhan* when it was formed in the subconscious mind. Whether my subconscious mind formed it or not and, if not, who formed it cannot be proved. I saw the form of Rammohan Roy for five days while I was writing it.

Great personalities such as Rammohan or Ramakrishna leave behind them an influence or impression (a vital impression) in the atmosphere, which beings of the lower vital world take up for amusement in such phenomena as automatic writing. The spirits of those personalities are not knocking about, but it is these beings that impersonate them. Sometimes we see in a vision the forms of such people; it is the mind's construction of the influence or impression left by them; it is the thought-image. Such thought-images are very common.

Once when I was thinking of some disciples, they saw my form. Either the image went from me or they constructed it in their minds.

Devils (beings of the vital world) may incarnate in the human body, they may push out the person that is taking birth or push him into a corner.

This kind of spiritualism (talking to spirits) is not only not spiritual but anti-spiritual as it concerns itself with the beings of a lower vital and subtle-physical world.

Gurus can help their disciples even after death by coming as spirits, if they want to; but if the Guru is of any worth, he does not care to do that unless he has a very limited vital and physical consciousness and has considerable attachment.

The force which comes into play in table-tapping or in shifting an object as in Mirra's experiment is the vital magnetic force which moves on the vital physical plane. The vital-physical plane is physical—there we have the vital in the physical—the vital subjected to the law of the physical and therefore able to move physical objects such as a table. The force is something universal like electricity. Mirra did not create that force—no force is created; it is there already and it is utilised. She willed or concentrated to create the necessary atmosphere which is a conductor of that force. Where there is no such precise individual will, the general will creates the atmosphere and sets the force at work. It may be either a force or a being which compels the table to move.

There are instances in which the table disappears while starting to reach the spot to which it is directed and then reappears on that spot. The explanation is that the being that is invisible takes the table into its own atmosphere, and so the table also

becomes invisible. There the laws of our space do not apply, the table is shifted by a sort of direct transference. The phenomenon is called "dematerialisation", but that is only a word. There is matter or substance even when the table disappears, but of another plane, subtle-physical, the matter or form does not get annihilated. There is the same phenomenon when Yogis pass through a wall. The *chaddar* about them, together with their bodies, becomes invisible and they pass through the wall! The thing is that even in the physical there are several gradations, one shades off into another, interpenetrates another. In the gross material we see solids becoming liquids and gases, but all in the same space. In the subtle-physical or vital-physical the laws of our space do not apply, the substance is taken up into it and again thrown down into our space.

In the physical belt itself there are various planes. For in this belt we have five bodies, three of which the Sadhak can become conscious of and easily feel. That is what the Veda means when it speaks of the three earths and seven earths. In the Puranas, it is said that Kartavirya conquered eighteen cities, one city after another. First there is the physical body. The next thing which the Yogi feels and becomes conscious of is the vital-physical body. He starts with feeling and consciousness: knowledge—that is formulated awareness—comes afterwards. This vital-physical is a sort of nervous envelope which supports the physical. You feel it not only within you, but around you. Before any disease attacks the body, the Yogi sees the disease coming, feels it in the vital-physical around him, around his chest or trunk, gets a feverish sensation there. But if he rejects it from the vital-physical, the disease cannot enter him. All subtle diseases (all except the most material, that is, vital-material) such as fever, pains in the nerves, etc., can be seen beforehand and prevented. If a man's nervous envelope is strong he is healthy, if it is weak he falls a victim to disease. Even the hostile forces pass through it. If you reject them from the vital-physical they cannot do anything. Sensitiveness to disturbance in the vital-physical is not a weakness but growth in consciousness. The undeveloped man is solid and impervious to such things. The first sign of growth is sensitiveness, but one must not be disturbed or agitated; all agitation is weakness. He must be steady, *dhira*, and reject the hostile forces.

Then there is the mental-physical body. The Yogi becomes conscious of all mental movements, in his mental-physical body, around the crown of the head. He feels the movements before they rise in the brain. He receives the movements without the least action on the brain or the nervous system, just as he receives all the movements, vital, etc. One can easily feel the vital-physical and the mental-physical but the supramental-physical and the Ananda-physical are difficult to feel and become conscious of.

(To be continued)

A TALK TO THE STUDENTS

AT THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

*This is the report, edited in places, of the fourth and final talk of the year given
by Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna) on October 20, 1971.*

THE high-lights of our last talk were my recollections of the Divine Levity which went on in the "Prosperity" Storeroom and of the Divine Gravity which held sway at the Soup Distribution downstairs. But perhaps these terms I have chosen are too trenchant in their distinction. Many serious things were done upstairs and at least once a very funny thing happened during the Soup Distribution.

The Mother was in deep trance. We tried to imitate her by shutting our eyes tight. Now, a big rat decided to join the Meditation. (*Laughter*) But it had a rather original way of meditating. It ran to and fro amongst us—I'm sure with its eyes shut like ours, because otherwise one cannot explain what it ultimately did: it rushed right into Dara's dhoti! (*Laughter*)

You can imagine poor Dara. He was in a terrible fix. Perhaps the word "fix" is not quite the *mot juste*, for he was extremely mobile. (*Laughter*) He jumped up on one side of his seat and jumped down on the other, he thrust out one leg, pulled in the other, and fumbled with both hands to catch the fellow within the folds of his dhoti. (*Laughter*) At last the rat ran out, but there was such a commotion that the Mother opened her eyes and looked for an explanation. Then Pavitra, in what he believed was a voice suitable to the solemnity of the Soup Distribution, said in a low rumble, "It is a Bandicoot!" (*Laughter*)

The Mother was amazed at first and then amused. I was in such a state I had to exert supreme self-control in order not to explode into a most unspiritual Ananda. Well, I managed to bottle myself up for some time, until my turn came to go to the Mother. I went to her, knelt at her feet and, still holding myself tight, gave her my cup. She looked at me and smiled with a twinkle in her eyes. I just burst into laughter. I couldn't act the concentrated Yogi any longer. And she was quite a sport: she opened her eyes wide, smiled very broadly, filled my cup and, with a slight knowing push, gave it back to me.

Nothing on the serious side to the same degree happened upstairs to counter-balance the general light-heartedness. Only a tiger leaping into our midst would have created a match to that incursion of the Bandicoot. However, something quite startling did happen once. You know we used to sit in a sort of semi-circle before the Mother. Suddenly she declared, "A fat black hostile being is sitting just in front of me." We all looked at one another (*laughter*) and wondered who she could have

meant. I happened to be right in front of her. (*Laughter*) Well, I may be more or less blackish, perhaps some hostility too may have lurked, but surely I wasn't fat at all in those days. (*Laughter*) So the suspicion slid off me, and then we could see from the Mother's eyes that she was looking at something that was invisible to us. After a while she packed the blighter off. "He is gone," she said. We asked her, "Why didn't you finish him? Why did you just let him go?" She explained a very important point. These hostile forces take all kinds of forms. And it's no use destroying one form, because the forces themselves cannot be destroyed. They will take another form and come to harass you. But they do serve a purpose: they put their probing fingers on defect after defect in us, spot after spot which is receptive to them, so that every shortcoming of ours may spark up in our consciousness and we may be able to deal with all our weaknesses efficiently. And they will go pricking us and poking us until we achieve absolute perfection. And then their existence will be nullified by becoming absolutely useless.

Thus, nothing like a tiger-leap occurred upstairs, but the Mother sometimes sprang a number of tiger-surprises on us, tearing our fixed notions to bits, destroying our conventional ideas. I may recall to you some of these mind-shaking revelations.

One concerned the very physical plane. The Mother had a friend named Alexandra David-Neel. Madame David-Neel also knew Sri Aurobindo a little. She was a student of Buddhism, especially the Tibetan variety about which she has written a very fascinating book. She died recently at the age of 101 or so in Paris. Our Prithwin interviewed her once, before she passed away. The Mother had a high opinion of her. She said she was very sincere and intense and was capable of considerable meditation. Now, the Mother told us, this lady once started walking while meditating. It was in the open. She walked and walked for a long time with closed eyes. When at last she opened them she found herself in a strange place and turned to go home. She walked back without shutting her eyes. At a certain distance she saw that there was a stream running right across. How had she gone over the stream? There had been nobody to help her take a boat. Evidently she had walked upon the water! This seems incredible, but as the Mother believed it we had no right to doubt. The Mother said Madame David-Neel would not fool anybody nor would she deceive herself. So the miracle of walking upon the water can occur even in our twentieth century! We have heard of Jesus walking on the Lake of Galilee. But to go across a fairly wide and deep stream in our own day by sheer power of consciousness spiritually poised above earthly matters was really an eye-opener. No wonder the Mother's story has stuck in my mind.

Another startle was when the Mother brought her original manuscript of *Prayers and Meditations*. The printed book had already come out, but we had never seen the handwritten version, the personal diary. With the shut volume in her lap, she asked us, "Name your favourite sentence." Each found out the words that had appealed

to them most. Quite coolly the Mother picked up a pair of scissors and started cutting out from the manuscript the parts we had selected. Then she pasted them on pieces of paper, wrote our names on top, put the current date which was June 21, 1932, signed her name "Mira" and handed the pieces to us. So precious a document she could just cut up and give away like that!

I remember the sentence I selected as the master *Mantra* of my life in the Ashram. It was an entry made in Pondicherry on September 25, 1914. It ran: "O divine, adorable Mère, avec ton aide qu'y a-t-il d'impossible?" The bit the Mother cut out from her volume contained the next sentence also: "L'heure des réalisations est proche et tu nous a assuré ton concours pour accomplir intégralement la Suprême Volonté." The English translation of the two sentences reads: "O divine and adorable Mother, with Thy help what is there that is impossible? The hour of realisation is near and Thou hast assured us of Thy aid that we may perform integrally the supreme Will."

I may add that there is one more sentence in this Prayer before the grand conclusion, which is:

The Lord has willed and Thou dost execute:
A new light shall break upon the earth,
A new world shall be born.

