

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JANUARY 1989

Price: Rs. 3.75

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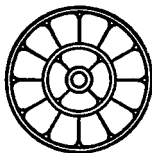
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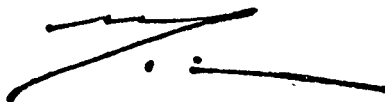


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India

Editor's Phone: 24782

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Published by: P. COUNUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST

PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY - 605 002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULY

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry - 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No. R.N. 8667/63

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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLII

No. 1

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
TRUTH VERSUS FALSEHOOD <i>From Huta's White Roses</i> ...	5
A TALK BY THE MOTHER TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 1 JANUARY 1958 ...	6
SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTER TO HIS POET BROTHER MANMOHAN GHOSE: WRITTEN TOWARDS THE END (1906) OF HIS STAY AT BARODA ...	9
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO FROM NIRODBARAN'S NOTEBOOK: CONCERNING A AND HIS EXPERIENCES ...	19
O RESTLESS HEART (Poem) <i>Vikas Bamba</i> ...	24
GOLCONDE: A LOOK BEHIND <i>Compiled by Shraddhavan</i> ...	25
THE SERVICE TREE: A TALK <i>Dyumanbhai</i> ...	29
THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE IN THE LIGHT OF HER <i>Prayers and Meditations</i> <i>Nilima Das</i> ...	35
VIGNETTES OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO <i>Compiled by S</i> ...	38
A HEART'S CALL (Poem) <i>Dinkar Palande</i> ...	39
HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM <i>Compiled by K</i> ...	40
GLIMPSES OF PAVITRA FROM THE REMINISCENCES OF PAVITRA AND MRITYUNJOY ...	43
POETRY-LIFE-YOGA SELECTIONS AND ADAPTATIONS FROM RECENT LETTERS <i>Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)</i> ...	48
THE STORY OF A SOUL <i>Huta</i> ...	56

CONTENTS

ATONEMENT (Poem)	<i>Shyam Kumari</i>	...	60
EXPECTATION (Poem)	<i>Abani Sinha</i>	...	60
SAVITRI'S HOUSE OF MEDITATION	<i>R. Y. Deshpande</i>	...	61
NOLINI KANTA GUPTA ON SRI AUROBINDO			
THE GREATNESS OF THE GREAT	<i>Compiled by Shyam Kumari</i>	...	68
“THE LION OF PUNJAB”—LALA LAJPATRAI			
A TALK	<i>Ratanlal</i>	...	73
A PERMANENT CALENDAR	<i>Dattatreya (Bakery)</i>	...	75

STUDENTS' SECTION

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION			
TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE			
14 AUGUST 1988—“ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS			
OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA”	<i>Speech by Srijita Roy</i>	...	76

TRUTH VERSUS FALSEHOOD

A LETTER OF THE MOTHER

THOSE who wish to help the Light of Truth to prevail over the forces of darkness and falsehood can do so by carefully observing the initiating impulses of their movements and actions, and discriminate between those that come from the truth and those that come from the falsehood in order to obey the first and to refuse or reject the others.

This power of discrimination is one of the first effects of the advent of the Truth's light in the earth's atmosphere.

Indeed it is very difficult to discriminate the impulses of Truth from the impulses of falsehood, unless one has received this special gift of discrimination that the Light of Truth has brought.

However, to help at the beginning, one can take as a guiding rule that all that brings with it or creates peace, faith, joy, harmony, wideness, unity and ascending growth comes from the Truth; while all that carries with it restlessness, doubt, scepticism, sorrow, discord, selfish narrowness, inertia, discouragement and despair comes straight from the falsehood.

(With acknowledgements to *White Roses*, the Mother's Letters to Huta, pp. 238-41.)

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 1 JANUARY 1958

*O Nature, material Mother,
Thou hast said that thou wilt collaborate
and there is no limit
to the splendour of this collaboration.*

New Year Message, 1 January 1958

Sweet Mother, will you explain the message for this year?

It is already written! The explanation has already been written, it is ready for the *Bulletin* of February 21.¹

There is nothing to explain. It is an experience, something that happened, and when it happened I noted it down, and as it turned out, it occurred just at the moment when I remembered that I had to write something for the year — which was next year at that time, that is, the year which begins today. When I remembered that I had to write something—not because of that, but simultaneously—this experience came, and when I noted it down, I realised that it was... it was the message for this year!

(Silence)

I will tell you only one thing: you should not misinterpret the meaning of this experience and imagine that from now on everything is going to take place without any difficulties and always in a manner that favours our personal desires. It is not on this plane. It does not mean that when we do not want it to rain, it will not rain! that when we want something to happen in the world, it will happen immediately; that all difficulties will be done away with and everything will be as it is in fairy-tales. It is not that. It is something much deeper: Nature in her play of forces, has accepted the new Force which has manifested and included it in her movements. And as always, the movements of Nature are on a scale which is infinitely beyond the human scale and not visible to an ordinary human consciousness. It is an inner, psychological possibility which has come into the world rather than a spectacular change in earthly events.

I am saying this because you might be tempted to believe that fairy-tales were going to be realised on earth. It is not yet time for that.

(Silence)

¹ The text of this explanation is given in an appendix to this talk

One must have much patience and a very wide and very complex vision to understand how things happen.

(Silence)

The miracles which take place are not what could be called story book miracles, in the sense that they don't happen as in stories. They are visible only to a very deep vision of things—very deep, very comprehensive, very vast.

(Silence)

One must already be capable of following the methods and ways of the Grace in order to recognise its action. One must already be capable of not being blinded by appearances in order to see the deeper truth of things.

We could usefully, this evening, just take this resolution: to try throughout the year to do our best, so that the time may not pass in vain.

APPENDIX

Explanation of the New Year Message of 1 January 1958

In the course of one of our classes¹ I spoke of the limitless abundance of Nature, the inexhaustible creatrix who takes the multitude of forms and mixes them together, separates them again and remoulds them, unmakes and destroys them, to move on to ever new combinations. It is a huge cauldron, I said: she stirs things inside and brings out something; it's no good, she throws it in again and takes something else.... One or two forms or a hundred have no importance for her, there are thousands and thousands of forms, and then as for years, a hundred years, a thousand, millions of years, it is of no importance, you have eternity before you! It is quite obvious that Nature enjoys all this and that she is not in a hurry. If she is told to rush rapidly through and finish this or that part of her work quickly, the reply is always the same: "But why should I do so, why? Doesn't it amuse you?"

The evening I told you about these things, I identified myself totally with Nature, I joined in her game. And this movement of identification provoked a response, a sort of new intimacy between Nature and myself, a long movement of a growing closeness which culminated in an experience which came on the eighth of November.

Suddenly Nature understood. She understood that this new Consciousness which has just been born does not seek to reject her but wants to embrace her entirely, she understood that this new spirituality does not turn away from life, does not recoil in fear before the formidable amplitude of her movement, but

¹ 30 October 1957.

wants on the contrary to integrate all its facets. She understood that the supramental consciousness is here not to diminish but to complete her.

Then from the supreme Reality came this order, "Awake, O Nature, to the joy of collaboration." And the whole of Nature suddenly rushed forward in a great surge of joy, saying, "I accept, I shall collaborate." And at the same time, there came a calm, an absolute tranquillity so that the bodily vessel could receive and contain, without breaking, without losing anything, the mighty flood of this Joy of Nature which rushed forward as in a movement of gratitude. She accepted, she saw with all eternity before her that this supramental consciousness was going to fulfil her more perfectly, give a still greater strength to her movement, a greater amplitude, more possibilities to her play.

And suddenly I heard, as if they came from all the corners of the earth, those great notes one sometimes hears in the subtle physical, a little like those of Beethoven's Concerto in D-major, which come in moments of great progress, as though fifty orchestras had burst forth all in unison, without a single false note, to express the joy of this new communion between Nature and Spirit, the meeting of old friends who come together again after having been separated for so long.

Then these words came, "O Nature, Material Mother, thou hast said that thou wilt collaborate and there is no limit to the splendour of this collaboration."

And the radiant felicity of this splendour was sensed in perfect peace.

That is how the message for the new year was born.

(Questions and Answers 1957-58, pp. 245-48)

SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTER TO HIS POET BROTHER MANMOHAN GHOSE*

WRITTEN TOWARDS THE END (1906) OF HIS STAY AT BARODA

ONLY a short while ago I had a letter from you—I cannot lay my hands on the passage, but I remember it contained an unreserved condemnation of Hindu legend as trivial and insipid, a mass of crude and monstrous conceptions, a lumber-room of Hindu banalities. The main point of your indictment was that it had nothing in it simple, natural, passionate and human, that the characters were lifeless patterns of moral excellence.

I have been so long accustomed to regard your taste and judgment as sure and final that it is with some distrust I find myself differing from you. Will you permit me then to enter into some slight defence of what you have so emphatically condemned and explain why I venture to dedicate a poem on a Hindu subject, written in the Hindu spirit and constructed on Hindu principles of taste, style and management, to you who regard all these things as anathema marantha? I am not attempting to convince you, only to justify, or at least define my own standpoint; perhaps also a little to reassure myself in the line of poetical art I have chosen.

The impression that Hindu Myth has made on you, is its inevitable aspect to a taste nourished on the pure dew and honey of Hellenic tradition; for the strong Greek sense of symmetry and finite beauty is in conflict with the very spirit of Hinduism, which is a vast attempt of the human intellect to surround the universe with itself, an immense measuring of itself with the infinite and amorphous. Hellenism must necessarily see in the greater part of Hindu imaginations and thoughts a mass of crude fancies equally removed from the ideal and the real. But when it condemns all Hindu legend without distinction, I believe it is acting from an instinct which is its defect,—the necessary defect of its fine quality. For in order to preserve a pure, sensitive and severe standard of taste and critical judgement, it is compelled to be intolerant; to insist, that is, on its own limits and rule out all that exceeds them, as monstrous and unbeautiful. It rejects that flexible sympathy based on curiosity of temperament, which attempts to project itself into differing types as it meets them and so pass on through ever-widening artistic experiences to its destined perfection. And it rejects it because such catholicity would break the fine mould into which its own temperament is cast. This is well; yet is there room in art and criticism for that other, less fine but

* *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 27, pp. 148-160 The spellings of proper names have been kept as in the typed copy of this letter found among Sri Aurobindo's papers. But a few necessary minor corrections of typographical slips have been made and translations provided of the Latin quotations in the concluding part. A small grammatical rectification has been found necessary in the typed Latin text.

more many-sided, which makes possible new elements and strong departures. Often as the romantic temperament stumbles and creates broken and unsure work, sometimes it scores one of those signal triumphs which subject new art forms to the service of poetry or open up new horizons to poetical experience. What judgment would such a temperament, seeking its good where it can find it, but not grossly indiscriminating, not ignobly satisfied, pronounce on the Hindu legends?

