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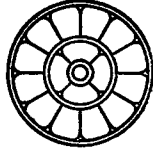
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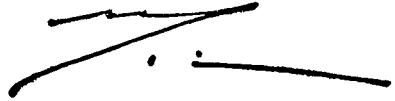


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLI

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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## KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, ON SRI AUROBINDO

*Dr. Satyajit Ghose, Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics, University of Cambridge, wrote recently to Nirodbaran: "I have just unearthed an interesting piece of document from King's College—an extract from their 1951 Annual Report—written with a very British point of view, though. I am sending you a copy."*

*Despite its few inaccuracies this complimentary document is valuable precisely because of its independent British source. Obviously it served as a spontaneous appreciative obituary from the College where Sri Aurobindo had studied for a number of years with distinction.*

AUROBINDO (then Aravind Acroyd) Ghose came up from St Paul's in 1890. His father, Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose of Khulna in East Bengal, and an M.D. of Edinburgh, wishing him to be brought up in the best English tradition, had sent him to this country at the early age of seven, and put him in the care of a family at Manchester. At King's he was a Scholar, and Prizeman, and in 1892 was placed in the 1st Class of the Classical Tripos. While at Cambridge he also published some poems, *Songs of<sup>1</sup> Myrtilla*, and passed the examination into the Indian Civil Service with record marks in classics. Apparently disliking horses, however, he omitted to take the riding test that was necessary, and this debarred him from joining. He then entered the service of the Maharajah Sayaji Rao III of Baroda, a very enlightened and progressive Prince, and at the Baroda College he became Lecturer in French, Professor of English, and Vice-Principal. In September 1903 he wrote to us in King's, giving his address—this reads curiously now—as Racecourse Road, Baroda, or the Baroda Officers' Club, Baroda Gymkhana. That so quick and sensitive a young Indian mind should have felt drawn at that time to politics, however, was natural, for Bengal was in a ferment over the controversies with which Curzon's Viceroyalty had ended; and in 1906 Aurobindo moved to Calcutta. There, as Principal of the Bengal National College and as Editor of *Bande Arataram*,<sup>2</sup> he advanced rapidly to the spearhead of the nationalist agitation, and was widely believed—though this was not proved—to be implicated in the cult of Terrorism. Twice arrested for sedition, the second time in connection with the Alipore Bomb Conspiracy, he was twice acquitted; and, while for many months in prison during trial on the latter occasion, he underwent the extraordinary change which converted India's foremost young political 'activist', the patriot-hero of those days, into the famous sage and recluse. Soon after leaving jail, to avert fresh attentions from the police, he disappeared quietly during 1910 into French Territory at Pondicherry, where he remained until his death on December 5, 1950, the centre of a cult totally,

<sup>1</sup> *to*

<sup>2</sup> *Mataram*

startlingly, removed from that of the bomb and the revolver with which, as late as 1935, the Government of India's Intelligence officials still half-believed him to be associated. Of the eminence that he attained during those three decades, not only as contemplative or mystic, but as academic philosopher, critic and literary craftsman there can be no question. Books and articles flowed steadily from his pen—most of them insufficiently known to Western readers because they were published in India—and his *Essays on the Gita* (1916-18) and his monumental *The Life Divine*, in particular, are works of very high distinction. His *ashram* at Pondicherry became a place of pilgrimage; yet during his later period he lived there almost completely withdrawn, permitting himself to be seen even by his own followers only twice a year in formal *darshan*, and on very rare occasions making oracular pronouncements on politics which must somewhat have perplexed or displeased his conventional nationalist admirers. Early in World War II, for example, he declared himself wholly in sympathy with Britain, and he commended the Cripps Mission in 1942. At his death on December 5, 1950, aged 78, the Press throughout India was filled with columns in his praise, to the exclusion of much ordinary news; President Prasad, Prime Minister Nehru, the Governors of States, and many leading public men wrote copiously in eulogy and reminiscence; and within a few hours, at Pondicherry, 60,000 people had filed past his bier. His gifts of spirit and of intellect had plainly been of the loftiest quality, and to this was added the romance of a unique career. Some would say that his position, among the great men produced by the new India of this century, is equalled only by that of Gandhi and Tagore.

## TWO UNCOLLECTED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

TO DILIP KUMAR ROY

KHITISH Sen's translation of my "Vedantin's Prayer" is, indeed, very fine. He has quite caught the tone of the original, the austerity and elevation of thought and feeling and severe restraint of expression with yet a massiveness of power in it—these at least were what tried to come out when I wrote it, and they are all unmistakably and nobly there in his rendering. Besides, he has translated it with remarkable exactness. Why, with such a gift, doesn't he write more in Bengali? I notice he has got the exact corresponding verse-movement. Yours is a fine poem, but I agree with you that his is at once poetic in a high degree and renders more closely the innate character of the "Vedantin's Prayer"... It is not surprising that he should have been so much moved by your poem "Vaishnava"; but Anilbaran is right: your "Vairagi" *is* the best of the four credos—a consummate achievement. (1930s)

\*

Buddhadeva has certainly remarkable powers. His Bandir Bandana is striking for so young a poet. There is an extraordinary power of language and a great force in the writing and a strong flow in the verse. The thought-substance I find a little deficient. This kind of God-baiting, due, I suppose, to Russian influence, seems to be now popular in the "advanced" minds of the East—but it is childish and out-of-date. Russia is still in the nursery in these matters, but I don't see why millennial India and China should want to prelude their new life by a second childhood. This kind of thing was done and done with in Western Europe fifty years ago, and done, too, in a much more profound, and as I may say, grown-up manner.

Apart from that, the gifts he begins with are considerable, and if he develops and achieves depth and subtlety as well as power—for power is not enough—and if he can acquire more of the inevitable in his language and rhythm, a greater power of what has been called architecture in poetry—(something that corresponds to design in painting and the arrangement of masses in architecture)—may lead to something very great. One can be a famous poet without these things, but it is these gifts that mark the greater immortals. The great danger for him arises from his early facility—for that sometimes stands in the way of the arduous growth that alone can raise the poetic stature to the level of the highest summits. (1930s)



## THREE TALKS OF THE MOTHER

### TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN

14 August 1957

THIS evening, instead of answering questions, I would like us to meditate on the remembrance of Sri Aurobindo, on the way to keep it alive in us and on the gratitude we owe him for all that he has done and is still doing in his ever luminous, living and active consciousness for this great realisation which he came not only to announce to the Earth but also to realise, and which he continues to realise.

Tomorrow is the anniversary of his birth, an eternal birth in the history of the universe.

21 August 1957

*Mother, for quite sometime there has been a feeling that the general consciousness in our activities has fallen, especially since the Ashram has grown so large. What is the reason for it and how can we put it right?*

Are you referring to all the activities of the Ashram or only to sports?... All the activities of the Ashram?

*I don't know very many, Mother; in the ones I see.*

*(After a long silence)* It is something rather complicated. I shall try to explain it.

For a very long time the Ashram was only a gathering of individuals, each one representing something, but as an individual and without any collective organisation. They were like separate pawns on a chess-board—united only in appearance—or rather by the purely superficial fact of living together in the same place and having a few habits in common—not even very many, only a few. Each one progressed—or didn't progress—according to his own capacity and with a minimum of relations with others. So, in accordance with the value of the individuals constituting this odd assemblage, one could say that there was a general value, but a very nebulous one, with no collective reality. This lasted a very long time—very long. And it is only quite recently that the need for a collective reality began to appear—which is not necessarily limited to the Ashram but embraces all who have declared themselves—I don't mean materially but in their consciousness—to be disciples of Sri Aurobindo and have tried to live his teaching. Among all of them, and more strongly since the manifestation of the

supramental Consciousness and Force, there has awakened the necessity for a true communal life, which would not be based only on purely material circumstances but would represent a deeper truth, and be the beginning of what Sri Aurobindo calls a supramental or gnostic community.... He has said, of course, that, for this, the individuals constituting this collectivity should themselves have this supramental consciousness; but even without attaining an individual perfection—even while very far from it—there was at the same time an inner effort to create this “collective individuality”, so to speak. The need for a real union, a deeper bond has been felt and the effort has been directed towards that realisation.

This has caused some... disturbance, for the tendency was formerly so individualistic that certain habits have been upset, I don't mean materially, for things are not very different from what they were, but in a somewhat deeper consciousness. And above all—that is the point I want to emphasise—this has created a certain inner interdependence which has naturally lowered the individual level—a little—except for those who had already attained an inner realisation strong enough to be able to resist this movement of what I might call “levelling”. And this is what gives the impression that the general level has fallen, which is not correct. The general level is on a higher plane than it formerly was, but the individual level has dropped in many cases, and individuals who were capable of one realisation or another have felt, without understanding why, weighed down by a load they did not have to carry before, which is the result of this interdependence. It is just a temporary effect which, on the other hand, will lead to an improvement, a very tangible general progress.

Of course, if each individual was conscious, if instead of yielding to this kind of levelling effect, he resisted it in order to transform, transmute, uplift the elements, influences, currents he receives from the group, then the *whole* would rise up into a higher consciousness far ahead of where it was before.

This is what I was aiming at—without explaining the thing to you in detail—when I spoke to you of a more and more urgent need to make an effort, and I intended, in fact, to explain to you one day that the effort you could make individually, instead of being for only an individual progress, will spread, so to say, or have very important collective results. But I said nothing because for months I wanted to prepare the individual consciousness to admit, I might say, even perhaps to recognise, this necessity for a collective individuality. This is what must be explained now. There is no other reason for this kind of apparent fall which, in fact, is not one. It is the spiral movement of progress which makes it necessary to move away from a certain realisation in order to make it not only vaster but also higher. If every one collaborates consciously and with goodwill, it will go much faster.

It was an imperative necessity if one wanted this Ashram life to be viable. Everything that does not progress necessarily declines and perishes, and for the

Ashram to last it had to make progress in its consciousness and become a living entity. There.

We are rather far away in the spiral from the line of realisation we had some years ago, but we shall come back to it on a higher level.

So that is the answer.

There may appear to be movements which seem to contradict what I have just told you, but that... it is always like that, for every time one wants to realise something, the first difficulty one meets is the opposition of all that was inactive before and now rises up to resist. All that does not want to accept this change naturally wakes up and revolts. But that is of no importance. It is the same thing as in the individual being: when you want to progress, the difficulty you want to conquer immediately increases tenfold in importance and intensity in your consciousness. There is but to persevere, that's all. It will pass.

28 August 1957

*Mother, Sri Aurobindo says here: "Whether the whole of humanity would be touched [by the Supramental influence] or only a part of it ready for the change would depend on what was intended or possible in the continued order of the universe."*

*The Supramental Manifestation, p. 56*

*What is meant by "What was intended or possible"? The two things are different. So far you have said that if humanity changes, if it wants to participate in the new birth...*

It is the same thing. But when you look at an object on a certain plane, you see it horizontally, and when you look at the same object from another plane, you see it vertically. (*Mother shows the cover and the back of her book.*) So, if one looks from above, one says "intended"; if one looks from below, one says "possible"... But it is absolutely the same thing, only the point of view is different.

*But in that case, it is not our incapacity or lack of will to change that makes any difference.*

We have already said this many a time. If you remain in a consciousness which functions mentally, even if it is the highest mind, you have the notion of an absolute determinism of cause and effect and feel that things are what they are because they are what they are and cannot be otherwise.

It is only when you come out of the mental consciousness completely and enter a higher perception of things—which you may call spiritual or divine—that you suddenly find yourself in a state of *perfect* freedom where *everything* is possible.

(*Silence*)

Those who have contacted that state or lived in it, even if only for a moment, try to describe it as a feeling of an absolute Will in action, which immediately gives to the human mentality the feeling of being arbitrary. And because of that distortion there arises the idea—which I might call traditional—of a supreme and arbitrary God, which is something most *unacceptable* to every enlightened mind. I suppose that this experience badly expressed is at the origin of this notion. And in fact it is incorrect to express it as an absolute Will. It is very, very, very different. It is something else altogether. For, what man understands by “Will” is a decision that is taken and carried out. We are obliged to use the word “will”, but in its truth the Will acting in the universe is neither a choice nor a decision that is taken. What seems to me the closest expression is “vision”. Things are because they are *seen*. But of course “seen”, not seen as we see with these eyes. (*Mother touches her eyes...*) All the same, it is the nearest thing. It is a vision—a vision unfolding itself.

The universe becomes objective as it is progressively seen.

And that is why Sri Aurobindo has said “intended or possible”. It is neither one nor the other. All that can be said is a distortion.

(*Silence*)

Objectivisation—universal objectivisation—is something like a projection in space and time, like a living image of what *is* from all eternity. And as the image is gradually projected on the screen of time and space, it becomes objective:

The Supreme contemplating His own Image.

(*Questions and Answers 1957-58, pp 172-76*)

## THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

*(Continued from the issue of July 1988)*

THE Mother had several little "groups" in 1912 in France (one with the name "Idéa"). These groups met regularly with the aim of gaining self-knowledge and self-mastery. At the close of each session, a small essay was read out. The Mother tried to communicate her early visions of the future on the 7th May 1912. She said: "The general aim to be attained is the advent of a progressing universal Harmony."<sup>1</sup> Thus even in 1912, already before Sri Aurobindo wrote the *Arya*, she envisaged—to quote her own words—the realisation of human unity, "to establish an ideal society in a propitious spot for the flowering of the new race, the race of the sons of God."<sup>2</sup>

The Mother has affirmed:

"The terrestrial transformation and harmonisation can be brought about by two processes....

"(1) Individual transformation, an inner development leading to the union with the Divine Presence.

"(2) Social transformation, the establishment of an environment favourable to the flowering and the growth of the individual."<sup>3</sup>

Approximately one year after her meetings she wrote her Prayers and Meditations as the agenda of the future. On July 23, 1913, we find:

"O Lord,... surely there is no longer any Thou or I or any separate universe; only an immense harmony is there, sublime and infinite, which is all things and of which all things will one day grow aware. It is the harmony of boundless Love, Love victorious over all suffering and all obscurity.

"By this law of Love, Thy law, I want to live more and more integrally; to it unreservedly I give myself.

"And all my being exults in an inexpressible Peace."

In the following prayer the Mother has shown a stupendous aspiration for "Harmony", this something which she has felt beating like the heart of the present and future on August 8, 1913:

"O Sweet harmony that fillest my heart, manifest thyself in the most external forms of life, in every feeling, every thought, every action.

"All is to me beautiful, harmonious, silent, despite the outer turmoil."

In the above prayer she was playing "only one note in the terrestrial symphony" and yet her "note was indispensable to the harmony of the whole."

What is the meaning of this harmony? Sri Aurobindo interprets it in the following words: "When all is in agreement with one Truth or an expression of it, that is harmony."<sup>4</sup> Sri Aurobindo has clearly stated the meaning, origin, and purpose of "Harmony" and its eternal play in the terrestrial evolution to his disciples nearly two decades later in striking words: "A cosmos or universe

is always a harmony, otherwise it could not exist, it would fly to pieces. But as there are musical harmonies which are built out of discords partly or even predominantly, so this universe (the material) is disharmonious in its separate elements—the individual elements are at discord with each other to a large extent; it is only owing to the sustaining Divine Will behind the whole that it is still a harmony to those who look at it with the cosmic vision. But it is a harmony in evolution, in progress—that is, all is combined to strive towards a goal which is not yet reached and the object of our yoga is to hasten the arrival to this goal. When it is reached, there will be a harmony of harmonies substituted for the present harmony built up on discords. This is the explanation of the present appearance of things.”<sup>5</sup>...

The Mother in her prayer dated January 9, 1914 invoked the incomprehensible reality which would lead one towards that harmony.