The things that were promised shall be fulfilled.

These words look forward to the Supramental Manifestation for which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were working. As you know, the Manifestation at last took place on February 29, 1956. On April 24 of that year the Mother declared for the first time publicly that the long-awaited event had come to pass. She distributed in the Meditation Hall the above phrases as the Message of the day. When she went upstairs, she called for the copies of all those of us who were near her there, and altered the future tense to the present and gave the first line a different as well as a personal turn. In its earlier form the passage had appeared as one of the epigraphs of *Mother India* ever since the fortnightly had grown a monthly: henceforth it appeared in the new form:

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.

It was indeed very gratifying to me on a back-look that I should have selected a sentence from that particular Prayer—and perhaps the selection was symbolic of some small vague connection I was to have with the Day of the Supramental Manifestation. But I shall come to this point a little later.

Let me continue with some of the unforgettable things of the Prosperity meetings. A few statements by the Mother bearing on the Yogic life have always kept ringing in my ears. One was a call to inner freedom, a casting away of all bondage of the past, a spiritual rebirth. She said: "If we want to counteract, annul or outgrow our past, we

cannot do it by mere repentance or similar things, we must forget that the untransformed past has ever been and enter into an enlightened state of consciousness which breaks loose from all moorings. To be reborn means to enter, first of all, into our psychic consciousness where we are one with the Divine and eternally free from the reactions of Karma. Without becoming aware of the psychic, it is not possible to do so; but once we are securely conscious of the true soul in us all bondage ceases. Then incessantly life begins afresh, then the past no longer cleaves to us." After this, the Mother went on to an astounding pronouncement based on a realisation of hers. She told us: "To give you an idea of the final height of spiritual rebirth, I may say that there can be a constant experience of the whole universe disappearing at every instant and being at every instant newly created!"

We think of the universe as necessarily a continuity through time. The Mother shatters this impression. According to her, there is no necessity compelling the universe to be what it has been. Every point of time is a point of absolute freedom for the Divine's Will. The Divine may make the universe more or less as it was before, but He does it freely. And the Divine can introduce certain elements at each second which are unforeseeable by us. And that is why history is so full of somersaults. People expect one thing and something else happens. Against all calculations the course of events suddenly takes a new turn. We are inclined to believe that hidden antecedents are responsible. But we never really find them, however much we may try to draw up a logical scheme. The unexpected is, in my view, the touch of the Divine re-creating the universe at a particular minute just a wee bit different.

Well, if we have faith in this re-creation minute by minute, we can also feel we are not completely bound by what we call the chain of Karma. We are often upset over the hold of our past. Like a millstone round our neck the past seems to hang. But nothing really binds us down in an absolute sense. Of course, our power of re-creating ourselves in our lives is limited. But as self-conscious beings, beings who can stand back and watch their own nature, inner and outer, with however small a detachment, beings who not only know but know that they know—such beings have at least a speck of true freedom, and from that speck they can alter their lives at any instant. This certainty I got when the Mother came out with that secret of secrets about the universe.

You will perhaps say: "It is all very well to know this. Actually we are hemmed in all the time by our feeling of incapacity: it is most difficult to alter our lives." Even for such a feeling the Mother has a consoling word. In the Storeroom she once talked about the flower which symbolises in her vision "Successful Future." Apropos of this flower she said that the successful future means the supramental change of the world, when the Divine will stand manifest—unveiled in its total perfection. Then she told us: "I do not mean to say that the whole world will at once feel its presence or be transformed; but I do mean that a part of humanity will know and participate in its descent—say, this little world of ours here. From there the transfiguring grace

will most effectively radiate. And fortunately for the aspirants, that successful future will materialise for them in spite of all the obstacles set in its way by unregenerate human nature!" Aren't these words wonderfully reassuring? To know that the work of the Supermind does not depend on us altogether but that the golden future will somehow come and pick us up and envelop us, provided we are willing to be so treated—this is indeed supreme Grace. And no power except the Supermind can be so gracious. It alone can transform us in spite of ourselves! But I think we should properly understand this sweeping of us into the Light. It means that at least one part of us wants the Light. Ordinarily, the other parts that don't want it and won't cooperate present to us a problem we have ourselves to deal with. We have to fight with these parts and often the fight looks pretty fruitless. The Supermind can overlook them and, through the one pure point of aspiration and surrender, set up a blaze that can act upon all the rest and do what seems impossible.

The Supermind—there you have a subject of perpetual fascination for my intellect. So you can imagine my pleasure when the Mother made a most surprising disclosure. When we talk usually of Supermind and Overmind, we do draw a marked distinction between them, but we do not go beyond saying that the latter is only the delegate of the former and therefore an inferior power by comparison and not capable of achieving the ultimate victory of the Divine. All the same, compared to our mind, it is a mighty splendour and we couple it with the Supermind while we mental creatures stand dwarfed below. The Mother shook us up by saying that the gap we feel between our mind and Overmind is less than the gap existing between Overmind and Supermind. Her words put things quite topsyturvy. But if we think clearly they should strike us as quite natural. After all, the Overmind is only the divine aspect of the mind. The Supermind is the Divine self-experienced in its creative movement—directly, immediately. The Overmind is the Divine projecting itself into the highest mental formulation of its nature. The Divine there is self-aware at one remove. Because of this the Overmind is, according to Sri Aurobindo, the top of the Lower Hemisphere: the Higher Hemisphere starts beyond it. Yet we are always impressed by its proximity to the Supermind and forget the radical, the colossal difference between the two. The Mother threw this difference into memorable relief. And the astounding reversal she made is very picturesquely reflected in some lines of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. Nobody seems to have noticed them, but they can serve as the packed seed of a whole revelatory philosophy, a whole new vision of reality. Sri Aurobindo writes in the third Canto of the first Book:

As if a torch held by a power of God,
The radiant world of the everlasting Truth
Glimmered like a faint star bordering the night
Above the golden Overmind's shimmering ridge.

There is a night between the Overmind and the Supramental Truth-world, and so vast, so deep is it that the Supermind appears above the Overmind as no more than

a tiny star at the furthest end of the darkness.

These lines and the Mother's words account also for the fact that the knowledge of the Supermind was lost and the Overmind stood as the ultimate Dynamic Divine for all spiritual seekers. And here the actual glories of the Overmind are themselves responsible too. What Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said must not lead us to look down on the Overmind. It is the plane of the Great Gods who are aspects of a single Godhead representative of the Supramental Divinity. Both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have here declared that there has not been any Yogi who, having gone into the Overmind plane, had not been caught in its giant grandeurs and believed he had reached the limit. Sri Aurobindo, of course, as soon as he came to that part of his sadhana when the prospect of the overhead planes was opened up, knew intuitively the essential character of the Supermind. He could not but know it, since he had come from the Supramental Truth as its Avatar to establish it on earth. But he has said that in the course of his sadhana he passed through a stage when the Overmind did not seem radically different from the Supermind. It is because of this that the word "Overmind" does not occur in the *Arya*. He felt that the Overmind was just a lower or subordinate status of the Supermind, a level where a divine multiplicity was much in evidence: that was all. And he says that he saw it like that because he was looking at it from the mind-plane, where the sadhana was then going on for a mental transformation. When you are on the mind-plane, you are so submerged in the Overmind's illuminations that you think here is a continuation of the highest "radiant world". But when Sri Aurobindo came down to the vital plane and still more when he descended to the physical consciousness for the transformative sadhana there, then it became sharply evident that the Overmind was not merely a sub-Supermind, as it were. Standing in the world of marked division, the plane where the One is broken up most strikingly, he could recognise as if from a terrible effect the root cause that had remained hidden. The root cause leading to the total division was the Overmind where the One and the Many are not in an integral balance but the One withdraws into the background or sinks into a basis and multiplicity has full play. The unity is never lost, yet it permits the multiplicity to work out every possible line to the extreme. The line of increasing division until the unity is lost gets worked out, after a few planes below the Overmind—then we have what Sri Aurobindo terms Ignorance and—at the lowest reach of the scale—Inconscience. And I guess that when the lustres of the Overmind were focussed by Sri Aurobindo on the formations of Matter, the products of the inconscience, their rays broke instead of victoriously penetrating. Such breaking must prove that the Overmind is not the true Omnipotence.

Now we can go back to where we stopped: the Day of the Supramental Manifestation, with which, I said, I had a small vague connection symbolised by my choice of that particular Prayer of the Mother's.

I believe the Supramental Manifestation was actually expected in 1938. In that

year I left Pondicherry at the end of February for a short spell in Bombay. I had some work to do there, and the Mother had told me, as perhaps many of you know from some reminiscences of mine published in the past, that Sri Aurobindo and she were expecting very great things that year, and so I shouldn't stay in Bombay too long. I said, "Mother, I'll come back the very moment you want me here. Will you please inform me? Do send a telegram at once." She agreed. But no telegram came. I waited for nearly five months and then asked why. Sri Aurobindo replied: "A general descent of the kind you speak of is not in view at the moment."

Now again in 1956 I had to go to Bombay at the end of February. As 1956 was a leap year, it was actually on February 29 that I left Pondicherry. I was to catch the morning train to Madras. So I met the Mother pretty early in the day. She said, "I don't want you to stay away long. Can you come back by the 29th of March?" Evidently she was expecting "great things" once more—the Supramental Manifestation, though she did not specify anything—and she was expecting it within a month's time, perhaps on the 29th of March itself, the date on which, 42 years earlier, she had first come to Pondicherry. I replied, "Mother, I shall surely be back by then." Then I left.