I would carefully distinguish between two types of myth, the religious-philosophical allegory and the genuine secular legend. The former is beyond the pale of profitable argument. Created by the allegorical and symbolising spirit of mediaeval Hinduism, the religious myths are a type of poetry addressed to a peculiar mental constitution, and the sudden shock of the bizarre repels occidental imagination the moment it comes in contact with Puranic literature, reveals to us where the line lies that must eternally divide East from West. The difference is one of root-temperament and therefore unbridgeable. There is the mental composition which has no facet towards imaginative religion, and if it accepts religion at all, requires it to be plain, precise and dogmatic; to such these allegories must always seem false in art and barren in significance. And there is the mental composition in which a strong metaphysical bent towards religion combines with an imaginative tendency seeking symbol both as an atmosphere around religion, which would otherwise dwell on too breathless mountaintops, and as a safeguard against the spirit of dogma. These find in Hindu allegory a perpetual delight and refreshment; they believe it to be powerful and penetrating, sometimes with an epical daring of idea and an inspiration of searching appropriateness which not unoften dissolves into a strange and curious beauty. The strangeness permeating these legends is a vital part of themselves, and to eliminate the bizarre in them—bizarre to European notion, for to us they seem striking and natural—would be to emasculate them of the most characteristic part of their strength. Let us leave this type aside then as beyond the field of fruitful discussion.

There remain the secular legends; and it is true that a great number of them are intolerably puerile and grotesque. My point is that the puerility is no essential part of them but lies in their presentment, and that presentment again is characteristic of the Hindu spirit not in its best and most self-realising epochs. They were written in an age of decline, and their present form is the result of a literary accident. The Mahabharata of Vyasa, originally an epic of 24,000 verses, afterwards enlarged by a redacting poet, was finally submerged in a vast mass of inferior accretions, the work often of a tasteless age and unskilful hands. It is in this surface mass that the majority of the Hindu legends have floated down to our century. So preserved, it is not surprising that the old simple beauty of the ancient tales should have come to us marred and disfigured, as well as debased by association with later inventions which have no kernel of sweetness.

And yet very simple and beautiful, in their peculiar Hindu type, were these old legends with infinite possibilities of sweetness and feeling, and in the hands of great artists have blossomed into dramas and epics of the most delicate tenderness or the most noble sublimity. One who glances at the dead and clumsy narrative of the Shacountala legend in the Mahabharata and reads after it Kalidasa's masterpiece in which delicate dramatic art and gracious tenderness of feeling reach their climax, at once perceives how they vary with the hands which touch them.

But you are right. The Hindu myth has not the warm passionate life of the Greek. The Hindu mind was too austere and idealistic to be sufficiently sensitive to the rich poetical colouring inherent in crime and sin and overpowering passion; an Oedipus or an Agamemnon stands therefore outside the line of its creative faculty. Yet it had in revenge a power which you will perhaps think no compensation at all, but which to a certain class of minds, of whom I confess myself one, seems of a very real and distinct value. Inferior in warmth and colour and quick life and the savour of earth to the Greek, they had a superior spiritual loveliness and exaltation; not clothing the surface of the earth with imperishable beauty, they search deeper into the white-hot core of things and in their cyclic orbit of thought curve downward round the most hidden foundations of existence and upward over the highest, almost invisible arches of ideal possibility. Let me touch the subject a little more precisely. The difference between the Greek and Hindu temperaments was that one was vital, the other supra-vital; the one physical, the other metaphysical; the one sentient of sunlight as its natural atmosphere and the bound of its joyous activity, the other regarding it as a golden veil which hid from it beautiful and wonderful things for which it panted.¹ The Greek aimed at limited and finite perfection, because he felt vividly all our bounded existence; the Hindu mind, ranging into the infinite tended to the enormous and moved habitually in the sublime. This is poetically a dangerous tendency; finite beauty, symmetry and form are always lovely, and Greek legend, even when touched by inferior poets, must always keep something of its light and bloom and human grace or of its tragic human force. But the infinite is not for all hands to meddle with; it submits only to the compulsion of the mighty, and at the touch of an inferior mind recoils over the boundary of the sublime into the grotesque. Hence the enormous difference of level between different legends or the same legend in different hands,—the sublimity or tenderness of the best, the banality of the worst, with a little that is mediocre and intermediate shading the contrast away. To take with a reverent hand the old myths

¹ O fostering Sun, who hast hidden the face of Truth with the golden shield, displace that splendid veil from the vision of the righteous man, O Sun.

O fosterer, O solitary traveller, O Sun, O Master of Death, O child of God, dissipate thy beams, gather inward thy light; so shall I behold that splendour, thy goodliest form of all. For the Spirit who is there and there, He am I.

and cleanse them of soiling accretions, till they shine with some of the antique strength, simplicity and solemn depth of beautiful meaning, is an ambition which Hindu poets of today may and do worthily cherish. To accomplish a similar duty in a foreign tongue is a more perilous endeavour.

I have attempted in the following narrative to bring one of our old legends before the English public in a more attractive garb than could be cast over them by mere translation or by the too obvious handling of writers like Sir Edwin Arnold;—preserving its inner spirit and Hindu features, yet rejecting no device that might smooth away the sense of roughness and the bizarre which always haunts what is unfamiliar, and win for it the suffrage of a culture to which our mythological conventions are unknown and our canons of taste unacceptable. The attempt is necessarily beset with difficulties and pitfalls. If you think I have even in part succeeded, I shall be indeed gratified; if otherwise, I shall at least have the consolation of having failed where failure was more probable than success.

The story of Ruaru is told in the very latest accretion layer of the Mahabharata, in a bald and puerile narrative without force, beauty or insight. Yet it is among the most significant and powerful in idea of our legends; for it is rather an idea than a tale. Bhrigou, the grandfather of Ruaru, is almost the most august and venerable name in Vedic literature. Set there at the very threshold of Aryan history, he looms dim but large out of the mists of an incalculable antiquity, while around him move great shadows of unborn peoples and a tradition of huge half-discernible movements and vague but colossal revolutions. In later story his issue form one of the most sacred clans of Rishies, and Purshurama the destroyer of princes was of his offspring. By the Titaness Puloma this mighty seer and patriarch, himself one of the mind-children of Brahma had a son Chyavan,—who inherited even from the womb his father's personality, greatness and ascetic energy. Chyavan too became an instructor and former of historic minds and a father of civilisation; Ayus was among his pupils, the child of Pururavas by Urvashie and founder of the Lunar or Ilian dynasty whose princes after the great civil wars of the Mahabharata became Emperors of India. Chyavan's son Pramati, by an Apsara or nymph of paradise, begot a son named Ruaru, of whom this story is told. This Ruaru, later, became a great Rishi like his fathers, but in his youth he was engrossed with his love for a beautiful girl whom he had made his wife, the daughter of the Gundhurva King, Chitroruth, by the sky-nymph Menaca; an earlier sister therefore of Shacountala. Their joy of union was not yet old when Priyumvada perished, like Eurydice, by the fangs of a snake. Ruaru inconsolable for her loss, wandered miserable among the forests that had been the shelter and witnesses of their love, consuming the universe with his grief, until the Gods took pity on him and promised him his wife back, if he sacrificed for her half his life. To this Ruaru gladly assented and, the price paid, was reunited with his love

Such is the story, divested of the subsequent puerile developments by which it is linked on to the Mahabharata. If we compare it with the kindred tale of Eurydice, the distinction I have sought to draw between the Hindu and Greek mythopoetic faculty, justifies itself with great force and clearness. The incidents of Orpheus' descent into Hades, his conquering Death and Hell by his music and harping his love back to the sunlight, and the tragic loss of her at the moment of success through a too natural and beautiful human weakness, has infinite fancy, pathos, trembling human emotion. The Hindu tale, barren of this subtlety and variety is bare of incident and wanting in tragedy. It is merely a bare idea for a tale. Yet what an idea it supplies! How deep and searching is that thought of half the living man's life demanded as the inexorable price for the restoration of his dead! How it seems to knock at the very doors of human destiny, and give us a gust of air from worlds beyond our own suggesting illimitable and unfathomable thoughts of our potentialities and limitations.

I have ventured in this poem to combine, as far as might be, the two temperaments, the Greek pathetic and the Hindu mystic; yet I have carefully preserved the essence of the Hindu spirit and the Hindu mythological features. The essential idea of these Hindu legends, aiming, as they do, straight and sheer at the sublime and ideal, gives the writer no option but to attempt epic tone and form,—I speak of course of those which are not merely beautiful stories of domestic life. In the choice of an epic setting I had the alternative of entirely Hellenising the myth or adopting the method of Hindu epic. I have preferred the course which, I fear, will least recommend itself to you. The true subject of Hindu epic is always a struggle between two ideal forces universal and opposing, while the human and divine actors, the Supreme Triad excepted, are pawns moved to and fro by immense world-impulses which they express but cannot consciously guide. It is perhaps the Olympian ideal in life struggling with the Titanic ideal, and then we have a Ramaian. Or it may be the imperial ideal in government and society marshalling the forces of order, self-subjection, self-effacement, justice, equality, against the aristocratic ideal, with self-will, violence, independence, self-assertion, feudal loyalty, the sway of the sword and the right of the stronger at its back; this is the key of the Mahabharata. Or it is again, as in the tale of Savitrie, the passion of a single woman in its dreadful silence and strength pitted against Death, the divorcer of souls. Even in a purely domestic tale like the Romance of Nul, the central idea is that of the spirit of Degeneracy, the genius of the Iron age,—overpowered by a steadfast conjugal love. Similarly, in this story of Ruaru and Priyumvada the great spirits who preside over Love and Death, Cama and Yama, are the real actors and give its name to the poem.

