

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

NOVEMBER 1975

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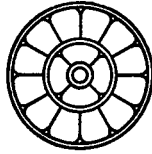
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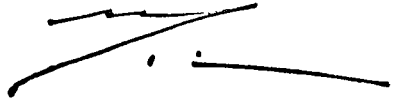


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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. XXVII

No. II

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."*

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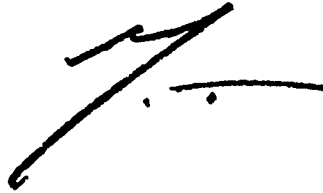
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## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

instead of being upset and struggling, the best thing to do is to offer one's body to the Divine with the sincere prayer "Let Thy Will be done." If there is any possibility of cure, it will establish the best conditions for it; and if cure is impossible, it will be the very best preparation for getting out of the body and the life without it.

In any case the first indispensable condition is a quiet surrender to the Divine's will.

With love and blessings,



instead of being upset and struggling, the best thing to do is to offer one's body to the Divine with the *sincere* prayer "Let Thy Will be done." If there is any possibility of cure, it will establish the best conditions for it; and if cure is impossible, it will be the very best preparation for getting out of the body and the life without it.

In any case the first indispensable condition is a quiet surrender to the Divine's will.

With love and blessings.

It is in this world that you have to change and that the change is possible. If you run away from this world, you will have to come again probably in worse conditions and you will have to do everything all over again.

It is much better not to be a coward, to face now the situation and to do the necessary effort to conquer. The help is always with you; you must learn to avail yourself of it.

Love and Blessings

It is *in this world* that you have to change and that the change is possible. If you run away from this world, you will have to come again probably in worse conditions and you will have to do everything all over again.

It is much better not to be a coward, to face now the situation and to do the necessary effort to conquer. The help is always with you; you must learn to avail yourself of it.

Love and blessings.

9-10-67

The first thing from  
which you must cure  
once for ever, is

Fear

It is more dangerous than  
the worst disease.

With love and blessings of

9-10-67

The first thing from which you must cure once for ever, is

*Fear*

It is more dangerous than the worst disease.

With love and blessings.

## NOVEMBER 17

### THE MOTHER'S "PRAYER AND MEDITATION" ON THAT DATE IN 1914

*The Mother withdrew from her body on November 17, 1973. It is of deep interest to read what she wrote on the first occurrence of November 17 for her in Pondicherry. It was in 1914, the year in which she met Sri Aurobindo. This piece of writing is also the only one from her pen on that date during all her years in Pondicherry. Here she is addressing her own highest being from the human plane on which that being has set its emanation, its incarnation. Her "Prayer and Meditation" may very aptly be taken as our own soul's converse with the Mother after she has departed from that embodiment.*

ALAS, sublime Mother, what must be Thy patience! Each time Thy conscious will attempts to manifest itself to rectify errors, hasten the uncertain progress of the individual led astray by his own illusion of knowledge, trace the sure path and give him the strength to walk steadily upon it without stumbling, almost always he pushes Thee away as a tiresome and short-sighted adviser. He is willing to love Thee in theory with a vague and inconsistent love, but his proud mind refuses to confide in Thee and prefers to wander all by itself rather than advance guided by Thee.

And Thou repliest, ever smiling in Thy unwearying benevolence: "This intellectual faculty which makes man proud and leads him into error is the very same which, once enlightened and purified, can also lead him farther, higher than universal nature, to a direct and conscious communion with our Lord, He who is beyond all manifestation. This dividing intellect, which makes him stand apart from me, also enables him to scale rapidly the heights he must climb, without letting his progress be enchained and delayed by the totality of the universe, which, in its immensity and complexity, cannot effect so quick an ascent."

O Divine Mother, always Thy word comforts and blesses, calms and illumines, and Thy generous hand lifts a fold of the veil hiding the infinite knowledge.

How calm, noble and pure is the splendour of Thy perfect contemplation!



## TWO "PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS" OF THE MOTHER

July 13, 1917

ONE day<sup>1</sup> I wrote:

"My heart has fallen asleep to the very depths of my being..." Merely asleep? I cannot believe it. I think it is completely hushed, perhaps for ever. From sleep one awakes, from this quietness there is no falling away. And since that day I have not found any relapse. Replacing something very intensely concentrated which for a long while was intermittently tumultuous, has come an immensity so vast and calm and untroubled, filling my being; or rather my being has melted into that; for how could that which is limitless be contained in a form?

And these great mountains with their serene contours which I see from my window, range after majestic range right up to the horizon, are in perfect harmony with the rhythm of this being, filled with an infinite peace. Lord, hast Thou then taken possession of Thy kingdom? Or rather of this part of the kingdom, for the body is still obscure and ignorant, slow to respond, without plasticity. Will it be purified one day like the rest? And will Thy victory then be total? It matters little. This instrument is what Thou watest it to be and its bliss is unalloyed.

May 6, 1927

One must know how to give one's life and also one's death, give one's happiness and also one's suffering, to depend for everything and in all things upon the Divine Dispenser of all our possibilities of realisation, who alone can and will decide whether we shall be happy or not, whether we shall live or not, whether we shall participate or not in the realisation.

In the integrality and absoluteness of this love, this self-giving, lies the essential condition for perfect peace, the indispensable foundation of constant bliss.

<sup>1</sup> April 10, 1917.

# THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BODY

## FROM A TALK BY THE MOTHER

I HEARD a Sufi mystic, who was besides a great musician, an Indian, saying that for the Sufis there was a state higher than that of adoration and surrender to the Divine, than that of devotion, that this was not the last stage; the last stage of the progress is when there is no longer any distinction between the Divine and oneself. They know this. It is even written in their books. It is a commonly known condition in which everything becomes quite simple. There is no longer any difference. There is no longer that kind of ecstatic surrender to "Something" which is beyond you in every way, which you do not understand, which is merely the result of your aspiration, your devotion. There is no difference any longer. When this union is perfect, there is no longer any difference.

*Is this the end of self-progress?*

There is never any end to progress — never any end, you can never put a fullstop there.

*Can that happen before the transformation of the body?*

Before the transformation of the body?... This is a phenomenon of consciousness. For instance, the physical consciousness may have this experience even for years before the cells change. There is a great difference between the physical consciousness (the body consciousness) and the material body. This takes a long time, because it is a thing that has never been done. That state, as I have already told you, is a commonly known state which has been realised by some people, the most advanced, the highest among the mystics; but the transformation of the body has never been done by anyone.

And it takes a terribly long time. Sri Aurobindo said — one day I asked him: "How long will it take to transform the body?" He did not hesitate, he said: "Oh! something like three hundred years."

*Three hundred years from when?*

Three hundred years from the time one has the consciousness I was just speaking about. (*Laughter*)

No, the conclusion, what you must succeed in doing, is to be able to prolong life at will: not to leave the body until one wants to.

So, if one has resolved to transform the body, well, one must wait with all the necessary patience — three hundred years, five hundred years, a thousand years, it does not matter — the time needed for the change. As for me, I see that three hun-

dred years is a minimum. To tell you the truth, with the experience I have of things, I think it is truly a minimum.

Just imagine. You have never thought about what it means, have you? How is your body built? In a purely animal way, with all the organs and all the functions. You are absolutely dependent: if your heart stops for even the thousandth part of a second, you are gone and that's the end. The whole thing works and works automatically without your conscious will (happily for you, for if you had to supervise the functioning, it would have gone the wrong way long ago). All that is there. You cannot do without an organ, at least totally, there must be something in you representing it.

Transformation implies that all this purely material arrangement is replaced by an arrangement of concentrations of force having certain types of different vibrations substituting each organ by a centre of conscious energy moved by a conscious will and directed by a movement coming from above, from higher regions. No stomach, no heart any longer, no circulation, no lungs, no.... All this disappears. But it is replaced by a whole set of vibrations representing what those organs are symbolically. For the organs are only the material symbols of centres of energy; they are not the essential reality; they simply give it a form or a support in certain given circumstances. The transformed body will then function through its *real* centres of energy and not any longer through their symbolic representatives such as were developed in the animal body. Therefore, first of all you must know what your heart represents in the cosmic energy and what the circulation represents and what the stomach and the brain represent. To begin with, you must first be conscious of all that. And then, you must have at your disposal the original vibrations of that which is symbolised by these organs. And you must slowly gather together all these energies in your body and change each organ into a centre of conscious energy which will replace the symbolic movement by the real one.... You believe it will take only three hundred years to do that? I believe it will take much more time to have a form with qualities which will not be exactly those we know, but will be much superior; a form that one naturally dreams to see plastic: as the expression of your face changes with your feelings, so the body will change (not the form but within the same form) in accordance with what you want to express with your body. It can become very concentrated, very developed, very luminous, very sane, with a perfect plasticity, with a perfect plasticity and a lightness as one wills.... Have you never dreamt of giving a kick to the ground and then soaring into the air, flying away? You move about. You push a little with your shoulder, you go this way; you push again, you go that way; and you go wherever you like, quite easily; and finally when you have finished you come back, enter your body. Well, you must be able to do that with your body, and also certain things related to respiration — but there will no longer be lungs; there's a true movement behind a symbolic movement which gives you the capacity of lightness; you do not belong any longer to the system of gravitation, you escape.<sup>1</sup> And so for each organ.

<sup>1</sup> According to Sri Aurobindo, this true movement behind respiration is the same as the one governing electrical and magnetic fields; it is what the ancient yogis used to call Vayu, the Life-Energy. The

There is no end to imagination: to be luminous whenever one wants it, to be transparent whenever one wants it. Naturally there is no longer any need of any bones also in the system; it is not a skeleton with skin and viscera, it is another thing. It is concentrated energy obeying the will. This does not mean that there will no longer be any definite and recognisable forms; the form will be built by qualities rather than by solid particles. It will be, if one may say so, a practical or pragmatic form; it will be supple, mobile, light at will, in contrast to the fixity of the gross material form.

So, to change this into what I have just described, I believe three hundred years are truly very little. It seems many more than that are needed. Perhaps with a very very very concentrated work...

*Three hundred years with the same body?*

Well, there is change, it is no longer the same body.

But, you see, when our little humanity says three hundred years with the same body, you say: "Why! when I am fifty it already begins to decompose, so at three hundred years it will be a horrible thing!" But it is not like that. It is three hundred years with a body that goes on perfecting itself from year to year, perhaps when the three hundredth year is reached one will say: "Oh! I still need three or four hundred years more to be what I want to be." If each year that passes represents a progress, a transformation, one would like to have more and more years in order to be able to transform oneself more and more. When something is not exactly as you want it to be — take, for example, simply one of the things I have just described, say, plasticity or lightness or elasticity or luminosity, and none of them is exactly as you want it, then you will still need at least two hundred years more so that it may be accomplished, but you never think: "How is it? It is still going to last two hundred years more!" On the contrary, you say: "Two hundred years more are *absolutely* necessary so that it may be truly done." And then, when all is done, when all is perfect, then there is no longer any question of years, for you are immortal.

But there are many objections that may be raised. It may be said that it would be impossible for the body to change unless something changes in the surroundings also. What would be your relation with other objects if you have changed so much? With other beings also? It seems necessary that a whole set of things changes, at least in relative proportions, so that one can exist, continue to exist. This then brings much complication, for it is no longer one individual consciousness that has to do the work, it becomes a collective consciousness. And so it is much more difficult still.

---

breathing exercises (*prāṇāyāma*) are simply one system (among others) for acquiring mastery over Vayu which eventually enables you to be free from gravitation and gives certain powers known to the ancients: the power to be extremely light or extremely heavy, very big or very tiny (*garimā, laghumā, mahimā, aṇimā*).

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of September 1975)

*(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 fragmentary, incomplete form. The translation of the full text as it was taped, with here and there a few special additions or modifications made by the Mother at the time of its first publication as a book in French, came out in book-form in 1973. We are giving this translation here.)*

FEBRUARY 6, 1957

*“Death is the question Nature puts continually to life and her reminder to it that it has not yet found itself. If there were no siege of death, the creature would be bound forever in the form of an imperfect living. Pursued by death he awakes to the idea of perfect life and seeks out its means and its possibility.”*

Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glimpses*, Centenary Vol. 16, p.386

THIS seems a subject good enough for us not to need to go further. This is a question which every man with a little awakened consciousness has put to himself at least once in his life. There is at the core of the being such a need to perpetuate, prolong, develop life, that the moment one has a first contact with death, even quite an accidental contact but one which is inevitable, there is a sort of recoil in the being.

In some who are sensitive, it produces a horror; in others, indignation. There is a tendency to ask oneself: “What is this monstrous farce in which one takes part without wanting to, without understanding it? Why are we born, if it is to die? Why all this effort at development, progress, the flowering of the faculties, if it is to come to a diminution ending with a downfall and disintegration?...” Some are in revolt, others less strong are in despair and always this question is asked: “If there is a conscious Will behind all that, this Will seems to be monstrous.”

But here Sri Aurobindo tells us that this was an indispensable means of awakening in the consciousness of matter the need of perfection, the necessity of progress, that without this catastrophe all beings would have been satisfied with the condition they were in — perhaps.... That’s not sure.

But now one is obliged to take things as they are and tell oneself that the means to get out of this must be found.

The fact is that all is in a state of perpetual progressive development, that is, the whole creation, the whole universe is advancing towards a perfection which seems to recede as one goes forward towards it, for what seemed a perfection at a given moment is no longer so after a while. The subtlest states of being in the consciousness follow this perfection even as it is produced, and the higher one climbs up the ladder, the

more does the rhythm of the advance resemble the rhythm of the universal development and draw close to the rhythm of the divine development; but the material world is of a rigid nature, there transformation is slow, very slow, almost imperceptible for the time-measure as human consciousness perceives it...and so there is a constant disequilibrium between the inner and outer movement, and it is this disequilibrium, this incapacity of outer forms to follow the movement of the inner progress which produces the necessity of decomposition and the changing of forms. But if, in this matter, one could infuse a sufficient consciousness for the same rhythm to be obtained, if matter could become sufficiently plastic to follow the inner progression, this rupture of equilibrium would not come about, and death would no longer be necessary.

So, according to what Sri Aurobindo tells us, Nature has found this rather radical means to awaken in the material consciousness the necessary aspiration and plasticity.

It is evident that the most dominant characteristic of matter is inertia, and that, were there not this violence, perhaps each individual consciousness would be so inert that it would accept to live in a perpetual imperfection rather than change....That is possible. In any case, it is thus that things are fashioned, and for us who know a little more, there is but one thing that remains to be done, it is to change all this, as far as we have the means, by calling the Force, the Consciousness, the new Power which has the strength to infuse into material substance the vibration which can transform it, make it plastic, supple, progressive.