That very day, in the evening, the stupendous thing happened! If I had known, I would never have gone. But I had a strange experience the same night. I need not recount it in detail, for I have told it elsewhere. At Madras I had caught the night-train to Bombay. I was alone in my compartment and I soon fell asleep. Almost at once I had a dream. I saw a huge crowd in an open place—something like the Ashram Playground—and I was on the fringe of the crowd. The Mother was sitting somewhere inside the open place and everybody was going in to do Pranam to her. I also wanted to do it, but somehow I couldn't get the slipper off my left foot—the lame one, as you know. I was shaking the foot and trying to fling away the blessed slipper. In the final jerk of that action I woke up. When my eyes opened, I saw the Mother standing in front of me in the compartment. I am a very sceptical fellow as a rule; so I thought I was imagining things. I shut my eyes; I opened them again, and there she still was. I shut my eyes once more and opened them. She was yet standing. This was too much. So I shut my eyes now for a long time. When I opened them, she was gone. Perhaps I should have kept looking and not allowed the sceptic in me to have play. I might have had a deeper experience. But the benefit now was that the sceptic got completely routed. An indelible wonder filled me. And the memory of that strange calm, translucent figure has stayed for ever with me.

I wrote of the experience to the Mother, but received no reply. Only on my return to the Ashram she explained what had occurred. It sounds too self-glorifying to talk of it, but it was a very glorious thing to hear from her. She said, "There were only five people who knew about the Supramental Manifestation—two in the Ashram and three outside." I blurted out, "Then what's the idea of staying in the Ashram?" (*Laughter*) She said, "I don't mean that anybody actually knew the Supermind had

manifested, but something extraordinary happened to some people. Among those three who were outside, I count you." Puzzled, I asked, "How's that?" She answered "Didn't you write to me that on February 29 at night you had seen me in the railway compartment?" I said, "Yes, but what did happen?" She replied, "Do you remember I promised in 1938 to inform you. I came now to fulfil my promise." I was absolutely overwhelmed. My God! what Grace the Divine could give to a poor fool! I fell at the Mother's feet in deepest gratitude.

All this is an old story and here it is rather by the way. After knowing of the Great Event I started revolving in my mind how it was that the Mother had been expecting the Manifestation on or about March 29 and it had come on the 29th of February. What could be the reason? The first reason I found was a most humbly egoistic one. I said, "The Supermind came on the day I left Pondicherry. I must have been the biggest obstacle in its way. (*Laughter*) As soon as I was removed, it found its passage free and there it was!" Then I reflected, "Well, it's pretty humble to think yourself such a big obstacle but pretty egoistic to believe the Supermind could depend on so insignificant a chap being there or not." I further thought, "Perhaps it did not come at the expected time because India was the field of the Manifestation. India is famous for unpunctuality. (*Laughter*) So the Supermind must have been most Indianly divine to come like that and not keep its appointment with the Mother." But I realised there was an opposite side: not only was the Supermind most Indianly divine but also most divinely Indian, and that is why it came a month earlier rather than a month later. (*Laughter*) Even this explanation did not satisfy me: it struck me as more imaginative than realistic. Then I thought, "We know now that two or three times in January, 1956, Sri Aurobindo came to the Mother and told her that the Supramental Manifestation was in the offing, but he didn't tell her the date. On the morning of the day I left the Ashram the idea of the Manifestation was very strongly in her consciousness: hence she was so particular that—as the saying goes—I shouldn't miss the bus. Her consciousness must automatically have given a push to the Supermind and it rushed out."

This explanation, however, is not the end. I found another in the Mother's talks. She has said: "It was absolutely unexpected on that day. But all my greatest experiences have come like that. I am in my usual consciousness and they come all of a sudden, as if to show their reality in the fullest contrast and vividness. One obtains the best value of a realisation when it is first experienced thus. If one is informed beforehand, the mind begins to play a part."

Still the question persists: "Why on February 29 exactly and on no other day?" Why not on February 28? My sister-in-law Mina who is sitting over there would have been delighted if it could have come on February 28, which was her birthday. Or else why not on March 1? It could have given the Mother a splendid surprise on any day round about.

Then I remembered what the Mother had said at the Playground on the evening

of December 31, 1954: "I foresee that the coming year will be a difficult year. There will be much inner struggle and much outer struggle too.... The difficulties may last perhaps more than the twelve months of the year, may extend to fourteen months.... They will be for all, for the world, for India, for the Ashram and individuals also, more or less equally. It is, I may say, the last hope of the hostile forces—to prevail against the Present Realisation."

Now think of the period the Mother has mentioned for the difficulties: fourteen months. Count twelve months of the year 1955 and then add two. Where do we land? From the evening of December 31, 1954, the fourteen months would come to a close exactly on February 29, 1956, in the evening!

Here is a prophecy that came true with the utmost precision. So we get a new "slant" on the Supramental Manifestation's character. It was not prodigiously unpunctual but observed the very day to which the Mother had pointed in her talk. So the Supermind may be seen to have shown the quality of being not Indian in any divine way but extraordinarily English: the Englishman is known for his punctuality. (*Laughter*). And would you believe that the Manifestation clearly carried a touch of the Englishman? The Mother, when she went into a trance in the Playground on the evening of February 29, found herself standing before a huge and massive golden door separating the world from the Divine and, lifting a mighty golden hammer with both her hands, she struck one single blow on the door and shattered it to pieces. But she did this on hearing three words. She has said: "As I looked at the door, I knew and willed, in a single movement, that 'the time has come'." Later she commented: "It is interesting to note that the words—'the time has come'—which express what I simultaneously knew and willed...were heard by me in English and not in French. It was as if Sri Aurobindo had spoken them." The fact that the Mother did not hear "Le temps est venu" but "The time has come" was, as I have put it, the Englishman's touch, and Sri Aurobindo was the Englishman! (*Laughter*) He had not only a greater mastery over the English language than any born Englishman but also something of the English *sang-froid* raised to the spiritual plane: the Englishman's typical composure, coolness, in danger or agitating circumstances, was transformed in him into a superb, an infinite equanimity, a Himalayan poise, we may say. So, in the Aurobindonian Englishness, I found a precise link between something said before and something which happened afterwards.

Now, talking of Supermind and of Sri Aurobindo in connection with it, I may touch on a statement which has become a part of our historical knowledge of the supramental progression upon the earth. You will find it in the pamphlet I published on February 29, 1960, where all that had been said up to that year by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother about the Supermind's advent was collected. There the Mother is reported to have declared in 1953: "Even in 1938 I used to see the Supermind descending into Sri Aurobindo. What he could not do at that time was to fix it down." Later I used this statement in an article of mine. Last year—1970—it was quoted to

the Mother from my article in relation to a brochure on Auroville which was being prepared. The Mother called it nonsense, romance, fiction, imagination and demanded who had ever said such a thing. The person who had taken the matter for the brochure to the Mother did not know the identity of the criminal. (*Laughter*) Subsequently, he found I had been the source. So my name was mentioned. The Mother again spoke out her mind spiritedly, branding the statement humbug and what not, and asking how I could have got hold of such an idea and published so absurd a thing. The situation looked quite serious. Pretty soon after this outburst my birthday came: November 25, if you care to know. It seemed really an occasion for me to shiver in my shoes. (*Laughter*) The Mother would surely tick me off. In advance I ascertained where precisely I had first found the declaration.

I went up to her, trying to look as innocent as I could. (*Laughter*) She also smiled very angelically—and quite without pretending, for the Divine's Grace can flow in spite of all our foolishnesses. Then the conversation started. I'll repeat it here but can't vouch that every phrase is exactly reproduced.

"How old are you today?"

"Sixty-six years complete."

The Mother laughed. I suppose from her chronological height—or, better still, her height of eternity—this age was just a joke.

I added, "Mother, I want to hang on till I see your Victory."

She looked a bit surprised at the tall order, but again laughed and said, "Bien."

Then she started the main topic.

"I want to tell you something. Somewhere in *Mother India*—I don't know in what issue—you have said that the Supermind had been descending into Sri Aurobindo's body in 1938 but could not be fixed down. Where did you get this information? It is just a piece of romance, it is utter nonsense."

I at once said: "Mother, I am very sorry."

With immediate response she said: "Oh, it doesn't matter."

I proceeded to explain: "I did not invent that statement. You are yourself supposed to have made it. And it first appeared in an article by my Associate Editor Soli Albles in 1954. The article was read out to you before it was published."

The Mother shrugged her shoulders and said: "I don't know what he meant. It has not come out correct. I'll explain the true thing to you. Clearly, Sri Aurobindo did not have the supramental body, and neither do I have it. But that does not mean that the Supermind was not in his body. The two things are quite different. One can have the Supermind in the body without the body being supramentalised. It is not true that the Supermind descended into Sri Aurobindo's body only in 1938 or that it was not fixed there but merely coming and going."

"I understand the position now, Mother."

"You see, when he left his body, he gave his whole supramental force to me. It came to me most concretely."

Then she touched the skin and flesh of her left arm to convey the sense of the concreteness, as if even flesh and skin had felt that supramental force. I thanked her for her enlightening explanation.

Here the important part of the interview ended. What followed is purely personal. I said:

"Now, Mother, I want to tell you something. Will you please open me up for good? Put your hand on the middle of my chest so that my heart may be always open to you."

She put her hand where I had wanted and pressed her fingers on the spot.

"Oh, it is going very fast!"

"Yes, Mother, it's like that because I am very impatient now."

She laughed and blessed me.

I came down a wiser and a happier man. Later, I linked up in my mind some of her words now with what I had been told by her several years before: "As soon as Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body, what he had called the Mind of Light got realised in me." And subsequently, on June 29, 1953, she had sent me through Nolini an explanation: "The Supermind had descended long ago—very long ago—in the mind and even in the vital: it was working in the physical also but indirectly through these intermediaries. The question now was about the direct action of the Supermind in the physical. Sri Aurobindo said it could be possible only if the physical mind received the supramental light: the physical mind was the instrument for direct action upon the most material. This physical mind receiving the supramental light Sri Aurobindo called the Mind of Light." In view of all this I hazarded the guess that 1938—the year when the Mother had expected something very great—had seen not exactly what had been expected but a great enough event: the come-and-go, rather than the permanent fixing down, of the Mind of Light.