The second essential feature of the Hindu epic model is one which you have selected for special condemnation and yet I have chosen to adhere to it in its entirety. The characters of Hindu legend are, you say, lifeless patterns of moral

excellence. Let me again distinguish. The greater figures of our epics are ideals, but ideals of wickedness as well as virtue and also of mixed characters which are not precisely either vicious or virtuous. They are, that is to say, ideal presentments of character-types. This also arises from the tendency of the Hindu creative mind to look behind the actors at tendencies, inspirations, ideals. Yet are these great figures; are Rama, Sita, Savitrie, merely patterns of moral excellence? I who have read their tale in the swift and mighty language of Valmeki and Vyasa and thrilled with their joys and their sorrows, cannot persuade myself that it is so. Surely Savitrie, that strong silent heart, with her powerful and subtly-indicated personality, has both life and charm; surely Rama puts too much divine fire into all he does to be a dead thing,—Sita is too gracious and sweet, too full of human lovingness and loveliness, of womanly weakness and womanly strength! Ruaru and Priyuvada are also types and ideals; love in them, such is the idea, finds not only its crowning exaltation but that perfect *idea* of itself of which every existing love is a partial and not quite successful manifestation. Ideal love is a triune energy, neither a mere sensual impulse, nor mere emotional nor mere spiritual. These may exist, but they are not love. By itself the sensual is only an animal need, the emotional a passing mood, the spiritual a religious aspiration which has lost its way. Yet all these are necessary elements of the highest passion. Sense impulse is as necessary to it as the warm earth-matter at its root to the tree, emotion as the air which consents with its life, spiritual aspiration as the light and the rain from heaven which prevent it from withering. My conception being an ideal struggle between love and death, two things are needed to give it poetical form, an adequate picture of love and an adequate image of death. The love pictured must be on the ideal plane, and touch therefore the farthest limit of strength in each of its three directions. The sensual must be emphasised to give it firm root and basis, the emotional to impart to it life, the spiritual to prolong it into infinite permanence. And if at their limits of extension the three meet and harmonise, if they are not triple but triune, then is that love a perfect love and the picture of it a perfect picture. Such at least is the conception of the poem; whether I have contrived even faintly to execute it, do you judge.

But when Hindu canons of taste, principles of epic-writing and types of thought and character are assimilated there are still serious difficulties in Englishing a Hindu legend. There is the danger of raising around the subject a jungle of uncouth words and unfamiliar allusions impenetrable to English readers. Those who have hitherto made the attempt, have succumbed to the passion for “local colour” or for a liberal peppering of Sanscrit words all over their verses, thus forming a constant stumbling-block and a source of irritation to the reader. Only so much local colour is admissible as comes naturally and unforced by the very nature of the subject; and for the introduction of a foreign word into poetry the one valid excuse is the entire absence of a fairly corresponding

word or phrase in the language itself. Yet a too frequent resort to this plea shows either a laziness in invention or an unseasonable learning. There are very few Sanscrit words or ideas, not of the technical kind, which do not admit of being approximately conveyed in English by direct rendering or by a little management, or, at the worst, by coining a word which, if not precisely significant of the original, will create some kindred association in the mind of an English reader. A slight inexactness is better than a laborious pedantry. I have therefore striven to avoid all that would be unnecessarily local and pedantic, even to the extent of occasionally using a Greek expression such as Hades for the lord of the underworld. I believe such uses to be legitimate, since they bring the poem nearer home to the imagination of the reader. On the other hand, there are some words one is loth to part with. I have myself been unable or unwilling to sacrifice such Indianisms as Rishi, Naga, for the snake-gods who inhabit the nether-world; Uswuttha, for the sacred fig-tree; Chompuc (but this has been made familiar by Shelley's exquisite lyric); Coil or Kokil, for the Indian cuckoo; and names like Dhurma (Law, Religion, Rule of Nature) and Critanta, the ender, for Yama, the Indian Hades. These, I think, are not more than a fairly patient reader may bear with. Mythological allusions, the indispensable setting of a Hindu legend, have been introduced sparingly, and all but one or two will explain themselves to a reader of sympathetic intelligence and some experience in poetry.

Yet are they, in some number, indispensable. The surroundings and epic machinery must necessarily be the ordinary Hindu surroundings and machinery. Properly treated, I do not think these are wanting in power and beauty of poetic suggestion. Ruaru, the grandson of Bhrigou, takes us back to the very beginnings of Aryan civilisation when our race dwelt and warred and sang within the frontier of the five rivers, Iravatie, Chundrobhaga, Shotodrou, Bitosta and Bipasha, and our Bengal was but a mother of wild beasts, clothed in the sombre mystery of virgin forests and gigantic rivers and with no human inhabitants save a few savage tribes, the scattered beginnings of nations. Accordingly the story is set in times when earth was yet new to her children, and the race was being created by princes like Pururavas and patriarchal sages or Rishies like Bhrigou, Brihauspati, Gautama. The Rishi was in that age the head of the human world. He was at once sage, poet, priest, scientist, prophet, educator, scholar and legislator. He composed a song, and it became one of the sacred hymns of the people; he emerged from rapt communion with God to utter some puissant sentence, which in after ages became the germ of mighty philosophies; he conducted a sacrifice, and kings and peoples rose on its seven flaming tongues to wealth and greatness; he formulated an observant aphorism, and it was made the foundation of some future science, ethical, practical or physical; he gave a decision in a dispute and his verdict was the seed of a great code or legislative theory. In Himalayan forests or by the confluence of great rivers he lived as the centre of

a patriarchal family whose link was thought-interchange and not blood-relationship, bright-eyed children of sages, heroic striplings, earnest pursuers of knowledge, destined to become themselves great Rishies or renowned leaders of thought and action. He himself was the master of all learning and all arts and all sciences. The Rishies won their knowledge by meditation working through inspiration to intuition. Austere concentration of the faculties stilled the waywardness of the reason and set free for its work the inner, unerring vision which is above reason, as reason is itself above sight; this again worked by intuitive flashes, one inspired stroke of insight quivering out close upon the other, till the whole formed a logical chain; yet a logic not coldly thought out nor the logic of argument but the logic of continuous and consistent inspiration. Those who sought the Eternal through physical austerities, such as the dwelling between five fires (one fire on each side and the noonday sun overhead) or lying for days on a bed of swordpoints, or Yoga processes based on an advanced physical science, belonged to a later day. The Rishies were inspired thinkers, not working through deductive reason or any physical process of sense-subdual. The energy of their personalities was colossal; wrestling in fierce meditation with God, they had become masters of incalculable spiritual energies, so that their anger could blast peoples and even the world was in danger when they opened their lips to utter a curse. This energy was by the principle of heredity transmitted, at least in the form of a latent and educable force, to their offspring. Afterwards as the vigour of the race exhausted itself, the inner fire dwindled and waned. But at first even the unborn child was divine. When Chyavan was in the womb, a Titan to whom his mother Puloma had been betrothed before she was given to Bhrigou, attempted to carry off his lost love in the absence of the Rishi. It is told that the child in the womb felt the affront and issued from his mother burning with such a fire of inherited divinity that the Titan ravisher fell blasted by the wrath of an infant. For the Rishies were not passionless. They were prone to anger and swift to love. In their pride of life and genius they indulged their yearnings for beauty, wedding the daughters of Titans or mingling with nymphs of Paradise in the august solitudes of hills and forests. From these were born those ancient and sacred clans of a pre-historic antiquity, Barghoves, Barhaspathas, Gautamas, Kasyapas, into which the descendants of the Aryan are to this day divided. Thus has India deified the great men who gave her civilisation.

On earth the Rishies, in heaven the Gods. These were great and shining beings who preserved the established cosmos against the Asuras, or Titans, spirits of disorder between whom and the Hindu Olympians there was ever warfare. Yet their hostility did not preclude occasional unions. Sachi herself, the Queen of Heaven, was a Titaness, daughter of the Asura, Puloman; Yayati, ally of the Gods, took to himself a Daitya maiden Surmishtha, child of imperial Vrishopurvan (for the Asuras or Daityas, on the terrestrial plane, signified

the adversaries of Aryan civilisation), and Bhrigou's wife, Puloma, was of the Titan blood. Chief of the Gods were Indra, King and Thunderer, who came down when men sacrificed and drank the Soma wine of the offering; Vaiou, the Wind; Agni, who is Hutaashon, devourer of the sacrifice, the spiritual energy of Fire; Varouna, the prince of the seas; Critanta, Death, the ender, who was called also Yama (Government) or Dhurma (Law) because from him are all order and stability, whether material or moral. And there were subtler presences; Cama, also named Modon or Monmuth, the God of desire, who rode on the parrot and carried five flowery arrows and a bow-string of linked honey-bees; his wife, Ruthie, the golden-limbed spirit of delight; Saraswatie, the Hindu Muse, who is also Vach or Word, the primal goddess,—she is the unexpressed idea of existence which by her expression takes visible form and being; for the word is prior to and more real, because more spiritual, than the thing it expresses; she is the daughter of Brahma and has inherited the creative power of her father, the wife of Vishnou and shares the preservative energy of her husband; Vasuquie, also, and Seshanaga, the great serpent with his hosts, whose name means finiteness and who represents Time and Space; he upholds the world on his hundred colossal hoods and is the couch of the Supreme who is Existence. There were also the angels who were a little less than the Gods; Yukshas, the Faery attendants of Kuvere, lord of wealth, who protect hoards and treasures and dwell in Ullacá, the city of beauty,

the hills of mist
Golden, the dwelling-place of Faery kings,
And mansions by unearthly moonlight kissed:—
For one dwells there whose brow with the young moon
Lightens as with a marvellous amethyst—

Ullaca, city of beauty, where no thought enters but that of love, no age but that of youth, no season but that of flowers. Then there are the Gundhurvas, beautiful, brave and melodious beings, the artists, musicians, poets and shining warriors of heaven; Kinnaries, Centaureses of sky and hill with voices of Siren melody; Opsaras, sky-nymphs, children of Ocean, who dwell in Heaven, its songstresses and daughters of joy, and who often mingle in love with mortals. Nor must we forget our own mother, Ganges, the triple and mystic river, who is Mundaquinie, Ganges of the Gods, in heaven, Bhagirathie or Jahnavie, Ganges of men, on earth, and Boithorinie or coiling Bhogavatie, Ganges of the dead, in Patala, the grey under-world and kingdom of serpents, and in the sombre dominions of Yama, Saraswatie, namesake and shadow of the Muse, preceded her in her sacredness; but the banks of those once pure waters have long passed to the barbarian and been denounced as unclean and uninhabitable to our race, while the deity has passed to that other mysterious under-ground stream which

joins Ganges and Yamuna in their tryst at Prayaga.