Evidently the greatest obstacle is the attachment to things as they are; but even Nature as a whole finds that those who have deeper knowledge want to go too fast: she likes her meanderings, she likes her successive attempts, her failures, her fresh beginnings, her new inventions; she likes the fantasy of her way, the unexpected in the experiment; one could almost say that for her the more time it takes, the more enjoyable it is.

But even of the best games one gets tired. There comes a moment when one needs to change them and one may dream of a game in which it would no longer be necessary to destroy in order to progress, where the zeal for progress would be sufficient for finding new means, new expressions, where the *élan* would be ardent enough to overcome the inertia, the lassitude, the lack of understanding, the fatigue, the indifference.

Why does this body, as soon as a progress has been made, feel the need to sit down? It is tired. It says: "Oh! one must wait. I must be given the time to rest." It is that which leads it to death. If it felt in itself that ardour of always doing better, being more pure, more beautiful, more luminous, eternally young, one could escape from this uncanny joke of Nature.

For her this has no importance. She sees the whole, she sees the totality; she sees that nothing is lost, that it is only remingling quantities, numberless minute elements, without importance, which one puts back into a pot and mixes well to bring forth from it something new. But that game is not amusing for everybody.

And if one succeeded in being in one's consciousness as vast as she, in being more powerful than she, why wouldn't one do the same thing in a better way ?

It is that which is the problem before us now. With the addition, the new help of this Force which has descended, which manifests itself, works, why shouldn't one take this formidable game in hand to make it more beautiful, more harmonious, more true?

It is enough to have sufficiently powerful brains to receive this Force and formulate the possible action. It is necessary to have sufficiently powerful conscious beings to convince Nature that there are other methods than hers.... This looks like madness, but all new things have always seemed crazy before they became realities.

The hour has come for this madness to be realised. And since we are all here for certain reasons, perhaps unknown to most of us, but still very conscious reasons, we may propose to ourselves the fulfilment of that madness, at least it would be worth the trouble to live it.

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## NOVEMBER 24

### A LETTER BY SRI AUROBINDO

*(In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, November 24, 1926, is said to mark the descent of what he calls Overmind, as distinguished from Supermind, into the physical being. Here is a brief statement by Sri Aurobindo which has a special interest and importance because it was perhaps the very last thing he dictated on questions concerning his Yoga. He dictated it a few days before December 5, 1950, on which he withdrew from his body. The statement was made apropos of a disciple's note on the significance and consequence of November 24.)*

It is only then that Sri Aurobindo started his Ashram, being sure that with the co-operation of the Gods the Supermind could descend upon the earth.

What happened on the twenty-fourth of November prepared the possibility of this descent and on that day he retired into seclusion and entered into a deep dynamic meditation so that all the possibilities involved might be realised.

---



# SRI AUROBINDO'S FIRST USE OF THE TERMS "SUPERMIND" AND "OVERMIND"

A POINTER BY LT. COLONEL G. L. BHATTACHARYA

LT. Colonel G. L. Bhattacharya made a prolonged search for the missing papers on Sri Aurobindo's action in 1902-1910 against the British rule in Bengal. In the course of it he read all the relevant writings of Sri Aurobindo. He has reported from them Sri Aurobindo's first use of the two terms we most associate with his Integral Yoga: "Supermind" and "Overmind".

It was in Sri Aurobindo's Baroda period that he coined "Supermind" while translating the Gita, chapter 2, verse 49, as follows:

"For far lower is action than the Yoga of the Supermind; in the Supermind seek thy refuge, for this is a mean and pitiful thing that a man should work for success and renown. The man whose Supermind is in Yoga casteth from him even in this world both righteousness and sin."

Sri Aurobindo coined "Overmind" in translating the Gita at two places. First, there is Chapter 2, verse 63:

"And when memory faileth, the Overmind is destroyed and by the ruin of the Overmind the soul goeth to its perdition."

Then there is Chapter 3, verse 42:

"High, say the wise, reign the senses but the heart is higher than they, and the Overmind is higher than the heart; he who is higher than the Overmind, that is HE."

Evidently, what Sri Aurobindo means in all the instances here is the higher intelligence or superior mind, the Buddhi, in man: what he later called "the intelligent will". But the shadow cast before by coming events is striking.

We may further observe two points. First, both the key-terms "Overmind" and "Supermind" were coined by Sri Aurobindo in connection with a discourse of Sri Krishna: the Gita. Secondly, these terms, in their true senses, are apt also in reference to Sri Krishna in Sri Aurobindo's letter of 29.10.1935 about November 24, 1926 which is called the Victory Day:

"24th was the descent of Krishna into the physical.

"Krishna is not the Supramental Light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards the Ananda."

K. D. S.

# IS CONSCIOUSNESS REAL?

AN UNFINISHED ESSAY BY SRI AUROBINDO

*(This recently discovered fragment was written in the late 1940's. The manuscript is unrevised and is in parts very difficult to read. The editor has made a couple of tentative readings and left a gap where no suitable word could be guessed. In a few places obvious slips have been rectified.)*

CONSCIOUSNESS, — but what is consciousness ?

And first of all we have to face the possibility that there is no such thing. For many hold that the word is an unreal generalisation invented to cover a class of material phenomena having their origin in Matter and material in their nature and essence, an operation of Matter on Matter and in Matter. Thoughts are only the vibrations of the grey matter of the brain; they are not something other or capable of rising beyond the material plane. They cannot exist independently of the brain; brain is not their instrument of expression or manifestation; they are an instrument made of its substance, dependent on its substance, in-existent without it. Mind is an action of Matter, not a separate power or force; there is nothing in it superior to the physicality of the body; it exists by the body and as a part of its activity, exists along with it, dies with it. Mind is a product of gases, an operation of Nature's chemistry, glandular influences, nervous stimuluses; it is Matter and records the operations of Matter.

But why then this appearance of mentality, of consciousness, of a conscious being? That too is only a trick of Matter, of the workings of Matter.

Well, be it so; but still this mentality creates an awareness of self and things and the movements of self and things, even if both be only a body and so many other bodies, and it is difficult to describe awareness as an inconscient movement or a delusion (...) of the inconscient seeming to be unconscious. Evidently we are in face of a general sophism invented by specialists of a limited field of data, the data of inconscient Matter, who are determined to force everything into its characteristic formulas and refuse to admit anything else. We must at least recover the right to see this awareness and its movements as they are or they present themselves to us and see how far it leads us and whether indeed, even if it occurs in Matter and the body, it does not lead us to something other than the body and other than Matter.

The materialist contention that consciousness is not a separate power or force or manifestation of energy like electricity or magnetism or steam but only a name for a particular bundle of brain phenomena, cannot hide the startling fact that inconscient and insentient Matter has become sentient and conscient even if it be only in (...) points, in jets, in small masses<sup>1</sup>.

This awareness has created at least the appearance of a being, a sentient and

<sup>1</sup> Tentative reading

conscient being who not only becomes relatively aware of self and things, but can study them, discover their nature and process, determine and develop the possibilities of his own consciousness and the possibilities of the world's forces and processes, can will and can create, even ponder and philosophise, can write poetry and create works of art, choose to modify and alter the world around him and make for himself a different life-environment, can look beyond Matter, can tend towards the heights of consciousness not yet developed, can envisage the Superconscient. If the consciousness that can do all this is not a force, a power in itself, it at least looks strangely like it. And we have the right, at least hypothetically, to study it as such a power or force and find out how far that leads us.

It may even lead us to the discovery of a Reality greater than the world of Matter or of Energy building up shapes of Matter and currents in Matter. It may take us beyond phenomena and appearances to the truth of things and to something that is the origin of all that seems to be.

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At the other extreme of human mentality we meet a similar and more devastating denial. Consciousness has no real existence or, so far as it exists at all, it is as a dynamic Power, a creator of illusions. There is nothing sound or real in what it builds; there is nothing true in what it sees; the world it shows us is an impossible chimera, a mass of figments and falsehoods. The sole consciousness that is true is the self-awareness of some absolute Silence, a spaceless immobile Infinite, a timeless featureless Eternity. Or, as the materialist sees only a bundle of phenomena material and dependent on Matter or a fortuitous result of material operations, so the Nihilistic Buddhist sees only a bundle of associations, *sanskaras*, which stuck together produce the false appearance of a continuity of concrete phenomena or a stream of momentary perceptions giving the impression of a false self and coherent world, a coherent personality, but if the bundle is dissolved, if the stream ceases to flow, all dissolves and collapses and shows the empty Nothingness which is the only eternal truth and the sole eternal reality. This superconscient Nothingness has no need of consciousness [for] the greatness of its emptiness or its everlasting peace of unconscious bliss. To return to Nothingness is the only use or meaning of existence.

Here too we seem to be in front of the sophism of a specialist seizing the sole salient and striking side, the one prominent aspect of Truth in which he is versed, putting aside all the rest as inconsistent or invalid. After all the world-events the degree of evolution, the extent to which consciousness has developed its powers, range, height or its fullness of vision and self-vision, is the measure of the evolution's development of its role and aim, its progress towards its goal, if goal indeed it has and is not the incoherent working out of an accidental Chance. Indeed, if we look at the way in which the Inconscient has devised the world and the sequences by which it has arrived at intelligence we have some reason [to believe] that it is a secret Consciousness which

has made this world and under the mask of inconscience has emerged as a slow process of an Ignorance developing Knowledge.

If so, it may well be that it is the self-awareness of the [eternal Existence] that is working out in the formula of inconscient Matter and ignorant Life and half-awakened Mind its own self-manifestation in the material universe.

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In any case consciousness is the one thing by which we can consider or decide the question at all. It is the one thing by which we conclude that the world exists or can inquire into its truth and its meaning. If consciousness has no reality and no value, then there is nothing by which we can know the truth, — one explanation of things has then as little value as the other; neither can be claimed as the truth. The consciousness by which we affirm the featureless sole Reality can be as fallacious as that by which we affirm our individual self and the universe.

If consciousness is the self-awareness of the eternal Existence, it can only be this self-awareness seeing its own power and the works of its power as a real world. If consciousness is a creation of the evolution, it is also the one thing by which it receives some value, the one thing by which its values can be reckoned, its internality<sup>1</sup>, its one central and essential value. It is not by the development of forms that evolution reaches its height, but by the evolution of consciousness. The life of consciousness is too persistent and effective and salient a phenomenon to be put aside easily or hustled off the field with an airy "It is not"; — a mirage is ineffectual and recedes or fades if it is touched; an illusion dissolves if (...), but this is stupendously effective, overwhelmingly persistent and we have to sound all its possibilities before dismissing it as something vain and trifling. World-consciousness may be only one aspect of our being, but it is a big and momentous aspect and it too should be given its full chance of justifying itself before it is ruled out of court. The eternal reality of a phenomenon like existence and its self-consciousness is also a truth of our being. But it is not impossible that they are two aspects of one Reality and not so incompatible as the metaphysical logician imagines. This is what we propose to do integrally and with a full and unshaking inquiry before we decide either way. The chances are that so enormous a thing as this world is something more than an interesting chimera. The chances are that when two such great aspects of existence confront each other, there is a connection somewhere, a reconciliation of their contraries....

<sup>1</sup> Tentative reading

## A DREAM-VISION OF THE MOTHER

OUTSIDE Sri Aurobindo's room I was waiting for the Mother to come from the room in the eastern wing where she used to stand and receive people in the course of every morning. Some people were in that room. The Mother entered it, spoke with them and then turned and saw me.

Smiling, she put both her arms forward as if to draw me towards her. I went and held her hands and told her: "Mother, I am depressed because I've to see you only in my dreams — and that also not every night."

She then took me near Sri Aurobindo's room and said a little angrily: "Why can't you open your eyes and see me whenever you want to see? I am always there. Why should people think they can see me only in their dreams?"

I replied: "Mother, I am an ordinary person. Many a time I feel your presence just next to me, and I try to see you but I can't. How can I with my eyes open — unless you do something for me?"

She laughed and, tapping my left shoulder, said: "Have some patience."

SEHRA

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## LET MEN RESPOND AND SEE

NEVER can clattering swords bring peace to man,  
Nor amity by constant clash be brought,  
Within man hide ill-will and guile that fan  
Hate's fire in him, to others spread it out.

As striking together of iron and flint-stone  
Or friction of lighting rods produces fire,  
So constant abrasion of hate on rancour's hone  
Makes bitter and bitter hatred's flames to gyre.

For all this world-wide play God's law is love,  
Love is inherent in each thing and creature,  
It is by love, for love, the world-ways move,  
Love kindles love — it is love's natural feature.

Sweet Mother is spilling down this love on earth,  
Let men respond and see through a soul-sprung birth.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

## APPEAL

WILL you not pour into me  
The ancient peace that lights your face ?  
I do not want it all for me,  
But just a drop — a tiny trace.

It is in the vast and silent valleys,  
In the purple shades of the aged hills;  
It is in the tremble of a dying leaf  
And in the murmur of low-toned rills.

On a calm and moonlit night  
Through tree-traceries the stars are soft-cool.  
Give me a little of that perfect coolness  
To dip mine eyes in its healing pool.

When day is perfumed with its earthy scent,  
And my face caressed by the far sea-breeze,  
My heart stops beating and turns truant  
To mingle with the quiet of cloud-kissed trees.

A dream within me struggles for freedom;  
It has no sense — 'tis a mad mad thing.  
It wants to skip on the prancing wavelets,  
On the tallest branches it longs to swing.

It wants to embrace the wet sweet earth  
And lie on her dampness, cheek to cheek;  
It yearns to shout from the highest hill-top,  
For ever roaming your heaven to seek.

I need no touch to feel your arms;  
I need no eyes to see your face;  
I gather your light in the cup of my heart,  
And drink deep draughts from its secret place.

Let me but enter into your presence,  
And the incense of your breath absorb;  
Let me be drenched in its utter sweetness,  
And feel in my blood its glowing throb.

My only gesture is to give you all —  
 Whatever I cherish I place in your hand,  
 For I know that your touch is boundless safety,  
 And my fears will vanish like script on sand.

MINNIE

11-3-36.

**Sri Aurobindo's Comment:**

“It is a very good poem — ‘joli’ in the French sense (not merely ‘pretty’ in the English). Mother finds it exquisite.”