These are extremely high matters and guesses are risky. Nearer home for us is the experience I prayed for at the close of my interview: not the come-and-go of the psychic opening but the permanent establishment of it. Even its glorious occurrence unbroken for days or weeks or months is not sufficient: it must be there at all times.

Here I may recall a friend of mine, a Bengali whose name was Sarat. He was a fierce-looking skeleton of a fellow. He had been a revolutionary and even in the Ashram he kept something of that fire and I dubbed him "the domesticated fanatic". He was not only thin but also seemed sickly. So every day, when I met him, I would ask him: "Hello, Sarat, how are you?" His answer, accompanied by a knitting of his brows, used to be: "Somehow I am feeling quite all right". (*Laughter*) He was a private student of mine for a while, wanting to learn English better. His greatest difficulty was to pronounce a word like "above". He could never combine the *b* and *v*. He would say either "avove" or "abobe". Anyway, he had some aspiration to what was above, but not much of a psychic opening. I watched him every day at Pra-

nam and he was quite stiff face to face with the Mother. Once, however, I saw a sort of unstiffening and softening. So I caught him afterwards and said, "Sarat, what has happened?" He exclaimed, "Oh, it's all finished—my part of the Yoga is finished—I have made my surrender. Now it's for the Mother to act—her job remains—I have nothing more to do." (*Laughter*) I remonstrated, "Look here, I know there was a psychic opening in you. I could see it and that's why I am asking you what happened. But don't imagine the opening is permanent just because you had such a glow of it once. You have to go on keeping it, concentrate on its remaining with you, pray for its staying always, work for its recurrence, make yourself ready to have it for a longer and longer time." He didn't look convinced. The Mother evidently had given him a chance to do the needful, but I am afraid he failed to take it. After a somewhat serious illness here he left the Ashram for good.

The point I tried to drive home to Sarat is very important. The psychic being is the golden key of sadhana. Yet we must not jump to the conclusion that the mind is of no importance. If it is utterly negligible, why has Sri Aurobindo written such a large number of books, including the enormous *Life Divine* which is a veritable mind-cracker? I believe that it is necessary not only to attempt doing Yoga but also to attempt understanding Yoga. And the understanding can come best if you read what Sri Aurobindo has written on Yoga. Without the understanding you could be very much upset and develop a habit of being melancholy. For you may have a series of brilliant experiences and then all of a sudden find yourself completely shut. You may feel dull as ditch-water and blank as a wall. It may seem as though the time has come to pack your trunk and bid good-bye. But if you have read Sri Aurobindo, you would know that after a fine spiritual period there is generally a lull, a period of quiescence in which assimilation takes place, the experiences are absorbed by the inner self. While this is happening, your outer being may have that desolating dullness and that unbearable blankness. No doubt, you feel as stupid as an ass while the assimilation goes on (*laughter*)—but you mustn't start kicking! You must keep quiet and let this period pass. Sometimes it can last very long. Sri Aurobindo has said even about himself that once his Yoga came to a dead stop for nearly a year. And I have a friend in the Ashram, a sincere sadhak with an intense turn inward and upward, who had a period of assimilation—I might say super-assimilation—lasting for six years! Poor dear didn't know what to do, but he understood what was going on. So he spent those six years reading the plays of Bernard Shaw! (*Laughter*) That tided him over the prolonged crisis. Then again the Yogic movement started, and I am sure it's going on famously.

In sadhana the place of the mind is not only at the feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: it is also between the pages of their books. The only thing to take care about is that you should not grow intellectually over-active. Otherwise you start analysing yourself all the time and that is hardly conducive to the Supermind's coming or even to less spectacular progress. There's one chap in the Ashram I know who has

never sat in judgment on his own sadhana or indulged in nagging self-analysis. And he has been perhaps one of the happiest here. Though not an intellectual, he is quite bright and intelligent, yet he has never worried to find out whether he was progressing or not. Most of you know him. Apart from his service to the Mother, he is now best known as a teacher of Hathayogic Asanas, but formerly he was most notable as one of the two closest friends of Amal, the other having been Premanand, the first librarian the Ashram had. Yes, I mean Ambu—our energetic, outspoken, humbug-proof, loyal-natured Ambu. In the old days he had a somewhat foppish air, but there was no effeminacy in him and, though he looked a little weak, he had a lot of courage. And I may say from repeated experience that he has a rare capacity of giving unstinted service. He has been of immense help to me, he has nursed me through illnesses and permitted me to be as incompetent as I liked. (*Laughter*) Thanks to him, I was able even to keep a stove and use it—I mean he managed it and I enjoyed its benefits. I am not very good at house-keeping and, though my incompetence may not match that of Dilip Kumar Roy who once told me that if he had to dust his own furniture every day he would prefer to commit suicide (*laughter*), I have been pretty much of a dud in domestic science. I used always to think in the old days that Ambu had the qualities of an ideal wife. (*Laughter*) Good job he was not born a woman, because husbands are not often ideal, and a husband having such a wife would never have let her go to become a Yogini. Ambu has become a Yogi—but what distinguishes him is that he has kept all bothering about Yoga out of his life: he has let the Mother do the bothering. (*Laughter*) He has cared only to serve her. When you keep thinking of her instead of your own progress you find the secret of happiness. As a result, I don't believe Ambu was ever really depressed. I have seen him sickly-faced at times, I have seen him a little sad too on occasion, but never depressed. And that is an excellent way of living. For, with depression there comes a lot of Yogic upset. Unfortunately there are such a number of people here who are depressed that I would say a sort of spiritual caste-system has sprung up with a large section which can be called the Depressed Class. (*Laughter*) We also know that depressions are always followed by inner havocs—storms in sadhana, psychological counterparts of the cyclones that time and again sweep over Pondicherry. And you may have read in the newspapers how these cyclones develop: we are told they develop because of some depression in the Bay of Bengal! (*Laughter*)

Time is running out and I have still a few things to say. Let me touch on how the Mother can help us not only out of depressions but also out of severe illnesses. Perhaps you know of the heart-trouble I had in 1948, when I was in Bombay. At that period I was bent on getting to the bottom of Einstein's theory of relativity. Day after day I went to the libraries, climbed up ladders to reach dusty volumes on high shelves, spent hours over difficult expositions and came home tired out. The theory of relativity, when first put forth, is supposed to have been understood by only four people in the world. I came to understand something of it many years later. Perhaps I

can give you a very short summary and put you among the wise. Newton said that all physical bodies attract one another, but he did not know why. Einstein came along and said, "They attract one another because they are all relatives." That is the theory of relativity. (*Laughter*) Well, while I was on the way to finding this out, I started getting a strange feeling in the heart-region. But I kept on, and one day I had a collapse. I managed to creep home. Then I could hardly move: I just dropped into my bed. There was such a sinking feeling in the chest that I thought I was about to die. I told my wife Sehra, "What can be done now? There is nothing to do. The end seems to have come. I shall go as Yogically as I can. Don't be sorry about anything." As you can see, I was too hasty a prophet. I could hold on till the doctor came. All the time I was inwardly appealing to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and I felt myself drawing golden and silver lights from them to my heart. Their presence was all about me. Some household remedies were also tried. Then the doctor arrived. He gave me an injection of morphia, which would relax me and send me to sleep. Relaxed I did grow, as if loosened from earth-bonds, but instead of falling asleep I grew doubly awake—or, rather, deeply awake. For I had an amazing new sense of everything. The whole universe seemed to be a divine being. All objects were as if individualised forms of divinity. The chairs and tables of my room appeared to be gods and goddesses. I felt like getting up and kneeling at their feet.

The doctor had forbidden me to get up or even to lift my head from the pillow. The heart must have complete rest. I did keep to my bed, with the various booklets, in which *Savitri* was then being issued, lying beside me. I read them till nightfall, marking with a pencil, as I always do, whatever struck me most. Then sleep came over me—but in that sleep there was an outburst of poetry. Lines kept racing before my shut eyes and I just had to awake, sit up and scribble them in the darkness on the front and back pages of the booklets, wherever there would be a blank. I would sink back into sleep and emerge from it again and again to record fresh lines. Almost throughout the night this went on. But it didn't tire me in the least.

From that night onwards, the days were filled with poems. The inspiration came in such an exciting fashion that my heart, instead of resting, thundered away—and half the time I was sitting in bed or leaning on one elbow. Every morning the doctor would call, examine my heart and smile in satisfaction, saying that as I was being such a good boy and following his instructions I would soon get well! (*Laughter*)

I kept the Mother posted about my condition and sent her and Sri Aurobindo all that I wrote. I informed them of my disobeying the doctor most shamelessly, reported his grave warnings against any exertion, and recounted how the poetry filled me with new strength and their help kept me improving. I asked them whether I was doing the right thing. The Mother wrote back: "My dear child, I quite agree with you that there is a power other and much more powerful than that of the doctors

and the medicines and I am glad to see that you put your trust in it. Surely it will lead you throughout all difficulties and in spite of all catastrophic warnings. Keep your faith intact and all will be all right."

I have told the story at full length in the "personal preface" I wrote for the three-months' collection of the poems when, on Sri Aurobindo's recommendation, they were brought out as a book in 1949. Undoubtedly the heart-trouble seemed worthwhile having for the inner experience of the Mother's help and the outer expression in those eighty-nine poems.

May I continue to speak for a little while more? I'll turn to another aspect of life. Once it got into my head that I would play cards here with some people. Udar at that time was in Pondicherry but not yet in the Ashram. He was a very close friend and he too played cards in that circle we had formed. What we played were gambling games, with a little money at stake. Once I lost a certain amount. And then I thought I would invoke the Mother and recover all my losses. (*Laughter*) I began to imagine gold, gold, gold coming from the place of every player at the table and gathering in my corner. I actually won back everything. When I next saw the Mother I spoke to her of my achievement. She said, in effect, "Do you think my force is behind gambling? Do you believe you could invoke it to make money by such card-games? Don't you understand the delusion of it? The forces behind gambling are very low ones, which sometimes give you abnormal luck but just to have the pleasure of pulling you down and making you fall flat. That is their game and you people fall into their hands, thinking some wonderful thing is going on." I replied, "Well, Mother, I have been fond of horse-racing too and I realise the truth of what you have said." Then she told me of an incident in her own life.