Are there not here sufficient features of poetical promise, sufficient materials of beauty for the artist to weave into immortal visions? I would gladly think that there are, that I am not cheating myself with delusions when I seem to find in this yet untrodden path,

via... qua me quoque possim
Tollere humo victorque virum volitare per oras.¹

“Granted,” you will say, “but still *Quorsum haec putida tendunt?*² or how does it explain the dedication to me of a style of work at entire variance with my own tastes and preferences?” But the value of a gift depends on the spirit of the giver rather than on its own suitability to the recipient. Will you accept this poem as part-payment of a deep intellectual debt I have been long owing to you? Unknown to yourself, you taught and encouraged me from my childhood to be a poet. From your sun my farthing rush-light was kindled, and it was in your path that I long strove to guide my uncertain and faltering footsteps. If I have now in the inevitable development of an independent temperament in independent surroundings departed from your guidance and entered into a path, perhaps thornier and more rugged, but my own, it does not lessen the obligation of that first light and example. It is my hope that in the enduring fame which your calmer and more luminous genius must one day bring you, on a distant verge of the skies and lower plane of planetary existence, some ray of my name may survive and it be thought no injury to your memory that the first considerable effort of my powers was dedicated to you.

¹ “a way by which I might lift myself too from the ground and fly, a conqueror, through the regions of the heroes”

² “Whither is this rubbish ending?”

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO FROM NIRODBARAN'S NOTEBOOK

CONCERNING A AND HIS EXPERIENCES

10 August 1941

N: A, who has come for the first time, met Dilip in Calcutta in 1937 and 1938. After Dilip's return to the Ashram for the August Darshan of 1938, A wrote him a letter. He said he was going through a severe crisis. He seemed to be enveloped by darkness all 24 hours, and felt something was trying to throttle him. It is not that he did not see daylight but the feeling of darkness was overwhelming, and though there was no physical discomfort, the choking feeling was very real. He did not feel like doing anything though his B.A. examination was only a few months away. There was no earthly reason for his condition he said, there was no dissension in the family, lack of money, etc. So he wrote to Dilip that he thought it was owing to something in himself. He asked whether Sri Aurobindo could help and what he would have to do for it.

Dilip, says A, gave a beautiful, encouraging and re-assuring answer. He said he sympathized with A's anguish and hoped that it would not last long. He said that he thought it was owing to something in A wanting a new birth. Till then forces of Nature had dominated him and now something in A, his *antarātmā*, was rebelling against that domination and naturally the old forces were re-asserting themselves with double vigour. Dilip said it was a very good sign and hoped that something really worthwhile would come out of the crisis. He asked A to write a letter, preferably typewritten, to Sri Aurobindo and, if he wished, to the Mother also and, if possible, to enclose a passport-size photograph of his. He assured A that Sri Aurobindo could certainly help. A did as Dilip had suggested and Dilip sent the letters to you. He also enclosed for the Mother an introductory letter in which he gave his impressions of A, his family background etc. and enclosed the photograph. The Mother sent back Dilip's letter to him with this remark in the margin of the last page: "It is a beautiful face, he must be a charming boy. He may write of his experiences."

A says that he had *diksha* from you. He adds that he wrote a letter each to you and the Mother after getting permission to do so. He also sent a photograph of his with his letter to the Mother. The Mother in her reply made a comment on the photograph and said he could write of his experiences, and sent him a packet of blessings flowers. He says he got the letter in the afternoon around half-past five and, as soon as he opened it and took the blessings packet in his hand, something happened. He saw a column of white light which was at the same time force coming down from above, touching the crown of his head and entering his body. Eventually it went down to his feet. He says this was *Shakti-sanchar*. He has asked me to report this to you.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Anything else?

N: He says that he had more to report but that he is waiting for your reaction.

11 August 1941

N: A says he is very grateful to you for confirming his experience. He related something about you which he had heard from a friend of his. He went to see this friend who is a Tantrik-cum-astrologer. He had your book *The Mother* with him. The friend on seeing the book folded his hands and touched his forehead with them in the normal Indian manner. A asked the friend why he did so: was it for the subject of the book or was it for the author? The friend simply said, "*Bhagabaner boi*" ("God's book"). Then he became quite solemn and quietly said, "I have got his horoscope", to which A replied, "That's interesting. God's horoscope?" The friend chided him, "Don't be flippant, I really mean it, I have it." A realised that the friend was serious and he, also becoming so, asked him, "All right, what is your reading?" "In 1947," answered the friend, "he will become the *ekachchhatra adhipati* ("unchallenged sovereign of the whole world.").

SRI AUROBINDO: 1947? Then I will do things quicker than Hitler! (*Turning to Manilal*) What post will you have, Manilal?

MANILAL: Nothing, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, you must have something to do.

MANILAL: Sir, I'll be at your feet.

SRI AUROBINDO: I'll make you the Chief of the World Medical Service.

12 August 1941

N: A says that the day after he had his *dikṣā* he started meditating without any apparent effort, even without any resolve to meditate. He says he got up at about 4 o'clock in the morning and then after having a wash he went down to his study and started to meditate. Soon he began to have experiences. He says that the first thing he noticed was that the walls of the room were vibrant, full of life and not any more made of solid matter. Two or three days later it was a force which was light, a kind of consciousness. After eight days he had a concrete experience of everything in the room being made of delight. He found it was the same substance of bliss which was in him and around him. He says this experience lasted with him for a month. He felt a joy always, and even for people of whom he was not particularly fond he had a spontaneous sympathy and love. He felt a great love even for animals he did not particularly like.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has had one of the highest experiences of Yoga.

N: A says that seventeen days after he had started meditating, he saw during the night when he was asleep a young woman standing by his bed. Even in his sleep he felt very alert and was sure that the apparition was not good though the woman seemed to be sad and her eyes appeared to appeal for help. He

heard a voice within him saying, "Go away." He felt it was not his own voice and yet it sounded exactly like it. He now takes it to be a command from a deeper part of himself. The woman did not seem to hear it, instead became more appealing with her eyes. After a while she seemed to stir a bit as if she might go nearer the bed. The voice within A went on repeating all the while "Go away" but when the woman seemed to be on the point of moving, it shouted with great force, "GO AWAY." The woman crumpled on to the floor without leaving any trace. A woke up, felt great relief, light and joy. He happened to look in a mirror in his room and there was a splendid light on his face.

SRI AUROBINDO: His inner being has rejected sex altogether.

13 August 1941

N: A has asked if the inner being means the psychic being.

SRI AUROBINDO: It also means the inner physical, the inner vital and the inner mental being. The psychic is the inmost being.

N: A has asked: "Aren't the gains in the inner consciousness to be worked out in the outer being?"

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the ultimate aim is to transform the total being and nature.

N: A has requested me to convey his gratitude to you and the Mother. (*Sri Aurobindo looked pleased.*)

19 August 1944

N: A says that he went to see someone who was a reputable astrologer, a different person from the one about whom I spoke to you some years ago. A relation of his sent him to this man to consult him about her son. A had your book *Essays on the Gita* with him and, on seeing it, the astrologer made the gesture of *namaskār*. On being asked why he did so and whether it was for the author or the book, he replied, "*Bhagabaner boi*" ("God's book"), the same words as the other man had said. He also said that he had not only your horoscope but also your birth-chart from yourself.

SRI AUROBINDO: How?

N: A says the astrologer told the following story. Sometime before November 1926, he had written to you requesting you to send him the date and time of your birth. He also wrote that he analysed the birth charts of great people as a matter of scientific interest and not for financial gain. He asked you whether he could do the same in your case. Then, A says, the astrologer appeared to be very moved and with obvious gratitude in his voice said that besides sending him the date and time of your birth, you had drawn a chart for him. But you had said that you would rather that he did not write and publish anything about you. The man commented: "Sri Aurobindo could have just told me not to write about him, instead he requested me not to do so. That is a sign of greatness."

Asked whether he had published anything about you, he answered, "How could I after Sri Aurobindo himself had said that he would not like me to do it." A asked him what his reading was. His answer was: "In 1947 his philosophy will become the basis of a new world civilisation and culture. Nothing can stop that." He added that he had read thousands of horoscopes but never seen the same time of birth as yours. He said it had all the signs of a unique greatness. A says he emphasised "unique", *ananyasādhāran*.

*

June 1945, one day around 4 a.m. A woke up from a sound sleep and found to his surprise something which had never happened before: *japa*, repetition of the names of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, was occurring spontaneously within him. After a time he felt the life-force and a diffused consciousness in him rising up through his body from the feet towards the centre (*chakra*) between the eyebrows. The consciousness formed itself into a reddish golden ball and appeared right in front of that centre. A was still in bed. He saw the mosquito-net, the pole holding it, the bedstead, the books on the shelves built into the walls and the walls themselves vanish into nothingness. After a while all that was there was bare Awareness. It was not awareness of anything, there was nothing to be aware of—nor did A feel he was experiencing Awareness, there was no experience but sheer consciousness. It was only later in the day when the intensity of Awareness became less and began to disappear gradually that A felt he had had an extraordinary experience. He felt a great detachment from everything and a strong disinclination to do anything. He carried on his domestic and professional duties—he was then teaching at a university in a town in north India—but had no sense of involvement in them.

A had a strong streak of *tāmasikatā*, inertia, in his nature. He knew that Sri Aurobindo's was a dynamic Yoga and that *apavrtti*, disinclination to work, was not only no part of it but a great obstacle to progress. He felt a division in his being and nature which produced in him a sense of despair. So when he came to the Ashram in June 1946 after having experienced pure Awareness, he wrote to Sri Aurobindo describing the experience and also about the strong element of inertia in his nature and asked him whether his interpretation of the experience, that it was of the silent Self, was correct and told him that he wanted to shed his inertia and prayed to the Master to assign some work to him so that he could discipline himself. A's letter was read out to Sri Aurobindo by me and he dictated the reply given below. After it was read back to him, he asked me to give it to A.

SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTER

Your analysis is perfectly correct.

Realisation of the silent, inactive Brahman is no bar to the dynamic side of

the Yoga, often it is the first step. One must not associate it with attachment to inertia. The silent Brahman is attached to nothing. Your mind is associated with inertia and attached to it.

Work itself is no solution, the spirit behind the work is important. The real remedy is to open oneself to the Force. When one gets free through the silent Brahman, one does not go back to the old way of work. By this liberation one becomes free from the ego, one becomes an instrument of the Divine Force by receiving the Force and feels its working; then inertia goes away and work in a new way becomes possible. Until that can be, one has to work in the ordinary way. But becoming an instrument of the Divine is the proper way.

I had the realisation of sublime Nirvana first. There was complete *Chitta-vṛtti nirodha*, entire silence. Then came the experience of action, not my own, but from above. One has to grow into it unless it comes easily.