She writes in the following exalted words: “Thou who shalt always be the unknown despite all that we shall ravish from Thy eternal mystery, we would go forward, making a complete and constant effort, combining all the multiple paths leading to Thee, go forward like a rising, indomitable tide, breaking down all obstacles, crossing every barrier, lifting up every veil, scattering all clouds, piercing through all darkneses go forward towards Thee, ever to Thee; in a movement so powerful, so irresistible that a whole multitude may be drawn in our wake, and the earth, conscious of Thy new and eternal Presence, understand at last its true purpose, and live in the harmony and peace of Thy sovereign realisation.”

On April 8, 1914, she writes: “O Lord, how ardently do I call and implore Thy Love! Grant that my aspiration may be intense enough to awaken the same aspiration everywhere. Oh, may goodness, justice and peace reign as supreme masters, may ignorant egoism be overcome, darkness be suddenly illuminated by Thy pure Light; may the blind see, the deaf hear, may Thy law be proclaimed in every place and, in constantly progressive union, in an ever more perfect harmony, may all, like one single being, stretch out their arms towards Thee to identify themselves with Thee and manifest Thee upon earth.”

The First World War broke out in 1914. The prayers and meditations were rather like pointer-readings to help us realise that despite the storm and disturbance there is a harmony behind.

She records on 31st August 1914: “In this formidable disorder and terrible destruction can be seen a great working, a necessary toil preparing the earth for a new sowing which will rise in marvellous spikes of grain and give to the world the shining harvest of a new race.... The vision is clear and precise, the plan of Thy divine law so plainly traced that peace has come back and installed itself in the hearts of the workers.”

The very next day she is completely identified with the Divine Mother. A fervent prayer surges in her heart. A voice from the profoundest depths tells

her: "Turn towards those who have need of thy love." Then she continues: "All the grades of consciousness appeared, all the successive worlds, some were splendid and luminous, well-ordered and clear; there knowledge was resplendent, expression was harmonious and vast, will was potent and invincible."

Sri Aurobindo has explained in the following passage about past periods of harmony in the evolution: "It is quite possible that there have been periods of harmony on different levels, not supramental, which were afterwards disturbed—but that could only be a stage or resting-place in an arc of spiritual evolution out of the Inconscience. What is meant here is the Divine in its essential manifestation which reveals itself to us as Light and Consciousness, Powers, Love and Beauty. But in its actual cosmic manifestation the Supreme, being the Infinite and not bound by any limitation, can manifest, in Itself in its consciousness of innumerable possibilities, something that seems to be the opposite of itself, something in which there can be Darkness, Inconscience, Inertia, Insensibility, Disharmony and Disintegration... moreover, in the evolution out of inconscient existence there rise up naturally powers and beings which are interested in the maintenance of all negations of the Divine, error, and unconsciousness, pain, suffering, illness, disharmony, evil."<sup>6</sup>

When both *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga* were running serially in the *Arya*, the Mother had to return to Paris as a result of the First World War. At that time Sri Aurobindo wrote to her that "an absolute equality of the mind and heart and a clear purity and calm strength in all the members of the being" were the essential conditions for the desired climb of consciousness which would help to develop the inner freedom and the right way of harmony. They would be the basis for the collective development in shaping the future society. Sri Aurobindo has elaborated the idea thus: "It is a spiritual, an inner freedom that can alone create a perfect human order. It is a spiritual, a greater than the rational enlightenment that can alone illumine the vital nature of man and impose harmony on its self-seekings, antagonisms and discords.... It means that no machinery invented by the reason can perfect either the individual or the collective man; an inner change is needed in human nature... If this is not the solution then there is no solution, if this is not the way then there is no way for the human kind."<sup>7</sup>

NILIMA DAS

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1. The Mother. *Words of Long Ago*, Vol 2, p 47
2. *Ibid*, p 47
3. *Ibid*
4. *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 23, p 560
5. *Ibid*, pp 1082-83.
6. *Ibid*, Vol 22, p. 9
7. *The Ideal of Human Unity*, "War and Self Determination", 1962, pp 295-97

## **SRI AUROBINDO'S BODY AND THE SERVICE TREE**

### **A LETTER FROM UDAR TO THE EDITOR**

IN the June 1988 issue of *Mother India*, there is the article by Parichand, "The Service Tree." I have some comments to make on this which, perhaps, you may publish.

Regarding Sri Aurobindo's body, as Parichand writes, it was charged with Supramental Light and, as long as it was so, the body was to remain. Then he adds that on the 9th December the first symptoms of decomposition started. This I do not accept. It is true that Dr. Sanyal said so but even then I protested very vehemently, even though I am a layman in such things. I said to The Mother that I knew of one thing in decomposition and that was the unmistakable smell that would come from the body. I have had some experience of this. In the case of Sri Aurobindo's body there was no trace of this smell at all. On the contrary, there was a wonderful perfume that arose from it. It was then that The Mother told me that it was not because of what Dr. Sanyal had said that She had decided on the burial but because of the sign that Sri Aurobindo Himself had given in that the Golden Light was no longer around His body, which had begun to have a grey colour. So I agreed to bury His body. When I lifted up His body to put it into the coffin, I was drenched with the liquid that had come out of His body which had, as I stated before, a wonderful smell, like a celestial perfume. I know that I did not change my clothes or take a bath for two days in order to keep that perfume with me as long as I could. I am fully convinced that His body has not decomposed. I have seen the body of Saint Francis Xavier in Goa and I noted then that it had shrunk, due to loss of liquid, and it had a grey colour, as in the case of Sri Aurobindo's body. So I told The Mother of my conviction and said that I would make the coffin as airtight as possible and I used a rubber seal between the lid and the box, with a large number of screws, so that nothing could enter the box from outside. I am sure that if it ever happens that the Samadhi is opened again and His body exhumed, it will be found to be intact. This is a firm belief which The Mother has not asked me to give up; so I hold it.

Then, when digging the pit for the Samadhi, it was The Mother who directed me throughout as to the cutting of the roots of the Service Tree. Some had to be cut and She directed all this. We did the work ourselves and I still recall how one of the persons at Golconde, Kaplan, worked like a "devil" or a god, in digging the pit.

I am sure that Parichand will not mind these comments.



## VIGNETTES OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

*(Continued from the issue of July 1988)*

### “To Her”

ONE day the Mother asked two of her attendants, Vasudha and X, to help her find a letter that Sri Aurobindo had once written to her. It had been kept in her safe, along with other precious things. The Mother and André sat in front of the safe, and the two ladies started to take out the meticulously arranged contents. One of the things which X removed was a small, flat, squarish packet wrapped up in silk. Thinking it might contain the letter they were looking for, she opened it. She was moved to tears when she discovered a copy inside of the first edition of *The Mother*—for Sri Aurobindo had written in it simply two words: “To Her.”

### The Whole Universe is in Me

Pradyot’s wife died suddenly when he was away from Pondicherry. On his return from Calcutta he went to the Mother who with great love and compassion consoled him and told him many things. At last Pradyot said, “Mother, I leave her with you”. The Mother replied:

“Not with me, in me, you all are in me, the whole universe is in me.”

*Compiled by S*

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## SUDDEN SIGHT OF FULL MOON

THE white lotus on the eastern lake  
Caught me unawares, held me in thrall.  
Mine was the joy of a new-born babe  
In some World-Mother’s loving arms.

How long the joy I do not know.  
I know but a taste of Eternity.  
Back on the sublunar earth again  
All that we do seems lunacy.

K. B. SITARAMAYYA

## HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

12

*Damodar, an Ashramite of long standing, met with an accident on June, 17, 1988, early morning. He was knocked down by a scooter and sustained head-injuries which proved fatal soon after he had been taken to the hospital. Below we give his life-story in brief as a memorial to a faithful sadhak and a warm simple-minded friend.*

DAMODAR-BHAI'S childhood passed in idyllic surroundings where mountains, rivers, forests and vast fields gave a sense of a secret World-Presence. His father was a simple Bhakta, whose inner contentment left a deep impression on him. When he was twelve, Damodar had to read *Brahma Jnana Shastra* which explained OM's greatness and its use in spiritual practices.

Even in his childhood Damodar loved to be with yogis and sannyasis. Hearing discourses on something higher gave him true happiness. One saint explained many spiritual matters to him, and gave true sustenance to his soul. This person awakened in him a longing for the Divine. He started meditating at midnight, for he was told that it was the most elevating time for meditations. His father's influence kept him from soul-killing egoistic pursuits, falsehoods and pretensions. The family atmosphere was very congenial for inner growth. His parents did not interfere with his reading and meditation. Thus he led a peaceful, quiet and aloof life.

Damodar-bhai decided to leave his home in quest of the Divine. Somebody in his confidence wrote to him, "When you have reached such a stage that you cannot remain a single minute without the Divine then only renounce your home." He hesitated and waited for sometime. After an inner preparation he felt, "It is time. I must leave the house and go to the Himalayas." The great moment had come. All inner and outer preparations were finished. One May afternoon when everyone of the family was taking the after-lunch nap, he left his home, carrying some books, a small bedding and a picture of Sri Krishna. He left a note behind saying that he was leaving in search of the Divine, never to come back.

Stopping at some places *en route* to the Himalayas he reached Hardwar on the Himalayan foot-hills and from there started his pilgrimage on foot. He explored caves, forests and mountains and stayed for a long time at Badrinath and Kedarnath in search of a Guru or rather the Guru. He met many great souls.

Then he went to Punjab and Haryana and stayed with a realised soul who was doing intense sadhana far from village and town. There young Damodar sat quietly in one small room for three or four hours following his teacher's suggestions, taking only one meal a day. He felt peace and happiness.

On Deepavali he went to Amritsar where many saints gather to celebrate the festival. One cool morning, covered by a chaddar he was meditating in a garden. A stranger approached him and asked, "What are you doing here?" Damodar kept silent. The unknown repeated the question three times. Then he replied, "I am searching for the Divine and the Guru." The Divine's messenger said, "Go to Sri Aurobindo's Ashram, Pondicherry."

On hearing the words Damodar-bhai felt a soothing vibration of joy and peace and a mighty inner attraction. Next day while wandering in the city somewhere he saw a photograph of Sri Aurobindo amongst four yogis of India and felt, "He is the person who is calling me." He embarked on the final journey and reaching Pondicherry stood at the Ashram gate. He told the gatekeeper, "Please take me to Sri Aurobindo." He got the reply, "Yes, yes, young man, wait... but you can see the Mother." He asked, "Please, may I see her just now?" The gatekeeper replied, "Oh! it is 7 p.m., but you can write to her." Damodar-bhai wrote a letter. After thirty-six hours an answer came, "Yes, you may stay here and work." As he was in his early teens, some light work, along with the collecting and counting of aspiration flowers was given to him.

Time passed and he started doing child-like drawings and sketches. He showed them to the great artist Pramod Kumar who also showed his paintings and sketches to him. Pramod Kumar suggested that he should send his efforts to the Mother, adding, "Her look, her touch will help your progress." Another artist friend suggested the same thing, at the same time guiding him in sketching flowers, birds and the Mother's figure, her love and grace.

Damodar-bhai took the advice and the Mother's look, her touch worked. She gave guidance and encouragement to the aspiring artist and above all gave him self-confidence. Moreover for him it was truly a joyous privilege to show her his paintings. He used to keep the paintings on her lap and then would sit at her feet, watching the expression of her sweet face and breathing the divine atmosphere. The Mother would scrutinize each and every detail and ask questions. Sometimes she would say "Good", very rarely "Very good." She even taught him how to roll the paintings.

After a long lifetime spent in her service, he used to feel,

"All was the working of an ancient plan,  
A way prepared by an unerring guide."

*Compiled by K*

## POETRY-LIFE-YOGA

### FROM SOME LETTERS

You write that you owe me "many a debt". I think the commerce has been two-sided as it was bound to be in a genuine friendship. But perhaps one of the gifts I in particular have tried to force home is the artistic conscience. And I hope that in the pleasure of being a devotee you haven't forgotten the duty of being an artist. Poetry is a precious medium, not to be chosen without a sanctification of the lips. And this sanctification does not come merely of a noble subject and its adequate treatment. For, even though you breathe of God with every syllable properly significant, you serve Him ill if your verse itself is not Godlike.

What do I mean by "Godlike"? As an extreme example towards whose quality all of us Aurobindonians should tend, let me quote those two stanzas from our master:

Swiftly, swiftly crossing the golden spaces  
Knowledge leaps, a torrent of rapid lightnings.  
Thoughts that left the Ineffable's flaming mansions  
Blaze in my spirit.

Slow my heart-beats' rhythm like a giant hammer's;  
Missioned voices drive to me from God's doorway  
Words that live not save upon Nature's summits,  
Ecstasy's chariots.

May I add that poetry can be Godlike even if the poet has no belief or faith in God? Of course if one consciously puts oneself in tune with a higher realm one is likely to be more receptive of the afflatus, provided one has the true poetic turn. But if that turn is present in a sceptic or an atheist he can still by means of the artistic conscience create great verse. Did not Elizabeth Browning refer to the Roman poet Lucretius as denying divinely the Divine? Sometimes Lucretius is indeed stupendous, as in those phrases where he describes the philosopher Epicurus, of whom he was a disciple, triumphing over the crude superstitions of popular religion that blocked the way of rational investigation:

Ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra  
Processit longe flammantia moenia mundi  
Atque omnia immensum peragravit mente animoque.

I have attempted to English these grand hexametres somewhat freely:

Therefore his vivid vigour of mind stood everywhere victor;  
 Forward afar beyond the world's flaming walls he ventured,  
 Crossing the measureless span of the all with his thought and his dreaming.  
 (23.9.1951)

\*

What you write about your wish to omit my "Héloise" from the collection *Altar and Flame* could not have been more perfectly put: "I can admire this poem, but I cannot overcome a difficulty which I have with some of its images. I could say more about this, but then it would take on too much significance, especially in view of my general and almost complete enthusiasm and love for your poems." I know exactly your response as well as your reaction. I may, however, say a few words on some points in the poem. They are not meant to recommend it for the collection. The piece would be out of place there—especially as it would not be flanked with compositions in a similar mode to render it more at home and help its edges fit better into the design of the whole. Actually it did stand in the midst of poems bearing an affinity to it. My plucking it out of their company was like throwing Héloise stark naked among shapes that came with a somewhat different attitude—poetic forms achieved by another process of art. I did not quite realise her incongruity without her "sister-songs". But I may explain to you the use of certain expressions which struck your ear rather oddly. Let me first quote the poem to make my remarks more apposite:

### Héloise

*(After a passage in one of her letters)*

Holier is the wife's name—  
 But, O my love, to the core  
 Of my heart would I truer be  
 As thy worthless whore,  
 Fallen at thy feet with no hands to lay  
 On the torch of thy fame!

I would live most low  
 To feel like a flame  
 The height which my heart-throbs know  
 Of thy beauty and brain.  
 What tribute could I pay  
 Deeper than harlotry  
 Smiling at sneers as vain  
 If Abélard be my stain?

The head and front of the poem's offence are the expressions "whore" and "harlotry". They are terms with a strong medieval atmosphere and they must be understood in their old associations. They do not mean what we take as prostitution, the selling of one's body for money. Their significance is anticipated by contrast with the word "wife" in the very first line. In the Middle Ages what is meant now by "mistress" was subsumed under "whore" and "harlot". At the same time the two latter words had no necessary connection with the sale of sexual pleasure. A woman having sex-relations with a man not her husband—a man who may not be anybody else's husband but is simply not married to this woman—would be looked down upon and labelled as "whore" or "harlot". The terms have got debased in our time. A still greater debasement has occurred with "mistress". This word in older English connoted no more than one's beloved, aside from being a general counterpart to "master" (now turned into "mister"). Marvell's "coy mistress" was—to his great impatience and disappointment—just the opposite of a bed-fellow. I may add about the other terms that they did not even point to any promiscuity as an inevitable shade in them. A woman, however deeply in love with one man alone, would still be branded with those terms if she was not married to her man. It is only the opprobrium of not being the legal wife that attaches to them. And this opprobrium would not come out in my poem if any other names were employed.