She said she had gambled only once. It was on board a ship. The person with whom she was travelling played cards hour after hour and kept losing all the time. So his friends turned to her, laughing: "Madame, why don't you take his chair and bring him some luck?" The Mother answered, "I warn you that if I play I will take away all your money." They guffawed. Our Mother took the seat—and she did take away all their money! She told me, "I could see all their cards as if they had been transparent." (*Laughter*) So, knowing all their hands, she played hers. Naturally they lost. It was a good lesson to them. They had to beg her to stop playing.

The Mother can do many unexpected things. And her force can work in ways that surprise us. Apropos of gambling I may tell you another story. It concerns my sister Minnie's husband. Nari, my brother-in-law, was very fond of racing, just as I myself was. He had been hesitating to come here. My sister had been a constant visitor ever since her girlhood. Although he saw her faith, he was not quite convinced. Now, one night he had a dream. He saw the Mother, but in a half-obscure manner, as if she had been veiled. The next day was a race-day. When he got up in the morning and studied the race-book he found a horse called "Masked Lady". At once he said, "Well, the Mother appeared to me last night as a Masked Lady. I'll put my money

on this horse." It happened that the horse galloped home first and brought him nearly Rs. 4000! With that money he came to the Ashram with his whole family. (*Laughter*) People can be touched in incalculable ways.

I am afraid I have been digressing into rather light talk. We must close on a serious note, shouldn't we?—as suits a man of my age and my supposed wisdom. (*Laughter*) I shall go back to the meetings in the "Prosperity" Storeroom. On one occasion the Mother asked us: "What is Yoga?" That's a good subject to end with; for, after all, we must know what we are trying to do. Several of us gave the Mother our definitions. I have recovered a copy of them from the limbo of some old notes of mine. But I don't remember quite exactly who was the author of which definition. I can give you my own conjectures and perhaps you can form surmises of your own. I'll read the definitions to you. It is interesting to note how various individuals respond to the spiritual Call and envisage the Integral Life. Some of the definitions incline to be philosophical in their terms, others bring out more feelingly the Ideal, while still others try to catch the actual working of Yoga in general, and the remainder hint the inner psychic movement in a purely personal mode.

Here is the first definition: "Divinising life."

Who could have framed it? It sounds like Nolini to my ears. He is in the habit of being either short and sweet or else short and severe, and in each case get rid of a question or a questioner as quickly as possible. (*Laughter*) But he puts a lot of stuff into his few words and gives plenty of food for thought. Not much demonstrativeness, but a good deal of concentrated self-dedication.

The next definition runs: "Faith in the Divine and aspiration for the Highest."

This has for me the ring of Amrita. It has a spontaneous putting of oneself in the Mother's care, believing in her implicitly and trying one's best to live up to her expectations.

Then we have a long definition: "A series of experiences which the individual soul feels from the time of the contact with the Divine up to the union with the Divine."

Quite a dictionary-definition—a satisfying one from the intellectual standpoint but a little lacking in the human sense of things and in personal particularity. I seem to hear a man named Satyen. I am not sure any of you have heard of him, for Satyen left the Ashram not long after the contact with the Divine but very long before the union. Perhaps the series of experiences proved a process too long-drawn-out?

The next is: "The process by which we transcend the ego and put on the Divine Consciousness, and by which we transform the lower nature into the Divine Nature."

This too is a bit of a mouthful, but it has more particularity. The ego seems to have been a troublesome thing and the lower nature a rather demanding proposition. Transcendence and transformation are prominently felt as needs. A sort of talkativeness about one's problems also comes through—and I have the impression of our great Dara, with his portly presence and his lively interest in the ego's doings and the

lower nature's problems, as well as his constant commentary on what used to go on in himself.

Now we have: "Birth of the supreme harmony in matter from the union of the above with the below."

Possibly the pronouncement is of the person named Purushottam who was in charge of the "Prosperity" and much occupied with material objects. He was also constantly concerned with movements from below—not low movements but a thrust as of the Divine concealed in matter. That impulsion used to make him jerk his legs again and again during meditation. (*Laughter*) But the above also was not outside his feeling. Of course, his name itself—colloquially speaking—means the chap who is above all, the topmost fellow—and its bearer seemed interested in other people's tops too. Once during a collective meditation with the Mother he moved about in an inspired way and pulled out a fistful of hair from a sadhak's head. (*Laughter*) Don't laugh; for, though it looks as if the sadhak must have taken good care not to expose himself again to Purushottam's inspiration, such a thought could never have crossed his mind then. Let me tell you that those were very serious sessions and the Mother was drawing down the beings of the Gods into people, and the sadhaks felt great exaltation and had remarkable experiences. With what Purushottam did, that sadhak had an unforgettable spiritual experience. The Mother confirmed its genuineness and indicated the extraordinary meaning of what had happened to him. Hers had been the general guiding force, even if the particular form given to it may have shown Purushottam's originality.

Then there is the definition: "To be entirely cleansed of falsehood so that there may be purity to know the Divine Will and respond to the Call at every moment."

Some worker wishing to be totally consecrated and made ready as an instrument of the Divine is voiceful in these words. But who could it be? In those days there were five prominent workers in different ways. There was Chandulal, there was Champaklal, there was Dyuman, there was Doraiswamy and there was the English-woman Datta, originally Dorothy Hodgson. Doraiswamy mostly worked outside the Ashram for the Ashram, and he had to deal with a lawyer's world which is notoriously in need of being cleansed of falsehood. And he was also known to be constantly invoking the Divine inwardly to guide him and help him in his complicated cases. Our sentence is phrased in a manner quite consistent with such a habit and it has the lawyer's language—well-knit and logical. So he could be its author. The statement is perhaps too long for Champaklal or Dyuman and is not quite in character with Datta's more direct and less ample movement. It is quite possible for Chandulal in its general bearing, but accurate expression of a complex thought was not precisely Chandulal's strong point.

As regards the next definition, I am positive about its authorship. It goes: "To return home."

The statement has a beautiful brevity. It was Pavitra (Philippe Barbier St.-Hilaire)

who framed these words. They have the French flavour—the simple blended with the suggestive, a felicitousness of phrase bringing out a delicate depth of feeling, and it is the feeling of the inmost heart, into which Pavitra, when he meditated, was in the habit of penetrating. From his face one could gather that he had found there his happy repose.

Not much longer is the definition that follows: “To do as Mother directs us to do.”

This could be any worker speaking. It could be Champaklal or Dyuman, the ever-ready obedient servants of the Mother, full of the zest of putting her Will into action. But perhaps there is here a certain leaning towards outer guidance, a waiting for the spoken command, the explicit directive. I sense a kind of English trait. Was it Datta defining Yoga thus? She was a very close attendant on the Mother for years.

Next we read: “To live in Mother and to know Mother’s Will.” Here is the same aspiration, with just the colour of a greater tendency to go inward into a devoted awareness of the personal Divine. A more Indian trait is evident. Maybe Champaklal, maybe Dyuman.

Then: “Not to hinder the Mother in making the best possible out of you.”

It could have come very well from an Iranian lady named Tajdar, who unfortunately went away after several years of service to the Ashram life. When I knew her, she was always eager to put all of herself at the Mother’s disposal.

The next one is: “To be in complete union with the Mother.”

A good summing-up of our ideal, but a little on the general side, showing a bent towards mental expression. Perhaps it came from a girl who had the most mental turn in those days among the sadhikas: Chinmayi. She had a great striving in her to be one with the Mother, but obstacles in her being, which others would not have made much of in themselves, she felt terribly. In a certain sense this was due to an intense sincerity which felt extreme dissatisfaction at the slightest shortcoming, a dissatisfaction which could be very upsetting. She passed away many years ago.

Now only two definitions are left. One of them is: “To live for Mother as if nobody and nothing else existed.”

Here is the echo of the strong movement of self-giving which once characterised Lalita. At one time it seemed as if she were an inseparable part of the Mother.

Now the very last: “To feel a warmth and a glow in my heart in my relation with Mother.”

This somewhat emotional-sounding expression comes—strange to say—from somebody who would be expected to use more brainy language. Instead of “a warmth and a glow in my heart”, one would imagine him saying, “a heat and a light in my head.” But actually he had lost his head over Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and that surely was the heart’s doing—but for a long time he didn’t know what had happened and felt a kindling and unkindling of the heart’s love for the Divine—and was all agog to stop the latter and keep always the flame he knew in the Mother’s presence.

Poor chap, he is still trying to tend the sacred fire. We'll wish him a steady progress and as few stumbles as possible. (*Laughter*)

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

DANCERS IN THE SUN

COLD is getting colder each day
 Dark encloses us by and by.
 The chill yet to be endured
 Has touched me,
 The task ahead's in view.
 Standing here, positioned amongst
 Brothers in the shadows,
 I watch the scene
 And become two people:
 The one looks on with compassion
 And love overflowing—
 The other remembers
 The brothers in the sun
 Making dance and tune
 Waiting,
 Waiting for their own.
 My longing weeps pearls,
 Rolling forth
 They catch
 The last of the light
 Reflecting
 The dancers in the sun.

GEORGETTE

RELIGION AND CHANGE IN CONTEMPORARY ASIA

A REVIEW-ARTICLE

A HIGHLY interesting collection of essays by several experts in their respective fields has recently appeared under this title¹ and deserves more than a passing notice. Attention has too often been directed to the political and economic problems faced by the newly awakened peoples of Asia, problems which not only concern themselves but are of vital import to the rest of the world and may even influence its future. We talk of democracy and dictatorship, of five-year plans and "cultural revolutions" and patterns of trade and currency adjustments. These are no doubt vital issues and preoccupy the modern mind with its decided bias for things physical and tangible. But that, one might venture to suggest, is not an altogether right approach to a study of Asia, for it misses the heart of the problem. "The true mind of Asia has always remained, behind all surface appearances, not political but social, monarchical and aristocratic at the surface but with a fundamental democratic trend and a theocratic spirit" (Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Chapter 23). Asia has always sought, the Asian mind has constantly found "the directing light..., the harmonising principle of all our life and action...directly and immediately in religion" (Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, Chapter 17). This fact is apt to be overlooked. It is the great achievement of the authors and planners of this volume of essays to have grasped this central fact and to have related their study of the contemporary scene in East, South and South-East Asia to the religious background.