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**A RETURN**

I CALLED you once my friends; the word is weak  
 And cannot tell the gladness in my heart  
 To see you after wandering long apart.  
 And once again I am compelled to speak  
 The love that better would remain untold  
 If love indeed it is and not desire  
 Dressed up in its most terrible attire  
 The better to approach you and seize hold  
 Of your unguarded beauty. But I know  
 That though all fire can be obscured by smoke  
 The words of adoration that I spoke  
 As I looked on your more-than-mortal glow  
 Were true. And you are now as then adored  
 As lovers and as portions of my Lord.

PETER HEEHS

## THE SUPREME IS ONE AND ALL

ON 31st December 1963, the Mother wrote in answer to a letter of mine mentioning certain adverse aspects which had been said to be shown in my horoscope. I was now too scared to face tough years ahead any more :

“Dear little child of mine.

“A happy new year.

“Won’t you let the Lord be stronger than horoscope? For the supreme Lord there is no horoscope which is Absolute. Have faith in the Lord’s Mercy and all can and will change.

“My love is always with you.

“Bonne Année.”

Here I may also recall what the Mother said to me earlier the same year on 11th January after our work on *Savitri* :

“There are many planets which are moving around. When a soul takes birth, it passes through certain planets at that time, and it feels their effect. There are, of course, our vital, mental and physical beings to deal with. There are innumerable things but actually nothing is separate. The whole Universe is wrapped in ONE — everything is ONE.

“Some astrologers calculate times and dates and say things about one’s life according to their calculations and intuitions. But they also fail in their prophecies. I met many astrologers in France, in India, in Japan and in West Africa but none could tell anything exactly.”

After a pause, she smiled and said :

“Now I will tell you a true story. A man was told by an astrologer that he would definitely die on a certain day. So he wound up all his business and cleared everything. The day arrived and he slept in order to wait for his death to come. Next morning, when he awoke, he saw all the things as they had been before. Then he told himself, ‘Goodness me! After death also I find the same things around me. Strange!’ ”

We both laughed. She continued :

“And yet another true story is quite the opposite. A man was told by an astrologer that his son would die of drowning. So the father would not allow his son to go near the sea or any place where there was water. His son was not allowed to look even at a picture of the sea. Years passed and the son became a young man, he got married, he had his own house, but still he had never happened to go near the sea. Once he went to a party; there he ate a fish; suddenly a bone of the fish stuck in his throat and he died. So somehow he died of the sea.

“Astrologers are not always perfectly right. Astrology is believed in mostly by ordinary people who do not have much intellectual development.



“Even if astrologers are right, everything can be changed in the spiritual life. Whoever has taken the path of Yoga can change the surrounding circumstances and conditions. The horoscope is not binding on the spiritual life.

“The horoscope is for the ordinary world — for worldly people. When you have taken the path of Yoga, the horoscope changes because the Law of the Lord is more powerful than the earthly laws. So when the pressure of that great Law comes, the laws of the earth have no value: They become powerless and disappear.”

The Mother also said in her conversation — *Questions and Answers 1957 and 1958*, pp. 246-247:

“...There is a fairly widespread belief that stars have a certain influence on the destiny of men, to the extent that an entire system of knowledge is founded upon this and, according to the different positions of the stars in the sky, it makes quite complete predictions about what will happen in one’s life.

“When one is at a primary stage of thought, one translates this by saying that stars have an influence upon our life.... It seems more logical and true to think it is a sort of notation or recording of a man’s destiny, for, in the universal unity, everything goes together and, if you know how to read the relations between the individual and the universal, you may find in the universal astral positions a kind of graph representing symbolically the life of one individual or another.

“Experience proves that this notation which is called a horoscope in astrology is not something final and that his destiny is not ineluctable, for if one decides to do yoga and develop spiritually, one escapes the absolute law of these horoscopes. This would be a sort of notation on the material plane of the relations between universal and individual life, and these relations may be altered through the introduction of a higher plane of consciousness in the material plane of consciousness.

“All this is what may be called half-knowledge which is a kind of very primitive attempt to catch the links of interdependence — between universal and individual existence. And all these things are just languages allowing us to fix a certain half-worked-out knowledge rather than absolute rules or the notation of indisputable facts. They are attempts, endeavours to understand things as they are, but very incomplete attempts — they have a certain attraction for some minds but are after all only very approximate approaches to the truth of things.

“If one goes sufficiently deep into mental human knowledge, one realises that all this knowledge as we have it externally in the mental consciousness is scarcely anything more than a fairly complicated language making it possible for us to understand each other but corresponding only quite remotely to the truth of things.

“There is a direct approach through identity which is much more effective

and, so to say, puts your finger on the key of the whole machinery of things, a direct key that needs no complicated knowledge for expression — something that corresponds to the movements of consciousness and will which do not need all the mental complications to express themselves. Then, the universal reality in all its completeness becomes a symbol and can be directly perceived in its essence.”

Now let us see what Sri Aurobindo has written in the Centenary Volume 17, pp. 284 & 289:

“... As a matter of fact astrology has never been scientifically disproved, nor has any rational ground ever been advanced for treating it as a pseudo-science. It simply came to be assumed at a certain period and under certain intellectual influences that it was a childish superstition. Or if there were any grounds, then it was left aside because astrologers were charlatans, because many, perhaps most predictions went wrong, but most of all because it was thought that in the nature of things, in any rational theory of the universe the planets simply could not have any influence on our characters, lives and actions. None of those grounds are sufficient....

“...An acceptance of the truth of astrology would not necessarily carry with it a complete determinism of Fate or mechanical law of Karma. In the Indian theory at least there is room for a determination by human will and endeavour, for Fate is mainly a determination by past action and a new will and action can cancel it; only a very strong Karma is imperative and irreducible. Even that may possibly be cancelled if one can enter into the freedom of the spiritual consciousness. One instance at any rate came to my knowledge in which the life had corresponded exactly with the pre-indications of the horoscope so long as the subject remained in the world but, as soon as he left it for a spiritual life, there was no longer any correspondence.”

Sri Aurobindo also writes in Volume 22, pp.467, 468, 469 & 470:

“...Astrology? Many astrological predictions come true, quite a mass of them, if one takes all together. But it does not follow that the stars rule our destiny; the stars merely record a destiny that has been already formed, they are a hieroglyph, not a Force, — or if their action constitutes a force, it is a transmitting energy, not an originating Power. Someone is there who has determined or something is there which is Fate, let us say; the stars are only indicators. The astrologers themselves say that there are two forces, *daiva* and *puruṣakāra*, fate and individual energy, and the individual energy can modify and even frustrate fate. Moreover, the stars often indicate several fate-possibilities; for example that one may die in mid-age, but that if that determination can be overcome, one can live to a predictable old age....

“... The Indian explanation of fate is Karma. We ourselves are our own fate

through our action, but the fate created by us binds us; for what we have sown, we must reap in this life or another. Still we are creating our fate for the future even while undergoing old fate from the past in the present. That gives a meaning to our will and action and does not, as European critics wrongly believe, constitute a rigid and sterilising fatalism. But again, our will and action can often annul or modify even the past Karma, it is only certain strong effects, called *utkata karma*, that are non-modifiable. Here too the achievement of the spiritual consciousness and life is supposed to annul or give the power to annul Karma. For we enter into union with the Will Divine, cosmic or transcendent, which can annul what it had sanctioned for certain conditions, new-create what it had created, the narrow fixed lines disappear, there is a more plastic freedom and wideness. Neither Karma nor Astrology therefore points to a rigid and for ever immutable fate.

“As for prophecy I have never met or known of a prophet, however reputed, who was infallible. Some of their predictions come true to the letter, others do not, — they half-fulfil or misfire entirely. It does not follow that the power of prophecy is unreal or the accurate predictions can be all explained by probability, chance, coincidence. The nature and number of those that cannot is too great...

“...Finally, even if all is determined, why say that life is, in Shakespeare’s phrase or rather Macbeth’s, ‘a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury, signifying nothing’? Life would rather be that if it were all chance and random incertitude. But if it is something foreseen, planned in every detail, does it not rather mean that life does signify something, that there must be a secret Purpose that is being worked up to, powerfully, persistently, through the ages, and ourselves are a part of it and fellow workers in the fulfilment of that invincible Purpose?

“P.S. Well, one of the greatest ecstasies possible is to feel oneself carried by the Divine, not by the stars or Karma, for the latter is a bad business, dry and uncomfortable — like being turned on a machine, ‘*yantrārūḍhāni māyayā.*’<sup>1</sup>”

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It was a pleasant morning on 25th February 1966. I went to the Mother as usual for our work

With a broad smile she gave me a card and said lovingly :

“Child, when I was looking for some papers, Sri Aurobindo appeared and gave me this card saying : ‘This is for Huta.’”

She asked me to read it there and then The luminous words of the Lord were : “Fix not the time and the way in which thy ideal shall be fulfilled. Work and leave time and way to God All-knowing.”

<sup>1</sup> ‘Mounted upon a machine by his Maya.’

On the same card the Mother had written :

“The Lord loves you and you are sure to reach your goal. But you must be PATIENT.”

Then she looked deeply into my eyes. I was absorbed in the glory of Gods and Goddesses. For a few moments my soul flew high to that sweet memory of Loved Ones. She was still looking at me. The soothing warmth of her love enveloped my heart. I came down from this feeling, and asked the Mother about the Gods and Goddesses and their collaboration in the new world. The Mother said with a smile :

“Gods and Goddesses of the Overmind haven’t yet surrendered to the Supreme Lord because they have their own great Power and they live in the Higher Consciousness.

“When Sri Aurobindo was in his body, I used to give blessings on the Puja days. They used to come.... Also when I went to the Meditation Hall downstairs, to give meditations, all these Gods and Goddesses assembled there. But, indeed, they are independent ; you see, for example, one of Kali’s aspects comes to me and tells me when human beings do wrong things. And I keep her quiet. Also one of the aspects of Durga came to me last year on one of the Puja days. She was simply magnificent. I asked her to surrender to the Supreme Lord. She said ‘Oh! but this is exactly what I wanted You to tell me! I am ready.’

“My child, she was really wonderful.

“In 1960, on the night previous to the first anniversary of the Supramental Manifestation, Child Krishna came to me and told me : ‘Ma, it is I who will distribute tomorrow’s Message.’

“So the next day when I went down, he sat on my lap and started giving blessings to people. It was really amusing seeing him do so. So, you see, these Gods are independent with their own Powers and are free to do as they like.

“When I was staying in another house (not here) I was very much attached to Shiva. I asked him to manifest on earth. He said : ‘No, I will not do so. I shall come when the Supramental Race will be on this earth.’

“So, I had nothing to say. For, he is free.

“Ever since I took birth on this earth, these Gods and Goddesses have been constantly with me.

“In the old days when I was taking a walk on the verandah, Krishna used to walk with me. I know that these Gods and Goddesses will surely help human beings in the New Creation, the New World of Supermind...”

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Let us all try our best to leave aside the past and old conceptions and perceptions, and accept sincerely the New Light which will surely change our consciousness.

Let us all try to assimilate the teaching of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and accept faithfully their guidance and help without seeking aid from other sources. For, the Supreme is wiser and more powerful than human beings.

The Supreme is ONE and ALL.

HUTA

*The three talks of the Mother to Huta © Huta 1975*

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## **SPEAK NOT AND SPEAK**

SPEAK not  
Of what you have  
And what you do.  
For what you have  
Many others have  
And what you do  
Many others do.  
But you are  
Unique:  
And if you speak of it uniquely  
It could also be uniquely interesting.  
Speak, speak,  
When spiritually moved  
To speak about Spirit the unique One.

GIRDHARLAL

# A SONNET OF NIRODBARAN

## WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS

27.11.36

*Poor*

*Quadruped!* My clóu/ded sóul/, do you knów / where you áre? *you know not whence  
you are*

Or what vast Power reshapes your destiny

At every moment, like a heavenly star

*crude and* From a dark mass of elements wild and free? *"Wild and free" is too jovial and  
exhilarating, it makes one regret  
the making of the star.*

*Quadruped!* Do you knów, / únder / the gárb / of the níght,/ *You know not under the grey  
garb of Night*

*Quadruped!* What Beau/ty ó/pens her slúm/bering éyes/ *deep-slumbered*

To a dream-firmament of golden Light?

*Quadruped!* But hów / can lím/ited vís/ion surmise/ *How can a vision limited surmise*

The hidden urge of the Transcendent Will

*Quadruped!*  
*or else*  
*centipede* Thro' the wór/king of the sún / that qui/etly blóoms/ *That through Time's  
working quietly makes  
bloom*

*The*

A seed into a multi-coloured smile

*Breaking the*

Out of the inconscient earth's eternal glooms?

Only by faith the Knowledge is enshrined

In the ancient temple of the twilit mind.

Sri Aurobindo :

Note well —

1) It is absolutely unrhymic to stress a number of unstressed syllables in a line suppressing the true accents — such broken-backed lines are unmetrical and intolerable, e.g.

Do you / know ún/der thé / garb óf / the night.

Or again

When Beau/ty ó/pens hér / slumbér/ing eyes?

You might just as well write

They wére / married tó/gethér / in á / pantrý/

or Oh, why / do you / perpé/trate sú/ch horrors/  
and think you have accomplished a metrical line.

2) When you want to put in a trochee support it by a strong syllable just preceding it; if you precede it by a weak accented syllable, you break the spine of the line.\*

You can't write

limitéd/víision/of things

But

In the long gulf that párts/silence/from sóund

is possible. But even so the trochee must be managed with the greatest care so that no jerk may be given to the rhythm.

If the quadrupeds disappear or rather become five-footed the poem becomes a very fine one — very fine indeed.

\*Unless of course there is some compensating or supporting element such as a pause, e.g.

Beauty,

Is heavenly, whether of sound or form —

or one wants to create an unusual effect, but that must be done with skill, not a trochee shoved in wherever and as you like, e.g.

Breaking/from the/wideness/of the In/finite

Upheld/in the/margin/of flowing/Time

But here the metre is deliberately irregular to create an effect.

*Q: A perfect sonnet! What do you think of the first line, Sir? "My clouded soul, do you know where you are?" Flat? and the clouded soul?*

SRI AUROBINDO: Flat? by God, sir, abysmal! The soul can get as clouded as it likes but do you know where you are? In Pondicherry, sir, in Pondicherry — the most clouded soul can know that. You might just as well now write "My friend, do you know that you are an ass?" and call it metre and poetry.

*Q: If 'heavenly' is too common, should I write 'morning' or 'evening star'?*

SRI AUROBINDO: Evening and morning are as common as heaven.

*Q: I don't know if the construction in the 5th line will do in poetry. Slumbering or crystalline or none?*

SRI AUROBINDO: The construction will but the metre won't; "When Beauty opens hér slumbéring eyes" would scan but slumbering is an atrocity.