The names I have adopted are "strong meat" but essential. They are needed also in order to stress the tremendous self-giving, the unconditional love-surrender, the utter abnegation of personal importance, the intense voluntary renunciation of all advantages accompanying a wife's status, the absolute lack of claim and the complete granting of freedom to the beloved. We have to put ourselves into the 12th century as well as into Héloïse's heart of passionate adoration, face to face with Abélard's "height of beauty and brain", to receive in full the living substance and the vibrant art, which are intended to convey by a powerful paradoxical movement a most exalting sensation. Both content and form would suffer, if not even grow null, without the shock-tactics I have brought into play, the extremism into which I have cast both the idea-gesture and the word-posture.

(22.6.1974)

\*

Your mention of loneliness and aloneness calls forth a few distinctions in my mind—from the Yogic standpoint. The former involves a strong sense of the physical absence of loved ones, the latter the feeling of freedom from bondage even to these and at the same time the glad recognition of their ever-presence of soul along with oneself in the depths of the Divine. Loneliness carries a bitter-sweet of memory, aloneness an entry—small or large—into an inner realm where one loses all loss not because one is oblivious but because there is no need to

recall anything: one touches or penetrates a wideness of omni-possession within a more-than-human reality.

Another term for “aleness” is what the Upanishad mentions as the rending asunder of the knot of the heart-strings, except that this experience relates to everything connected with one’s feelings, and does not relate merely to the dear people to whom one is attached. It marks a passage from the finely and profoundly psychological to the sheer spiritual. A prominent aspect of it is shown in those lines of Sri Aurobindo:

A poised serenity of tranquil strength,  
A wide unshaken look on time’s unrest,  
Faced all experience with unaltered peace.

A step beyond this aspect, carrying into the supracosmic the large freedom achieved against a cosmic background, comes in the stanza from Sri Aurobindo:

He who from time’s dull motion escapes and thrills  
Rapt thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal’s breast  
Unrolls the form and sign of being,  
Seated above in the omniscient silence.

Your medical curiosity about the effect the rending of the heart’s knot would have on the physical cardiac organ finds me somewhat at a loss. I may only surmise that in the long run one may echo the Aurobindonian state:

Slow my heart-beats’ rhythm like a giant hammer’s—

or progress inwardly as Amal has always hoped to do

Till all the heart-beats of my life’s increase  
Count but the starlike moments of His peace.

(3.3.1986)

\*

It’s good news that you will be Pondying for three days. Yes, the time is rather short, but as the awful punster in me is tempted to say, going about in shorts near the Divine’s Samadhi is better than indulging in long pants for the Divine’s presence far away. Punning as execrably in prosodic terms, I may affirm that to execute a pyrrhic (two shorts, — —) or a tribrach (three shorts) here is preferable to performing a spondee (two longs, — —) or a molossus (three longs) elsewhere. To play on words in a more sober spiritual way, let me state that to long sincerely for the Mother in however brief a span of time is not to fall short of her expectations of her little ones.

(4.4.1986)

\*

Here are my answers to your questions.

(1) The experience of a Presence silently radiating love from the heart is surely of what Sri Aurobindo calls the “psychic being”, the true soul. But the psychic being itself is something of the Divine come down from the Transcendent and flowing out to everything of the Divine beyond ourselves from the same everything within us. In order to be authentically psychic, the radiation you speak of has to be of a deep quiet intensity that gives and gives and never feels wasted if there is no response from the human recipient, for it really goes forth to the Divine who has worn the face and form of this or that person. Actually it streams out not only to persons but also to non-human creatures and even to objects since the Divine is hidden in them as well: that is, to all manifestation. I may add that it creates in one a happy constant sense of self-dedication and self-consecration to the Supreme.

(2) In the course of individual evolution it is the psychic being that “grows” through the various experiences from life to life. The apparent movement is towards the True, the Good, the Beautiful, but inwardly the movement is towards the Divine and when this inward fact is recognised the genuine spiritual life has begun and one is aware of one’s soul directly and not only of the reflection or rather emanation of it in the mental-vital-physical complex. I may add that no matter how much the psychic being grows, it still remains a child—simple, straight, trusting, humble. But this child is at the same time an extremely wise one, with the experience of ages enriching it and a spontaneous truth-feeling derived from its transcendent origin. Nor is it a weakling: its inherent immortality gives it a natural strength—strength to endure, to help, to conquer circumstances—strength born from the unfailing intuition of an omnipotent Loveliness accompanying it.

(11.4.1986)

\*

Your mention of evening reminds me of a line in one of my poems:

The wideness with one star that is the dusk.

It seeks to catch in terms of a spiritual mood a phase of Nature or perhaps I should say it tries in words to reflect by empathy an inward-going moment of the Earth-soul. The dusk suggests the movement of withdrawal from outer wakefulness into a sense of dreamy mystery and the single star represents the emergence of a one-pointed depth-consciousness, a unifying intensity discovered within. The combination of vague shadow and gemlike shine is set in a perception of calm immensity—a perception which seems to make the wideness a natural accompaniment of the concentrated withdrawnness.

Facing such a sight you would spontaneously turn your thoughts to Pondi-



cherry. Perhaps Pondicherry would appear to you as a wideness with Amal as a tiny twinkler nestling in the tranquil omnipresence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Perhaps "twinkler" is not quite an accurate term. The evening star is a planet and planets are steady and I think Amal also has a certain steadiness in his temperament; but whatever calm there may be is not anything cold, unresponsive. A heart can beat steadily, yet there is still a pulsing. However undisturbed in its rhythm, the pulsing shows the feeling it has for the Master and the Mother and for their children, near or far.

The far child that is you will soon be near. He will be all the more welcome because his farness is only an appearance. His friends always feel him near just as he feels ever close to the true home of his soul. Soon we shall have the joy of seeing again his warm, sincere, handsome face with the God-dreaming eyes.

(4.4.1988)

AMAL KIRAN  
(K.D. SETHNA)

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## A CONFESSION

I ADMIT I cheated—the most my own self.  
 My surface thoughts betrayed genuine ones  
 Generated from the inner-good in me.  
 Actions mocked the intuitive urge motivated  
 By a second mind nearer to my soul.  
 Satisfaction false and fabricated lulled me to a drugged sleep.  
 In bloated conceit I boast of achievement and acclaim.  
 The hollower sounds the louder—only the ignorant clamour.  
 Disenchantment dries my dreams in a deadly drought,  
 Empty, mindless, soulless I lurch in despondency—  
 All because I cheated and cheated my own self most.  
 Retract I would not—nor would I yield  
 To the importunities of my indignant ego—  
 Smouldering at its prevailing supremacy questioned.  
 Strong I feel conceding a candid confession,  
 Happy, that I did not relent not the least repent.

DEBANSHU

## THE FIRST WOMAN FREEDOM-FIGHTER FOR INDIA

*August 15 this year is at once Sri Aurobindo's hundred and sixteenth birth-anniversary and the forty-first anniversary of India's independence for which Sri Aurobindo always fought. It is fitting that on that day we should remember Madame Bhikhaiji Rustom Cama, in whose honour the Publications Department, Ministry of I & B, has brought out a book for Rs. 22 by a fellow Parsi woman, Khorshed Adi Sethna. With acknowledgment to the Indian Express, Sunday, May 29, 1988, we are reproducing a short review which appeared on p. 5 of its Magazine Section.*

### MADAME BHIKHAJI RUSTOM CAMA

CONSIDERING the paucity of information on this remarkable lady, a biography of Madame Cama is to be welcomed. Undaunted by this handicap, Khorshed Adi Sethna confesses that she undertook to write this biography because she belonged to the same community and shared the same birthday!

It is a brave tribute, and deservedly so, to an Indian woman described in confidential British files as "anarchical, revolutionary, anti-British and irreconcilable". At a time when women in general and Indian women in particular were to be seen and not heard, Madame Cama courageously and stridently called for the independence of her beloved country.

Central to the theme, of course, is the unfurling of the Indian tricolour at the International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart in 1907 by Madame Cama—"the first time the Indian tricolour was unfurled on foreign soil" as any Indian schoolchild could tell us. Most of her friends and associates not being alive, a lot of the facts have been gleaned from letters, manuscripts and archives.

Born into a wealthy Parsee family she was christened Bhikhaiji (while commemorating her, would the authorities at least spell her name correctly?). She had a warm, happy childhood in a privileged home. Even then she was self-willed and unconventional, being the first Parsee lady to wear a frock, thus causing eyebrows to be raised. Years later she would recall with a twinkle in her eye that her teachers and friends had admired her for doing so.

Sethna traces her brief marriage to Rustom Cama—a good-looking, wealthy barrister from a prominent progressive family. The marriage was doomed to failure because of the couple's divergent political views and Bhikhaiji Cama's intense and increasingly deep involvement with the Independence movement.

She left for Europe ostensibly to have an operation, but stayed in self-imposed exile for the next 35 years. This part of the book is devoted to the work, dedication and sacrifices made by the Indian nationalists in Europe. These stalwarts, largely forgotten by history books and the nation alike, are brought

to life again—the gentle Dadabhai Naoroji, the fiery Savarkar, Shyamji Varma (the founder of India House in London) and many others deserving of our respect and attention.

A chapter on the history of the Parsees is most refreshing. It traces their exodus from Iran to the country of their adoption—India. Sethna is at pains to explain the two most misunderstood aspects of Zoroastrianism—Fire Worship and the Tower of Silence. For the latter, she quotes Nusli Wadia's interview on B.B.C. television. Asked snidely if these people really fed their dead to the vultures, Wadia shot back: "Yes, which is a sight better than being fed to the maggots"!

In frail health and yearning for her homeland, Madame Cama returned to India in 1936 (after signing an undertaking to the British authorities). Soon after, she was admitted to the Parsee General Hospital where she died several months later, unhonoured and unsung, but perhaps with the knowledge that, after all, her struggle had not been in vain.

REHANA SEN

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of July 1988)

## The Mother's Message

This is the  
interesting story of  
how a being discovered  
the Divine Life



Vol. Three 1959

No. 20

THE arrival of the New Year 1960 brought a spell of poignant chill weather.  
The Mother's New Year message came like a wave of cheer:

"To know is good,  
to live is better,  
to be, that is perfect."

She also remembered to send me the message of the Epiphany Day—the 6th January. I was charmed by the passage from *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo:

“To be or become something, to bring something into being is the whole labour of the force of Nature; to know, feel, do are subordinate energies that have a value because they help the being in its partial self-realisation to express what it is and help it too in its urge to express the still more not yet realised that it has to be.”

\*

Miss Doris Tomlinson had already returned from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. She gave me an attractive card from the Mother. It displayed a reproduction of a boy's portrait by Murillo. The Mother had written on the card:

“To my dear little child  
with love and blessings.”

Doris gave me news of the Ashram and the Mother. Despite her longing to stay on, she had to come back because of her ill-health.

She inquired how I was and how I got on with my studies. My answer was: “Now everything seems all right.”

\*

The louring sky threatened snow—a cold wind swept over my body. The iciness in the air made me shiver uncontrollably. I drew my coat close about me and entered the Palace Hotel in Marble Arch for my accommodation. It was reputable and run by two English ladies. Though the name was high-sounding, the place in fact was small, cosy and comfortable. It had the central heating system, which suited me fine.

The ladies were kind enough to give me a special rate. For, I was a student.

After bidding *adios* to Mrs English, Mrs Snowdon and Miss Jarret at Mercury House, I went to the Palace Hotel, which was not far from L.T.C.—London Training Centre—where I had already started going.

Mercury House was pretty far from LTC and I had to change two tube-trains. Many a time when I got too late to catch the tube-train, I rushed and ran disregarding my 3"-high-heel shoes and the heavy coat.

Now it really gives me a nightmare to think of the shoes and my running in them!

\*

It was pitch dark—the air was biting cold when Sudha and I came out from our favourite Lyons' basement self-service restaurant. Her place was near mine. We wished each other good night and parted.

My bed was soft and warm and I snuggled into it. Before sleep overtook me, I thought of Mercury House. When I was still there, I learnt that the ghost of an old woman haunted the vacant room close to mine and that she came out of the room at midnight. But whenever I went to the bathroom which was between the two rooms I never had a glimpse of the woman.

Sri Aurobindo has shed some light on the subject of ghosts in the *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*, page 97:

“The word ‘ghost’ as used in popular parlance covers an enormous number of distinct phenomena which have no necessary connection with each other. To name a few only: (1) An actual contact with the soul of a human being in its subtle body and transcribed to our mind by the appearance of an image or the hearing of a voice. (2) A mental formation stamped by the thoughts and feelings of a departed human being on the atmosphere of a place or locality, wandering about there or repeating itself, till that formation either exhausts itself or is dissolved by one means or another. This is the explanation of such phenomena as the haunted house in which the scenes attending or surrounding or preceding a murder are repeated over and over again and many other phenomena. (3) A being of the lower vital plane who has assumed the discarded vital sheath of a departed human being or a fragment of his vital personality and appears and acts in the form and perhaps with the surface thoughts and memories of that person. (4) A being of the lower vital plane who by the medium of a living human being or by some other means or agency is able to materialise itself sufficiently so as to appear and act in visible form or speech with an audible voice or, without so appearing, to move about material things, e.g., furniture or to materialise objects or to shift them from place to place. This accounts for what are called poltergeists, phenomena of stone-throwing, tree-inhabiting *bhutas*, and other well-known phenomena. (5) Apparitions which are formations of one's own mind and take to the sense an objective appearance. (6) Temporary possession of people by vital beings who sometimes pretend to be departed relatives etc. (7) Thought-images of themselves projected, often by people at the moment of death, which appear at that time or a few hours afterwards to their friends and relatives.”

\*

I slept deeply in my tiny room.

It was strange waking up in the morning to the hum of traffic instead of the supreme silence of Mercury House in Swiss Cottage I had grown used to.

I peered through the panes of my window and saw the big drops of rain beating against them with incessant monotony.

After my leisurely bath, I had my breakfast in the hotel dining room. They gave only breakfast here. For the rest of the meals I had to go out, which was a trial in this unfavourable weather.

Fortunately I could get my lunch at L.T.C. because it had its own self-service canteen.

There was co-education in my college. Students from all over the Continent, from the Far East and from other countries came to study here.

My class was full of stylish students in every mode and dress—girls in gay attire and with long flowing hair—boys in vari-coloured suits and pointed shoes.

The chatter of numerous voices speaking far too many languages gave me at times a pounding headache.

I enjoyed English literature, poetry, correspondence and typing.

Our English teacher was tall and hefty with big nut-brown eyes and dashing moustaches. He never doffed his famous black faded Oxford-University gown. Every now and then he twirled his huge moustaches.

One day, out of the blue, he wrote on the blackboard:

“All women are basically the same real bitches.”

There was stunned silence for a second or two. Then suddenly an uproar broke from the girls: “Sir, how dare you write such a thing, it is perfect nonsense, crazy....” and so on. Some naughty boys exclaimed: “Touché”

Soon with presence of mind, the teacher altered his sentence:

“All women are bitches except those in this class.”

There was a gale of laughter in the whole class.

Perhaps his bitter experience with women had soured him. Hence the outrageous sentence.

Here is a topical joke:

A professor who was irritated:

“If there are any morons in the room, please stand up.”

A long pause, and one lone freshman rose. The professor:

“What do you consider yourself—a moron?” The freshman:

“... er... Well, not exactly that, sir, but I do really hate to see you standing all alone by yourself.”