26.6.1946

*

A felt disappointed that Sri Aurobindo had not given him any guidance to do anything specific. His idea was that if Sri Aurobindo had told him to do something, whatever it might be, he would try to carry it out diligently and regularly and thus overcome the inertia in his nature. A has told me that he came to realise why Sri Aurobindo did not ask him to do anything. If he had and if A could not have fulfilled it, it would have been a failure to carry out the Guru's *ādesha* which might mean spiritual disaster. A says that it was out of compassion that Sri Aurobindo did not grant his prayer for a clear "command" to do something.

A discussed the matter with the Mother at the same time as he wrote to Sri Aurobindo about his problem. The Mother also did not assign any specific task though A had asked her for it as he was going to stay in the Ashram for nearly two months. A few days passed, but the Mother only said she would consider what A might do. On being asked a third time she simply said, "You are not used to work, A, are you?" A answered quietly, "No, Mother, I am not." And A had told me that they both had a laugh.

A has reported to me that the Mother made the remark with such compassion and love and simple humour that he could not feel hurt or offended. He also said that the incident showed the Mother's great insight into people's characters. Incidentally, the Mother did tell him in response to his prayer for some guidance that if he wanted to get over his inertia he should make a resolution, for example, to read one paragraph of *The Life Divine* every day and then stick to the resolution with diligence. She further told him not to worry about work during that particular stay in the Ashram but to enjoy himself.

27 June 1948

N: A has just written that five days back he was taking a bath in the afternoon and, when he had nearly finished and was feeling cool and comfortable, he started singing a *bhajan* of Mirabai. Towards the end the word Mira occurred and he was playing on it, repeating it over and over again. He says his mind suddenly became very indrawn and he felt a descent of peace. He writes he had to go to a meeting at the Pathamandir. He says he did all that he had to do in the milling crowd of Bowbazar and College Street but the feeling of peace never left him. He has written to me to ask you whether the Mother's name—but it did not occur to him that it was the Mother's name he was repeating—has the power to bring such experiences.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has got it. Why does he ask? Of course the Mother's name has the power.

O RESTLESS HEART

O RESTLESS heart, the love you seek
 In humans is so ephemeral, weak!
 Give up your blinded stray desire,
 For the way of all flesh is only the pyre. ~
 Let all yourself be in your giving:
 Loving the Eternal is the life worth living.
 When into your void His light will pour,
 Your soul to unseen heights will soar.
 His veil no more will cover your eyes:
 Then truth takes birth and sorrow dies.
 When Himself to you will His grace reveal,
 Know then your life has His great seal.
 Within yourself you'll find His role
 And cry, "My Lord is the Soul of my soul!"

VIKAS BAMBA

GOLCONDE: A LOOK BEHIND

COMPILER'S NOTE

This essay is an arrangement of material about Golconde that has been deposited with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library. The first part deals with the conception and form of the building; the second with its designers and builders and the circumstances of its construction. The compiler and the Archives would be happy to receive additional information about this exceptional building and those who were the Mother's instruments in realising it.

SHRADDHAVAN

PART ONE: THE BUILDING

1. The Conception

WALKING to her lodgings from the Ashram Main Building, a sadhika mused: "We have heard of the magnificence, beauty, grace and cleanliness of Dwarka, Mathura and Ayodhya in the days when Krishna and Rama walked their streets ... How is it, Mother, that when both you and Sri Aurobindo have hallowed Pondicherry by making it your home, we still see so much dirt, ugliness and squalor around us here?" As if in answer to her thought, she heard the Mother say, "Ah, my child... but *this* is what I had in mind." And looking up, she realised that she was passing Golconde. Years later she recounted this experience to Mona, the housekeeper of the building, who told her that the Mother had planned Golconde to be only the first of a series of beautiful buildings to house her children.

Many architects feel a conviction that if only they could create perfectly beautiful surroundings for people to spend their lives in, amid harmonious proportions and fine materials finely used, the entire consciousness of the inhabitants would be uplifted and refined. This aspiration underlies their work, even though as a rule they have to compromise with the limitations set them by circumstances and their clients, who rarely share their vision. The Mother endorsed this way of seeing things when she gave as an inaugural message for the Last School building in Auroville—which was designed by Roger Anger with just such an aspiration—"In the physical, the Divine manifests as Beauty."

Her intention in building Golconde has been expressed for us by Sri Aurobindo:

First, Mother believes in beauty as a part of spirituality and divine living; secondly, she believes that physical things have the Divine Consciousness underlying them as much as living things; and thirdly that they have an

individuality of their own and ought to be properly treated, used in the right way, not misused or improperly handled or hurt or neglected so that they perish soon or lose their full beauty or value;... it is on this basis that she planned the Golconde. First, she wanted a high architectural beauty...; but also she wanted all the objects in it, the rooms, the fittings, the furniture to be individually artistic and to form a harmonious whole.... Moreover, each thing was arranged to have its own use, for each thing there was a place, and there should be no mixing up, or confused or wrong use.... The Mother hoped that if right people were accommodated there, or others trained to a less rough and ready living than is common, her ideas could be preserved.¹

Now it is fifty years since the construction of Golconde was started, and this very special building is more and more receiving the appreciation of those whose gifts and training best fit them to recognise what a remarkable achievement it is. For example, Charles Correa—one of the most outstanding architects in India today, and one with a high international reputation—when writing the catalogue of an exhibition of modern architecture in India for the U.S.A. “Festival of India”. In this catalogue, Correa singled out Golconde as “the finest example of modern functional architecture built in India in the pre-Independence period.”² And at the “Solar World” Congress held in Perth, Western Australia, on August 15, 1983, Golconde was cited as one of the four outstanding buildings of the bio-climatic period (1933-63) of solar architecture, in the following terms:

In one of the most remote parts of India, one of the most advanced buildings in the world was constructed under the most demanding of circumstances concerning material and craftsmen. This reinforced concrete structure was completed primarily by unskilled volunteers with the most uncertain of supplies, and with virtually every fitting custom-fabricated. Yet this handsome building has a world stature, both architecturally and in its bio-climatic response to a tropical climate 13° N of the equator. It has the reputation of being the most comfortable building in Pondicherry, although it has no mechanical cooling system.³

The chief architect himself, Antonin Raymond, in an autobiographical article, referred to Golconde as “the best architecture of my career”. And he gave very specific reasons for why he was able to achieve his best in the special conditions existing in Pondicherry at that time. It will be worthwhile to quote the passage in full:

Our eight months at the Ashram (in 1938) were extremely fruitful and instructive. Not only was the life in this Indian monastery the revelation of another way of life, but the conditions under which the work of the building

was done were so remarkable when compared to those we had known in this materially bewildered world, that we lived as in a dream. No time, no money, were stipulated in the contract. There was no contract. Here indeed was an ideal state of existence in which the purpose of all activity was clearly a spiritual one. The purpose, as a matter of fact, of the dormitory was not primarily the housing of the disciples; it was the creating of an activity, the materialisation of an idea, by which the disciples might learn, might experience, might develop, through contact with the erection of a fine building. Time and money were of secondary value. This situation was quite other than the usual one of being pinched between a client and a contractor. Here everything was done to free the architect completely so that he might give himself entirely to his art and science.

And yet, simultaneously, on the job perfect order was maintained, every nail was counted. Among various disciples chosen to work on the building, this one engrossed in the business of testing the soil might have been a retired dentist; the one responsible for opening and closing the gate—he actually had been a banker—did his job with a conscientiousness impossible to obtain in a world where a man listens for the sound of the 5 o'clock whistle. There were engineers amongst the disciples: everyone lent a hand.

Under the invisible guidance of the leaders of the Ashram, whose presence was always felt, to whom daily all was reported, whose concern was the spiritual growth of each member of the community, I achieved the best architecture of my career. Golconde, the dormitory was called....⁴

Some words of Agnes Sammer, wife of one of the other architects who worked with Raymond on Golconde, are also revealing. She recalls her husband, František Sammer, telling her of the architects' conferences with the Mother, and of his amazement at the Mother's attitude, expressed in the words, "Don't consider the amount of money and the amount of time; I want a good building."⁵ She tells, too, of the day when her husband, an atheist and materialist, came home from his work deeply moved. "I have just witnessed a miracle!" he told her. On the building-site he and others had been discussing a technical problem that none of them could find a solution for. There were two engineers—Pavitra and Chandulal—and two architects—Sammer himself and George Nakashima. After long and fruitless arguments, Pavitra suggested that they should present the problem to the Mother and see what suggestion she could offer. Sammer said, "But we can't disturb her with a matter of this kind. It is for us to solve it. She has no training in engineering." Pavitra replied, "You'll see. Come, let's go." The Mother received them at once and listened attentively to their explanations of the difficulty. After a few moments of silence she said, "Can it be done this way...?" and described a solution which they all agreed was the only reasonable and usable one.⁶

Agnes, given the name of "Agni" by Sri Aurobindo, has her own way of expressing the significance of Golconde:

The realisation of Golconde was not merely the constructing of a beautiful modern house in reinforced concrete for sadhaks, but a vehicle for the spiritual awakening and development of innumerable people who otherwise might not have been touched by the Light for a long time to come.

It was the first practical means of contact and communication of any important size between East and West that the Ashram had.

From many points of view Golconde is a milestone in the spiritual growth of the sadhaks and the Ashram. In its way, it too is a temple, joining men and women of all the world irrevocably to the Divine, like a "jewel" from the original mine that gave it its name.⁷

(To be continued)

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THE SERVICE TREE

A TALK BY DYUMAN-BHAI ON 2nd FEBRUARY 1988 OUTSIDE
HIS ASHRAM ROOM

UPTIL now we know that Hanuman was the greatest servant, *dāsa*. Today I will tell you how Sri Aurobindo used to serve the Mother, how he waited for the Mother when she was late.

We usually had the night-meditation at 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock or 1.40 a.m. One night after 11, seeing the people waiting, the Mother said, "I am coming." Then she rested. She went into a trance. Now it was 1.40 a.m. People were waiting downstairs. Sri Aurobindo was waiting in his room. The Mother was not to be found. Where is the Mother? I went and tried to wake her up. There was no response. I went to Sri Aurobindo. I found him sitting on his bed waiting for the Mother from 11 o'clock... I said, "She is in a trance." He replied, "Wait 3 minutes, wait 5 minutes. If she doesn't get up, tell the people to go home." I waited, no response from the Mother. I went again to Sri Aurobindo and told him, "She is still in a trance." "Tell the people to go home." At 1.45 a.m. I went to the small window half-way down the Meditation-Hall staircase and announced, "Sri Aurobindo says, 'Go home'." Then the Mother woke up and actually started running. "Ah! they are all waiting!" "No, Mother, Sri Aurobindo asked them to go home." "But food for Sri Aurobindo?" Sri Aurobindo, like a *dāsa*, had been waiting for her all the time.