*Q: Does the trochee in the word 'vision' spoil the rhythm?*

SRI AUROBINDO: By God it does. If the syllable before were an accented one the

trochee would be all right. But this can only read,  
 But how/can lim/ited vi/sion surmise/?.

A quadruped, sir, a quadruped.

*Q: Is the idea of 'What Beauty opens...' repeated in the seed-image?*

SRI AUROBINDO: No.

*Q: Beauty may be of many things, not necessarily of a seed into flower?*

SRI AUROBINDO: It can, perhaps, but it oughtn't.

*Q: 'Inconscient, earth's eternal' too many vowels' sounds?*

SRI AUROBINDO: How can there be too many vowels' sounds? You mean too many *e* sounds? It doesn't matter.

*Q: 'Ancient temple' too many t's?*

SRI AUROBINDO: Can pass.

*Q: What about the thought, sequence, etc.? Please show the defects with the opinion and criticism. Is it a metaphysical or a philosophic poem?*

SRI AUROBINDO: God knows! But the matter is that the metre of some of your lines is enough to make the hair of a prosodist stand on end in horror! I have marked all the quadrupeds you have created *in situ* — also put in the margin my five-footed emendations of them.

### Revised Version

Poor clouded soul, you know not whence you are  
 Or what vast Power reshapes your destiny  
 At every moment, like a heavenly star  
 From a dark mass of elements crude and free.

You know not under the grey garb of Night  
 What Beauty opens her deep-slumbered eyes  
 To a dream-firmament of golden Light.  
 How can a vision limited surmise

The hidden urge of the Transcendent Will  
 That through Time's working quietly makes bloom  
 The seed into a multi-coloured smile  
 Breaking the inconscient earth's eternal gloom?

Only by faith the Knowledge is enshrined  
 In the ancient temple of the twilit mind.



## THREE NIGHT POEMS

“My singing is gone out upon the dark.”

Francis Thompson

### THE WINGS OF THE WIND

*The wings of the wind are silver and strong,  
And sing in my heart a strange wild song,  
That Thy night is a shimmering moonfilled dream,  
And Thy heart a murmuring flamefilled stream.  
Love skims on dim enchanted wings,  
And through the darkness soars and sings,  
It sweeps across deep starswayed space,  
And flows like fire from Thy bright Face.*

### I STAND ALONE

O Lord, I stand alone against the sky,  
And sing the songs of stars into the night,  
The night on whose vast wings I rise and fly  
Like some shining silver-splendoured thing  
Into Thy moonswept light.

O Lord, I stand alone and call to Thee  
Who made this night with flaming voices ring,  
And pray my flight be swift and strong and free  
Into a Love so high and bright  
It makes my darkness sing.

### THE VOICES OF THE NIGHT

The voices of the night to Thee belong,  
They soar into my heart like a starswept song,  
And I burn within the searing dreams that throng  
My soul, in flames that through me sing and sweep.  
And when the moon, that famous hollow gong,  
Flings its silver fire through the swaying shadows long,  
I am seized by a Love so wild and sweet and strong,  
That I fly to Thee on shining wings of sleep.

JEAN

## THE TOUCH OF THE MOTHER

It was 1957 or the beginning of '58. In those days, almost every night was luminous and sleep would break with the vision of the rising sun. Several times a day, the Mother used to come down to give blessings. At 6 o'clock in the morning She used to give Balcony-Darshan. The Ashram atmosphere vibrated with intense love and devotion for the Mother and aspiration for the Goal, the Supramentalisation of the whole being. Every Darshan and blessing from Her was an additional help towards this aim. Whoever visited the Ashram could not help making the following remarks: "Ah! I am feeling extraordinary joy and peace and freshness here, which is nowhere in the outside world. Her Divine Majesty can lift, in a single glance, man's heart and mind and soul to their origin which is the Supreme Delight."

The second occasion to see Her was at about 8 o'clock, when we used to receive a blessing-flower from Her before going to work. There would be a queue. We used to go to Her and stand in front of Her for a few seconds only. Though the time given for the privilege of standing in Her presence was extremely short, yet Her marvellous look could satisfy each heart with the revelation and celestial gifts She used to pour on Her children.

And I, too, was one of these fortunate ones. When my turn came to receive the blessing-flower, She lifted Her head. I observed a mysterious smile on Her face. Then She gave the blessing-flower, "The Divine's Solitude", as She has named it. I, too, on my part greeted Her, keeping my head on her knees. When I lifted my head She touched my forehead with Her fingers. As I turned from Her, I found that a blue light was coming out of my eyes. Wherever I looked, all was blue. Thinking it was an auspicious moment in my life, when I could be gifted with the Truth of my being, I sat for meditation. Perhaps that way I could open myself more and receive more.

Hardly a minute or two had passed when I found myself stationed high up in the sky, sitting inside a huge ring of light which was my own aura—much bigger than an aura is usually conceived to be. It must have been own identification with my central being (Jivatman). From there I could see my body sitting under the Service Tree and people moving in the Ashram courtyard. Up there I thought, "O Sukhvir, why do you suffer down below on earth? Whenever you undergo any kind of suffering, you should come here immediately and be free and above all suffering."

SUKHVIR ARYA

# SRI AUROBINDO'S WORK AND THE WAY TO ITS FULFILMENT

## A LOOK TOWARDS THE FUTURE FROM THE STANDPOINT OF NOVEMBER 17, 1973

SRI Aurobindo left his body on December 5, 1950. The Mother departed from hers on November 17, 1973. But the Ashram which they founded is aware of their presence all the time. The Samadhi in the courtyard of the main Ashram-building — holding the physical remains of both these mighty pioneers of a new world — is a living power. All who have stood before it have known a Light and a Love ready to respond to their prayers and aspirations. A giant Grace breathes out from this simple flower-laden incense-haunted monument of peace. Our hearts feel suffused with the promise of that fourfold state of fulfilled being which Sri Aurobindo has summed up in a master-mantra:

Arms taking to a voiceless supreme delight,  
Life that meets the Eternal with close breast,  
An unwall'd mind dissolved in the Infinite,  
Force one with unimaginable rest.<sup>1</sup>

It was to embody such a state in its entirety that the Mother carried on the work of Sri Aurobindo after he had sacrificed, as she has declared, his own physical transformation in order to hasten the divine destiny of the world. As a result of the exhaustion of the forces of Darkness in his willingly accepted "death", he sought for his companion, the Mother, an easier passage in the future to the goal of his Integral Yoga. And, through the Mother's physical transformation, the path was to be cleared for the race to evolve from humanity to supermanhood. Sri Aurobindo meant to concentrate in his co-worker the achievement of his victory in the time to come.

The first step towards this victory was the permanent establishment, in the Mother's most outward self, of that phase of the supramental consciousness which he had called the Mind of Light. And that establishment was a prelude to the progressive illumination, which she subsequently described, of the subtle consciousness within the very cells of the body. But when this illumination had reached — if we may judge from her "Notes on the Way" — a stage preparatory to a radical reversal of

the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to,

there took place on the contrary what appeared to be a radical reversal of the entire course of the Yoga. The Mother abandoned the physical frame she had used for ninety-five years in the cause of the Divine's manifestation on earth.

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Poems* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1972), p. 575.

What are we to make of this act of leave-taking by one whom we expected to complete the Yoga of Supramental Descent and Transformation? And how are we to envisage the shape of the future?

One thing may be immediately said. All the energies the Mother had to spend on her body in the enormous uphill fight for Matter's divinisation have been set free. They are turned now to a general impact on individuals and groups everywhere. Increasingly they are felt as a new cosmic impetus bearing mankind over hurdle after hurdle thrown in its path by agencies mundane and preternatural. Individuals also have known a vast Care bearing them easily along with a strength that is at the same time a sweetness.

But this is one side of the situation. As against the advantage of a greater impact on a universal scale, there is the absence of a *pou sto*, a fulcrumlike poise on hard earth to move its downward gravitating nature to finer intensities. The focus of divine consciousness held within a human face and form, with a recognisable receptiveness to our calls and a sunshine-smile for every agonised grope of our beings, is missed. And, when we realise that the Mother's body which had kept the now-freed energies busy with its maintenance was precisely the fiery point at which a divine future for the very substance of earth-man was being moulded, we cannot help looking anxiously for sign-posts and guide-lines.

## I

On November 17, 1973, when the Mother withdrew from her body, the question could not but arise: "Is her work fated to remain incomplete?" If any doubt could be entertained of Sri Aurobindo's project of complete success, the idea of incompleteness would be out of place and the perplexed mind might find comfort. But how would we reconcile such comfort with the drive of numberless pronouncements by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? Two brief expressions by Sri Aurobindo of their fundamental goal may be quoted to speak for all.

A letter on January 14, 1932, has the phrase: "...I want to divinise the human consciousness, to bring down the Supramental, the Truth-Consciousness, the Light, the Force into the physical to transform it..."<sup>1</sup> The same letter goes on to say: "All other Yogas regard this life as an illusion or a passing phase; the supramental Yoga alone regards it as a thing created by the Divine for a progressive manifestation and takes the fulfilment of the life and the body for its object. The Supramental is simply the Truth-Consciousness and what it brings in its descent is the full truth of life, the full truth of consciousness in Matter."<sup>2</sup> Here Sri Aurobindo's aim is the Supermind's descent and the process of this descent finally achieves the total transformation of the "physical". That will be the crowning stage of Sri Aurobindo's action and the Divine's manifestation.

<sup>1</sup> *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953), p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

Again, Sri Aurobindo's letter of September 5, 1935, which couples the Mother with him by name, says : "What is being done is meant to prepare the manifestation of the Supermind in the earth-consciousness down to Matter itself, so it can't be for the physical of myself or the Mother alone."<sup>1</sup>

This short declaration implies three basic points : (1) Not only the higher parts of the earth-consciousness but "Matter itself" is to hold the Supermind's manifestation; (2) Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who are trying in 1935 to bring about this manifestation are to exemplify it in their "physical"; (3) they would not be "alone" in that achievement: others too should succeed by their help.

No doubt, the "physical" of the Mother as well as that of Sri Aurobindo has been given up short of total transformation. But is real failure at all possible? The answer is "No."

What else can the answer be in the face of such words as Sri Aurobindo employed on October 19, 1946, when conditions in India looked very unfavourable? — "...I have not been discouraged by what is happening, because I know and have experienced hundreds of times that beyond the blackest darkness there lies for one who is a divine instrument the light of God's victory. I have never had a strong and persistent will for anything to happen in the world — I am not speaking of personal things — which did not eventually happen even after delay, defeat or even disaster."<sup>2</sup>

Then there is the letter of April 4, 1950, to a disciple "badly upset" with his "sense of the present darkness in the world round us". Sri Aurobindo writes: "For myself, the dark conditions do not discourage me or convince me of the vanity of my will 'to help the world', for I knew they had to come; they were there in the world-nature and had to rise up so that they might be exhausted or expelled.... Afterwards the work for the Divine will become more possible and it may well be that the dream, if it is a dream, of leading the world towards the spiritual light, may even become a reality. So I am not disposed even now, in these dark conditions to consider my will to help the world as condemned to failure."<sup>3</sup>

We may remember that this letter was penned at almost the time when Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were aware that one of them had to give up the body in the interests of their work and he had decided that he would go and she would stay for its completion.<sup>4</sup>

Even apart from our faith in such direct references by Sri Aurobindo to his own mission, we may dismiss the idea of failure on the basis of our insight into the nature of the Avatarhood we ascribe to him and the Mother.

Generally speaking, in the case of Avatars of any type, real failure cannot be thought of, whatever the surface appearances. Has not Sri Aurobindo exclaimed: "Why should the Divine be tied down to succeed in all his operations? What if failure suits him better and serves better the ultimate purpose? What rigid primitive notions

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 247-8.

<sup>4</sup> "A 'Call' from Pondicherry" by Dr. Prabhat Sanyal, *Mother India*, December 5, 1953, p. 87.

are these about the Divine!"<sup>1</sup> If the Divine's (that is, the Avatar's) ultimate purpose is served, the failure which helps it cannot be regarded as a real one. A real failure is the frustration of one's avowed ultimate purpose. The Avatar comes to establish a certain stage in the earth's evolution and always fulfils his mission in the mode intended by the Divinity that he is. To quote Sri Aurobindo again: "The Divinity acts according to another consciousness, the consciousness of the Truth above and the Lila below and It acts according to the need of the Lila, not according to man's ideas of what It should or should not do. This is the first thing one must grasp, otherwise one can understand nothing about the manifestation of the Divine."<sup>2</sup>

The same view Sri Aurobindo expresses elsewhere also. According to it, the Divine Consciousness of the Avatar, concerned as it is with only two things fundamentally — "the truth above and here below the Lila and the purpose of the incarnation or manifestation" — does "what is necessary" for them "in the way Its greater than human consciousness sees to be the necessary and intended way".<sup>3</sup>

Now, if real failure is out of the question for all Avatars, how much less can it be conceived in connection with the incarnate Supermind? The Supermind, unlike even the highest Overmind consciousness like Sri Krishna's, is the Transcendent not acting indirectly as in Sri Krishna through the supreme grade of the Cosmic Divine, but acting directly, with all the power of the more-than-cosmic level, however self-veiled and self-limited for the necessities of the World-play. So to believe that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother did not succeed and that their plan to supramentalise their own "physical" went quite astray is to entertain a sheer anomaly. Simultaneously, we have to come to grips with the fact that they have shed their bodies and thereby made a straight interpretation of their aim unrealistic. But, before doing so, let us further underline the situation in which we are placed by our argument. We cannot deny Sri Aurobindo and the Mother the full possibility to do what they set out to accomplish.