After a few days the teacher copied on the blackboard a poem by Robert Burns from a piece of paper he had brought with him:

"My love is like a red red rose  
 That's newly sprung in June,  
 My love is like a melody  
 That's sweetly played in tune.  
 So fair thou art, my bonny lass,  
 So much in love am I  
 And I will love thee still, my dear,  
 Till all the seas run dry.  
 Till all the seas run dry, my dear,  
 And rocks melt with the sun  
 And I will love thee still, my dear,  
 While the sands of life do run.  
 So fare thee well, my bonny lass,  
 And fare thee well a while,  
 And I will come to thee again  
 Though it were 10,000 mile."

He asked us to take it down. When the class was over, he came near my desk and gave me the piece of paper with a smile. I thanked him. I was very much amused.

A young and handsome teacher with his flashing steel-grey eyes taught us literature. He never wore a black gown but an immaculately tailored suit.

One day when our class ended and I was about to leave it, he came to me and suggested: "Miss Hindocha, why don't you wear the European dress? If you do, you'll look like a Spanish girl."

I answered with a smile: "Thank you, sir, but I would rather stick to my national dress."

On my way home, I thought: "If I were dressed in bright-coloured finery and did a spirited show of tapping heels and clicking castanets, I would really look like one."

The misty dusk crept into the evening sky when I emerged from the tube-train station and headed for the Palace Hotel with relief at the idea that the next two days—Saturday and Sunday—I would relax.

*(To be continued)*

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#### CORRECTION

In the note at the beginning of "Notes from a Sadhak's Diary" by Dara, published on p. 455 of the July 1988 issue of *Mother India*, it was incorrectly stated that he passed away in 1970. The correct date of his passing away is 8.2.1966.



# GLIMPSSES OF PAVITRA

## FROM THE REMINISCENCES OF PAVITRA AND MRITYUNJOY

*(Continued from the issue of July 1988)*

### Part 4

#### Japan: 1920-1924

*Mrityunjy recounts some interesting details about Pavitra's four years in Japan.*

MRITYUNJOY: Pavitra's trip to Japan from France was not made for the sake of pleasure; it was a real adventure based on an inner call. Pavitra was seeking his spiritual master, who, according to his intuition, was somewhere in the East. He felt that spirituality must be something other than what most people practised in Europe, and that for him it was something in the Oriental line. So behind his pilgrimage was the search for Truth. His country, his position as a young engineer with bright future prospects, his life-long surroundings—he left all there behind and headed towards the unknown.

Pavitra reached Japan in the middle of 1920, a few months after the Mother had left the country for India. So he did not see her there, but only heard of her from friends who had known her well. He lived in Japan for four years, from the middle of 1920 to the middle of 1924.

Several times Pavitra said that he liked Japan more than his own motherland. Whenever an opportunity arose to compare cultures, he would spontaneously refer to an example from Japan. He never forgot its people—their artistic nature, which expressed itself through a refined taste in every walk of life; their emotional self-control (they neither laughed nor cried aloud); their capacity for hard work; and above all, their honesty and truthfulness. More than forty years later, he would narrate small stories about the Japanese people, incidents from his own experience. One or two examples showing their honesty will suffice.

There are many mountains, big and small, in Japan. People often go to visit them on holiday trips. They take off their regular shoes and put on a special type of straw sandals that are convenient for climbing. And because these sandals sometimes wear out on the way, the seller leaves a number of pairs in a small shelter up on the mountain. The price of the sandals is marked, and a box is left nearby in which to put money. The mountaineer passing by the route takes a pair and puts money in the box. No one is there to look after it. The dealer returns once a week to collect the money and leave some more sandals. There

is no theft or cheating. This kind of thing is unbelievable to us in our present surroundings.

Once Pavitra lost his purse and an important book in a tramcar; he forgot them when he got off. The next day he called at the Head Office and found his missing things waiting for him, ready to be verified and delivered. Such is the honesty of the Japanese.

Pavitra mentioned, incidentally, that children in Japan, who in those days had no idea about any other country, sometimes expressed their innocent curiosity by asking him whether there were tramcars in France.

Because of his noble and affectionate nature, his refined manner, and his capacity of being kind to even the most ordinary people, Pavitra soon found a warm welcome in the hearts of the Japanese people. Friendly with all, whatever their walk of life, he was given a reception rarely extended so quickly to a foreigner. In the homes of aristocrats or in the huts of villagers and fishermen, he was a friend of the family. From a few photographs that are still in his album, one can see this. In the house of a very rich person, Mr. Misutoni of Atami, Pavitra is the honoured guest, taking their photos; in one photo the host and his family and friends are all dressed in the sacred dancing costumes of Kani-kosan; they look so cheerful and in high spirits! There are also pictures of Pavitra with a picnic party in a car on a holiday trip to the countryside: in one photograph we see a remote village where a simple wooden bridge is being constructed; he, the qualified engineer from Paris, is helping the bridge-builders with his advice.

In November 1922, Pavitra had the opportunity of meeting Professor Albert Einstein, who was visiting Japan on a lecture tour. A photograph of the two, with a crowd of students and teachers from Tokyo's Imperial University, is the only record left.

Pavitra also had occasion to meet foreign dignitaries and visiting groups. In November 1922, for example, the Ambassador of Belgium arrived with a party on an economic mission; and some time afterwards, the "Escadre Française" came on tour. With Pavitra's help as translator, these groups were lodged and entertained on the estate of one Mr. Okada, an important man of Japan. This role was not always to Pavitra's liking, but when requested by the Japanese authorities he lent his help. Such were his unavoidable programmes from time to time; they had nothing to do, of course, with the real purpose for which he had gone to Japan.

On Christmas day in 1921, Pavitra spent the evening with a friendly group of Buddhists in Shimoshibuyo. It was an attempt to enter into the heart of Japan. He began to meet people who were devoted to Buddhism, especially Zen Buddhism, and to take lessons in it.

In six months of State service as an engineer in Paris, Pavitra had saved enough money to undertake the journey to Japan, but since he wanted to remain

there indefinitely, he had to earn his living. He could have taken up his own profession of engineering, as his friend Antonin Raymond had done in architecture, but that would have meant devoting most of his time to it. And if earning his livelihood had been his main aim, he would never have resigned his lucrative post in Paris. This being the case, the only way out was to try something new. He decided to start a chemical laboratory, which opened in 1922. (The Ashram Laboratoire had its beginning here perhaps—or did it have it in his mother's kitchen?)

Soon Pavitra's laboratory began to attract the attention of students and teachers; indeed, it turned out to be a seat of pilgrimage for people from all walks of life. Students and teachers one can expect, but why did senior officers, dignitaries, members of the royal family and, most surprisingly, some Buddhist monks from Mongolia also come to see his lab? One can well imagine that it was his charm of manner, courteous behaviour, integrity of character and, above all, his atmosphere of purity and serenity which attracted all who were a little receptive. Sometime in 1923, his Imperial Highness S.A.I. Prince Chichibu came to visit the laboratory with some palace officials. Pavitra, with his thick beard and tall, handsome figure, explained his research projects to them. They were impressed and spent a long time with him. Though he was busy now with students and laboratory work, Pavitra still maintained his intimacy with members of the traditional aristocratic families, such as Dr. Ishizu and Viscount Skokuni Soga. Sometimes they would take him on excursions, especially during the spring, when Japan takes on a festive appearance with its famous cherry blossoms.

Pavitra was practising Shintoism at this time. There is a picture of him with a group of about twenty devotees of various ages, standing on the icy banks of a frozen river. It was bitter cold at that time, he said, and they had all fasted for twenty-one days; then they bathed in that ice-cold water! This was a method of body purification; after the fasting and bathing, they felt a sensation of lightness and purity in the very cells of the body.

In 1922 there was a tremendous earthquake in Japan, which devastated almost half the island country. It was an unforgettable experience for Pavitra. Late in the afternoon, when the earthquake began, he remembered that in his laboratory there were jars of acid and inflammable liquids which had not been kept with any special precautions. He decided to go to the lab, which was at the other end of the city, six miles from where he lived. Some students who were at his house enthusiastically offered to go with him. By that time it was almost evening. They wanted to go by tramcar, but there was none to take them as the electricity had failed. So they had to walk the whole way, in the midst of still-continuing tremors. In the growing dusk, with the danger of a crack in the earth below their feet at any moment, these adventurers strode along the road. As they went, they saw the local families who had quietly come out of their houses and

assembled in the nearby open spaces, from which they watched their ravaged homes: some were falling down, others were on fire. All the members of these families, young and old, were silent: nobody uttered a word of lamentation, nobody cried out to see their life's shelter destroyed by Nature's cruel whim; they simply looked on with stoic calm, almost with yogic indifference. They were used to such calamities from their birth; it was a part of their existence. This silent acceptance of fate's tragic play impressed Pavitra very much; he had never witnessed such a scene in his life. The police were there, but they were not bothered by any indiscipline. They merely prevented people from rushing into the shops of the cloth-merchants. These merchants, unable to save their stock, which had caught fire, had called people to take as much as they could. But the police feared that such a move would create further difficulties and disrupt the public order, so they did not allow anyone to step inside the burning shops. Most of the traditional Japanese structures were made of wood and bamboo, so they were easily inflammable.

At last the chemists reached their destination. They went upstairs to the room where the acids were stored. There they found nothing in disorder, for such was Pavitra's way of doing things. The bottles of acid were shaking from time to time, due to the tremors. But the lab had been saved. Still, they took further precautions, separating the inflammable bottles and jars from the others. Having finished the work, they were just preparing to leave when they saw the wooden staircase collapse before their eyes. The only staircase! And the house was shaking again. But without panicking, they waited till they could hail a passer-by and ask him to bring a rope by which they could climb down. Late in the night they returned home safely.

Did they sleep comfortably that night? We don't remember what Pavitra said about that. What we remember is that two and a half years later, when Pavitra was living in Mongolia, he one day received a gift-parcel. Inside he found a small, genuine Swiss-made timepiece—a present from his Japanese friends, to mark their gratitude and appreciation for his courage during the earthquake. That timepiece is still in his room.

It was just after the big earthquake that Pavitra met the architect Antonin Raymond and his wife Naomi, who lived in Japan. Soon they became close friends. This Monsieur Raymond is none other than the architect of Golconde, a fifty-room residence in the Ashram. He and his wife came to the Ashram in 1939 when the Golconde construction was beginning, and remained for about three months. They spoke very highly of Pavitra, calling him their best friend in the world.

In May or June of 1924, when Tagore went to Japan for a second time, Pavitra met him in Tokyo's Imperial Hotel. There he got a photograph of Tagore autographed. Tagore signed his full name in Bengali for this unknown young Frenchman! On 22 June 1924, Pavitra addressed a large gathering of college

students and teachers. His last meeting with the Raymonds took place just two days later. His time in Japan was ending.

Soon after, Pavitra left Japan for Mongolia via China. Here also his guiding star arranged things from behind the scenes. A delegation of Mongolian monks came to visit Japan. They could very well have visited some Buddhist temples and gone away! But that was not to be: they also paid a visit to Pavitra's laboratory. Pavitra was more interested in knowing what they were doing than in explaining his own work to them. He felt that a door was opening for him and so he made closer acquaintance with them. The greatest difficulty was language. They did not know French, and he did not know Mongolian. It happened that one of the delegation members, an ex-officer of the Russian army, was married to a Chinese lady who knew some English. Through her, with the determination that he was born with, Pavitra succeeded in making the monks agree to let him live in their monastery for some time. He was always ready to face any difficulty in order to reach his goal.

*(To be continued)*

# NOLINI KANTA GUPTA BIRTH CENTENARY

## Compiler's Note

THE Summit unveils its grandeur only to those who dare the crags and the chasms and walk on the razor's edge. Nolini-da is one who attained that high peak of spirituality from where the luminous Suns—the Mother and Sri Aurobindo—swam into his ken. By his life-long arduous Tapasya, deep surrender and happy service he could gaze at and comprehend something of the Totality that is Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In the sacred month of August, here is the first half of a revelatory article on Sri Aurobindo by him. The second will follow in the September issue.

SHYAM KUMARI

## SRI AUROBINDO

### 1

FROM a certain standpoint Sri Aurobindo's message is very simple, almost self-evident. The sum and substance of all he says is that man is growing and has to grow in consciousness till he reaches the complete and perfect consciousness, not only in his individual but in his collective, that is to say, social life. In fact, the growth of consciousness is the supreme secret of life, the master key to earthly evolution.

Sri Aurobindo believes in evolution. Creation, according to him, has a purpose and man moves to a goal. That is nothing else than the unfolding of consciousness. Originally all was Matter, only dead Matter. At a certain stage out of Matter came Life: what was or appeared to be dead became alive. Thus the plant world was born—the first primeval stirring of consciousness, a consciousness vague, blind, practically unconscious, yet moved by a newly acquired or awakened pulsation. There was again a period of gestation and incubation bringing out at the end a rudimentary Mind, a first conscious consciousness: so the animal was born. Consciousness is clearer and freer here, emerging into formulation: it is now instinct or sensibility and in its higher grades infused with a streak of spontaneous thinking. Sensuous mentality gave birth to Mind proper, that is thought, reflection and man appeared. A fully awakened consciousness, consciousness that can turn round upon itself is the characteristic marking out human consciousness.

Such then are the stages in the progression of consciousness; they are clearly observable and admitted practically on all hands. Only Sri Aurobindo points out two crucial characters of this movement. First: Matter, Life, Mind-Intelligence—these are not distinct or separate entities, one coming after another, the succeeding one simply adding itself to the preceding, coming we do not know

from where. Not so, for something cannot come out of nothing. If Life came out of Matter, it is because life was there hidden in Matter, Matter was secretly housing, was instinct with, life. That only can evolve which was involved. So, again, if Mind came out of life, it is because Mind was involved in life and therefore also in Matter although at a farther remove. Yet again, vital mind developed into Intelligence and consciousness proper, and it could be only because that too was its secret nature and hence the secret nature of Life and even brute Matter. Thus the whole chain of gradation is linked together indissolubly and the binding reality that runs through all is consciousness, overt or covert. It is indeed consciousness that lies at the root of existence—the basic substance, Matter is nothing but consciousness become unconscious; and the whole scheme or process of the cosmos is the increasing manifestation and expression of that consciousness. Secondly, the other character is that at each cross-over, there is not only a rise in consciousness but also a reversal of consciousness, that is to say, the level attained turns back upon the preceding levels, influencing and moulding them as far as possible in its own mode and law of existence. When life appeared in Matter, wherever there was material life, the matter thus taken up by life behaved differently from dead matter: an organic body does not follow the strict mechanical laws of inanimate bodies. Likewise a life endowed with mind has a different functioning than mere life. And a body which houses a life and mind, which has, as it were, flowered into life and mind moves and acts in another way than an inert body or even a vitalised body. Man's intelligence and reason have reoriented or tend to reorient his vital instincts and reactions, even his bodily functions and forms. A conscious regulation, even refashioning of his life and body is the very essence of human consciousness, the urge of his nature, instead of a spontaneous *laissez-faire* movement of pure vitality or the mechanical ground of the material base. These three major provinces or layers of consciousness—Matter, Life and Mind—man has taken up into himself and in the light of his consciousness—his Intelligence—has studied and classified them arranging them serially as the well-known sciences of Physics, Biology and Psychology.

Now, Sri Aurobindo says, evolution marches onward and will rise beyond mind to another status of consciousness which he calls Supermind. In the earthly scheme there will thus manifest a new type, a higher functioning of consciousness and a new race or species will appear on earth with this new consciousness as the ruling principle. Out of the rock and mineral came the plant, out of the plant the animal, out of the mere animal man has come and out of man the Superman will come inevitably.