She gave him food after 1.45 a.m. He had waited for nearly three hours, just sitting and waiting. That is why Sri Aurobindo is the greatest *dasa*, servitor of the Mother. Equally, the Mother was a servitor to Sri Aurobindo. Till now nobody has been born greater than the Mother as a servitor to Sri Aurobindo, to the Lord, nor greater than Sri Aurobindo to the Mother Divine, *Adishakti*. He worshipped Her. He served Her. It's in this context that the name "Service" was given to the tree. None of us had any idea.

The Ashram consisted of four different houses. One by one they were hired or purchased and joined together. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo were staying in the Library House—what is now the entrance to the Ashram. They came to this house on 8 February 1927. Subsequently new building-work started. To wash the bricks for this work and for the cement, three tanks were built in 1930. From Prosperity Hall to Ravindra's fruit-room all was newly built.

There was a mango tree where the Service Tree now stands. The mango tree was to be cut down, the Mother asked us to get a Service Tree (plant) from the Botanical garden. As Parichand is now the Ashram gardener, Manubhai was then the gardener—his helpers were Ambu and Dyuman. Manubhai is gone, Ambu is here still, Dyuman also is here. The tree was planted on a Tuesday. Why this was done we couldn't make out. In 1930 it was planted.

Did the Mother plant it herself?

No, the Mother asked us to plant it. The place those days was full of cats—would go on the roof, drop the tiles, because they would always fight; and there was always a lot of noise. They were everywhere. So we asked the Mother, Why not remove this? why not remove that?" "No, no! If you want, you may fill up these three tanks with sand or something and put ferns on top." We did that when Sri Aurobindo left his body. She said (now listen carefully), "I want to keep him in the centre of the Ashram. There are three tanks—keep the western side tank as it is, the other two you can make one. Go deep down 10 feet. Put Sri Aurobindo at the bottom. At 5 feet put a slab." Then she uttered a prophecy for herself—"If something happens to me, put me there." So, accordingly, He is below, then comes the Mother, and at the top you go and surrender yourselves to Her and to Sri Aurobindo. And thus Sri Aurobindo and this Mother we are all serving. That is the gist of the beginning of the Service Tree.

Whom does it serve? I told you, "The Mother and Sri Aurobindo." How each of them served each other I have told you. Why the place was kept there from 1930, that she knew, though she was telling us, though Sri Aurobindo was telling us from 1920 that he would remain for ever and 24th November 1926 was declared the Day of Victory, and two days later was the Immortality Day. The Mother brought down the Force of Immortality. But the Divine Grace has other ways. He left his body and the Mother decided to keep him in this Ashram at the centre, not outside, so that this becomes the centre of the universe and the universe comes to the Lord for the new life and She merges into Him. This is called Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi. She merged into him. No separation between the two.

The tanks were here, and we have heard that there was a kitchen somewhere.

That was on the southern side. When the Ashram started, the Ashram meant formerly Sri Aurobindo and around him some of his people—not relatives but those who followed him. They were here. Then when the Overmind's descent took place on the 24th November 1926 the Mother and Sri Aurobindo thought, "What we have received is a surety for the next thing—the Supramental Descent, why not give facilities to aspiring souls?" Remember these words: "Let's give them facilities so that they may aspire more and something more may come down upon earth." For this reason they called this establishment the Ashram. There was no other suitable name. So we had the kitchen and the dining room here, not there, from 1927-1934. On January 4, 1934 we shifted from here to the present dining room building.

Where was the mango tree?

When we purchased this house the mango tree was in the centre of the courtyard, where there is the coconut tree now.

Was it cut down?

The tree died and we had to remove it. There are old pictures (Nirmala's brother is a drawing teacher, he must be having those pictures, you can see the tree there).

Were there any mangoes?

No, we never received any mangoes, never. But under that tree were all our departments: lime, bricks, tin-making, workshops, were here in this small place. Nowadays we have so many departments separately.

When did you come here?

I came in 1924. I met Sri Aurobindo. In those days there was no staying arrangements. He asked me to go back. I told him, "As you are asking me to go, I am going but I shall come back, for this is the home for me." Home, I made a difference between a home and the Ashram, because I belong to a home. And I came back in 1927 when the Ashram began and I am still here.

Did you water the Service Tree every day?

Yes, Ambu and I. You know Ambu? He stays at Nanteuil. He came in 1928 as a young boy. We were a gang of workers. These are the stories of 60 years ago.

Were there tanks where the Samadhi is now?

There were three tanks. Here the wall was removed. Where you take tulsi leaves from the Samadhi, that was the third tank. The wall in between was removed. On the morning of December 5, Sri Aurobindo left his body at 1.26 a.m., and the work began. On the morning of the 6th when the Mother went to his room, she found that his body was changing its colour and becoming golden. Usually bodies become black after death. On the morning of the 7th, it became more luminous and on the 8th even more so. But according to the law we couldn't keep the body for long. So the doctor of the General Hospital had to be called to certify that the body was intact, in perfect condition. On the morning of the 9th, it showed some signs of discoloration and it was decided to bring it down. By the middle staircase it was brought down from his room.

At one time, the Mother had the idea: "Here there are too many people,

too much noise. I wish I could give Sri Aurobindo solitude." She thought of purchasing the Trésor House where Dr. Satyavrata has his Nursing Home now. Then Sri Aurobindo said, "No, if I move, the whole world will tumble down. I won't move at all." And he remained here, so much so that no rain, no cyclone could disturb him. He was engrossed deeply in his work.

Once there was a big cyclone. The Mother rushed to his room to close the windows. He had no idea that there was a cyclone raging outside. He was writing, that's all. So that was Sri Aurobindo.

When you planted the Service Tree, didn't the cats disturb it?

No, the cats did not disturb it and everything—the cats, etc.—remained unchanged till 1945. When the Second World War was going on, there was the threat that the Japanese might come and drop bombs here, then we built a new house where two old houses had stood.

When was the concrete structure built to hold the branches of the Service Tree?

The Service tree began to grow, the branches began to go on the roof of the old house. We had to remove the old house. What to do with the branches? So this scaffolding was built—what we call the Sanchi railings were created. They were done by Sammer the architect from Czechoslovakia who had come here with Raymond and Nakashima and together the three of them built Golconde. So this whole creation in the Ashram courtyard was by Sammer and at the foot of each pillar you'll find a square place. You see, the Mother used to come in the evening on the terrace and give meditation. Her idea was to have grass in each square but that could not be done, so pebbles were put.

When was this built?

The whole thing started from 1930-32. When the first-floor room was ready, then the Mother came there on 24th April 1932. She used to be in the small corner room where Champaklal now stays.

Did the Service Tree grow very fast?

Yes, because of all-round protection and then water, and thirdly because the Mother was always looking at it. The Mother is responsible for its growth. So often in cyclonic weather the branches were broken. If you look carefully, you'll see that many have been cut. As they were broken we had to cut them off.

Didn't the roots disturb the place where Sri Aurobindo's body has been kept?

Well, I haven't gone down where the body has been kept, so I can't say.

But when the pit was being prepared?

No, at that time nothing. Then the tree was very young. Now it's very big—a giant tree. But 38 years back, it was only 20 years old. Now the roots are moving everywhere. They have even crossed the wall and gone on the other side.

Is the tree still young?

I'll give you the picture of the Service Tree filled with flowers. When it was 50 years old, the picture was distributed to everybody. I don't think any of you were here at that time—in 1980.

Some children—*I was here, I was here, I was.....*

Oh, you were here, then you must have received the picture. I'll give it to the rest of you. There's another thing. I am happy to give it to you, because one day you also will become like Ratna and then like me and older still!

When the Mother's birth centenary came, you were there. That's because it was 10 years ago: 1978.

Some children—*We were there.*

It was in '78 February when the Mother's birth centenary was coming that Ratna's younger sister said, "Give us something which has been used by the Mother." Another one said, "Give us something of Sri Aurobindo."

So here they are. (*Distribution of some of the folders remaining over from the lot that had been distributed on 21st February 1978.*) Do you like them? A piece of the sari used by the Mother, a piece of the dhoti used by Sri Aurobindo in each one. That's the Grace that has come upon you today.

O.K. Ratna? Happy? Bring both the packets. There are sweets for you. Now sit down, I'll give them one by one. I always remember Ratna's younger sister. Because of her this was possible.

Why are the petals of the symbols in different colours?

Different colours show different aspects of the Divine.

Has the Mother given these colours?

Yes, the Mother has given them. We also distributed napkins to all. I'll give them to you now.

Who made these napkins?

They were made at Hablik's; they are an Ashram product.

I thank Ratna to have brought you all here and have given me a chance to be with you.

We are getting these exactly after 10 years.

Oh! that reminds me of something else. How many children are you?

We use the word "Mother". But why? It is because in 1926 Sri Aurobindo said: "The Mother." It was written calligraphically, then printed. This was also given in 1978.

Did Gauri-di write it?

No, not Gauri, Ange's mother. All of you happy?

What was your age when you came here?

I was 21. I wandered about everywhere. I wanted to be an Himalayan monk, I went to the Belur Math of Ramakrishna, I went to Shantiniketan. I wandered. I was destined to be here to give you all these things.

THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

IN THE LIGHT OF HER PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

(Continued from the issue of December 1988)

“SERVICE to the Divine”: the connotation of these words as it emerges from the Mother’s prayers gives the key-note of the earth’s evolution and of spiritual fulfilment. Here the question can arise: “What is evolution?”

In the general view of science ever since the appearance of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, man is the product of a mechanical biological process. But several Western philosophers have taken a teleological view of evolution. For Hegel, this world-process is that of Spirit becoming conscious of itself as freedom. Hegel states: “It must be observed at the outset that the phenomenon we investigate—Universal History—belongs to the realm of Spirit.”¹ He further states: “The destiny of the spiritual world, and since this is the substantial world, while the physical remains subordinate to it, or in the language of speculation, has no truth as against the spiritual—the final cause of the world at large, we allege to be the consciousness of its own freedom on the part of Spirit, and *ipso facto*, the reality of that freedom.”²

Sri Aurobindo, while affirming like Hegel a movement essentially of Spirit, has a wider and more varied vision of the world-process. He writes: “It is true that the world’s movement is not a straight line; there are cycles, there are spirals, but still it circles, not round the same point always, but round an ever advancing centre, and therefore it never returns exactly upon its old path and never goes really backward.”³

But further Sri Aurobindo says: “An involution of spirit in the Inconscience is the beginning; and evolution in the Ignorance with its play of the possibilities of a partial developing knowledge is the middle, and the cause of the anomalies of our present nature,—our imperfection is the sign of a transitional state, a growth not yet complete, an effort that is finding its way; a consummation in a deployment of the spirit’s self-knowledge and the self-power of its divine being and consciousness is the culmination...”⁴

The philosopher Alexander’s evolutionary theory has some contact in thought with that of Sri Aurobindo. Both see an emergent world-process and speak of higher forms of developing life and both open the prospect of the arrival of a higher consciousness than ours. In Sri Aurobindo’s view, the world’s evolution is not merely continuous but requires a divine descent to move it upward towards perfection.