At the outset, in the Editor's Introduction, a fundamental question has been raised: what are we to understand by "religion"? Religion, it has been pointed out, has to be considered not merely in its aspect of creed and ritual, "it is rather to be seen as a human institution and as a mode of thought as well, both arising within a socio-cultural matrix"; it may come to "colour the entire life style of a culture". It is this view of religion, "a total ethic, an ethos" understood in this sense that has guided the discussion in these essays. The approach has naturally varied with the individual authors. Some, like Joseph M. Kitagawa on Japan and Robert R. Jay on Indonesia, have treated the subject in the broad perspective of history; others like Arthur F. Wright on China, and I. Milton Sacks on Vietnam have concentrated on the recent and contemporary scene; the studies on Burma and Pakistan give interesting glimpses into the popular and orthodox mind based on first-hand knowledge. All of them show a keen insight into the forces at work that are shaping the total life of the

¹ *Religion and Change in Contemporary Asia*, edited by Robert F. Spencer, edition for Asia published by Oxford University Press, Bombay, by arrangement with the original publishers, the University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minn., U.S.A., 1971. Price in India Rs. 45. pp 177.

areas concerned. India too, which in a sense holds the key to the problem of the future, has been passing through a phase of negation which, however, need not be overemphasised; such phases have been common enough in its past.

The broad picture that emerges from these studies is that the mind of Asia is at the present moment and has for sometime past been in a state of turmoil with regard to its religious heritage, and does not seem to know what to do with it in its hectic rush at modernity. It is caught between two worlds. It cannot ignore the world of modern science and a socio-economic ideology which fastens on collective progress and a basic justice and equality to be ensured to all as far as may be through the instrumentality of a governmental machinery whether of the democratic or dictatorial pattern. On the other hand it cannot, even if it tries, altogether break away from its old moorings in the religious traditions of the past, their world-view and ethics, their concept of man and his place in society, their scheme of socio-economic and political order. The result has been a queer amalgam, a strange jumble of forces out of which no one really knows what is likely to emerge at last. In some of these studies, an attempt has been made to hazard a forecast, rightly in the most hesitating way. We may here venture to offer a few suggestions of our own, based on Sri Aurobindo's prognostications.

It seems to be clear that Asia cannot do without religion—"religion" in its broadest sense of an aspiration to something spiritual, something that is not covered by the formula of mind, life and body as the directing force of existence. The problem arises: where to find it? The answer given by the old established faiths may have served to an extent the needs of the exceptional individual. He could, by following certain lines of rigid discipline, come to a state where he could feel in certain measure safe from the perplexities of thought and life, and even hope in the end to escape from them altogether in a heaven or nirvanic state. Whether or not he could in the long run escape at all from this round of births and deaths remains still problematical. But whatever the fate of the exceptional individual, he did not really do much for the millions who were not so exceptional. In this sense we have to accept Sri Aurobindo's dictum that Asia failed ultimately, not because of too much religion, but because of too little of it. It did not make any sincere endeavour to spiritualise the race, a difficult enough job but one that could legitimately be expected of a continent that has made religion its particular province. All it could do was to lull the masses into the belief that if they behaved in a particular way, offered worship to certain deities on particular occasions, they would find solace in their troubles, obtain material benefits, would have better luck in the lives to come or in an eternal Beyond. The masses believed, and because they had faith, they got at least in this world something of what they wanted and for the rest trusted to the hereafter.

All this has been for sometime now put under a severe test with the cultural and political invasion of the West. The exceptional individual has come to doubt the efficacy of the old disciplines. He is now no longer so eager to preach religion to the

masses. More and more of them are on the other hand taking to ideologies like those initiated by Marx and are looking to the "successes" of Communist Russia for an inspiration. As one of the essayists in the present series puts it neatly, "nothing commends a system of thought like success-in-action." This is not to say that the Asian masses have been converted to Marxism. Far from it, as the recent massacres of left-wing enthusiasts by the orthodox Muslim masses of Java so graphically described in this volume clearly show. Buddhism retains an equally strong hold on the people of Burma and Vietnam, as these studies suggest. There is no doubt a systematic attempt at brain-washing at the village level in communist China, but nothing is on record to prove that the mass of the Chinese people have renounced their age-old faiths. Nevertheless, one cannot predict with any certainty that even the masses may not some day come to accept the promises of a terrestrial utopia if their leaders are really in earnest about it. In that event, Asia "may reproduce or imitate the occidental experiment of industrialism, its first phase of capitalism, its second phase of socialism; but then her resurgence will bring no new meaning or possibility into the human endeavour" (Sri Aurobindo, *War and Self-Determination*). But one need not take it for granted that this is the only possibility of the future.

"Across this possibility falls the shadow of India. One sees a growing revival of the ancient Hindu religion and the immense sweep of a spiritual awakening and significant movements" (Sri Aurobindo, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, I.1). This is a matter of great moment. For India has been at the very core of the Asian spirit, and if India can evolve something new and rich and strange out of the meeting of East and West, as there is every hope that she will, then "she will be the leader in a new world-phase, aid by her example and cultural infiltration the new tendencies of the West and spiritualise the human race" (*Ibid.*).

One may conclude with Sri Aurobindo that "the one real and important fact in Asia of today is this that the whole active force of its future is centred not in priesthood or aristocracy, but...in a newly-created intelligentsia, small at first in numbers, but increasing in energy and the settled will to arrive and bound to become exceedingly dynamic by reason of the inherited force of spirituality. Asia may well preserve its ancient spirituality....But whatever turn that spirituality takes, it will be determined by the mentality of this new intelligentsia and will certainly flow into other channels than the old ideas and symbols" (*The Ideals of Human Unity*, Chapter 23). What those "other channels" might be is more than one can prophesy.

ON A POEM BY EMERSON

WHY, with his particular elevated and sensitive nature, the American-style sage Ralph Waldo Emerson was not more of a poet than he was is a question perhaps more perplexed or obscure than profitable. The answer is probably in the same thing that kept him from being very much of a sage either: his American environment, that would have him primarily and fundamentally “down to earth” and “practical” by the lights of small horizons, however he might want to expand and soar in his larger nature, and develop his nobler capacities. If he was to flourish in America, he could not be too much of a Transcendentalist: or rather, he could not be really *transcendental*, though his philosophizing a little could be accepted as lending a kind of elegance to the scene, a token that Americans were not really barbarians after all. As long as they were not “out” anything, you know, they could tolerate a little “culture”: and of course it was “capital” too, in a way—something to brag about to foreigners, and put American stock high. Even a little exceptional *cultural* elevation was all right now and then, so long as it was not allowed to make any “practical” difference, and interfere with the “serious business” of the new “go-ahead” dispensation.

But Emerson *was* a poet, and could not altogether conceal the fact behind roughness and assumed indifference to the formal refinement that poetic mastery requires. There is no poem of his that is not worth comment, and one who has not read his poetry is advised that to do so would probably not be a waste of his time. Here my interest is in eleven lines of blank verse called “Days”. This poem was one of the first examples of the art to impress me when I was a boy and Emerson was one of the first serious writers to attract me. I have never forgotten the lines, and am now perhaps at last coming in a fair way to comprehend them. So:

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single in an endless file,
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
I, in my pleached garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

This is not the shallow statement most readers probably take it to be (albeit thinking their shallowness profound): it does not lament or record a lack of readyminded

worldliness, that is an eye to the "main chance", to pile up "goods" and "make things work" on this gross material plane, with no care to a larger existence. What the man circumscribed in his neatly small garden, his well-ordered and even artistic smallness, has failed to respond to is the call to his full nature and the inexhaustible wealth of divine realization.

For it is on this plane and this alone that the full realization is possible and the full treasure can be offered. Here is the meeting place of the extremes, where the divine kingdom shall come. But men do not will enough, and most have no inkling of the Will above the ego-nature, the collected strength that can take the Light's direction. So most men, when they are not discouraged or broken (or perhaps when they are), are easily and soon satisfied: they forget the dreams and the aspirations of their youth and "settle down", consider their work done, grow old and pass away. The hypocritic days are baffling to them: the acting is too good, the mystery too impenetrable and unfathomable, the surface fascination too strong; and they gape and lounge bemused, and cannot understand the play at all. It is a rare man who can consciously grow by Time, and recognize that he himself is the protagonist, to whom the Days "answer". Most take a few little things, and sink into the dullness and darkness and inertia that is all too much a part of their nature. They cannot stand firm and clear-eyed till everything is offered, and accepted: the terms met, and the evolutionary compact fulfilled.

But for one who can even begin to do this—one who can see, if only in a brief glimpse, the "scorn"—there is always time. It is never too late, though in that particular life he may accomplish little. There is continuity, and awakening always bears fruit. Whether Emerson really knew much of this we may seriously doubt; but still it is in his poem, which can be an inspiration for anyone fitted to aspire, and eventually to achieve. The Grace is there: but a torn sail cannot receive the wind, or a sieve the water. The true man, however, the genuine aspiring human being, will find and play nobly his true leading part in the play that is divine celebration, and that will carry him, when his Will is come free in Light, to the immortal beatitude.

JESSE ROARKE

GLIMPSES OF HISTORICAL PONDICHERRY

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1971)

4

WE shall now touch on the second arrival of the Europeans at Pondicherry, the first having been that of the Roman traders 2000 years ago.