In Sri Aurobindo's letters we have even a few open clues to the unfailing character of the power brought by the Supramental Avatar. A question was put to him in 1933: "It seems to me that if the Supermind is not established in Mother's body-consciousness, it is not because she is not ready for it like us, but because in order to establish it she has first to prepare the physical of the sadhaks and of the earth to a certain extent. But some people take it in the wrong way; they believe that the Supermind has not been established in her body because she has not yet reached perfection. Am I right?" Sri Aurobindo answered: "Certainly. If we had lived physically in the Supermind from the beginning nobody would have been able to approach us nor could any sadhana have been done. There could have been no hope of contact between ourselves and the earth and men. Even as it is, Mother has to come down towards the lower consciousness of the sadhaks instead of keeping always in her own, otherwise they begin to say, 'How far away, how severe you were; you do not love me, I get no help

<sup>1</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome One (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1958), p. 415.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 414.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 427.

from you', etc., etc. The Divine has to veil himself in order to meet the human."<sup>1</sup>

Here Sri Aurobindo, speaking of living physically in the Supermind from the beginning, affirms that from the beginning the Mother and he could have had not just a completely divinised consciousness but also a completely divinised bodily existence. To "live" is to be more than merely conscious: it is an organic activity, and when one adds the adverb "physically" one brings in a realisation in terms of the matter composing the organism. Moreover, just to have the physicalised mind or the physicalised life-force turned supramental would not render Sri Aurobindo and the Mother unapproachable or any sadhana impossible to do. As long as some part of the physical being — namely, the material constitution of the body — remained unsupramentalised, a point of contact with Sri Aurobindo and with the Mother would be there for people, and the two Gurus' sadhana of this part's supramentalisation would give people an opportunity to do some sadhana of their own along with the still unperfected Gurus. Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's capacity of living physically in the Supermind from the start must signify nothing short of their capacity of having a bodily existence divinised to the full.

Further, in saying "Certainly" to the correspondent Sri Aurobindo has concurred with the latter's opinion that there never was any question of the Mother's not being ready for the Supermind's establishment in her body-consciousness or of her body not attaining the perfection necessary for the establishment of the Supermind in it. This means that complete success in their present lives was always within the reach of the Mother and, by the same token, that of Sri Aurobindo himself. Hence failure, in the essential sense, could never be anticipated for either of them.

What actually happened may be guessed from another point covered by Sri Aurobindo's "Certainly". The correspondent has opined that the reason why the Mother's body had not been divinised by the time he wrote his letter was that "the physical of the sadhaks and of the earth" had not yet got prepared to the needed extent. This point comes out very clearly in a statement of Sri Aurobindo's in August 1936 on the spiritual fight upon the physical plane: "As for the question about the illness, perfection on the physical plane is indeed part of the ideal of the Yoga, but it is the last item and, so long as the fundamental change has not been made in the material consciousness to which the body belongs, one may have a certain perfection on other planes without having immunity in the body. We have not sought perfection for our own separate sake, but as part of a general change — creating a possibility of perfection in others. That could not have been done without our accepting and facing the difficulties of the realisation and transformation and overcoming them for ourselves. It has been done to a sufficient degree on the other planes — but not yet on the most material part of the physical plane. Till it is done, the fight here continues and, though there may be and is a force of Yogic action and defence, there cannot be immunity. The Mother's difficulties are not her own; she bears the difficulties of

<sup>1</sup> *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, pp. 357-58.

others and those that are inherent in the general action and working for the transformation. If it had been otherwise, it would be a very different matter."<sup>1</sup>

The implications are clear. If the Mother did not drag with her the whole world's difficulties in opening up the most material part of the physical plane, if she did not have to tackle the whole earth-consciousness's resistance to the transformative action and working, she would achieve her own supramentalisation, her body would be divinised and she would be yogically perfect and the Aurobindonian goal would be compassed *in toto*. There can be no possibility of failure for her and for Sri Aurobindo in themselves: their own personal success is a certainty. The evolutive process, without which no terrestrial achievement can be permanent and grow an expression of the terrestrial plane's *dharma*, is bound to take time but the time required for instruments like Sri Aurobindo and the Mother would be fairly short. Their supramentalisation, even if evolutionarily stretched out, would show in its history something of "what men would regard as a miraculous intervention", an amazing rapidity of movement which would come, as Sri Aurobindo has said, "if the human mind were more flexible and less attached to its ignorance than it is".<sup>2</sup> In any case, there could be no in-built chance of failure for her and him if they sought supramental perfection for their own separate sake: rather there would be an automatic success.

But they did not seek this perfection like that — and there was the rub. Yet it was not such a rub as might lead to failure: it could only lead to a host of difficulties and sufferings and illnesses in the course of an earth-representative sadhana whose final fruit would be a success holding out the promise of transformation to all mankind. Carrying within themselves the power to live physically in the Supermind from the beginning and having the ability to be perfectly ready for the divinisation of their bodies, they must be expected to have power enough to establish the Supermind in their physical beings in spite of all obstructions accepted from others and from the general earth-conditions. The obstructions might even create an early period during which Sri Aurobindo would not be sure whether he would succeed: evolutionary Avatars have to pass through all human phases. But, however evolutionary, these were Avatars — and Supramental Avatars at that. Consequently, a time must come when Sri Aurobindo would go past possibility and even probability and reach practical certainty and the luminous dominating sense of achievement in the near future. Thus on December 28, 1934 he writes:

"I know with absolute certitude that the Supramental is a truth and that its advent is in the very nature of things inevitable. The question is as to the when and the how. That also is decided and predestined from somewhere above; but it is here being fought out amid a rather grim clash of conflicting forces. For in the terrestrial world the predetermined result is hidden and what we see is a whirl of possibilities and forces attempting to achieve something with the destiny of it all concealed from human eyes. This is, however, certain that a number of souls have been sent to see that it shall be now. That is the situation. My faith and will are for the now."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 390-1.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 381-2    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 233-4



Granting the non-failing supramental power in operation through its two chosen emanations who came, as this letter shows, with a small group of beings as collaborators in the work of supramentalisation in the present time and not in another age, we are left with no escape from seeing as a success what has happened to both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and hence as a voluntary fate their passing away without personal supramentalisation. This fate has to be interpreted as having been embraced for nothing less than success but success in a fashion enigmatical to man's non-flexible mind which is attached to its ignorance.

The call on us is to keep steadily before this mind the true nature of the Avatarhood that was Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's — and then to probe the events of the two "deaths". But to reach the proper view we must clear a few crucial points. While refusing to deny the authenticity of the success in spite of those events, we must ask how in view of them the Master and the Mother could be said to succeed in the "now" to which Sri Aurobindo refers and, if they could, under what aspect consistently with their certitude their success would arrive.

## 2

Obviously, they have altered their original plan. And there is no reason why they should not — provided they fulfil in however oblique and paradoxical a shape their fundamental mission. The Avatar, even the Supramental Avatar, assumes certain human traits in right earnest: otherwise Avatarhood would be a flashing intrusion of the Divine and have no evolutionary significance for the world. In a very effective sense, God has to become like us in order to help us become like Him. God has to undergo our predicaments and take upon Himself our defects, pass through obscurities and come to terms with the manifold play of possibilities that work out the designs of the Supreme, a play calling for various adjustments and alterations, shifts of strategy and shufflings of tactics. The Incarnation takes his stand in the midst of a world-order that has gone on for centuries along lines often in opposition to new truths. The Incarnation enters a game proceeding according to rules partly dictated by the Ignorance through which evolution moves towards Knowledge. These rules are permitted to spring surprises even upon Divinity when It enters the human formula. The humanised Divinity holds on to Its basic vocation but needs to revolutionise Its methods, discard old projects, adopt startlingly new devices.

Thus Sri Aurobindo has spoken of an entire change of front from what was being done soon after November 24, 1926, when he and the Mother experienced the Overmind descent into their bodies. Looking back from a later time (October 18, 1934) he writes : "...if the Mother were able to bring out the Divine Personalities and Powers into her body and physical being as she was doing for several months without break some years ago, the brightest period in the history of the Ashram, things would be much more easy and all these dangerous attacks that now take place would be dealt with rapidly and would in fact be impossible. In those days when

the Mother was either receiving the sadhaks for meditation or otherwise working and concentrating all night and day without sleep and with very irregular food, there was no ill-health and no fatigue in her and things were proceeding with a lightning swiftness.... Afterwards, because the lower vital and the physical of the sadhaks could not follow, the Mother had to push the Divine Personalities and Powers, through which she was doing the action, behind a veil and come down into the physical human level and act according to its conditions and that means difficulty, struggle, illness, ignorance and inertia..."<sup>1</sup>

Alluding to the same "brightest period", Sri Aurobindo remarks on January 14, 1932: "...the Supramental could very well have come down into Matter under former conditions, if the means created by the Mother for the physical and vital contact had not been vitiated by the wrong attitude, the wrong reactions in the Ashram atmosphere. It was not the direct supramental Force that was acting, but an intermediate and preparatory force that carried in it a modified Light derived from the Supramental, but this would have been sufficient for the work of opening the way for the highest action, if it had not been for the irruption of these wrong forces on the yet unconquered lower (physical) vital material plane."<sup>2</sup>

Again we hear from Sri Aurobindo on December 31, 1934: "It is a little difficult to say whether all have to come down totally into the physical. The Mother and I had to do it because the work could not be otherwise done. We had tried to do it from above through the mind and higher vital, but it could not be because the sadhaks were not ready to follow..."<sup>3</sup>

A change still more radical and revolutionary in the dynamics of the Integral Yoga was required in 1950. When Sri Aurobindo and the Mother saw the necessity of one of them abandoning the body and Sri Aurobindo chose to withdraw from his physical sheath on December 5, he began to operate from behind the scene as a power of manifestation from the subtle-physical plane where he had established himself and a power of evolution from the Inconscient where he had thrust the antennae of his consciousness through the dissolution of his semi-illuminated gross-physical substance. His direct role upon the earth was projected into a future when, as the Mother communicated to us, he would come in the first supramental body built in the supramental and not the natural way. From his command to the Mother early in the year that she would have to "fulfil our Yoga of supramental descent and transformation", we understood that just as he would represent a non-evolutionary materialisation of the Supramental she would toil on to represent an evolutionary supramentalisation of the Material: they would be the obverse and reverse of the same eternal Truth-gold made current in our Iron Age. The Aurobindonian objective would still be compassed except that, contrary to the original plan, the Master himself would not be the first body in evolutionary history to be divinised. But as he was concerned essentially with the supramentalisation of the earth-consciousness and never involved in any personal race for the Supermind all was well for him so long

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 383-4.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 386.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 387-8.

as his own Shakti, the Mother, with whom he was one in consciousness, was there to be the leader of the evolution, guiding the earth to its fulfilment by supramentalising herself in this life and not in another.

Yes, Sri Aurobindo's departure, although heart-stunning, was yet not absolutely mind-bewildering. It is the Mother's departure that is the extreme enigma. Of course, a radical and revolutionary change of plan is as legitimate for her as for him. But her change has occurred with an ostensible non-completion of the task Sri Aurobindo had entrusted to her. It is this non-completion that hits us hard and acutely challenges us.

### 3

If we are to formulate a satisfying answer, we must set the enigma itself in its proper terms. These terms can only be as follows: "Sri Aurobindo willed — and his willing was in tune with the nature of the Supramental Avatarhood — that from their assumed human bodies a centre would result of a supramentalised physicality for the supramentalisation first of a few of their children and finally of all humanity. He focused his vision of such a centre in the Mother. Now that she has made her exit without actualising his vision, how will she yet manage, as she must, to be in a divine body amongst us to continue carrying the travail of evolution towards the *grand finale* prophesied by Sri Aurobindo? And what, after her exit at the age of ninety-five, should we understand by fulfilment not in a later age but in the present time?"

Our statement has two "posers": to adopt Sri Aurobindo's own brief categories for the original plan, "the question is as to the when and how." The challenge of the "when" can be immediately met. By the present time, the "now", we have to understand the period which would have been covered by the progress of the Mother's body if, animated more and more by the Supermind, it had persisted on earth in its originally planned course of concentrated evolution towards the supramental completeness. How long would that period be? The Mother has reported Sri Aurobindo as saying that perhaps three hundred years would be needed for the complete transformation of the body. She has also expressed her own feeling that it might take longer but an intense speeding-up of the supramental action may keep the time within the lower limit. So we cannot calculate in terms of less than three centuries. The oblique and paradoxical yet authentic success we have to attribute to the Mother must be allowed this time-span to realise itself. With the Supermind as her guard, her life could have been prolonged to that stretch for the full realisation. Logically, we cannot insist on a smaller stretch for the novel "how" of her fulfilment.

All the same, we may not rule out a shorter duration by virtue of the very novelty involved. Who knows if, just to avoid those three centuries which were the inevitable minimum under the old dispensation, she has struck out a new path which may seem to us a plunge into darkness but is actually a streak of light too rarefied for us to see until it issues once more into our common day? Should we not have faith that she

would never do anything except for our advantage — that is, for the purpose of bringing about the Life Divine for us by means of her pioneering fulfilment?

The question would yet remain: “In what form is this fulfilment to be now conceived”? There are only two modes of conceiving it.

One is with reference to the “new body” which the Mother spoke of on several occasions as existing in the subtle-physical plane and acting upon the body in the gross-physical with a view to emerge into it and materially manifest a *corps glorieux*, “a body of glory”, a divinely radiant form. The gross-physical, in order to effectuate the emergence in it of the new body, would have to get transformed to a high degree. Transformation must imply the assumption of the central difficulties of corporeal life and the conquest over them. The tendency to age, to deteriorate in faculties, to grow weak, to harbour the process of decay and run the risk of death — this tendency had to be faced in right earnest and then conquered. The Mother, in her ninety-fifth year, stood evenly balanced, as it were: the difficulties of the human condition were sufficiently borne and the power to prevent them from becoming dominant was in enough exercise but there seemed to be a standstill, a kind of stalemate.

We have to say “seemed” because the Supramental Avatar holds, by the right of a direct transcendent origin, the capacity to counter and annul all cosmic laws. The Mother could have brought that capacity into play and moved forward, but the reversal of the problem she had admitted into herself — the problem of “this mortal coil”, the tumultuous trouble of the human condition — would probably have taken an inordinate length of time — very much past what would be advantageous to her children. In response to a sudden call from the Truth above and to the hidden requirement of the World-Play, she consented to the dissolution of a body whose cells were passing through the sublime suffering of a radical recast under the Supermind’s pressure. The Transcendent, that was her own highest Self, overruled in the interests of His earth-creatures His own planned triumph in a chosen vehicle.