Standing on the mental plane, immured within the dimensions of Reason and mental intelligence, it is not easy to contemplate the type of consciousness that will be; even as it was difficult for the ape to envisage the advent of his successor, man. But certain characteristic signs, rudimentary or fragmentary movements of the higher status are visible in the mental consciousness even

as it is: the ape likewise was not without a glimmer of Reason and logic, even the faculty of ratiocination that seems to be the exclusive property of man. There is, for example, a movement we call Intuition, so different from Reason to which even Scientists and Mathematicians acknowledge their debt of gratitude for so many of their discoveries and inventions. There is also the other analogous movement called Inspiration that rules the poet and the artist disclosing to them a world of beauty and reality that is not available to the normal human consciousness. Again, there is yet another group of human beings at the top of the ladder of evolution—mystics and sages—who *see* the truth, possess the truth direct through a luminous immediacy of perception, called Revelation. Now, all these functionings of consciousness that happen frequently enough within the domain of normal humanity are still expressions of a higher mode of consciousness: they are not the product or play of Reason or logical intelligence which marks the character, the differentia of human consciousness.

But, as at present, these are mere glimmers and glimpses from elsewhere and man has no command or control over them. They are beyond the habitual conscious will, they come and go as they like, happy visitations from another world, they do not abide our question and are not at our beck and call. The Supermind, on the contrary, is in full possession of that consciousness of which these are faint beginnings and distant echoes. The Superman will be born when man has risen above his mind and emerged into the supramental consciousness.

One thing needs to be pointed out here: it is that man is expected to consciously transcend himself and deliver this supermanhood, for it is to be a conscious process, a labour of the wakeful will. That is the great difference which the new transition has brought in. So long evolution was a spontaneous and apparently unconscious process, moving slowly and inadvertently as things in nature normally move. Man rose out of the animal: he simply found himself man one day, there was no conscious effort, no previous knowledge of the change on the part of the animal undergoing the change. Likewise the animal came out of its plant origin spontaneously and unwittingly: the plant too evolved out of the inert and inanimate matter through a natural process of slow mutation. But now at the stage of manhood consciousness has become fully conscious, self-conscious, and therefore its further ascension cannot but be conscious, ever more conscious, the result of deliberate energising. This is a process of self-transformation. It has a method, a technique, a whole system of its own. The growth of consciousness, its culture and transformation is the end and purpose of all true education: its highest consummation, its supreme perfection is what is intended by Yoga, the mystic's system of inner discipline.

We say, then, supramentalisation of consciousness is the goal Nature is aiming at and man striving for: it is the next step that earth and man are taking in their evolutionary urge. Man, however, represents a very crucial stage—he is the dividing line between two hemispheres—two modes of consciousness, two



types of creation. As I have said, up to man it is a natural spontaneous unreflecting unconscious evolution: with man it is conscious, deliberate, wilful evolution. What was being done behind the veil in ignorance will now be done openly in full knowledge. The very first result will be the shortening of the time factor. The conscious process increases the tempo, telescopes into decades or years a process or development that would take centuries or more otherwise; in man a growth is achieved in one life that would normally need several lives. The other characteristic result is that when the Supermind establishes itself, there is no more ignorance, it is all light and knowledge. Till the mental range, even at its highest heights, it is a mixture of light and darkness, of knowledge and ignorance: there is always an element of doubt, uncertainty or partial perception: there is a groping, a trial and one moves at best from greater darkness to lesser shade. With the Supermind all that changes: the Superman lives always in the full daylight, in the zenith consciousness, in the plenitude of knowledge. He moves from light to light, knowledge to knowledge, no longer bound to the division and duality inherent in the present human consciousness. It may be that man may not at a bound reach the peak of the Supermind: for there are lower ranges, voluntary limitations of the Light, less absolute formulations of the perfect being through which man will have to pass for a greater enrichment of his nature and for the establishment of other orders of luminous existence upon earth. Sri Aurobindo has, in this connection, spoken of the Overmind and the Mind of Light. But these too lie beyond the border of mental twilight and are domains of Light, own delegates of Supermind.

It may not be out of place here just to mention a few characters proper to this supramental over-border consciousness. First of all, it is the seat and organ of complete knowledge: knowledge here is not the result of the deductive and inductive process of reason, it does not balance pros and cons and out of uncertain possibilities strike out an average probability: it is direct, straight, immediate, certain and absolute. Knowledge here comes by identity—the knower and the known are one and what is known is therefore self-knowledge. Secondly, the will too is not an effort or striving and struggling, but the spontaneous expression of the self-power of the consciousness; willing means achieving, one wills the inevitable truth, for knowledge and will too are one. Thirdly, it is the status of perfect delight, for one has passed beyond the vale of tears and entered the peace that passeth understanding, one has found that Joy is the source of creation and the truth of existence is held in Ecstasy.

It is in other words at bottom the Vedantic status of Sat-chit-ananda (perfect Being, Consciousness-energy and Beatitude), but individualised serving as the basic reality of the world-life and existence: it is this that seeks to manifest and embody itself in its own dharma—supreme law—in and through the physical forms and modes of that life and existence. Beyond this it is not possible here to enter into the further mysteries of the Arcanum.

Lastly, another point and we have done. It is that all human efforts in the past in any realm or domain towards a higher life has been contributory to this supreme consummation that Sri Aurobindo envisages as coming or sure to come. It is very often asserted that human nature is irremediable and although we may try at a little amelioration of his instinctive life, especially as a social being, there can be no permanent or radical cure of the original sin of Ignorance and Inconscience with which his earthly nature is branded. Reformers, idealists, even saints and sages have seen and sought to counter the evil—some tried to get rid of it, others round it: but it is still there, as rampant as ever, apparently with no effect upon it. For one thing, evil was sought to be cured by its opposite, the good, but the good that belongs to the level of consciousness to which evil too belongs. In other words, we tried to deal with the world and treat it with the force of the Mind, even though in some cases, the mind was a high or even the highest spiritual mind. To touch the roots of the malady that extend into our deepest fibres, our most material being, dead inconscience, one must rise to the very source of consciousness, the creative truth-consciousness: the Supermind alone can transform the earth, transfigure the earthly life. In the second place, the past attempts did not all go in vain: they were preparations, the first ground-work, on various levels and in various domains of human life and consciousness where the light infiltrated, to whatever extent it may be, and things and forces were shaken and reshuffled to admit of other forces and inspirations; if nothing else, at least the possibility was created.

Sri Aurobindo's aim, we have said, is not an individual fulfilment, however glorious and successful it might be, and not merely the fulfilment of one limb only of the individual however deep and high. Sri Aurobindo embraced the whole man and the whole society. A fulfilled life in society upon earth—the highest and completest life possible, not only possible but inevitable to the human being—that is the work for which he laboured. Man's mind and intelligence, his life-energy, his body-form are all taken up, purified of the lower formulation, remoulded into the mode and pattern of the supramental truth-consciousness: he becomes a complete, integral, perfect being expressing and embodying in all his limbs and movements the supreme reality made of utter truth and knowledge and power and delight. This being his individual life, his collective or social life too would figure the same pattern. A new society in which men have found their soul and soul function is a harmonious, a unitary body, composed of individuals who by living each one in his self live in all and living in all each one lives in his self. Likewise, an aggregate of such societies—a society of nations, as it is already called somewhat in a prophetic vein,—will also be an inherently harmonious and unified, even a unitary body too, since all these larger units will express through their corporate life each in its own special way the glory and greatness of the Divine Consciousness.

In this global reconstitution of the earth life, Sri Aurobindo gives India a

great role—a mighty destiny and a heavy responsibility. For he considers India as the repository of the spiritual consciousness, the Guardian of Truth, as the Veda says, and in the new age of world unification her national being will act as the spearhead breaking into the old-world formations and signalling the shape of things to come.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 4, pp. 351-357.

## INDULEKHA—MY MOTHER

INDULEKHA, my mother, passed away on 12th August, 1987 on the eve of the birth-centenary of my father Nolini Kanta Gupta. Nolini Kanta is well-known to all but only a few knew about Indulekha's grim struggle for existence to bring us up in an atmosphere which was not favourable to her. My intention here is not to present a biographical sketch of her but to describe her last two days.

Suddenly she fell ill. She had a congestion of cough in the chest and had respiratory difficulty. Dr. Datta was summoned but she refused to take any medicine, saying, "Mother has said that medicines do not allow the natural healing power to act." So we failed to persuade her to take medicines. The day before her departure we knew that she was going to retire although she was conscious and was answering our questions. Madhuri who was very dear to her came and sat beside her and introduced herself as my mother had lost her vision. She stretched out her hands towards Madhuri and held them with love and emotion. My mother asked her to come again, as she took leave. Madhuri did come the next day only to find a frail lifeless body. The day before her departure Indulekha was in good humour and was joking with her friends and admirers. Who knew that she was bidding adieu to them for the last time?

Shyam Kumari revered her very much and Indulekha in her turn bestowed on Shyam Kumari profusely her motherly love and affection. On hearing the news of my mother's serious ailment she rushed to her bedside and asked, "Indulekha-di, how are you?"—"Very fine," was the answer. "Do you see Mother and Sri Aurobindo or Nolini-da?"

—"Yes", she replied emphatically.

—"I am your daughter, tell me do you want anything?"

—"Nothing".

—"I myself shall prepare orange, mango and apple juices and you will promise me that you will take them."

Indulekha kept her promise even when it was difficult for her to swallow anything.

On the last day, 12th August, after lunch I was sleeping in the adjacent room and our faithful maid-servant was attending on her. She had to go out for a while and on her return she found my mother lifeless. She screamed aloud and I rushed to her bedside. She was lying still yet majestic in the bed. Her soliloquies that I had overheard just a month before her departure flashed in my mind—"I shall pass away when I shall be left alone." I could never imagine that it would come true so soon. The maid-servant was not supposed to leave the place until she was relieved by somebody. The Mother created such a situation in order to fulfil Indulekha's last wish.

Hers had been a life of trials and struggle. She received Sri Aurobindo's

guidance whenever she needed it. I reproduce here a letter hitherto unpublished from Sri Aurobindo, to her.

Indulekha,

If Umapada and his family invite you to remain with them for the two months, you may do so, it would be probably the best arrangement.

SRI AUROBINDO

16-11-32

The grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and her own indomitable spirit carried her across the ocean of difficulties to the light-house of peace and joy.

SUBIR KANTA GUPTA

# HUMOUR IN THE PLAYS OF SRI AUROBINDO

*(Continued from the issue of July 1988)*

## A SUMMING UP

THE difference between an ordinary comedy and a masterpiece is not on how many laughs the reader gets, how many guffaws the playwright can raise, but in the depth of the response of the reader or the viewer, the quality of his release, the plane or psychological landscape where his laughter puts him, to which the satire and wit lead him. Do we come out of the theatre hall, or pull out our page mark from the book, with a contented happy sigh as well as with a trusting warmth in our hearts? with a greater confidence in ourselves, in our fellow-beings and in our destiny? Are we made more understanding, better and less grim? Does the play orient our thoughts kindly towards men and Gods?

To be truly great, comedy has to be idealistic—though it may seem a strange attitude towards comedy where the risqué and ribald are accepted without a raised eye-brow, where the role has always been considered as pure and simple entertainment, sometimes even at the cost of decency and leading to degradation. To stipulate that comedy should uphold the torch of the ideal may raise some critical heckles. Any glib-tongued street-entertainer can tickle our ribs, and can even make tears of merriment flow from our eyes, but then what happens afterwards? Has our faith in ourselves and our fellow-beings been reinforced? Do we feel an awakening within and foresee or at least hope for a dawn without? Do we aspire for or sense the victory of truth or do we get resigned to a human life lived ordinarily without justice, lacking upliftment?

Generally, comedians play upon the common clay of the human temperament and its faults and foibles. Such devices and ruses may entertain our surface parts but do they reassure us with the victory of the just and with goodness rewarded? Fools may be, and sometimes are, favoured by fate for their naiveté but in all great literature including great comedy, we seek for the victory of the hero who, like most or all of us, has many a fault but who represents our higher parts too. By contriving situations and creating characters which lighten and bring forth the funny and the ludicrous in life and man, the playwright lightens the daily burdens of humanity but this sort of ease and release is perforce temporary. The eternal joy, the sigh of true relief, the high liberation from the tension of life are achieved only when after portraying our feet of clay, our ridiculous parts, after showing with refined or rustic artistry what gullible fools we human beings are, the author brings out our greater being permeated with the potencies of godhead and divinity which must triumph over all outer and inner obstacles. This fusion of the susceptibilities of humanity with the flowering of its basic goodness and inherent greatness is the secret of the sustained popularity

of modern writers like James Herriot. Even bestsellers by Nobel-prize winners Dr. Watson and Dr. Fyenman are not read for their scientific content, which the general uninformed reader skips or reads without understanding or only for their pungent and witty style, but also because their books show that ultimately effort, innovation and the nobility of the human spirit triumphs. That man in his best parts is akin to the Gods—this also has to be brought out and emphasized.

Herein lies the supreme achievement of Aurobindonian comedies. Sri Aurobindo's pen touches creature after human creature, portrays different countries with different cultures, at widely separated time-distances—but always to upraise, never to degrade. After reading Oscar Wilde's comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest* the reader feels that all is well that ends well, but he does not get the inner glow which one gets after reading *Pygmalion* but neither of the two gives the feeling and reassurance that all is well with the world, that there is a God above. No man can truly be happy without being in harmony with his higher parts, an alcoholic self-oblivion or the hallucination of a drug-addict or a ribald easing leaves a bitter taste, a depressive hangover of heart and sense. After seeing a comedy which entertains but does not uplift, one comes back to life a little lightened in mood but with no solid strength to face life, aware of a lasting solution.

Sri Aurobindo brings out the best in his characters. To people like Harkoos, Bilkis, Mymoona, Sheikh Ibrahim, Cydone, Diomede and Cireas whom fate has placed in humble stations he gives the strength to remain firm and happy, bear the yoke of life with joyous fortitude, to walk with dancing steps on the sharp pebbled roads and to ultimately emerge in the sunny skies, rewarded for keeping a stiff upper lip. Neither men nor Gods have a liking for those who cringe, they prefer audacity to whining. The tempest sometimes spares those who spar with it in a lively fashion, the stiff and the depressed are uprooted and blown down to be crushed by the tempestuous steeds of time. The characters in Sri Aurobindo's plays are like the stately saplings which tease the lightning and make fun of the thunder, which bend but do not break, and raise triumphant heads after the storm has passed. Thus by raising to summit heights his characters—note the noble resignation of Ibn Sawy, the magnanimity of Nureddene to his uncle—Sri Aurobindo has fulfilled the function of true comedy, and has presented a model for the future. His comedies carry a covert message to each human being to bear his or her troubles with a trust in fate and the Gods. Sri Aurobindo's characters take the sting out of misfortune by smiling and relaxing even when all is or seems to be lost, for truly nothing is irrevocably lost and there is always a tomorrow in this life or another. Sri Aurobindo's Cydone pays teasing homage to the beauty of Andromeda while the seamonster is nearing to devour them, his Harkoos makes fun of his masters, his Bilkis by making a quick appraisal and then by a bold solicitation changes her slavery into the exalted station of a noble's

beloved wife and of that of a grateful queen's friend. In his plays a bold poacher by confronting a Caliph wins a gold purse. All this stems from their optimistic outlook on life. Success and fortune love those who even when chased by the Furies walk undaunted with hope sheltered in their hearts.

Because of this noble trait the comedies of Sri Aurobindo stand out like brightly-lit torches amongst the world's literature.

SHYAM KUMARI



## THE TALE OF SAVITRI ACCORDING TO THE MAHABHARATA

THE story of Savitri narrated in three hundred verses, mostly in the Anushtubh metre, appears in the Vana Parva, the Book of the Forest, of the Mahabharata. The Pandavas had lost the game of dice and had been ordered to live for twelve years as exiles away from civilization; this was to be followed by one year of dwelling incognito. In their wanderings, moving from place to place in different parts of the country, they came again, towards the end of the twelve-year period, to the Kamyaka Woods. The place was beautiful, gorgeous with varied trees ever laden with flowers and fruits; there were woodland lakes and several streams carried limpid waters with low murmuring sounds; the beasts roamed freely there and the birds filled the sky with delightful songs. In those serene cloistral surroundings dwelt hundreds of sages who had achieved difficult siddhis through lifelong austerities. The Pandavas also chose one of the convenient sites to abide in their holy company.