The French were not the earliest settlers there in modern times. The Portuguese who knew the Cape route to India had founded three trading stations on the Malabar Coast: at Calicut, Cannanore and Cochin. Then, in 1505 they opened up another trading post at Ceylon, and several along the Coromandel Coast, such as at San Thome, Negapatam, Pondicherry, Tranquebar, etc.

Pondicherry at that time belonged to the Gingy Prince Moothu Krishnappa Naick, and he expelled the Portuguese from Pondicherry in 1614; he offered the Pondicherry trading post to the Dutch instead, but the Dutch left Pondicherry for Tevanapatnam near Cuddalore. As the trading station was again empty, the Gingy Naick gave it to the Danes in 1624.

But they were not interested in remaining in Pondicherry for the purpose of trade, and as the French were at Surate, the Gingy ruler offered it to the French. The trading station was a huge building, having more the appearance of a fortress. Such an appearance was necessary to discourage the Maratha incursions.

At the outset, the French remained in Pondicherry only long enough to make their purchases of goods; but, with the arrival of François Martin, they settled permanently in 1673.

François Martin, however, was made prisoner by the Dutch who sent him with his family to Batavia, and they took Pondicherry. After slow and tedious negotiations, Pondicherry was returned to François Martin by the Dutch who also gave him some surrounding villages in 1699.

Trade was flourishing, but the Maratha incursions were becoming frequent, and it was found necessary to build a fort.

In 1703, the Jesuits opened at Pondicherry a college where Latin, philosophy and theology were taught; students came from Bengal, Madras, the Philippines, Surate, Persia, Paris and London.

François Martin died in 1706. Under his guidance, Pondicherry town had improved considerably and the trade had been good.

Many governors succeeded François Martin; then came Governor Dupleix.

5

Joseph François Dupleix came to Pondicherry from Chandernagore. The French had a settlement there and Dupleix had in ten years of good management brought it up to its best. It was under Dupleix and by his clever and cunning politics that France became very powerful in India: her influence extended from the river Krishna to Cape Comorin. He owed a good deal to his wife, because she had been born in India, and spoke Bengali and Tamil equally well. His counsellor and "dubash" Ananda Rangapillay helped him also in no small measure.

Under Dupleix, Pondicherry became the first city in South India, by its riches and military power, and Nawabs came often to visit the town. It was then said that Dupleix whose reputation extended from the Himalayas to Rameswaram had the knack of bringing together lions, tigers and sheep.

Pondicherry was well fortified under Dupleix, and an inscription on a stone commemorating the building of a portion of the fort is still to be seen in the town.

In 1751, Dupleix received from Gingy the twelve granite pillars, which now adorn the entrance to the old pier around Gandhiji's statue, but were intended to decorate the gardens of the palace that was being built for him as the Governor.

Dupleix was recalled to France in 1754 and his departure coincided with the decline of French influence in India.

The town then began to pass through many vicissitudes, and was also totally destroyed by the British in 1761.

The French returned in 1816 after a long absence, and went on improving the town steadily in all respects, until in 1954 Pondicherry was handed over to the Indian Government.

6

No survey of Pondicherry would be complete without a mention of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who have given this town its full and final importance.

Sri Aurobindo was born at Calcutta on the 15th of August, 1872, and was sent to England at a tender age. He was very successful in his studies there. Being a consummate linguist, he had no difficulty in studying every type of Western culture.

He was an ardent nationalist. Upon his return to India he first spent a few years in the service of the Maharaja of Baroda and then entered politics. In the course of his nationalist leadership he spent a year in prison. But even there, though the environment was not favourable, he was engaged in profound meditation.

His spiritual realisation went beyond his initial objective of liberating his country, and he set for himself a universal goal: the future of humanity, a new age of the spirit and a new race of men on earth.

After leaving gaol he carried on for a while his past political and other activities,

but the British were trying to remove him from the political field. He counteracted their move successfully; but on receiving an inner spiritual command he left Calcutta for Chandernagore which was in that period French territory, and then received a further order from within to leave for Pondicherry. He arrived there by the ship *Dupleix* on the 4th April 1910. With this act he completely broke away from his earlier life.

According to Sri Aurobindo's vision, man's present existence in the world is a life in the ignorance with the Inconscient at its base, but even in this darkness the presence and possibilities of the Divine are involved. The created world is not a mistake or a vanity, an illusion to be cast aside, but instead the scene of a spiritual evolution by which, out of material inconscience, is to be manifested the Divine Consciousness.

Mind is the highest state reached yet in evolution, but above it still is the Supermind or eternal Truth-Consciousness. By being open to a greater divine consciousness, it is possible for us to attain this power of light and discover our Self, remain in constant union with the Divine, and bring down the supramental force, to transform mind, life and body: this is the aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

The Mother continues Sri Aurobindo's work. Very early in life she was interested in occult matters. She often had visions of a figure which she recognised as Sri Aurobindo when she first met him on the 29th of March 1914. She had to return to France, and came to settle definitely in Pondicherry on the 24th of April 1920.

On the 15th of August 1954, on the birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo and also of India's Independence, the Mother declared that her object in life was to give a concrete shape to Sri Aurobindo's great teachings: "He tells us that all nations are essentially One and intended to express divine unity on this earth through harmonious and organised diversity."

To emphasise the unity of human origin, the Mother sent the following message to the United States of America on the 4th of August 1949: "Stop thinking that you are of the west and the others of the east. All human beings are of the same Divine Origin, and meant to manifest upon earth the unity of this origin."

This message went out from Pondicherry which has remained through the ages, and is now more than ever, the City of Knowledge

(concluded)

GISELAINE MONNIER

Author's Note

I here wish to express my gratitude to Me. Yvonne Robert Gaebbelé and the late Mr. P. Z. Pattabiraman for their kind help, advice and encouragement in writing this article.

“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1971)

GOD AND THE WORLD

Boons of Spiritual Heritage

“A SPIRITUAL ideal has always been the characteristic ideal and inspiration of India.” Hence the renaissance of India, which began with Ram Mohan Roy, must not come to an end with what we have gained so far.

The link between God and man has been almost broken. Ancient India never divorced God from life—rather it always subordinated everything, even politics, to the cultural pattern. We must move on and on—forward, inward, upward—till we acquire something of the Vedic Spirit.

It may be questioned here: Are we to revive the past—go back to bygone days?

True, the past cannot be revived in its old form. We cannot uphold the ideal of the chariot in the age of the aeroplane and jumbo jet. Contact with Western civilisation has brought a fresh breeze, helped our youth breathe the spirit of the age, but the loss we have sustained far outweighs the gain. It is not the primitive India that has to be revived, but, to quote Sri Aurobindo: “...the spirit, ideals and methods of the ancient and mightier India in a yet more effective form and with a more modern organisation.”

This being said, we may add: How rich was our past! Our forefathers braved the seas, carried our civilisation to far-off lands. What educational discipline was maintained in the Ashrams of our Rishis,—the Rishis who made India illustrious! Even kings would put their sons in their charge. When the pupils came out of their Ashrams they were no longer slaves to passion, but unique in the display of richness of character and national vitality.

While under the spell of these ideas, another quotation from Sri Aurobindo’s *Brain of India*¹ comes to mind: “a gigantic intellectuality, spirituality and superhuman moral force we see pulsating in Ramayana and Mahabharata,² in the ancient philosophy, in the supreme poetry, art, sculpture and architecture of India. What was the basis of the incomparable achievement... the great triumphs of science... the unique social structure? What was it that stood behind that civilisation second to none?”

¹ Lakhs of copies of the English version of these books are going to foreign countries,

² P. 11.

Sri Aurobindo's answer is : (1) Education of the soul and (2) the practice of Brahmacharya.

Regarding the efficacy of Brahmacharya he points out:

"The practice of Brahmacharya is the first and most necessary condition of increasing the force within and turning it to such uses as may benefit the possessor or mankind.... The source of life and energy is not material but spiritual; but the basis, the foundation on which the life and energy stand and work, is physical.

"All passion, lust and desire wastes the energy by pouring it, either in the gross form or a sublimated subtler form, out of the body. Immorality in act throws it out in the gross form; immorality of thought in the subtle form. In either case there is a waste.... On the other hand, all self-control conserves the energy in the *retas*...

"According to the ancient theory *retas* is *jala* or water, full of light and heat and electricity, in one word, of *tejas*. The excess of the *retas* turns first into heat or *tapas* which stimulates the whole system, and it is for this reason that all forms of self-control and austerity are called *tapas* or *tapasyā* because they generate the heat or stimulate, which is a source of powerful action and success.

"Secondly, it turns to *tejas* proper, light, the energy which is at the source of all knowledge. Thirdly, it turns to *vidyut* or electricity, which is at the basis of all forceful action whether intellectual or physical. In the *vidyut* again is involved the *ojas*.

"Thus, the *retas* refining from *jala* to *tapas*, *tejas* and *vidyut* and from *vidyut* to *ojas*, fills the system with physical strength, energy and brain power. In its last form of *ojas* it rises to the brain and informs it with that primal energy which is the most refined form of matter and nearest to spirit. It is *ojas* that creates a spiritual force or *vīrya*, by which a man attains to spiritual knowledge, spiritual love and faith, spiritual strength.

"It follows that the more we can increase the store of *tapas*, *tejas*, *vidyut* and *ojas* by Brahmacharya, the more we shall fill ourselves with utter energy for the works of the body, heart, mind and spirit."

Before we proceed something interesting comes to mind. Questioned about his impression of India, a foreign dignitary said in a thoughtful tone: "Any other country would have fallen to pieces. It is a miracle India is not falling. This shows there is a power that sustains her."

An extract from Sri Aurobindo's writings gives the answer why it is not falling.