The sole course open to the Mother was to let fall the body she had worn so long and so carefully prepared. This would mean letting someone else’s body in the future achieve the fundamental Aurobindonian goal of changing evolutionarily into a divine onè. Since both she and Sri Aurobindo had basically sought the supramentalisation of others, such a shift-over of achievement was altogether welcome. But none could be supramentalised without the dynamism of the Avatar who had descended from the Supermind to give supramentalisation to the world: either the Mother or Sri Aurobindo had to be the instrument for the divinisation of earth-creatures. This was the proviso of their very mission. Long ago — on April 20, 1935 — Sri Aurobindo laid down the terms of his work: “I have no intention of achieving the Supermind in myself only. I am not doing anything for myself... If I am seeking after supramentalisation, it is because it is a thing that has to be done for the earth-consciousness and if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others...”<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo’s supramentalisation was the *sine qua non*. And when he left his body, it could not be done in others if

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 216.

it was not done in the Mother whom he had elected as a compact field for his victory. When she left her body, the need still held for a centre which somehow or other would not be different from herself. Someone else's body would naturally have to be divinised now instead of her own, but the proviso of their mission would be satisfied only if to divinise someone else's body she yet worked from a poise on the earth itself. That poise would be indispensable to the pioneering Avatar-spirits that she and Sri Aurobindo were. Hence the question, confronting the Mother in her ninety-fifth year of Supramental Avatarhood was: how, while obeying the Transcendent Will and giving up the body she had entered nearly a century before, was she to establish an earth-poise of divinising power?

We can reach an understanding of her answer through an insight into the transformation she was undergoing. On the one side the transformation was meant to render the gross-physical form increasingly subtle by the action of the subtle-physical Supramental Shape, so that it might be fit to house the latter. On the other side the transformation was meant to render this Shape increasingly dense by the reaction on it of the gross-physical form, so that it might be fit to be housed in the materially visible and tangible. Embracing the decision of the Transcendent, the Mother appears to have abandoned further subtilising or supramentalising the dense stuff of her evolutionary frame and to have concentrated on drawing up into this frame's non-evolutionary counterpart — into the subtle-physical Supramental Shape — the conscious essence of whatever subtilisation the dense evolutionary substance had acquired. By means of such a drawing up, she endowed the non-evolutionary counterpart with some of the "virtue" of the dense matter that had been passing through the transformative travail. The deathless Light proper to the new body waiting behind the scene took on an extra density and, when the old body gave itself up to death, the extra-densified new one got charged with the sense of the other's function and was pulled towards the materially visible and tangible, as if it were henceforth meant to stand not beyond but right over the frontier between its own world and ours.

The Mother we were familiar with is now the new secret body, a superhuman ensheathing. Such a transference from the old body is nothing inconceivable. She actually had the experience, on March 24, 1972, of living as the new body with a continuity of consciousness from the old. She says: "I had a body altogether new in the sense that it was sexless.... It was very white.... It was very slim — it was pretty. Truly a harmonious form... I *was* like that, I had become like that.... It was quite natural..."<sup>1</sup> At the time of the transference the old body had not been dropped: it had just been kept aside. Now it has been allowed to dissolve, and the Mother has only a divine ensheathing. But she has assimilated into it all the attainments of the dissolved sheath in terms of "body-mind" and thereby brought it closer to our longing human arms than it ever could be without the assimilation of those attainments. A veritable Goddess, the Mother is yet within concrete reach of us — we have only to stretch our arms more intensely *ripae ulterioris amore*, "with love of the other shore", to get the Truth-

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, August 1972, p. 75.

touch we need for our integral Godward growth. The greater proximity of this compassionate Perfection to our body's soulful cry is what the Mother has accomplished through the apparent withdrawal from us that was her death.

With its greater proximity comes a greater force to carry us towards the Supramental goal. But this proximity is not the whole aim of the Mother's strategy. The earth-poise the Avatar of the Supermind must have in order to supramentalise earth is no more than approached by the proximity. It has yet to be fully realised. And the extra-densified new body has the power to realise it in full. To obtain that power for this body was the final victory won by the Mother. The new body's extra density provides the Mother with the possibility of materialising that body and making it visible and tangible, a supreme Presence in our midst to bring about our evolutionary completion.

But, just as the Mother's sadhana before her passing away was linked with our receptivity to the higher consciousness and could be to a considerable extent quickened or slowed down by the state in which we were, so also her progress towards materialisation from the boundary between two worlds is conditioned in a substantial measure by our response to her stand on that boundary. She cannot materialise herself soon unless we hasten to spiritualise ourselves.

The sudden shock we have received with the Mother's departure and, along with it, the sense that departure has given us of a greater impact from her new body have caused a forward spurt in our Yoga. If we can keep up the intensified aspiration we may hope to see the new body materialised in the near future—in less than a century. Even if our effort for progress gets relaxed, the Mother will press for the manifestation. Her children then may not have to wait very long.

If, however, she finds it unfitting that she should thus manifest, a second way is conceivable. Indeed, it would be the one inevitable way under the circumstances. And of this possibility too we have a glimpse in some words of the Mother. Three years before she had the experience of living in her new body as if it were the most natural sheath for her — to be precise, on February 15, 1969 — she said: "...the work is becoming more and more 'exacting'. But I feel (that is to say the body feels very well) that it is part of a training. It looks like that: it must hold on, the body, or otherwise, so much the worse, it will be for another time."<sup>1</sup>

This can mean only one thing : as in the past, the Mother will utilise the usual process of birth, assume once more a body like ours and be amongst her children at the head of earth's evolution. An implication of this meaning is that for the body-supramentalising turn of evolution the rebirth of none except the Mother will do. But her rebirth will not involve going laboriously over the same field that she covered before. Rather, by force of all that her earlier incarnation has done and by the greater proximity it has brought about of her Supramental Shape, this second embodiment will have, despite its unavoidable nexus with world-conditions a rare rapidity of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, April 1969, p. 89

sadhana and will soon be ready to house that Shape and uplift her children to spiritual supermanhood. When and where the hour of the re-embodiment will strike is left to the wisdom operating through the Supramental Shape in which she now abides. But we may be sure that it will not go beyond the limit of what we have stipulated as her extraordinary life-length if the original plan of supramentalisation had been followed. In saying "another time" she need not be construed as referring to a far-off date and negating the broad sense of "now". The expression simply connotes a bodily existence other than the one that was hers from February 21, 1878. In fact, once she decides on this alternative way of securing her earth-poise, the "when" can be very near and the "where" is likely to be such as to let her appear amidst her erstwhile family without unnecessary delay.

What we must guard against is letting our imagination run riot. We must not start hunting for signs and make various self-gratifying mental constructions. Although we must keep our eyes open, we must be passive in our receptivity. If the Mother takes birth, she will declare herself in her own fashion and her own good time. We must not superimpose our ignorance-coloured "Lo here!" and "Lo there!" The birth which she will bring about by her direct action will carry the clearest credentials. We shall not need to speak for it. We have merely to watch and wait.

Still, as regards the whole possibility of a second embodiment we have to remember the Mother's expression: "so much the worse." She did not favour "another time" and the mechanism involved for it: the usual process of birth. It would have to be the last resort. The preference would undoubtedly go to the direct self-materialisation. Even though we have no open reference to such a mode of re-appearance of the Mother, we know that she looked forward in general to an occult method of birth for human beings. This method was expected to come into force after the Mother had sufficiently divinised her body and established herself firmly for the new world she was building up, the world in which Sri Aurobindo was to come in the first supramental body built in the supramental way. But, with the evolutionary alteration of her course on November 17, releasing new powers of action, the will of Sri Aurobindo for supramentalisation in the present age, and not in a later one, would tend to bring this method into use far sooner.

However, if we take "so much the worse" in its own restricted context, we find "another time" to be disapproved as compared only to the birth the Mother accepted in 1878 and wanted to use for the utmost consummation. Then there would be nothing in particular against the usual process of birth. The two alternatives of reappearance would be on a par.

But neither can become an early reality without our co-operation. We should go all out to create the conditions that would facilitate the wonderful phenomenon of self-materialisation. For the Mother's rebirth too our souls must keep devoted vigil. More than ever before we shall have to open our depths to the Light and Love that were lavished on us for so many years and that still waft to us from the joint

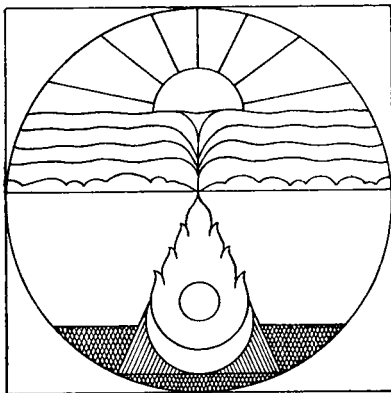
Samadhi. Had we answered sufficiently to their call, the original plan might never have been changed. Indeed, to a high degree, it is our "estranged faces" that have made us "miss the many-splendoured thing" that for ninety-five years was our Mother, most divine, most human.

K. D. SETHNA

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# “THE MOTHER OF DREAMS”

## SOME EXPERIENCES FROM 1973

I LEFT for Bombay from Pondicherry by plane on August 2, 1973 to have the cataract in my right eye removed. I had to remain there owing to unexpected circumstances right on to the night of November 18. On the morning of that day I had a phone-call from Pondicherry informing me of the Mother's passing away the previous evening. Along with my wife, her sister, my niece and her husband who were all in Bombay at the time, I flew home to the Ashram the same night.

Looking back at the stay in Bombay I cannot help seeing the Grace of the Mother in the series of dreams I had of her, such as had never happened to me in all the years I had known her. It was as if she showed herself close and intimate to one who was far away but needed her intensely — a presence of love and light giving repeated *darshan* before the great leave-taking. The last dream was on the very night of November 17. I used to write a report of each dream. Perhaps these reports may prove of general interest and hold meanings for others no less than for myself. They are reproduced below as originally written. Some later comments follow them whenever these second thoughts seem to illuminate the earlier experiences.

### I

#### Dream of 18.8.1973

I have got up from sleep, with a wonderful dream as a *grand finale* to the night's rest. Yesterday before going to bed I had the news that the Mother had appeared on her balcony at 6.15 p.m. on August 15 but had gone in because it had started raining. I felt there was something wrong with the information, for it was hardly like the Mother to be frightened by a bit of rain. But I was elated by the fact that after all she had given *darshan*. I went to sleep concentrating on her.

Round about 6.15 this morning I had my dream. I was in a horse-carriage going somewhere. I ended up in the midst of a crowd waiting to see the Mother. Each of us had a card with a number and two words. My card read: “47. Matter-of-fact. Independence.” There was a sort of balcony from which Champaklal was calling out the numbers. I joined the queue and climbed up a staircase and reached the first floor. There was a room to the right. The Mother was sitting there, awaiting all of us.

On the way I had interrogated my own condition and found some faults or rather ambivalences in it but on the whole it seemed fairly receptive. I approached the Mother. She appeared a little lean in the face, the nose looked sharp-cut; otherwise she was as I had seen her in my first interview in December 1927 — and, as on that occasion, a soft white radiance seemed to play all over her. I knelt down,

she smiled, I put my head on her feet, she blessed me. When I lifted my head — with my hands clasped together and pressed to my heart — she was still smiling. I was filled with a sense of beauty and graciousness. It was the Mother I had always known — with no barriers between us, all the recent withdrawal and absence due to her ailing condition were wiped off.

I moved away and stood in a big adjoining room. Watching from there I saw a visitor-sadhak doing pranam to the Mother. He kept his head at her feet even after she had blessed him. She did nothing for a while and then touched his head two or three times impatiently. She did not want such an artificial self-centred ceremony as this prolonged pranam. But the chap hardly took notice of her disapproval. He got up in his own good time. The Mother started saying something. I don't remember all the words, but the last one got translated in my mind into the Gujarati term "Gandio!", meaning "Imbecile!" I was surprised, and looked with mingled shame and pity at the fellow.

He got up and with a dazed expression walked hurriedly away and disappeared. In contrast to this occurrence I came to know from my wife Sehra that she had done pranam sixteen times, bowing at the Mother's feet first and then touching the head to the sides of her seat and so on, but the Mother had kept smiling and said, "It's all right." The two occurrences showed her different responses to false devotion and to true love.

I lingered for some time in the adjoining room talking with people. Then I woke up. My whole being was brimmed with a deep quiet joy. And the realisation came to me that utter humility is the only way to receive the Divine's personal physical presence on the earth. Not the mind but the heart has to be our answer to this supreme grace. And, while I was becoming aware of this truth, I felt that by her appearance to me and by her blessing the Mother had not only compensated me for missing August 15 in Pondicherry but also rounded off a certain puzzling period and given the "green signal" to me, opening the way at last to my cataract-operation which had been suspended even though I had been in Bombay for it from the 2nd of the month.

Suddenly I remembered that a few days before starting for Bombay I had had a dream of the Mother which I had not told anybody because I had regarded it as just a projection of my own desire to get the cataract treated in an unorthodox way — without surgery. In this dream the Mother was seated in somewhat the same fashion as in my present one. I approached her and told her, "I am going to have my cataracts removed." She at once replied, "No, don't get them removed. Go to Togo." The closing part of the speech was a mystery except that the last two syllables were merely the first two in the reverse order: instead of "Go to" there was "To go." The opening part of her speech was surely a non-acceptance of my hurried desire for the operations. And yet the command to go pointed to my leaving Pondicherry for some other place. Perhaps my memory garbled what she had said and I had missed the word "Bombay".

I may add that in this dream the Mother was not quite normal. For, when my

right hand touched her left foot she winced in pain. As the feet are symbolic of the most exterior part of the being — the gross-physical — I suppose the pain signified that some crucial work was going on in this part of the being — work which seemed to have been essentially over before my second dream. And during the crucial process her attitude to the question of getting my cataracts removed was clearly negative.

My hurry in the opposite direction was mistaken and has actually proved useless. The Mother's Grace has intervened to check it. A doctors' strike has gone on stopping what I had arranged to be done as soon as I would have arrived in Bombay.

Here I may record in parenthesis an interesting event. Our “astrologer-royal” of the Ashram — Patrizia Norelli-Bachelet — had told me that according to my horoscope the time was very inauspicious for the operation. She said she was not happy at my going in for it. The stars showed “isolation, detachment, separation”, but in an unfavourable manner for a move like the operation. As a Yogi who steps out of the round of common cosmic forces I was supposed to ignore stars — whether ethereal or Hollywoodian. But perhaps Sri Aurobindo who, in spite of telling us that the stars' indications are not binding when one enters the Yogic life, had yet coincided the day of his passing away with the astrological indications of the time of his “death”, as if deliberately to pay with his sacrifice the full penalty of material fate — perhaps Sri Aurobindo saw something worth attending to in the pointers of my horoscope. Anyway, the Mother's negative attitude in my pre-Bombay dream had come before Patrizia spoke to me. Somehow it had been decided by the Divine that my operation should not happen in the period which was horoscopically inauspicious.

The upshot of the delay was that the doctor who would have operated on me was put off the scene and another who proved to be an ideal operator came into the picture. As though to make the change-over doubly sure, fate whisked away the first doctor to a conference in Africa. It strikes me that, if the operation had occurred when I had ventured to have it, there would have been some loss of protection. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have evidently saved me from myself.