It was here that on an earlier occasion Rishi Markandeya had visited the Pandavas when Sri Krishna, with his consort Satyabhama, had been living with them for a few days; the sage Narad also had happened to visit them at the same time. Urged by him Markandeya, bright like the mid-day sun, had taught the sublime precepts of life and of virtuous conduct to Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas. However, during the intervening period the Pandavas, though driven out to the forest, were still chased and harassed by their arch-enemies. All the five of them, and their wife Draupadi too, had to bear humiliations and withstand constantly the tortures inflicted upon them. In fact, Draupadi was once abducted by Jayadratha and she had to be rescued by defeating him in a battle.

In the resultant state of melancholy and introversion Yudhishtira approached Markandeya and asked him whether in the entire history of mankind there had been anyone who had ever had to face such harsh difficulties and who was harrowed in life like him. The Rishi consoled him and recounted to him the story of Rama, the Prince of Ayodhya, whose sufferings including the abduction of his wife Sita had been immeasurably poignant. It was all in the cause of Righteousness. When pressed further to tell if there had been any woman who too had undergone hardships in devotion to her husband the way Draupadi did, Markandeya narrated the story of Savitri.

शृणु राजन् कुलस्त्रीणां महाभाग्यं युधिष्ठिर ।  
सर्वमेतद् यथा प्राप्तं सावित्र्या राजकन्यया ॥

Hear, O King Yudhishtira, how the most precious fortune, which women of noble upbringing desire, Princess Savitri won for them all. Thus Markandeya begins the narration.

Long ago in Madra ruled a noble king. An ardent follower of the dharma, he was of a devout nature and was firmly established in truth. He was respectful to the seers and sages and was kind to the citizens of his country. His name was Aswapaty. Performer of Yajnas, presiding over charities, skilful in work one, who had conquered the senses, he was loved by the people of his kingdom and himself loved them, Aswapaty's single concern was the welfare of everybody and towards that end he spared no effort. But he was issueless. With the passing of time and with the advancing of age this caused him great affliction. Therefore with the intention of getting a child, he undertook very hard and arduous tapasya extending over eighteen years. Every day he offered a hundred-thousand oblations to the Goddess Savitri. He observed rules of the strictest continence and held all the senses fully under control and took just a little food and that too only in the sixth part of the day. At last, pleased with his devotion and worship, Goddess Savitri herself appeared out of the sacrificial flames in front of him and blessed him. She granted him a boon of fulfilling an appropriate wish of his. She even told him that she, understanding the purpose of his great austerities, had already talked to Brahma about his desire to have a son. She further informed him that he would soon get a daughter, beautiful and effulgent, *kanya tejaswini*, and he should not have any hesitation in accepting this boon. It had been bestowed by the great Father-Creator himself and he should be happy about it.

In proper time the King, who ever abided by the Law, established his seed in the womb of his eldest queen, the companion of his dharma, Malavi; a few months later a daughter was born to her.

सावित्र्या प्रीतया दत्ता सावित्र्या हुतया ह्यपि ।  
सावित्रीत्येव नामास्याश्चकुर्विप्रास्तथा पिता ॥

Got by the blessings of Savitri, who was pleased by the Savitri oblations, the father and the wise ones named her too Savitri.

Fair and beautiful like the Goddess Fortune, the Princess grew into full maidenhood at an appropriate age. With large hips and a slender waist graceful as she was, and lotus-eyed, she looked truly like a perfect golden idol. People often thought her to be some heavenly damsel, *devakanyā*, who had come down here as Aswapaty's daughter. And, indeed, because of that unsurpassable beauty and fiery splendour of her youth, no king or hero-prince dared approach her, extending his hand in marriage.

Once on a festive day, at the turning of the lunar fortnight, Savitri took a holy bath washing her hair; then she went to the temple and offered her prayers to the gods and gave ritual oblations to Agni. The wise ones recited the hymns of benediction. Worship done, she took some flowers and a portion of food-offerings to the deities as prasad and went to give it to her father. She

touched his feet in obeisance and, after giving him the flowers and prasād, stood with folded hands before him.

Seeing his daughter grown to full youth, and beautiful like a goddess, *deva-rupini*, and yet unmarried, Aswapaty was very much distressed. He told her that she should go out in search of one who was endowed with qualities like her own, a young man of her choice to espouse. She could do so, for none had come as a suitor asking for her hand. He also explained to her that a father becomes open to reproach when, according to the dharma, he fails to give his daughter, of the right age, in marriage.

The noble virgin, blushing somewhat, bowed down at her father's feet and without a second thought set out on her vague search. Riding in her golden chariot and accompanied by the elderly counsellor-ministers she travelled through various kingdoms. She went to the ancient and holy places of pilgrimage and gave away great wealth to the most excellent in sacred learning. In the course of her journey, as she passed through the green wooded regions, she visited several hermitages and made respectful obeisances to the royal sages and the Rishis deeply absorbed in a life of contemplation.

In the meanwhile, on a particular day, the heavenly sage Narad and Aswapaty were in council in the majestic Palace of the King. About the same time, as if by coincidence, Savitri after visiting the holy places and the several ashramas returned to her father's house. Seeing her father and the god-sage Narad seated in the Palace-Hall, she, bright and graceful like a bride, touched their feet and offered them worshipping respects. Narad looked at her and made enquiries of the King as to why he had not given his young grown up daughter in marriage yet. Aswapaty explained to the sage that it was precisely with that purpose he had sent her abroad and she must be returning now after having accomplished her mission. He asked her to narrate the details of her journey and the name of the one whom she had chosen for a husband.

Savitri at her father's instance began relating the detailed sequence of her long journey and the result of her quest. She told them that she had gone to the far Shalwa country which at one time was ruled by King Dyumatsena. He was once a mighty and heroic ruler and was righteous in the conduct of governing the country. But then he became blind. A neighbouring king, his past enemy, took advantage of this and invaded his kingdom. Dyumatsena was defeated and had to retire, with his wife and a young child, to the forest. There he engaged himself in tapasya by observing difficult vows. That child, named Satyavan, grew in the hermitage under the tutorship of the sages and the elderly Rishis, learning the sacred lores from them. Savitri disclosed that it was Satyavan whom she had chosen as her life's partner.

But Narad at once rang a note of alarm, even regret, and told the King it was a matter of grave misfortune that Savitri should have chosen Satyavan for a husband.

अहो बत महत् पापं सावित्र्या नृपते कृतम् ।  
अजानन्त्या यदनया गुणवान् सत्यवान् वृतः ॥

Alas! Savitri by making this choice has, O King, unknowingly done something not desirable, that forebodes great evil; she took Satyavan to be one of high merit.

True, his father always lived in truth and his mother had noble attributes and, born as he was of such parents, he was named by the Brahmins Satyavan, the Truthful. As a lad he was fond of painting and drew horses and therefore he was also often called the Painter of Horses, Chitrashwa. To several queries of Aswapaty, Narad replied that Satyavan was bright like the sun and had a sharp intellect like that of Brihaspati; he was munificent like Sankriti, the son of Rantideva; like Yayati he was exceedingly generous; in the manner of Shibi, the son of Ushinar, he was respectful to the learned and was a speaker of the truth; and because he was beautiful like the moon, people often wondered whether he was one of the Ashwinikumars themselves. He had mastered his senses; he was a youth of heroic deeds and yet was friendly to everybody. The sages of the Wood were endeared to him and had always high praise for his exceedingly fine qualities. But at Aswapaty's insistence to know also if Satyavan had any defect, Narad said that there was only one blemish and that blemish lay in the fact that Satyavan was to die on that day after one year. Savitri had made, quite unknowingly, for that single reason, an undesirable, nay, an accursed choice in selecting Satyavan to be her life's companion.

Aswapaty advised Savitri to proceed again on her quest and find another person for a husband. He told her that as the revered sage, respected by the gods also, saw a short life for Satyavan, it nullified his virtues and all his other noble or exceptional qualities; she should not accept what was blameworthy, particularly when made known.

Savitri was, however, firm in her resolve. She stuck to her decision by asserting that it was her inner being which had made the choice and which would alone govern her; it was the judge and authority for her, *pramāṇam me manas-tatah*. She argued that only once can the wealth be divided between brothers and not the second time; only once can a father give his daughter in marriage and not again; and once only does a philanthrope speak the word of charity and abide by it. It mattered not for her if Satyavan had a long life or short, whether he had virtuous qualities or was without them, because only once would she make her choice and not the second time. She elaborated her point further by invoking a greater truth of the higher life.

मनसा निश्चयं कृत्वा ततो वाचाभिर्घोष्यते ।  
क्रियते कर्मणा पश्चात् प्रमाणं मे मनस्ततः ॥

It is by perception that one comes to a certain conclusion first and then one speaks of it; only after that it is put into action. My mind in this regard is the single authority.

Savitri reiterated that this was exactly what she had done in making her choice and adhering to it.

Narad saw in Savitri a clear and fine unperturbed discernment; he recognised too that she was firmly treading the path of dharma from which none could take her away. Seeing also that the qualities of Satyavan could not be matched in anybody else, he recommended their marriage. With this he blessed them and wished that the marriage of Savitri would proceed unhindered without any ill-happening. Then invoking propitious things of life and good fortune for all, he left the Palace for his home in Paradise.

अविधनमस्तु सावित्र्याः प्रदाने दुहितुस्तव ।  
सावयिष्याम्यहं तावत् सर्वेष्यां भद्रमस्तु वः ॥

*(To be continued)*

R. Y. DESHPANDE

# THE IMAGE OF “ETHER” IN SRI AUROBINDO’S WORKS

## A PRACTICAL HELP IN MEDITATION

### (1) Ether

THIS realisation of all things as God or Brahman has, as we have seen, three aspects of which we can conveniently make three successive stages of experience. First, there is the Self in whom all beings exist. The Spirit, the Divine has manifested itself as infinite self-extended being, self-existent, pure, not subject to Time and Space, but supporting Time and Space as figures of its consciousness. It is more than all things and contains them all within that self-extended being and consciousness, not bound by anything that it creates, holds or becomes, but free and infinite and all-blissful. It holds them, in the old image, as the infinite ether contains in itself all objects. This image of the ethereal (Akasha) Brahman may indeed be of great practical help to the Sadhaka who finds a difficulty in meditating on what seems to him at first an abstract and unseizable idea. In the image of the ether, not physical but an encompassing ether of vast being, consciousness and bliss, he may seek to see with the mind and to feel in his mental being this supreme existence and to identify it in oneness with the self within him. By such meditation the mind may be brought to a favourable state of predisposition in which, by the rending or withdrawing of the veil, the supramental vision may flood the mentality and change entirely all our seeing. And upon that change of seeing, as it becomes more and more potent and insistent and occupies all our consciousness, there will supervene eventually a change of becoming so that what we see we become. We shall be in our self-consciousness not so much cosmic as ultra-cosmic, infinite. Mind and life and body will then be only movements in that infinity which we have become, and we shall see that what exists is not world at all but simply this infinity of spirit in which move the mighty cosmic harmonies of its own images of self-conscious becoming. (Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 20, p. 355)

As the ether both contains and is as it were contained in the jar, so this Self both contains and inhabits all existences, not in a physical but in a spiritual sense, and is their reality. (Vol. 20, p. 356)

...the mind in Samadhi has access to the inner space called sometimes the *Cidākāśa*, to depths of more and more subtle ether which are heavily curtained from the physical sense by the grosser ether of the material universe, and all things sensible, whether in the material world or any other, create reconstituting

vibrations, sensible echoes, reproductions, recurrent images of themselves which that subtler ether receives and retains.

It is this which explains many of the phenomena of clairvoyance, clair-audience, etc.; for these phenomena are only the exceptional admission of the waking mentality into a limited sensitiveness to what might be called the image memory of the subtle ether, by which not only the signs of all things past and present but even those of things future can be seized; for things future are already accomplished to knowledge and vision on higher planes of mind and their images can be reflected upon mind in the present. But these things which are exceptional to the waking mentality, difficult and to be perceived only by the possession of a special power or else after assiduous training, are natural to the dream-state of trance consciousness in which the subliminal mind is free.

(Vol. 20, p. 502-503)

The old Greek thinkers conceived of cosmic Substance as possessed of four elements, omitting or not having arrived at the fifth, Ether, in which Indian analysis found the first and original principle.

(Vol. 16, p. 342)

But even as early as the Rig Veda, ether is the highest symbol of the Infinite, the *apeiron* of the Greeks; water is that of the same Infinite in its aspect as the original substance; fire is the creative power, the active energy of the Infinite; air, the life-principle, is spoken of as that which brings down fire out of the ethereal heavens into the earth.

(Vol. 16, p. 343)

It starts with the original or root energy, *mūla-prakṛti*, which as the first substance, *pradhāna*, evolves by development and change into five successive principles. Ether, not fire, is the first principle, ignored by the Greeks, but rediscovered by modern Science;\* there follow air, fire the igneous, radiant and electric energy, water, earth, the fluid and solid.

\*(Note : Now again rejected, though that does not seem to be indubitable or final.)

(Vol. 16, p. 352)

Ether and material space are different names for the same thing. Space, in its origin at least if not in its universal character, is an extension of the substance of consciousness in which motion of energy can take place for the relations of being with being or force with force and for the building up of symbolic forms on which this interchange can be supported. Ether is space supporting the works of material energy and the symbolic forms it creates; it is, speaking paradoxically but to the point, immaterial or essential matter.

(Vol. 17, p. 14)

The relation of the phenomena of Nature to the fundamental ether which is contained in them, constitutes them, contains them and yet is so different from

them that entering into it they cease to be what they now are, is the illustration given by the Vedanta as most nearly representing this identity in difference between the Absolute and the relative. (Vol. 18, p. 76)

But vibration in this state of ether is not sufficient to create forms. There must first be some obstruction in the flow of the Force ocean, some impinging of force expansion, some interplay of vibrations, some impinging of force upon force so as to create a beginning of fixed relations and mutual effects. Material Force modifying its first ethereal status assumes a second, called in the old language the aerial, of which the special property is contact between force and force, contact that is the basis of all material relations. (Vol. 18, p. 80)

Ether may and does exist as an intangible, almost spiritual support of Matter, but as phenomenon it does not seem, to our present knowledge at least, to be materially detectable. Subdivide the visible aggregate or the formal atom into essential atoms, break it up into the most infinitesimal dust of being, we shall still, because of the nature of the Mind and Life that formed them, arrive at some utmost atomic existence, unstable perhaps but always reconstituting itself in the eternal flux of force, phenomenally, and not at a mere unatomic extension incapable of contents. Unatomic extension of substance, extension which is not an aggregation, coexistence otherwise than by distribution in space are realities of pure existence, pure substance; they are a knowledge of Supermind and a principle of its dynamism, not a creative concept of the dividing Mind, though Mind can become aware of them behind its workings. (Vol. 18, p. 238)

If the subliminal and subconscious may be compared to a sea which throws up the waves of our surface mental existence, the superconscience may be compared to an ether which constitutes, contains, overroofs, inhabits and determines the movements of the sea and its waves. It is there in this higher ether that we are inherently and intrinsically conscious of our self and spirit, not as here below by a reflection in silent mind or by acquisition of the knowledge of a hidden Being within us; it is through it, through that ether of superconscience, that we can pass to a supreme status, knowledge, experience. (Vol. 18, p. 561)

The first ripple or vibration in causal matter creates a new and exceedingly fine and pervasive condition of matter called Akasha or Ether; more complex motion evolves out of Ether a somewhat intenser condition which is called Vayu, Air; and so by ever more complex motion with increasing intensity of condition for result, yet three other matter-states are successively developed, Agni or Fire, Apah or Water and Prithvi or Earth. These are the five tanmatras or subtle elements of Sankhya philosophy by the combination of which subtle forms in subtle matter are built. (Vol. 27, p. 230)



Ether was, they found, the primary substance out of which all this visible Universe is evolved and beyond ether they were unable to go without matter losing all the characteristics associated with it in the physical world and lapsing into a quite different substance of which the forms and motions were much more vague, subtle, elastic and volatile than any of which the physical world is aware. This new world of matter they called subtle matter and analysed the subtle as they had analysed the gross until by a similar procession from denser to subtler they came to a finest condition of all which they described as subtle ether. Out of this subtle ether a whole world of subtle forms and energies are evolved which constitute psychical existence. Beyond subtle ether matter lost its subtle characteristics and lapsed into a new kind which they could not analyse but which seemed to be the matrix out of which all material evolution proceeded. This they termed causal matter. (Vol. 27, p. 231)

The first and original state of subtle matter is the pure ethereal of which the main characteristics are extreme tenuity and pervasiveness and the one sensible property, sound. Sound, according to the Vedic inquirers, is the first evolved property of material substance; it precedes form and has the power both to create it and to destroy it. Looking around them in the physical universe for a substance with these characteristics they found it in Akasha or Vyoma (sky), implying not our terrestrial atmosphere but that which is both beyond it and pervades it,—the fine pervasive connecting substance in which, as it were, the whole universe floats. They therefore gave this name, Akasha, to the ethereal condition of matter.