"We are the descendants of those who performed Tapasya and underwent unheard-of austerities for the sake of spiritual gain and of their own will submitted to all the sufferings of which humanity is capable.... We are the people to whom suffering is welcome and who have a spiritual strength within them greater than any physical force. We are a people in whom God has chosen to manifest himself more than any other at many great moments of our history. It is because God has chosen to manifest himself and has entered into the hearts of his people that we are rising again as a nation,

“Each nation is a Shakti of power of the evolving spirit in humanity and lives by the principle which it embodies. India is the Bharata Shakti, the living energy of a great spiritual conception, and fidelity to it the very principle of her existence. For by its virtue alone she has been one of the immortal nations; this alone has been the secret of her amazing persistence and perpetual force of survival and revival.”

Regarding the efficacy of Brahmacharya he points out: “The practice of Brahmacharya is the first and most necessary condition of increasing the force from within and turning to such uses as may benefit mankind. All human energy has a physical basis. The mistake made by European materialism is to suppose the basis to be everything and confuse it with the source. The source of life and energy is not material but spiritual.”¹

It is by Brahmacharya that ancient Indians placed all energy at the service of the brain, thereby greatly increasing the creative mental activity.

“Mr. Gladstone was considered to be the possessor of an astonishing memory because he could repeat the whole or part of Homer’s Iliad without a pause.” For our Vedic scholars there would have been nothing unusual in this. Practically the whole of Sanskrit literature has been handed down to us, from generation to generation, by their brain-power. The Vedas were retained long in memory before they were written down. This feat can be seen in the life of Dayananda and of Vivekananda in our era.

Our ancients knew that all energy comes from One Source—the Universal Prakriti. The greater our capacity to hold and assimilate it, the greater the success in life. “When the *ādhār* is trained” and is able to bear its inrush, one has reached the goal of life, “his evolution is over”—he is *siddha*, the perfect one. To use the Vedic term, he is *tapta-tanu* (baked-red).

Another thing: Our forefathers were not concerned only with their individual selves or with their own country. Their hearts went out in great prayers: *Sārva janāḥ sukhino bhavantū* (“May all mankind be happy”).

Sri Aurobindo’s call is to young India: “It is the young India who must be the builders of the next world. They must be men, who would dedicate themselves not to the past, the present but the future.”²

Is this not something worth aspiring after?

God is man’s great ideal. If the passions of at least a few are fired, they will go through life, taking delight in the battle itself, unmindful of victory. Those who choose a noble cause do not enter into calculation nor is theirs a rat race for personal glory. It is they who are supposed to be the pioneers of the new experiment.

Hence the aim of education should be to promote the spiritual development of the youngsters.

Here we come up against a difficulty. Where are the teachers—the mothers and

¹ *Ibid*, p 11

² “We belong not to the dawns of the past but the noons of the future.”

fathers—who would mould the destiny of the little ones to such a high ideal? Here lies the importance of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

Before saying something about this temple of learning an impertinent question about India as a spiritual force demands an answer:

“What remnants of India’s ancient spiritual heritage,” it is argued, “survive in our day-to-day life? Is not spirituality a dead force in present India?”

Spirituality will never die in India. It may see the day of decay, as is the case today due to petty political squabbles, but it will never disappear from India.

Spirituality is in India’s soil. Spirituality is India’s soul. Spirituality is its source of life. The galaxy of spiritual luminaries has never broken up in the past and will not break up in future.

Don’t we find a fitting answer to the challenging question in Sri Aurobindo himself? Is he not the renewer of ancient India and the harbinger of a far greater India?

True, India does not inspire people today as it did in the past but even now hundreds turn to India in quest of spirituality. Does not the Sri Krishna movement in the West, for instance, give evidence of Sri Aurobindo’s vision: “India’s spirituality is entering Europe and America....” With the passing of time its tempo will increase by evolutionary pressure.

Let another prophecy of Sri Aurobindo be enshrined in our mind: “The sun of India’s destiny would rise and fill with its light and overflow India and overflow Asia and overflow the world. Every hour, every movement could only bring them nearer to the brightness of the day that God has decreed.”

The spiritual unrest in the world is due to the over-concentration of worldly powers without a spiritual basis. If once the world realises this truth a new vision of life will open before its eyes. The only difficulty is that it does not give much importance to inner withdrawal—spiritual exploration.

The world would have been torn to bits had there been no immutable peace sustaining it. That is the symbolic meaning of Hindu mythology—Shiva lying inert and Goddess Kali dancing on his breast.

NARAYAN PRASAD

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Pocket Book of Boners, Pocket Books, Inc., New York, N.Y. 17th Printing, 1943.

It is not always the most recent offering in the world of letters that one finds worthy of critical mention. Occasionally, a vintage piece steals the limelight of one's attention.

Such a book is *The Pocket Book of Boners*, 'an omnibus of schoolboy howlers and unconscious humour,' now in its fortieth year since its first appearance in print. As the editors point out in the foreword, the unwitting contributors to this volume may long since have achieved eminence as millionaires, statesmen, engineers, "perhaps even presidents"; but the "youthful indiscretions" of the authors in their childhood exam papers seal their literary fame albeit anonymously, as the following excerpts so aptly prove. These are quite a number, but it is the biggest compliment to this wonderful book that they are the minimum we can control ourselves to quote.

Definitions

The Royal Mint is what the King grows in his Palace Gardens.

An unbridled orgy is a wild horse.

Louis XVI was gelatinized during the French Revolution.

The letters M.D. signify "mentally deficient."

A Soviet is a cloth used by waiters in hotels.

Acrimony is what a man gives his divorced wife.

An adult is a man that has stopped growing at both ends but not in the middle.

Literature

A lyric is something written to be sung by a liar.

The three types of the sonnet are the Spenserian, Shakesperean and Pedestrian.

Gainsborough painted Mrs. Siddons as a tragic mouse.

There are three kinds of poetry—lyric, dramatic and epidemic.

Homer wrote the Oddity.

Pope wrote principally in heroic cutlets.

Wells' history is a veritable millstone on the road to learning.

Milton wrote "Paradise Lost"; then his wife died and he wrote "Paradise Regained."

Q. Give an example of a collective noun. A. Garbage-can.

A passive verb is when the subject is the sufferer, as "I am loved."

Degrees of comparison of "Bad:"

Bad; very sick; dead.

History

Q. What was the Age of Pericles? A I'm not sure, but I reckon he was about forty.

The government of England is a limited mockery.

The Battle of Trafalgar was fought on sea, therefore it is sometimes called Waterloo.

After his death, Charles I, who during his life had been known as Charles the Tyrant, became Charles the Martyr. He died for the good of his country, because his country was much better off after he was dead.

The climate of Bombay is such that its inhabitants have to live elsewhere.

The inhabitants of Moscow are called Mosquitoes.

Science-Health

To keep milk from turning sour you should keep it in the cow.

Algebra was the wife of Euclid.

Q. Define: H₂O and CO₂. A. H₂O is hot water and CO₂ is cold water.

Four animals belonging to the cat family are the father cat, the mother cat, and two kittens.

When we see an object, light passes through the eye and into the brain where little light exists.

The function of the stomach is to hold up the petticoat.

A person should take a bath once in the summer time and not quite so often in the winter time.

Natural immunity is being able to catch a disease without the aid of a physician.

Miscellaneous

A scout obeys all to whom obedience is due and respects all duly constipated authorities.

A scout is a fiend to all and a bother to every other scout.

Capital punishment should not be used too frequently in schools.

Q. Name a five-letter word meaning a heavenly body with a long, luminous tale.

A. Angel.

Letters in sloping type are in hysterics.

Achilles was the boy whose mother dipped him in the River Stinx until he was intolerable.

Socrates died from an overdose of wedlock.

Q. What is the chief cause of divorce? A. Marriage.

They say music hath charms to soothe the savage beast but I never noticed it had any effect on me.

In a limited monarchy only one man can be king at a time.

The Boer War was a pig fight put on for the pleasure of Louis XIV.

TWINKIE

THERE IS NO CHOICE

OFTEN soon fizzles out friends' words of promise,
 Self-interest is the driving force all-where;
 Sometimes a dagger's point, sometimes a bomb is
 Hidden behind sweet words that prove a snare.

Delve deep within for thy own self's soul-power,
 Nothing of the world shall stick to stand by thee;
 Thy soul-strength buttressed by Truth is thy fortress-tower
 Defying, untouched, all falsehood and treachery.

Rely on nothing except on Truth thou livest—
 Truth fortified by Her Love that carries Her Grace;
 Unsafe thou art if not to Truth thou givest,
 Reject world's dangerous and ruinous clever ways.

For the Truth to side with thee Truth only cherish,
 Whoever, whatever depends on the world shall perish.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

EIGHTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

THE Eighth Annual Conference of the New Age Association was held on the 22nd August 1971. At the beginning the following message, specially given by the Mother for this Conference, was read out:

“Have faith and be sincere”.

After that a poem of Sri Aurobindo and two other passages from his writings were read out by three members of the Association. Then four other members spoke on the following subjects:

The Reality of the Individual — Anand Arya
Human Relationships — Basabjit
The Concept of the Hero in Sri Aurobindo's Poetry — Romen
Avatarhood and Evolution — Rupa Jauhar

SPECIAL SEMINARS FOR THE YOUTH CAMPS

The New Age Association, during the last seven years since its inception in July 1964, has kept its activities confined to the Higher Course students of the Centre of Education at Sri Aurobindo Ashram. In this year of Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary an idea was proposed to the Mother if the activities of the Association could now be extended to cover a wider field in order to make contacts with outside students in India and abroad. The Mother's reply to this proposal was that the Youth Camps, to be organised by Sri Aurobindo's Action at the Ashram during the Centenary year, “seem an excellent opportunity” to realise the idea.

In pursuance of this direction of the Mother, two special Seminars were organised for the First Youth Camp held at the Ashram from 26th September to 10th October 1971.

Four members of the Association—Romen, Debranjana, Swadesh and Anand Arya—read papers on different subjects at these Seminars followed by discussions with the visiting students of the Youth Camp.

Two more special Seminars were organised for the Second Youth Camp held at the Ashram from 24th October to 7th November 1971. The same four members read papers at these Seminars followed by discussions with the Youth Camp students.

Compiled by: KISHOR GANDHI