One question may puzzle people. If the Gurus so hold me in their hands, why did they not prevent me from starting in such hot haste to get the operation done? One may say that my folly was so great that they could not directly counter it. But I think this is only half the truth. My state of mind at the time was such that I just had to be—as my horoscope showed — isolated, detached, separated from my immediate circumstances. And Bombay was the best place to “go to”, as the Mother's words had it. But, though badly needing to go, would I have gone if the urge to get rid of those awful impediments to my work — the cataracts — had been lacking? So to rush like a cataract to get the cataracts removed was the unavoidable mode by which the sorely needed isolation, detachment, separation could be achieved. The Grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother lay behind even my folly. The folly itself may be interpreted as a paradoxical action of their wisdom.

While writing this, it occurs to me that the name “Togo” itself might be a hyper-

ingenious way of pointing to Bombay. For, impossible as it may sound, I knew when I was a boy an English child in Bombay who had been named "Togo" because he had been born in 1904, the year at whose near-end during the Russo-Japanese War Admiral Togo had started the masterly manoeuvres by which he had destroyed the whole Russian fleet off the coast of Manchuria. And I myself was also born in the same year in Bombay. Perhaps the month of my birth — November — was the one in which Togo's manoeuvres started.

I am now waiting, in gratitude and confidence, for events to take the turn which the Divine wishes. The Mother, according to her own sense of the right time, will see me through my cataract-problem and lead me, in every sense, from Darkness to Light.

In closing, I may confess that I have not yet properly gauged either the meaning of "Matter-of-fact" and "Independence" or the suggestion of "47". Maybe those two words tell me that I have to be realistic and not live under illusions, as well as that I should stand in my own inner strength and not be influenced by outward factors. What they tell me could be a manner of conveying what Sri Aurobindo deems essential for realising the Spirit in terms of Matter: a sublime common sense and a supreme poise.

As for "47", it may be taken in the context of the word "independence" as appropriate since India won her independence in the year 1947 on August 15 which was also a birthday of Sri Aurobindo. But there is another reference possible. There will start, for me in the December of this year — on the 16th, to be exact — my own 47th year as a member of the Mother's Ashram.

### Later Comment

After the Mother's passing away a sharp light falls on the number 47. The Mother took charge of the Ashram, at Sri Aurobindo's bidding, on November 24, 1926. The year 1973 completed, in November, 47 years of her creative role as the Ashram's Head — no less than its Heart. The number in my dream appears to mean that, on the physical plane, this completion was also the end.

In view of the termination of the Mother's physical presence amongst us, the words "Matter-of-fact" and "Independence" acquire, in the meanings I have tried to read in them, a special point. They beckon me to an undreamt-of stance of practicality and self-reliance in the outer half of the spiritual field.

### 2

### Dream of 29.8.1973

Early this morning I had another dream of the Mother. I dreamt that some time in the late afternoon I went to see her. From an outer room I passed into an inner

one. Before entering the latter, I picked up a tubular flashlight, its body tarnished and old-looking. But, as soon as I got in, the “torch” disappeared from my hand.

I found the Mother standing, in a long robe, as I have often seen her in the years immediately following 1954. When I approached her she smiled a little and gave me a bunch of flowers for myself and another bunch for Sehra. One flower was prominent in each bunch. It was positioned like a leader of the three or four others. The Mother, pointing to it, said, “Seventy times” — and, pointing to the rest, she added, “Forty times.” Then she mentioned the significance of my leading flower and that of Sehra’s. Mine was “Vital Protection”. Sehra’s was “Radha’s Consciousness in the Vital”.

I asked the Mother whether the significance of these flowers were to be spoken out by us 70 times and those of the remainder 40 times. She answered, “Concentrate on them inwardly.” I then bent down to her hand-level, kissed her left hand, and received the blessing from her right.

As I was taking my leave she called me back, “Aren’t you going to wish me a happy birthday?” I looked somewhat puzzled. Either Vasudha or Kumud explained, “Mother couldn’t celebrate her birthday on the 21st February. So she’s doing it now.” I walked back to the Mother. She opened her arms and we warmly embraced. Before the embrace ended, she kissed me on my right cheek. I first kissed in the air in response but soon brought my lips to her left cheek and kissed it.

Then I left her, saying to myself, “This is the most wonderful day of my life!”

When I woke up, I took the old tubular flashlight standing on the table next to my bed and with its dim glow read the time on my wrist-watch. It was 3.08 a.m.

Looking back, the first thing that struck me was the numerological aspect. Like the number 47 which had figured on my card in the dream of August 18, there were 70 and 40 in this dream. The same two numbers 4 and 7 were here, though in the opposite order. And their total, either way, was 11 which, again, totalled  $(1+1=) 2$ . Even the time of waking was  $3+8=11=2$ . And the date itself — the 29th — amounted to  $11=2$ . Perhaps we can ignore the waking time and the date, but the recurrence of 4 and 7 is quite intriguing.

I noted that along with the 2 ultimately resulting from the addition of these figures there were 2 words — “Matter-of-fact” and “Independence” — in the earlier dream and again 2 words for me — “Vital Protection” — in the present case.

Curiously enough, the second dream came 11 days after the first which had come on the 18th — a time-length which once more adds up to 2. Finally, if we add the pair of dates — 18 and 29 — what do we get? Precisely the numerals which in different ways were given by both my dreams: 47. And, of course, 47 is 2.

What is the significance of this recurring 2? I can think only of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo side by side — joined and inseparable.

I may observe that in the meeting with the Mother there was no sense of cataract, no dimness of vision: everything was clear and normal. The cataract-sense and the dim vision must have been there when I took hold of that old tarnished flashlight.

But the complete disappearance and forgetting of it when I received flowers from the Mother showed the change in the state of sight. It was as if the Mother were giving me some power of seeing which I did not lately have. But what exactly was I called upon to see?

### Later Comment

Perhaps I had to see the reason why the Mother's birthday was being observed in the month of August in my dream. The Mother may have been passing at that time through a period in which one could declare that a special birthday for her in some sense was occurring in the same month as Sri Aurobindo's birthday. The month being the same should suggest an extra-strong linking of them, so as to give a particular point to the side-by-sideness I have read in general in the number 2 produced by  $47=11$ . The Mother's departure from her physically embodied state in 1973 joined her most literally with Sri Aurobindo, setting her close beside him on the subtle plane and marking the commencement of a new life one with his work from there, the birth of a new activity on her part as the Shakti of Sri Aurobindo.

*(To be continued)*

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# THE MESSAGE OF THE GITA

## A BRIEF REVIEW

(1)

### The Importance of the Gita

“THE greatest gospel of spiritual works ever yet given to the race”,<sup>1</sup> the Gita in Sri Aurobindo’s view is “our chief national heritage, our hope for the future, our great force for the purification of the moral weaknesses that stain and hamper our people.”<sup>2</sup> Outside India it has come to be regarded “universally... as one of the world’s great scriptures, although in Europe its thought is better understood than its secret of spiritual practice.”<sup>3</sup> Since the revival of religious thought in India with the beginnings of our Renaissance, the Gita has ceased to be a “transcendental philosophy” and has been made a rule of life. It has always in the past been a favourite weapon of offence and defence in philosophical debate. Its present popularity is evidenced by the immense volume of literature, perhaps the largest in regard to any single book, that has grown round it in recent years in India; even in the Western countries translations and commentaries receive growing attention. There is hardly a man of any education in India who does not at some stage in his life or on some occasion read the Gita, for solace or for edification.

### A Difficult Book

The Gita is not an easy book. Its thought is complex, composed of many strands. Its practical teaching is “full of contradictions”, as even the Pandava hero Arjuna for whose benefit Sri Krishna is reported to have given the discourse on the battlefield of Kurukshetra thousands of years ago complained to the Teacher for “confusing his mind with contradictory statements.” We are so far away from this antique text in point of time, have so little familiarity with the background of philosophical thinking and yogic as well as social practice with which Arjuna may be assumed to have been familiar, that our difficulties in grappling with the Gita text are more and not less than those of Arjuna or even the medieval commentators.

The difficulty does not proceed from the language; for the language is easy classical Sanskrit. Its “perfect, strong and suggestive phrase and the living beauty of the rhythmic pace”<sup>4</sup> add to its grace and poetic charm. The difficulty comes partly because of its use of certain philosophical and yogic terms like *māyā*, *puruṣa*, *prakṛti*, *karma*, *sannyāsa*, *tyāga* — there are some others — in a sense peculiar to itself, a sense that does not become clear unless we know the whole purport of the teaching. What is still more baffling to the reader is that an emphasis is put now on Vedānta, now on Sāṅkhya, now on Knowledge, now on Works or Devotion, which can be very mislead-

ing until we know their place in the teaching taken as a whole. Here as in everything else, we cannot know the part unless we know the whole.

This has led to quite a large variety of opinions, in India and abroad in recent times, about the true purport of the Gita. Modern Western scholarship has not yet made up its mind as to whether the Gita is “a Vishnuite remodelling of a Pantheistic poem (Holtzmann), or a Krishnite version of an older Vishnuite poem which in its turn was a ‘late Upanishad’ (Hopkins), or a text-book of the Bhagavatas revised in a Vedantic sense by the Brahmanas (Garbe), or a late product of the degeneration of the monistic thought of the Upanishads representing the period of transition from theism to a realistic atheism (Deussen)...”<sup>5</sup>

Two great figures of the modern Indian revival, Bankim Chandra Chatterji of Bengal and Bal Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra, both of them strongly inspired by the need of kinetism among our people, lay the greatest emphasis on the Gita as a gospel of social and political action guided by the principles of humanitarianism and national service. Another line of thought, influenced by the gospel of non-violence, virtually refuses the Gita’s injunction to “remember Me and fight” and would have the protagonist of Kurukshetra advocate only a “non-violent” struggle with man’s enemies within himself. The Gita doctrine of Swadharma has been used in current controversies over the Indian system of caste divisions, in justification of the present parody of the ancient *varṇa*.

### Its Popularity

It would almost seem as if the very difficulty and complexity of the Gita text have made it so popular. Everyone finds in it what is uppermost in his mind, and seeks the appropriate verses. Taken out of their context and read without reference to the rest of the book and the general tenor of its teaching, the particular passages would seem to justify the finding and leave the finder happy. But this might lead to serious trouble as well. Nothing for example could be more dangerous than the misuse of the *mahāvākya* of the Gita, the concluding verses which enjoin the giving up of all “dharmas” in reliance on the Lord alone. It may be quite easy to forget that it is the culminating point of a long and difficult discipline which forms the subject matter of the eighteen chapters that have gone before; so it might easily lead to an antinomianism or an indolent *laissez aller* that is farthest removed from the Gita’s intention.

But even the biggest error contains an element of truth.

For the Gita brings a message of hope to all men, in whatever condition may be theirs, at whatever stage of spiritual development. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, it throbs with “a divine compassion for the ignorance of the struggling mind, a divine will to pour forth on it all light and power and happiness....For from all, from the thief and the harlot and the outcaste as from the saint and the sage, the Beloved looks forth and cries to us, ‘This is I.’”<sup>6</sup>



Particularly reassuring to suffering humanity is its promise, made in the name of the Lord, that in whatsoever manner one approaches Him, in like manner is one cherished by Him, *ye yathā mām prapadyante, tān-statharva bhajām-yaham*. And what greater hope could be extended to man than its categoric statement that all ways of approach to the supreme Godhead are equally noble in His eyes and equally deserving of an answering grace, the approach of the afflicted, *ārta*, and the seeker of gain, *arth-ārthī*, no less than that of the seeker of knowledge, *jīnasu*, and of one who knows, *ināni*; all of these attitudes are noble in His eyes, *udārāḥ sarva ete bhāvāḥ*. There is only one condition demanded, and that is faith, *śraddhā*. Here it opens the path to all who believe in the existence of Something or Somebody who has the power to do what is beyond the capacity of our limited humanity.

### The Gita Philosophy: Its Synthetic Spirit

In approaching the Gita's philosophical viewpoints, it would help if we constantly keep in mind that its primary aim is not to establish to the exclusion of others a particular line of metaphysical thought. The Indian mind, with its keen power of minute analysis, has often shown its delight in hair-splitting distinctions and in fighting tooth and nail in order to maintain a particular position against all possible criticism. Here, in the Gita, has come out with startling vivacity its equally fecund capacity to synthesise. This synthetic spirit pervades all its thought as well as its scheme of yoga.

The Gita is primarily a practical guide to yoga; its object is to reconcile the highest spiritual aim with life and action in the world. The philosophy serves as a background, a theoretical basis for the methods it advocates, the yoga. In its philosophical statements it makes the positions it takes more explicit, more definitive and intellectual than in the mystic and intuitive utterances of the Veda and the Upanishads, at once more clear than in the cryptic style of the Sutras and far less argumentative than in the later Bhashyas of the principal systems. Indeed there is very little argument, it is mostly an enunciation, leaving it to the aspirant to verify by experience. Incidentally it gives us an inkling of the changes that had taken place in Indian philosophical thought since the time of the Upanishads; that is one of its valuable contributions.

This thought had developed on certain independent lines more or less exclusive of one another. Vedanta and Sankhya and Yoga and Veda-Vada (this is the Gita's name for what we would call Purva-Mimansa) were the systems of which it takes cognisance. But none of these forms of philosophical thought, though ultimately traceable to the vast Upanishadic synthesis, appears here exactly in the forms we are familiar with in all its varieties in later Indian thought. Nor is the Sankhya or the Yoga philosophy of which the Gita speaks the same in all its details as the Sankhya of Iswara-krishna or the Yoga system of Patanjali. The Vedanta, again, which came to be evolved out of the ancient Upanishadic thought and in which "the Purusha, Deva,

Ishwara — the supreme Soul, God, Lord — of the Upanishads all became merged in the one all-swallowing concept of the immutable Brahman,"<sup>7</sup> is not the whole of Vedantic thought of later times. How the Gita takes these positions as it found them and effects a broad synthesis out of them, reconciling seemingly antagonistic viewpoints and adding some luminous ideas of its own, is a fascinating study. Only a brief outline can be attempted here.

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

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# THE USES OF POETRY

## WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MODERN ENGLISH POETRY

### A Lecture

(Continued from the issue of October 1975)

(We are glad to publish from the pages of *Josephite*, journal of St. Joseph's College, South India, this brilliant "Second Leigh Memorial Lecture" delivered on February 21, 1975 at that Institution by Professor M. S. Duraiswami, M. A., Retired Professor of English, Annamalai University, whose name has become almost a legend in academia.)