The next matter-condition evolved from Ether and moving in it, was the pure aerial or gaseous. (Vol. 27, p. 233)

As ether, the matrix, is the continent and condition of Matariswan and his works, so is Brahman the continent and condition of ether and its evolution. Matariswan is born out of ether and works in ether, but ether is itself only an intermediate evolution; in reality, Matariswan is born out of Brahman the Self and works in Brahman the Self. (Vol. 27, p. 241)

...Matariswan, he that rests in the matrix of things, that is to say, Vayu, the motional or first energetic principle of Nature founded in akasa, the static principle of extension which is the eternal matrix of things, working in it as Prana, the universal life-activity, *dadhāti*, (Gr. *tithēsi*) establishes, sets in its place and manages.

Matariswan is the energy of God in Prakriti which enters into, as a child, in the womb (*Ma*) and then emerges out of the static condition of extension, represented to our senses in matter as ether. It emerges in the motional principle of expansion and contraction represented to the senses as the gaseous state,

specially called by us therefore Vayu, which by disturbing the even self-contained vibration (*śabda*) of the ether, produces vibratory waves (*kṣobha*), generates action and reaction (*rajas*) on which the ether behind is continually impressing a tendency to equipoise (*sattva*), the failure of which is the only cause of disintegration of movement (death, *mṛtyu*, *tamogūṇa*) and creates contact (*sparsā*) which is the basis of mental and material sensation and indeed of all relation in phenomenal existence. (Vol. 27, pp. 334-35)

(*To be continued*)

*Compiled by* SHIVABHAI

## SRI AUROBINDO: THE SOUL OF INDIA

*(Continued from the issue of July 1988)*

SRI AUROBINDO'S life was not lived on the surface for men to observe, analyse or generalise about dates, entrances and exits. The 'facts' of his outer life were certainly not his real life. On the other hand, his inner life was unique, vast and crowded with multitudinous events. A great and vivifying message had to be given to a nation or to humanity and God had chosen this mouth in which to shape the words of the message.

A momentous vision had to be revealed; and it is to his eyes that the Almighty first unsealed the vision which was to be declared to the world, especially to India. Supreme moments of inspiration did he put in words which have merely to be uttered to stir men's inmost nature.

Those words are the mantra which he was born to reveal. The words laid bare new meanings to the politicians, the revolutionary leaders, the nation builders, poets, philosophers, lovers of humanity. We can say about Sri Aurobindo:

“Apart he lived in his mind's solitude,  
A demigod shaping the lives of men:  
One soul's ambition lifted up the race;  
A power worked, but none knew whence it came.  
The universal strengths were linked with his;  
Filling earth's smallness with their boundless breadths,  
He drew the energies that transmute an age.”<sup>1</sup>

The Divine descends into the world so that man can ascend into the divine nature and consciousness. “But we have to remark carefully... for upholding of the Dharma is not an all-sufficient object in itself, not the supreme possible aim for the manifestation of a Christ, a Krishna, a Buddha, but is only the general condition of a higher aim and a more supreme and divine utility. For there are two aspects of the divine birth; one is a descent, the birth of God in humanity, the Godhead manifesting itself in the human form and nature, the eternal Avatar; the other is an ascent, the birth of man into the Godhead, man rising into the divine nature and consciousness, it is the being born anew in a second birth of the soul.... “It is that new birth which Avatarhood and the upholding of the Dharma are intended to serve.”<sup>2</sup>

India is the God-chosen place to manifest the true dharma of humanity from age to age. Sri Aurobindo as an inward thinker unveiled the secret truth and mystery of the different ages from the Vedic period to the modern age. He has brought out new characteristics of India's magnificent past.

In the previous articles I have discussed the Vedic and Upanishadic Ages and their marvellous insights.

The next age is called the "Heroic Age", which is reflected in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

A question may arise whether the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are myths or history. It is difficult to ascertain historical facts accurately. Undoubtedly we can assume that there must be some historical data on the basis of which we may build up a picture of the ancient Aryan civilisation, political, moral, economical and spiritual.

Sri Aurobindo analyses and focuses the inner truth of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. He writes about the former: "It has been said truly that the Ramayana represents an ideal society and assumed illogically that it must therefore represent an altogether imaginary one. The argument ignores the alternative of a real society idealised. No poet could evolve entirely out of his own imagination a picture at once so colossal, so minute and consistent in every detail."<sup>3</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has said again: "While Valmiki was a soul out of harmony with its surroundings and looking back to an ideal past, Vyasa was a man of his time, profoundly in sympathy with it, full of its tendencies, hopeful of its results and looking forward to an ideal future."<sup>4</sup>

What is Dharma? Says Sri Aurobindo: "The Dharma, at once religious law of action and deepest law of our nature, is not, as in the Western idea, a creed, cult or ideal inspiring an ethical and social rule: it is the right law of functioning of our life in all its parts. The tendency of man to seek after a just and perfect law of his living finds its truth and its justification in the Dharma. Everything indeed has its Dharma, its law of life imposed on it by its nature; but for man the Dharma is the conscious imposition of a rule of ideal living on all his members. Dharma is fixed in its essence but still it develops in our consciousness and evolves and has its stages; there are gradations of spiritual and ethical ascension in the search for the highest law of our nature.... There must be in all things some wise and understanding standard of practice and idea of perfection and living rule,—that is the one thing needful for the Dharma..."<sup>5</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's striking speech at Uttarpara after one year of confinement in the Alipur jail is a revelation of true Dharma. He recounted what the Divine had told him and done to him: "... 'I have brought you here to teach you what you could not learn for yourself and to train you for my work.' Then He placed the Gita in my hands. His strength entered into me and I was able to do the Sadhana of the Gita. I was not only to understand intellectually but to realise what Sri Krishna demanded of Arjuna and what He demands of those who aspire to do His work, to be free from repulsion and desire, to do work for Him without the demand for fruit, to renounce self-will and become a passive and faithful instrument in His hands, to have an equal heart for high and low, friend and opponent, success and failure, yet not to do His work negligently. I realised

what the Hindu religion meant. We speak often of the Hindu religion, of Sanatana Dharma, but few of us really know what that religion is. Other religions are preponderatingly religions of faith and profession, but the Sanatana Dharma is life itself; it is a thing that has not so much to be believed as lived”.

The Light of Sri Krishna appeared on the horizon at a crucial hour of India's culture and with the descent of divine force which he represented he became a leader of evolution to help humanity at a revolutionary crisis. The light of Sri Krishna was the highest light possible to manifest at that time.

“Valmiki's mind seems nowhere to be familiarised with the high-strung intellectual gospel of a high and severe Dharma culminating in a passionless activity, raised to a supreme spiritual significance in the Gita, which is one great key-note of the Mahabharata.”<sup>6</sup>

“The poet of the Mahabharata lives nearer to the centre of an era of aristocratic turbulence and disorder. If there is any kernel of historic truth in the story of the poem, it records the establishment of those imperial forms of government and society which Valmiki had idealised.”<sup>7</sup>

“... He (Vyasa) boldly erects above ordinary ethics a higher principle of conduct having its springs in intellect and strong character; he treats government and society from the standpoint of a practical and discerning statesman-like mind, idealising solely for the sake of a standard. He touches, in fact, all subjects and whatever he touches he makes fruitful and interesting by originality, penetration and a sane and bold vision. In all this he is the son of the civilisation he has mirrored to us, a civilisation in which both morality and material development are powerfully intellectualised.”<sup>8</sup>

“The great discovery of the age was the manifestation of Dharma which showed the right path for the self-development of the individual and collectivity. ... India has always existed for humanity and not for herself and it is for humanity and not for herself that she must be great.”<sup>9</sup>

*(To be continued)*

NILIMA DAS

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- 1 *Savitri*, Book One, Canto Three, p 44.
- 2 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 13, pp 137-38.
- 3 *Ibid.*, Vol 3, p 217
- 4 *Ibid.*, Vol 3, p. 220
- 5 *Ibid.*, Vol 3, p 219
- 6 *Ibid.*, Vol 3, p 220
- 7 *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p 220
- 8 *Ibid.*, Vol 14, p. 104
- 9 *Ibid.*, Vol 2, pp 3-4

# THE ETERNAL CHILD AND THE ETERNAL MARVEL

(Continued from the issue of July 1988)

## INTERLUDE

### The Fate of Mairi: Complex Myth of Oedipus and Bilwamangal

THE mendicant had smilingly refused the offered food; but he remained standing before the door, his motionless silhouette a violet shadow against the morning light. "I would like your wife to show me her face."

The master of the house was shocked and troubled; first of all, *sadhus* who have renounced the world are not supposed to look at a woman; and secondly, no one should dare ask a man of his caste for permission to see the face of the lady of the house. And yet... one should not disregard the request of a holy man.

"Master, the flame of her gaze must burn away the last traces of my human fate."

There was silence in the room when the noble returned, leading his wife. She had told him that she felt a mendicant had followed her home after catching sight of her as she left the temple. What could it mean?

The lady slowly raised the fold of sari that hung over her forehead, shading her whole face. Her eyes glowed with pride, with an almost contemptuous chastity. The *sadhu's* gaze did not waver. Motionless, he seemed to be regarding something beyond her, to sink in the depths of being where individuality loses its contour; a vague smile grew on his lips, seeming to make his impersonal gaze yet more distant, to veil it with the aura of a dream, direct it towards some far-away scene....

The smile grew fixed, the happiness it expressed held something almost inhuman. He extended his hand and asked for pins. In a single movement she unfastened her hair and offered on her outstretched palm the two long pins that had held it. The mendicant lifted each of them with the fingertips of a hand and in one slow gesture plunged them into his eyes, piercing the pupils, then laid them, half-red, on the ground at her feet.

When they led him back to the crossroads at the end of the village, that same smile still lit his face, framed, along the line of each cheek, by two curved traces of tears of blood.

\*

The empty gaze of blind Tiresias struck the King of Thebes with the same indifferent irony we sometimes seem to perceive in the disinterested smiles of the dead.

"O Fool, what are you seeking to discover? Why do you persist? Are you not aware that no man can know his own fate with impunity?"

Oedipus trembled with impotent rage. He, who had accepted the fatal chal-

lence of the Sphinx, who had torn from the talons of her insoluble riddle the all-powerful secret—the secret of Man—that had raised him to kingship from the dusty paths he had trodden so long, driven ever onwards by that dark threat, that curse which, inseparable as his shadow, had pursued him unremittingly from the day of his birth...; he was now ready to stake everything, ready yet again to renounce all he had—glory and wealth and power—to follow a thread that might perhaps rend the veil forever, give back to him his true identity, solace him at last with a final absolution.... And this blind old man, this seer whose gaze could pierce the unknown, would deny him this unique opportunity, block with refusal and silence his way to that last discovery?

“Will you speak, you mouther of misfortunes, to your King? I hold the power of life and death over you!”

“No misfortune can ever be compared to your lot, O King. And no death can ever redeem the horror of your life.”

\*

Bilwamangal, sitting by the roadside beyond the edge of the village, seemed to gaze blindly at the crossroads, whose directions now were all the same to him, ways that from now on led nowhere.

His vision of the world had to close forever upon those beautiful eyes, that womanly face... for it had been a woman's face, and just such lovely eyes, which had opened his world to a new vision, a true direction. Now, in this last sacrifice, this road alone had remained open to him, leading in that direction alone. For this new road led through his heart, towards the unknown depths of his soul. And guiding him like music was that voice of love—echo of a song that had once seduced his heart and soul and led him far from the calm spaces and ordered days of his distant Brahmin childhood.

An angelic voice, flowing from a house of sin...: that house had become his temple; that woman, his only love.

Each evening at sunset, bathed, perfumed, dressed in fine fresh clothes, he would cross the river which divided his own respectable quarter from the area of ill-repute where the singer Chintamani palace stood; and he would return only in the morning, at an hour when all rituals and prayers in his house were already over.

Day after day, night after night, his life now, far from schools and sanctuaries, had only one aim left: to be lulled by the notes of that music, by the sweetness of those eyes, by the delight of those caresses, by the abandonment to that passion. Like an opium-eater, he had plunged into forgetfulness as into a sea of shadows, clinging to that one plank of safety.

Until....

\*

“Until I know *the whole truth*, my soul can have no rest!” Now it was his wife, the Queen, who would have prevented him; but Oedipus needed to make the thing clear—else, when would this passion leave him?

This rage, like that time at the crossroads: a moment of fury, and all the old menace had burst in upon his life, suddenly, like lightning from a summer thundercloud. And all those people, that old man and his companions, who had been swept up in that whirlwind of madness, had all been led to that meeting-place, right on time, by the same implacable destiny; led to the place where their ways met, on the road to Delphi....

They lay in the bloody dust, and vultures were circling above the carnage, when Oedipus strode away from his new murder.

And only now, after all these years, he had learned who was his victim at that accursed crossway: the former King of Thebes. So he himself, Oedipus, was the assassin on whom he had already, with his own mouth, pronounced the sentence of perpetual exile!

But now what he needed above all was to have the final proof, to know, to get to the very bottom of the thing....

\*

To the very bottom! For Bilwamangal, it had been on a night of storm, and his father too had just died.

He had crept out of the house like a thief, into the downpour. Inside, Brahmins were praying for the welfare of the soul that had left its earthly abode to return, passing through all the intermediate worlds, to the eternal peace of Brahma's paradise. He alone, the only son, had turned his back on the rituals laid down since the dawn of time, betrayed his caste, renounced his creed.

A need stronger than any human law, than any divine belief, was sundering the ties of blood and religion and drawing him inexorably towards the one place where his soul was given back to him, even before death, in a body and in this life, the place where the peace of the formless came to him through the forms of beauty, where the silence of the eternal was rhythmized in the tones of a woman's voice singing to him the secret nuances of love.

The jetty was deserted, the river in flood, its current boiling on at a dizzying speed. If only a plank of wood, the branch of a tree, would help him stay afloat, he would surely get to the other side! He knew every curve and bay of the river's course. He launched himself towards a black something tossed on the waves, seized it, and—God knows how!—reached the further shore.