The divine descent at its fullest takes the form of the Incarnate Divine, the Avatar. Sri Aurobindo explains: “The Avatar may descend as a great spiritual teacher and saviour, the Christ, the Buddha, but always his work leads, after

he has finished his earthly manifestation, to a profound and powerful change not only in the ethical, but in the social and outward life and ideals of the race. He may, on the other hand, descend as an incarnation of the divine life, the divine personality and power in its characteristic action, for a mission ostensibly social, ethical and political, as is represented in the story of Rama or Krishna; but always then this descent becomes in the soul of the race a permanent power for the inner living and the spiritual rebirth.”⁵

Sri Aurobindo has expounded the course of evolution in the following words: “An involution of the Divine Existence, the spiritual Reality, in the apparent inconscience of Matter is the starting-point of the evolution. But that Reality is in its nature an eternal Existence, Consciousness, Delight of Existence: the evolution must then be an emergence of this Existence, Consciousness, Delight of Existence, not at first in its essence or totality but in evolutionary forms that express or disguise it. Out of the Inconscient, Existence appears in a first evolutionary form as substance of Matter created by an inconscient Energy. Consciousness, involved and non-apparent in Matter, first emerges in the disguise of vital vibrations, animate but subconscious; then, in imperfect formulations of a conscient life, it strives towards self-finding through successive forms of that material substance, forms more and more adapted to its own complete expression.”⁶

About the two views based on evolution by old and modern thinkers and philosophers, Sri Aurobindo says: “The scientific idea starts from physical being and makes the psychical a result and circumstance of body; this other evolutionary idea starts from soul and sees in the physical being an instrumentation for the awakening to itself of a spirit absorbed in the universe of Matter.”⁷

In connection with Sri Aurobindo’s vision of evolution it is relevant to quote what some disciples of his asked him: “Who is Mother?” The glowing answer came: “The Life Divine in course of evolution, the Divine Consciousness at work in Matter—that, so to speak, is what this existence represents.”⁸

The Mother’s *Prayers and Meditations* stands for the truth of what Sri Aurobindo has said in the above lines. In this book, she is an instrument of the supreme conscious Law, who should work for the earth-consciousness and not be absorbed in complete ecstasy neglecting Matter, as other spiritual liberators did in the past. She accepted all the physical actions needed to transform the body and prepare a divine human race. She lives out a response of the soul, as an instrument, to a command from above and this response for earth-work is “Service to the Divine.” The Mother represents herself as a Karmayogin in her book. She dedicates herself entirely to work for the Divine with an egoless attitude which would exclude even the Sattwic ego of the ordinary virtuous person.

Sri Aurobindo has seen the ego-principle as universal and says: “The elimination of this form of ego leads straight towards the true instrumental action which is the essence of a perfect Karmayoga... If this ego disappears, then we

can truly become, not only pure instruments consciously consenting to every turn of the divine Hand that moves us, but aware of our true nature, conscious portions of the one Eternal and Infinite put out in herself for her works by the Supreme Shakti.”⁹

The above statement of Sri Aurobindo finds an equivalent in the Mother’s prayer dated April 18, 1914: “Yesterday morning the last veil was almost rent, the last stronghold of the blind and ignorant personality seemed to be on the point of yielding; for the first time I thought I had understood what true impersonal service was, and the obstacle separating me from the integral realisation seemed very fragile to me, and on the point of disappearing definitely.... O Lord, Lord, wilt Thou not then let me escape at last from ignorance and become one with Thee? Now that I have known and seen so well what the work upon the earth must be, could I not realise it? Am I then rivetted to ignorance and illusion?...”

The Mother in her prayer dated November 28, 1912, expresses her mission of service to the Divine. “The outer life, the activity of each day and each instant, is it not the indispensable complement of our hours of meditation and contemplation? And is not the proportion of time given to each the exact image of the proportion which exists between the amount of effort to be made for the preparation and realisation? For meditation, contemplation, Union is the result obtained—the flower that blooms; the daily activity is the anvil on which all the elements must pass and repass in order to be purified, refined, made supple and ripe for the illumination which contemplation gives to them. All these elements must be thus passed one after the other through the crucible before outer activity becomes needless for the integral development. Then is this activity turned into the means to manifest Thee so as to awaken the other centres of consciousness to the same dual work of the forge and the illumination. Therefore are pride and satisfaction with oneself the worst of all obstacles. Very modestly we must take advantage of all the minute opportunities offered to knead and purify some of the innumerable elements, to make them supple, to make them impersonal, to teach them forgetfulness of self and abnegation and devotion and kindness and gentleness; and when all these modes of being have become habitual to them, then are they ready to participate in the contemplation, and to identify themselves with Thee in the supreme Concentration.”

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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VIGNETTES OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of December 1988)

A SWEET RELATIONSHIP

X's elder brother and sisters were already living in an Ashram boarding in Pondicherry when he was born in U.P. Naturally his parents made much of him, especially his father who started telling him about the Mother even before the child could talk.

When he was one year old his father gave him a toy-telephone explaining that on it he could talk with the Mother. With a child's faith X started talking with the Mother, never doubting that his words would reach her. Who can say that the Mother didn't hear him or that he didn't receive a silent response?

When one year and three months old, his parents brought him to Pondicherry. His father asked the Mother when he could bring X to her. She asked him to bring the child to the garage door (under the old balcony) in the evening when she returned from the Playground.

On the Mother's arrival the father bowed low in pranam. X copied his father. Pleasantly surprised, the Mother exclaimed, "ooouoo....." X also repeated "ooouoo....." The Mother laughed heartily.

When X's father asked when he should bring X to her again she replied that the child was too young to be brought inside the Playground but he should wait at the door where she would see him daily. Thus she talked with X every day but she sensed that the child was afraid of her and so she said, "No fear should be allowed to develop."

Back home again in U.P., X's father used his toy-telephone device to remove the fear of the Mother and also suggested that he should write letters to the Mother. X dictated letters to his father to be forwarded to the Mother. The gracious loving Mother not only replied to his letters but regularly sent him parcels of beautiful foreign toys.

When his parents came to the Ashram again, X was two and a half years old. His elder sister used to go to the Mother daily along with some others. The Mother permitted her to bring X along. So X accompanied her to the first floor where the Mother played all sorts of games with him. She even raced with him. But one day he asked the Mother to run on all fours with him — he could not speak yet, so he demonstrated what he wanted. Then laughingly the Mother told him, "This, my child, I cannot do." X could not even pronounce the word "Mother" but only lisp "Mothel, Mothel." Every day he pulled the Mother by her hand and pointed towards her room. The Mother would ask, "Now, my child, what do you want?" He would point towards a large beautiful plastic

crane and the Mother would reply, "That, my little child, you cannot have." Thus passed that memorable visit.

In those days the Mother was visiting the sadhaks in their rooms and houses. Taking advantage of this grace, X's parents on their next visit invited her to their house where they were staying for his third birthday. The Mother brought along as a present the long-coveted crane.

Compiled by S

A HEART'S CALL

A HEART'S call
 Or a signature tune played on thought's flute,
 Have they a pitch, a tone, a melody
 Uniquely their own?

When I feel a vibration within my mind,
 When I hear a footfall within my heart,
 When for no reason a line of a song
 Arises within and hums its way
 Out of my parting lips,
 Do I know who calls? Waves of what sea
 Fall and sing on my inner shore?

Mind's call and heart's whisper
 Neither have a name nor a face,
 The fragrance is strange as is the colour;

How then do I recognise
 Within each call and whisper
 A call sign, a signature
 Of who has called?

Maybe I don't, I only know
 It is someone who loves,
 Who loves for its sheer delight,
 And how many such do I know?

DINKAR PALANDE

HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

15

G WAS born in the tumultuous days of Gandhi's Non-cooperation Movement. Her parents were very active in the struggle for the freedom of the country. Actually her father was in prison when she was born. Thereby hangs a story.

The doctors had performed an operation on him and by mistake severed some nerves, thus rendering him unfit for siring children. G's father didn't know that his wife was pregnant. Later on his family informed him that a daughter had been born. But due to a mistaken translation by prison-censors he was informed that a son had been born to him. (In those days all the letters of freedom-fighters were severely censored by the jail authorities.) He asked for an allowance of ten rupees a month for providing milk for his child. The authorities were relieved at his having at least one child and maybe his was the only case where His Majesty's Government gave an allowance for the upkeep of a political prisoner's child.

During and after the Salt Satyagraha G's mother also plunged into the Movement. All these children of freedom fighters were left under the care of Gandhiji, who deputed young Indira Gandhi to comb their hair and take care of them. G remembers that Indira used to tie up her pigtails.

Now G's destiny took a strange turn. She was only seven and a half years old, yet her grandfather married her off without informing her father, who was shocked when he knew about it, but arrived too late to cancel it. After her marriage G returned to her father's place. Her education finished with the fourth standard. When she was fifteen she went to her husband and led a normal housewife's life. Her children grew up.

G's family was deeply religious, as were most Hindu families in those days. Her son was about ten years old, when he played the role of Rohitasva, the son of King Harish Chandra who is famous for his adherence to truth. It was on the occasion of Saraswati Pooja celebrations. One of the spectators was so impressed by the boy's acting that he enquired about him and his parents. Somebody introduced him to G's father. It turned out that they had been class-fellows in their childhood. This gentleman invited G with her husband and children to his place to renew their childhood friendship.

It was a divinely ordained 'Day' for G. In their host's house she saw a photograph of the Mother. At once all her body became stiff, she lost her voice. Only with a gesture of her hand and with her eyes she asked 'Who is she?' No other sound came from her lips; their hosts were alarmed. When several minutes had passed they laid her down. Only after ten or fifteen minutes her voice returned. She asked about the Mother. Their host informed her that she was the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. She was the Goddess, the

Shakti, and that she had an Ashram in Chirai Pondi—he didn't know even the name of Pondicherry. He further disclosed that S, the former headmaster of their village school, had gone and settled in the Ashram. If she needed further information she could write and ask him.