It must have been noticed, by now, that I have dealt only with the widening of our mental horizon and the growing awareness of new kinds and levels of consciousness. Though the resulting gain is not mere knowledge and some part of it may conduce to wisdom, all this is only one part of what poetry can *do to* the responsive reader. The other and more significant *use* of poetry is to work on the reader or *in* him and trouble him (as Wordsworth would say) with an end in view. And what is that end? To put it in very general terms, the only terms I know with my poor equipment, poetry at its best helps the best or ideal reader to become fully human. By 'fellowship with essence' (as Keats put it), by giving himself to every kind of imagined experience and sharing the 'exultations' and 'agonies' of others, the reader exercises and extends the powers of his mind, heart and spirit and attains a rounded perfection of his nature. As a result, he reverses the experience of Coleridge in *Dejection* and is now able to *feel* what he only *knew* before. Secondly, he has liberated himself from 'that horrible tower' (in *The Waste Land*) which is the prison of the ego. He is now able to 'give' and 'sympathize'; and he can even lose his separate identity and become what he contemplates. This last is, of course, a grace granted only to the ideal reader. But the merely responsive reader can come within measurable distance of the goal.

If this is the final effect of poetry, the ending end of it (as Sir Philip Sidney would say), what are the means and the stages of that beneficence? We may well begin with the simpler effects achieved by what may be called the poetry of acceptance. Robert Frost is one of the few modern poets who have no quarrel with the world or who have, as he puts it, only a 'lover's quarrel'. He accepts the fact of our imperfect condition but he shows how we can make the best of it. We come to realize, with him, that even in a drab and dreary way of life and while getting on with the job on hand, we can do some good, with a little wisdom and enjoy much quiet happiness. There is a fine parable of man's dual nature and destiny in that well-known poem *Birches*.

I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,  
 And climb...  
 Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more  
 But dipped its top and set me down again.  
 That would be good both going and coming back,  
 One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

My next example is from Hopkins. It is the special virtue of his imagination that it delights in all that is odd, irregular, eccentric, or heterogeneous in nature and endows it all with a rich significance and a new kind of beauty. Thus he brings us to recognize the concept of *Pied Beauty* in the short poem beginning with

Glory be to God for dappled things.

It is the felt absence of this 'pied beauty' that is one of the elements of the horror and anguish experienced in that highly complex poem *Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves*. Elsewhere he shows the value of wild weeds and pleads for their preservation —

What would the world be, once bereft  
 Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,...  
 Long live weeds and the wilderness yet.

As with nature so with human nature and all life. The effect of such poetry is one of moral profundity as well as natural magic.

Neither Hopkins nor even Frost offers us this serenity and purity of experience everywhere in his poetry. And we get something very different indeed when we turn to poetry that deals with the more unruly passions of men. Love and war unleash the wildest of these natural forces: and it is no cynicism to say that where they prevail, the problem of evil is already present. *Her Vision in the Wood* is a poem of Yeats that deserves to be better known than it is. It enacts a drama of hideous self-discovery: the revelation of evil in self to self. An old woman sees in a vision a dying young man, somewhat like Adonis; and then she recognizes him as her own former lover and realizes, with a shock of horror; that she was his murderess.

War shows the same principle of evil at work though on a vast scale and involving millions of lives. According to Dame Edith Sitwell, *The Raids, 1940*, Night and Dawn were the time and occasion of her war poem, *Still falls the rain*. But it is timeless and universal, in the range and relevance of its vision; and it includes, in its compassion, the lowliest forms of life. Evil, springing from the heart of man, murders that very heart, quenches the light granted to him and betrays the love of his Redeemer. But that love persists, in spite of the red rain of evil, and has the last word in the poem—

Still do I love, still shed my innocent light, my Blood, for thee.

We see evil again, but evil externalized and projected on a vast screen, in Robert Lowell's *Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket*. The North Atlantic Ocean functions here as the leading actor in the outer drama of shipwreck, destruction and waste. And, at a deeper level, it is a symbol of the principle of evil in nature, eternal but mindless. We may call it the destructive element or elemental evil. Man has braved it and proved

his unconquerable spirit; and this is a positive and achieved good. But the sea wins first and last; and a sense of waste and loss remains as a total and lasting effect.

For giving an extra dimension to his poem, Lowell has made artistic use of Herman Melville's epic of whale-hunting. *Moby Dick* provides not only a setting and local colour for the poem but part of the very texture of it. Ahab, the Pequod and the White Whale serve as concrete symbols of the passions and forces at war. By suggestion as well as significant details, the poem evokes a sense of the sublime and a horror that is almost preternatural.

It argues, therefore, rare courage or conviction in a poet if, in the face of all the evil and suffering of our age, he can call upon mankind to rejoice. But this is exactly what W. B. Yeats does in his mature poetry. The only utterance of Old Rocky Face, as you may remember, is the word 'Rejoice!' 'Self-delight' recurs in his poetry and prose. It may seem to some of us to mean something akin to the bliss of the soul in Indian philosophy. The final state to which Yeats aspires and would take his readers is, no doubt, 'self-delight'. But what gives his mature poetry its distinctive quality and fascination is the richness and complexity of its experience. There is a regular alternation between two values and ways of life: the ideal of thought, contemplation and wisdom on the one hand and the ideal of action, and joy in life and art on the other. It is characteristic of Yeats that he wants both kinds of fulfilment and keeps swinging (or vacillating, as he would prefer to say) between the experiences of the two sides of his nature which he calls his self and his soul. And he does this not only in different poems but often in one and the same poem: witness the dialectic in *The Tower*, *A Dialogue of Self and Soul* and *Vacillation*. *Byzantium* is an attempt, not altogether successful, to make the best of both worlds, that of being and that of becoming. It was, perhaps, only in one poem and in one image that he finally achieved that unity of being which he sought all his life:

O Chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,  
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?

That famous image comes in the last stanza of *Among School Children*, as the conclusion and crown of the dialectic not only of that poem but of a whole group of kindred poems.

I would make one point about Yeats and his poetry before passing on. We find in it words and images suggesting mystical experience or some transcendental state. His poetry abounds in trances, dreams and visions and there are, among those experiences, sensations of sweetness, light and warmth which seem to correspond to what mediaeval mystics called *Dulcor* and *Calor*. In a *Dialogue of Self and Soul*, Self says the last word and affirms —

We are blest by everything,  
Everything we look upon is blest.

And a similar conviction of being blest and able to bless comes to the speaker in *Vacillation*. Notwithstanding all this, I am unable to make up my mind about the genuineness of the mystical or indeed any spiritual experience in Yeats's poetry. For

one thing, such awakenings and intimations come to him only momentarily—or, as he reckons, for 'twenty minutes more or less'. And then, does he ever wholly escape from his ego and forget himself? Does he come to feel he is everything and nothing, as a true seer should? At best, perhaps, we may imagine, he made some inner progress and had some true experience but failed to go on and relapsed. Was he then a mystic *manqué*? I am not sure even of that.

It is interesting to compare Yeats with T. S. Eliot in this respect. Early in his poetic career, and long before he became an Anglo-Catholic, Eliot was liable to experience states and sufferings that can only be called *paraspiritual*. In *Preludes*, *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*, and some passages in *The Waste Land* (section I especially) a sort of de-realization seems to be at work, so that the actual appears unreal and has an odd and disturbing effect. And the experiences embodied in *Whispers of Immortality*, *Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service* and some parts of *Gerontion* suggest a kind of negative vision or a felt absence of vision, for which Wordsworth, who himself had passed through that awareness, found the right name: 'visionary dreariness.'

That bleak state is no longer there when we go on to *Ash Wednesday* and the *Ariel Poems*. What we find instead is a new awareness of spiritual needs and possibilities, along with a new humility and serenity. Of *Ash Wednesday*, which has been abundantly explained and explicated, it is necessary only to say that it presents, in successive stages and scenes, the theme of seeking redemption by dying into life and submitting to the divine will. *The Journey of the Magi* takes up the transvaluation of birth and death from *The Waste Land* and, exploring further, makes us aware of a certain death that was in reality a new birth. The theme of rebirth and new life appears also in another *Ariel* poem, *Marina*. A feature of interest in it is the transfiguration of persons, places and material objects. It reveals to King Pericles — and to us — the birth of a new order, and new life; and there appear new seas and landfalls for the adventurous spirit of man.

It has been well said of *Four Quartets* that it was, in a sense, the poem Eliot had been writing all his life. Many of the themes and problems we have seen above are taken up here and carried to some conclusion. But the central concern of the whole sequence is to sum up the experience of a life-time as man and poet and explore its meaning.

Time, which had always exercised the poet's mind, appears as the dominant theme of *Four Quartets*. We are made aware of different orders of time and of its operation in man. Among its effects, we see the predicament of old age and the valueless wisdom that is born of experience, whether it is that of the individual or what we find in history. Time has to be conquered but it can be done only in time: which means, and requires, living 'at the still point of the turning world'. To some of us, 'chance moments of vision' may come, at times, revealing a timeless order, a state of paradisaical perfection. But these are exceptional moments: for most of us, 'there is only a life-time of waiting and hoping for grace'. We have, for the duration, to practise non-attachment and renunciation and purify ourselves in the fire of love and sacrifice. It

is characteristic of Eliot that he finds work and hope and a future even for old men —

Old men ought to be explorers...  
 We must be still and still moving  
 Into another intensity...  
 Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,  
 The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters  
 Of the petrel and the porpoise.

In desiring and demanding a heroic and adventurous old age, Eliot comes very near to the later Yeats, revealing an interesting, if momentary, affinity. Another point of contact between the two poets may be seen in *Little Gidding* (11), where the 'familiar compound ghost' refers to

that refining fire

Where you move in measure, like a dancer.

That image of a 'refining fire' and the 'dancer' will surely recall to the reader the flames and the purgatorial dance in *Byzantium*.

*Four Quartets* explores, as we have seen, the meaning of Eliot's experience as a man; and this constitutes the dominant theme: there is also, side by side, a search for meaning in his experience as a poet; and this makes a second important theme in three of the Quartets. We see there the poet's concern with words and the discovery of meaning. 'Each venture is...a raid on the inarticulate'; and, as Tennyson said of the building of Camelot, the poet's work, being done 'for ever', is never done (or done with) at all. But there comes, after many failures, a transient triumph, his words make

a complete consort dancing together.

This experience is not merely personal; it has also relevance and value for the whole genus of writers and the species called poets.

*Four Quartets* may claim to be representative in another respect as well. It illustrates the chief use to which a poet may put his own poetry. It may serve to explore his experience in life and try to discover the meaning of it. The experience may be that of a life-time, as in *Four Quartets*, or of one significant part of life, as in Wordsworth's *Prelude*; or, as is more common, it may be a single experience in the poet's inner or outer life. It was one such single experience that led to the writing of *Dejection, an Ode* by Coleridge, *Resolution and Independence* by Wordsworth, *The Wreck of the Deutschland* by Hopkins, and *Easter 1916* by Yeats.

Self-knowledge is one great benefit; but it is not the whole beneficence of poetry. What is equally valuable is the reaction of poetry on the poet, on his emotional, moral, or even spiritual nature. Let me explain. By making a poem out of a painful experience, whether it is brief or lasts long, a poet gets it said and done with and gets it out of his system. It is a kind of *auto-catharsis* (self-purgation). The result or effect may range from momentary relief at one end to spiritual liberation at the other. Thus, Wordsworth says of one of his poems —

A timely utterance gave that thought relief —  
 or it may be the end of a stage or state of suffering and the beginning of a better state. We have it on Yeats's own authority that he warmed himself back into life by writing *Byzantium*! Of T. S. Eliot it may be said (and, I think, has been) that, by writing *The Waste Land*, he was enabled to escape from *his* Waste Land and 'fare forward' as a 'voyager' in life. And, on a larger scale, this seems to be true also of Shakespeare in the great tragedies and of Dante in his masterpiece.

It is the practice of some poets to make a poem about the experience of writing poetry: which may be counted one more use of his poetry to a poet. We have seen this in Eliot and his *Four Quartets*, as well as in Ezra Pound. Yeats's *Byzantium* poems may signify, among many other things, the creation of immortal poetry. But this is nothing new: Coleridge has done it at least once. *Kubla Khan*, according to one interpretation, is an extended metaphor for poetic creation.

As for the pleasure of bringing forth a poem and the artist's joy in the technique of expression, these are obvious and may be taken for said.

Similarly, a brief reference must suffice for the use found by poets for other men's poetry. Such use may take obvious forms like 'lifting' raw material for poetry, a plot or theme or thought, or, it may be a matter of technique, learning the trick of the trade, the tools' true play: the early poetry of Yeats and Eliot being well-known examples of such apprenticeship. More subtle and pervasive is the effect of inspiration derived from the work of chosen masters, like Shakespeare and Milton, and, in our own age, T. S. Eliot.

Last, we come to the community or nation *as a whole*. What use does it find in poetry? Not much, it may be said, in this age of the world. But there is more, even today, than we are apt to think. "Our concern," says the ghostly poet to the author in *Little Gidding*,

Our concern was speech, and speech impelled us  
 To purify the dialect of the tribe  
 And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight.

Poets, as we all know, are the real makers of a civilized language. They raid the inarticulate and give a tongue to dumb feelings and emotions. We may even say poetry creates new percepts by bringing them to light and giving each its proper name.

One last gift of poetry to the community is the creation of certain myths that serve as symbols of some common human quality or condition. Among the significant creations of modern poets, the best known are those of T. S. Eliot: his mythical places, the Waste Land and the Rose Garden, and his mythical figures, Prufrock, Sweeney, Gerontion and the Hollow Men.

Good poetry will never be popular; but myths like these have become part of the consciousness and speech of the minority, the 'saving remnant' who know and make the best *use of poetry*.

(Concluded)



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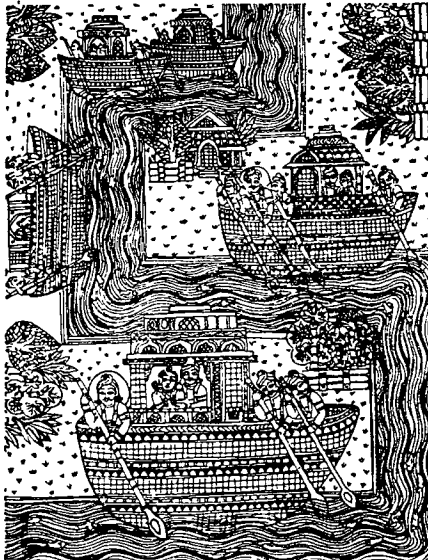
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