The courtesan's house was closed, on such a night. But a creeper, hanging among jasmins from the balcony of his beloved, enabled him to hoist himself up to her room. The surprise of this unexpected arrival redoubled the fires of their love. The rain was a curtain of pearls at the window; now and again a sudden flash of lightning would reveal to the lovers hitherto unknown images of



the beloved: for an instant, a luminous appearance would materialise the dark bliss of the night's dream in the brilliance of a smile, the gleam of a look, the ecstasy of a face, the flow of a body's supple lines—and then again the night would hide all seemings with her veil of mystery.

The next morning, he had told her of his flight, his betrayal. She grew grave, then wished to walk with him as far as the riverside.

Smilingly, to cheer her, he had shown her the plants on the balcony where he had climbed up the night before. Chintamani gave a startled cry: what he had taken for a creeper was the body of a cobra, its head caught fast between the jasmine branches, strangled by the weight it had borne, now swaying lifeless in the morning air.

And at the river-bank, she had almost fainted: yesterday's branch, which he had drawn up onto the bank and laid at the roots of an ancient banyan tree, turned out to have been a funeral raft, still bearing the remains of a corpse—incompletely burned on the evening of the storm

Her face pale, her eyes full of tears, she had faced a Bilwamangal still smiling, lost in his dream. Suddenly she drew herself erect; her cheeks flamed, her eyes blazed, her voice filled with strange power.

"O Brahmin, your life is consecrated to the knowledge of truth, to the discovery of your immortal soul.

"Go then, and never return!

"If the passion that is leading you to ruin, only burned in the fire of your quest, on this very day you would attain the bliss of the Eternal!"

And she raised her joined palms before her forehead, lowered her eyes, then turned back towards her house.

Bilwamangal stood on the beach, with the corpse.

Her words were still ringing within him when he turned from the river and went the other way.

\*

And Oedipus too, had just made his discovery; he too had abandoned his country forever.

But this was not enough.

He would have wished to leave this cursed world altogether, this polluted life, to die back into the earth; and if he did not kill himself outright, it was only because that seemed not enough: to hang himself, or throw himself from a cliff. He would have wished simply to disappear—to *efface every trace of his human fate*.

And since he did not find any other way to do it, he had started by blinding his eyes... so that the world, at least, disappeared—*his world*, which now was there no more.

Nothing existed, anywhere around him.

No more countries, no more cities, no more men—nothing any more. A child's hand had taken his, and led him by the loneliest of pathways; only places forbidden to mortal men sheltered the one who had suffered the worst from Fate....

\*

A woman's hand had found him, beside the crossroads where his wanderings had ceased. She had tended his wounds, covered his eyes. She had led him to the jetty and set him in a boat. Days and days on end he had been lulled by the songs of the boatmen, the murmur of flowing water, the gentle rocking of the hull; they were ascending the smooth course of a great river. At last they had pulled into the quay of a pilgrim city.

The same hand found him again, led him to a porch beside a small temple. The rustling foliage of a garden sometimes shut out for a moment the dim notes of chanted prayers. No other sounds reached him.

Day after day a woman's footstep brought him water, food, fresh linen. Day after day a deepening peace took possession of his whole being.

The empty darkness of his blind gaze quivering under a spray of silver snow began to gleam with an opal misty glow...

mind's clouds were pierced by beams of soft moonlight  
heart's waves shimmered, caressed by rays of gold  
his being's vision warmed to crimson joy  
and the rose of a new dawn of life  
set ablaze with its blossom his soul's night.

But as his eye of wisdom had opened to the sun of that ecstasy, the echo of a long-ago voice resounded through the vaults of his heart·

“O Brahmin  
If the passion that is leading you to ruin  
Only burned in the fire of your quest  
On this very day  
You would attain eternally the Bliss of the Eternal!”

And as the wind amid the leaves bore from the temple a murmur of prayer, an echo of a long-ago music rang in the voice. that was praying

*Chintamani!* the jewel of his mind shone brightly in the light of his soul. And lo! its flashing gleams could pierce even the wall of his dead sight. Bilwamangal rose. Step after step, as one led through the night by thunder-storm, he reached the threshold of the sanctuary. The voice of a woman

soothed him with the melody of a familiar song. The courtesan of the temple of his heart was praying at the altar of his God.

His immortal soul was given back to him, even before death; his single love melted in the ecstasy of all the worlds. And the song reached its climax with a double refrain:

“To love a woman  
is to love all women;  
There is only one woman:  
She, the World-Mother;  
To hate a man  
is to strike at the roots of one’s own self;  
All humanity is only one being:  
and God himself shall be the Son of Man.

\*

Heaven’s thunderbolt crashed on the ground of Colonos;  
even the body of Oedipus disappeared from the world of man.

*(To be continued)*

B. PETRIS

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**The Battle of Kurukshetra** by Maggi. Publisher P. Lal. Writers' Workshop, Calcutta. Price Rs. 120.00, Flexback.

TIME inevitably obscures history, dulls its edges, and dilutes its poignancy. Even myth and legend lose their vibrancy with the passing of the millennia. The voices of the gods are no longer heard, heroes no longer bestride the earth, and the colossi of another yuga pass into the memory of a succeeding age that no longer understands.

Yet the magic of the past can be revived, the myth come to life again as a force that not only equals but surpasses the immediacy of present-day affairs, prosaic as they seem by comparison.

It is in this light that one must look upon Maggi Lidchi-Grassi's *The Battle of Kurukshetra*, a re-telling of the Mahabharata epic. Here at last the dust falls away, the images re-form and an astonishing age revives and surges forth in all its power under the guidance of her pen. The setting and the *dramatis personae* are of mythic proportions, larger than life and often semi-divine, as the great ones of the ancients all over the world so often were. Maggi slips easily into the ambience of this world of greatness as though it were her natural medium. She compels us to accept without difficulty the valour of her heroes and the dharmic laws that govern their existence, the courage and sheer physical strength required of them to survive in a society where physical combat to the death was a daily reality, and war a norm of life for the princely Kshatriya. Most of all, she brings to our attention the extraordinary beauty of the kings and princes, princesses and queens that people the Mahabharata. Yet the beauty of which she speaks is no cardboard or film-poster beauty. Her characters breathe from within. Their beauty wells from unfathomable inner resources of fortitude and majesty. Each personality lives as a striking individual: Ashwatthama, blend of warrior and Brahmin, tormented by his own dilemma of having to fight on the wrong side against his dearest friends in the battle of Kurukshetra; Yudhishthira, enigmatic and multi-faceted, who—at the turning point of the narrative, the dice game—is seemingly hypnotized into sealing his own doom; Arjuna, the valorous, the hero of heroes, nagged nevertheless by the fear that his position as the greatest archer in the world might be challenged by his rivals, Karna and Ekalavya; Draupadi, so captivating, so prized above the scores of other beautiful queens and princesses that fill the story, that she is violently assaulted on three different occasions with various disastrous results for her attackers. The list could go into pages—with Greatfather Bheeshma; the blind king Dhritrashtra; Duryodhana and Sakuni, incorrigible instruments of disaster; the tragically arrogant Karna; Dronacharya the Brahmin who nevertheless teaches weaponry and the martial arts. The human fabric of the

book is vast and many-splendoured.

Yet the pivot of all the action in *The Battle of Kurukshetra* is Maggi's greatest triumph—the depiction of Krishna. Krishna springs straight from the heart as a being of infinite power, knowledge and compassion, seen in this light through the reactions of whomever he encounters. His personality, his presence, command adoration. To his friends, he is Narayana, the divine friend, companion and guide. To his enemies—the tyrants of the earth—he is the arbiter of their impending destruction. His is the ultimate voice, his the mind and heart that embrace and at the same time overreach everything human, that are of our kind and yet so much beyond it, that see, that comprehend, that act with divine certitude when all else crumbles or falters.

The author narrates her story through two voices, that of Ashwatthama and that of Arjuna. Ashwatthama starts by speaking of the background of interrelationships stretching back three or more generations, that bind all the characters together in a tight web of kinship. He goes on to recount how the young princes, all cousins, grow up together at the royal court of Dhritarashtra, himself among them, with his father Dronacharya as their tutor. And he remembers with bitter sorrow how the seeds of jealous rivalry between the two sides of the family are planted early on in their lives, and of how, like puppets, each is doomed to fulfill his own role in the final collective cataclysm.

Arjuna carries the narrative onward, after Ashwatthama concludes with the story of Arjuna's and his brothers' appearance at the swayamvara of Draupadi, his winning of the bride, and her marriage to all five Pandavas. It is here that Krishna appears and takes his place as the central figure of the epic. Arjuna goes on to tell of his unfolding relationship with Krishna over the years, and the mystic bond that inseparably binds him as Nara to Krishna as Narayana—the two born upon earth together to usher in the Kali Yuga, the Age of Iron. We relive with Arjuna the paralysing horror of the dice game which his eldest brother loses to his cousin, Duryodhana, as though in a trance. We suffer with him the pain of the Pandavas' thirteen years' exile. And finally, we follow with bated breath his account of the preparations of both camps on the field of Kurukshetra, and empathise with his inner agony as both armies array themselves on the field for battle.

This recreation of the Mahabharata is remarkable in several respects. First, it has brought to life an ancient and much-told tale with a renewed freshness and urgency. The author has done this not only with a gentle and kindly humour but a singular lack of exaggeration or hyperbole in an account full of the hyperbole of extreme passion and violence. Her simplicity and directness hold the narrative in place. Her gift for understatement sharpens every colour and every situation. Her humour permits us to smile at Bhima, wrestler and champion mace-wielder disguised as a palace cook, to savour the supreme warrior Arjuna transformed into a palace eunuch for a year, and to delight in the hilarious

escapade of Arjuna as Brihannala the eunuch, and the cowardly young prince Uttarakumara, riding out to a confrontation with Duryodhana's invading forces.

The second aspect of Maggi's book which elicits our admiration is her careful researching of a multitude of fascinating details—of the weaponry used, of military strategy, of armour, clothing and architecture, not to speak of social customs utterly strange to the modern age, such as the charming ancient form of greeting where two people, upon meeting each other, would take each other's head scent. The Rakshasas, too, are a race unknown today, creatures with pointed ears and fangs hanging over their lips. Indeed, Bhima's son Ghatotkacha, by a Rakshasi princess, is as delightful as he is bizarre, having arrow-shaped ears and being "bald as a pot" since birth, yet so personable that all of Bhima's non-Rakshasa family take him to their hearts immediately.

Finally, one must commend Maggi for having taken a great national epic and so presented it that it becomes available in a contemporary form of expression not only to Indians but to an international readership who would otherwise have no chance to acquaint itself with this masterpiece of ancient lore, trapped as it has been in age-old Sanskrit texts, and the ritualistic recitations of traditional raconteurs.

Now that she has whetted our appetite, we look forward to more. The present volume takes us to the beginning of the epic battle of Kurukshetra. We eagerly look forward to the next which will plunge us into the cataclysm itself.

BINA SAKSENA

# *Students' Section*

## **THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION**

**Sixty-third Seminar**

**28 February 1988**

### **THE VISION AND THE WORK OF THE MOTHER FOR THE FUTURE**

*(Continued from the issue of July 1988)*

**Speech by Valeria Brockhaus**

THE Mother's vision and work for the future, which is identical with Sri Aurobindo's, embraces the whole humanity and the entire world. But like all new things that have to be realised in the future life of humanity, a centre has first to be created embodying the concrete realisation of the vision which could serve as a model for the rest of mankind to follow. It is for this reason that the Ashram was founded and that is why the Mother called it "the cradle of the new world."<sup>1</sup> Auroville is a further extension of the same ideal. It is intended to be an international township in which Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's ideal of the manifestation of the supramental Truth expressed in a collective life, representing all the elements of a harmonious world unity, would find concrete shape. In my talk I propose to give a very brief outline of Auroville's development and organisation, mostly in the Mother's own words.

In August 1954 the Mother had said in a short writing titled *A Dream*:

"There should be somewhere upon earth a place that no nation could claim as its own, a place where all human beings of goodwill who have a sincere aspiration could live freely as citizens of the world and obey one single authority, that of the supreme truth; a place of peace, concord and harmony..."<sup>2</sup>

This conception of an ideal society corresponds to Sri Aurobindo's vision of the New Society, and the task of giving a concrete shape to it was entrusted to the Mother. This is evident from another short writing of the Mother in which she has briefly stated the ideal for which Auroville was created.

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed), Vol 13, p 113.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, (Vol. 12) p 93

“Earth needs

“a place where men can live away from all national rivalries, social conventions, self-contradictory moralities and contending religions;

“a place where human beings, freed from all slavery to the past, can devote themselves wholly to the discovery and practice of the Divine Consciousness that is seeking to manifest.

“Auroville wants to be this place and offers itself to all who aspire for the Truth of tomorrow.” (20 September 1969)<sup>1</sup>

It was on the very day of this Seminar, 28 February, twenty years ago, in 1968, that the Mother’s dream took concrete form. Youth representing 124 countries of the world had gathered together on that day for the foundation ceremony of Auroville, “The City of Dawn”. A boy and a girl from each of these 124 countries and 23 Indian States poured a handful of their motherland’s soil into a lotus-shaped marble urn, as a symbol of their determination to realise a true universal harmony. Then the voice of the Mother, transmitted from her room, was heard as she read out in French what I translate here in English:

“Greetings from Auroville to all men of good will.

“Are invited to Auroville all those who thirst for progress and aspire to a higher and truer life.”<sup>2</sup>

She then continued by reading out the Auroville Charter, which was later translated into 16 other languages. This is how it goes:

“1. Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole.

But to live in Auroville one must be the willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.

2. Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.

3. Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future.

Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations.

4. Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity.”<sup>3</sup>

Auroville’s basic pattern is circular, coinciding with the circular lotus-like symbol of the Mother. Although the details have undergone numerous changes

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works of The Mother* (Cent Ed), Vol. 13, p 208

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 199

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp 199-200



since the first design, the primary division of areas into four equal zones has remained unaltered. The four zones are designed to give equal place to the four fundamental aspects of man's activity:

1. Dwelling—in the residential zone:
2. Social Relations—in the international zone.
3. Culture—in the cultural zone.
4. Work—in the industrial zone.

The centre of Auroville contains three elements: the banyan tree, which is the physical middle of Auroville and which symbolises the force of Nature; the lotus-shaped urn which symbolises the unity of mankind; and, the most predominant of all, the Matrimandir which symbolises the soul of Auroville. On 21 February 1971, as the Matrimandir was founded, the Mother said:

“Let the Matrimandir be the living symbol of Auroville's aspiration for the Divine.”<sup>1</sup>

Now I would like to read out a few answers the Mother has given to questions concerning Auroville.

*Q: What is the fundamental difference between the ideal of the Ashram and the ideal of Auroville?*

The Mother: “There is no fundamental difference in the attitude towards the future and the service of the Divine. But the people in the Ashram are considered to have consecrated their lives to Yoga... Whereas in Auroville simply the good will to make a collective experiment for the progress of humanity is sufficient to gain admittance.” (10.11.1969)<sup>2</sup>

*Q: Is it the Divine Will that Auroville should be born, or else does the Divine look upon the attempt to build Auroville as an experiment?*

The Mother: “The conception of Auroville is purely divine and has preceded its execution by many years.

“Naturally, in the details of the execution the human consciousness intervenes.” (17.4.1969)<sup>3</sup>

*Q: Who will own the land and buildings of Auroville?*

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207

The Mother: "The Supreme Lord."<sup>1</sup>

This, in brief, is the Mother's vision and work for the creation of this new society. Since the foundation of Auroville, hundreds of people have come to it to help create what the Mother called "A City the earth needs."

To conclude my talk I would like to read out a short answer of the Mother in which she explains what she meant when she called Auroville "a dream."

"You say that Auroville is a dream. Yes, it is a 'dream' of the Lord and generally those 'dreams' turn out to be *true*—much more true than the human so-called realities!" (20.5.1966)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p 196.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p 197

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