It was January 1962. G wrote a letter to S begging for a photograph of the Mother and pleaded for more information about the Ashram and the Mother. S sent her a photograph of the Mother and some books and as for further information he wrote, "Why don't you come yourself and see?" The photograph of the Mother bewitched G. She wanted to look at it again and again. In the same way her eldest son started worshipping the Mother. Tears used to flow from his eyes when he looked at the Mother's photo. G started pressing her husband to take her to the Ashram. Her family was perturbed by this turn of events. So G hid the photograph of the Mother in a suitcase and she would often open it to look at it. One day it was as if the Mother had become small and come out of the photograph and held out her hands to her.

In May of the same year G came to Pondicherry with her husband. This one visit sealed her fate. She had found her true home, her Goddess and guide. She went back, to return within a few days with two of her children, in spite of the opposition of her husband and family.

G had not even asked the Mother for permission. She never gave a thought to how she would live and bring up her children. She had a faith that all would be well and the Mother would accept her. She was only twenty-seven years old and educated only up to the fourth standard.

The unsettled childhood, the ill-health she had suffered became acute now. On her arrival she had to be admitted to the hospital with kidney failure.

An Ashramite who had ten years before come from G's village to settle in the Ashram, had helped her to rent a room at Rs. 15/- per month. G was not yet an Ashramite. Now her landlady, whom she had known only for a few days and who was not even an Ashramite, came to her rescue. During the long four months that G was in General Hospital this lady looked after's G's children, took them to visit her during the visiting hours and prepared special snacks for G. The Mother was informed, and she sent G blessing-packets from time to time, and on the August Darshan reserved a sari to be given to G after she came out of the Hospital.

When G was discharged from the hospital, she was accepted by the Mother and given some work. After a few months G's son went to the Mother on his birthday. He was dressed completely in white and somebody gave him a white lotus to offer to the Mother. On seeing him the Mother remarked, "White outside, white inside." Till now G had had no individual Darshan of the Mother. Her heart yearned for the Mother's touch. One day she wrote a letter to the Mother expressing her aspiration for pranam and gave it to Nolini-da. That same night she saw the Mother in a dream saying, "Go to Nolini." Next morn-

ing G narrated her dream to Nolini-da, who laughingly asked her to come the next day though he had not yet given her letter to the Mother.

There was a queue for the Darshan of the Mother. G also joined it. As soon as she reached the Mother, the Mother spread out her arms to G in the same way as she had earlier seen her do from her photograph. She kept her head on the Mother's hands which were in her lap and lost all consciousness. More than a quarter hour passed. Then the Mother pulled out one hand and caressed her head. Finally G regained her outer senses and left in a blissful state. On the staircase Champaklal asked the reason of the delay. Vasudha answered, "She went to sleep in the Mother's lap. What could I do?"

G's eldest son had also accompanied her and had received the touch of the Mother on his head. For months he had the feeling of the Mother's touch concretely on his head, so much so that for many days he refused to wash or comb his hair. Thus G and her children grew in the Divine's arms, dedicated to her, and they remain here, hers for ever.

Compiled by K

GLIMPSES OF PAVITRA

FROM THE REMINISCENCES OF PAVITRA AND MRITYUNJOY

(Continued from the issue of December 1988)

Part 8

Early Days in the Ashram: 1928-1930s

Mrityunjoy concludes his account of Pavitra's early years in the Ashram.

MRITYUNJOY: Pavitra's life was more and more illumined by the Mother. As his intimacy with her grew deeper by sadhana, his importance in the organisation of the Ashram life became evident. But he never showed any sign of superiority over others. From the beginning his responsibilities were mainly technical and organisational. Especially for any technical work, he became the Mother's right-hand instrument. He also handled her foreign correspondence.

Pavitra worked with very nominal equipment—whatever was available; for example, he used very simple devices in the electrification of Meditation House, the newly-bought building in which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother lived from February 1927. For a Polytechnician the work was nothing, but Pavitra did it carefully. In the Ashram, all work was done for the sake of the Divine, so it was important to do it well. Gradually new aspirants arrived. To one of them, the Mother gave the electrical installation work. Pavitra handed the whole responsibility over to him. When the new man asked for help, Pavitra always gave it cheerfully, but when the man was in an independent mood Pavitra let him work as freely as he liked. Officially, of course, Pavitra remained in charge, according to the Mother's wish.

In the late twenties a few cars were offered to the Mother—a Renault, a Grand Six and a Lorraine. Pavitra became her chauffeur. A first-class driver, he had learned to drive at the age of thirteen or fourteen, though the Paris authorities would not give him a licence until he was sixteen. The Mother went for a drive almost every afternoon for an hour or two, that being her only respite from work during the day. Sometimes she would take a few Ashramites along in another car, driven by a local employee.

As the cars were running regularly, their repair and maintenance became essential. In those days, there were few local mechanics and none of them was very competent. Pavitra decided to put up an Atelier—a workshop—for repairing the Mother's cars. But it took a few years to materialise the Atelier since at first there was no place to build it. But gradually the land between Library House and Meditation House was bought by the Mother. In the meantime a civil

engineer from Gujerat named Chandulal came for sadhana. He took charge of the Building Service, and under his direction the odd bits of land were joined together and the whole area developed into a compound. Provision was made for a workshop.

Meanwhile Pavitra kept all his tools in his room, which was no larger than the one he had occupied in Rosary House. Evidently its builder had no premonition of its tall new dweller! But however inconvenient, the dweller didn't mind. He had been trained well and had the capacity to adjust to any circumstance. In that little room, the cot occupied almost half the space. Then there was a huge almirah, a shabby deal-wood almirah, and a few boxes that had accompanied him to Japan, Mongolia and China, and are even now lying in his room. These wonderful artifacts covered almost the whole floor. One could somehow manage to negotiate the room through the narrow passage that was left. And through it the Mother passed daily at least twice, in the afternoon and evening. The cot itself, with its mattress rolled back to one side, served as a spacious table, suitable for all purposes. There was also a chair and a small table, which Pavitra used for preparing *salades* for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He could make a variety of salads—true French salads. Simply to watch him at work was to learn a chapter of human life. What a clean and orderly arrangement of every detail: the utensils in position, the water in the bowls, the knives and forks and spoons, the apron and towels, the salt and pepper, vinegar and oil, and then the vegetables, some boiled, some raw, some soaked in salt since the day before, and lastly the washing place with a big jug of water—all set up as if in a scientist's laboratory! Pavitra's swiftness, clarity and neatness on the job was a picture. And as he worked, still he could talk to a young disciple sitting on the window-sill!

At any moment the Mother will come. He has to hurry up. The time is 1:00 p.m. Yes, here is the Mother, surprised to see a novice here at this hour, but, all gracious, she allows him to remain. It is time to go. Crossing the terrace, Pavitra accompanies the Mother through her bathroom door, carrying four or five bowls, one above the other, covered with saucers; they contain Sri Aurobindo's lunch.

These details are perhaps not of much interest to an outsider. But we are only trying to describe how in a limited space and with limited resources, one can manage to do all that one intends to do. Even on his terrace Pavitra was growing vegetables and leafy greens in pots. The present-day modern kitchens in the Ashram, furnished with up-to-date stoves and ovens, any number of vessels and many busy people—how can they compare with the simple efficiency of those early days? And for whom? For the Divine!

Pavitra's grand almirah was a storehouse and an exhibition piece. It was amazing to see how much he managed to pack into it, all classified and labelled with scientific precision. For example, his tools. Since he was running the

Mother's cars, Pavitra needed certain tools for immediate use; he kept them hung on hooks inside the two doors of his almirah. Even expert mechanics generally do not treat their tools with such care and feeling and observe such order. One always sensed a consciousness living in these things. This was the result of the training given to a child in a French house. And it is just what we have to learn in the Ashram.

Those who had the privilege of seeing Pavitra at close quarters were impressed, first and foremost, by how wonderfully active he was all the time. His numerous fixed activities were carefully, neatly and as if automatically carried out; yet even when odd items suddenly intruded, he could somehow attend to them without disturbing his schedule. One wondered how he managed to do so much. It was possible, perhaps, because no work of his was purely his own; he lived to serve the Mother and surrender to her as completely as possible; as a result he had no time to waste and yet he had all time at his disposal. The consciousness of a surrendered disciple was the secret of all with him.

At any odd hour, if one peeped into his room, one would find him, say, washing stamps. After soaking them and removing their gum, he arranged them for drying between sheets of blotting paper; in the half hour or so they would take to dry, he opened an album, put in some new stamps and removed old duplicates for exchange—all with the speed of an expert hand. The job was finished within the allotted time. Pavitra would look at his watch. It was time to fetch the Mother, who had gone to visit some ladies. There were times—once or twice a week—when the Mother did not go out for her usual afternoon drive because she was visiting the two ladies' houses. Pavitra would accompany her, but during the hour or two she spent there, he would return to do these odd jobs.

Towards the evening of another day, one finds him rushing to the bathroom for a bath. The Mother has just come back from her evening drive and gone to see Sri Aurobindo. She takes half an hour or even less before returning to Pavitra's room to go with him to Prosperity—he must be ready by then! Pavitra goes for a bath, comes back, puts away his dusty clothes, dresses in fresh ones, takes a tumblerful of tea with lemon, and waits for the Mother. To finish all that in twenty or twenty-five minutes is a feat requiring the utmost swiftness and precision. Pavitra's military service gave him that training.

When the northern block of buildings was constructed by Chandulal, Pavitra shifted to his present room upstairs; his workshop just below was still being built. Pavitra himself organised the interior, which took a number of years to fit out fully. The planning was a remarkable thing: months ahead, even before the masonry began, the planning of every detail had been minutely worked out. At each step Pavitra asked the Mother, and did as she said. On her way out for a drive and, again when coming back, she would peep inside the new workshop. Little by little, with whatever money the Mother could spare, new machines, big and small, were bought and installed. The Mother seemed

to have a special regard for the workshop and its workmen; she knew all the local men by name.

The main purpose of the workshop initially was to repair the Mother's cars. Those old cars often required parts to be changed or made, but Pondicherry had no reliable car-repair garage. Pavitra could never get repairs done properly. That is why he decided to build a workshop. He was literally alone for the job. There were two drivers to help him with the cleaning of the cars, but they had little knowledge of servicing them. So Pavitra was all alone, and he had to develop the workshop from scratch. But he knew what to do. A French engineer of the highest class, he had learned every detail of the trade: smithery, soldering, tinning, sawing, boring, milling, lathing and more. The right equipment did not come all at once. Pavitra had to wait years in some cases before an important machine arrived. In those days, all the equipment had to be imported from France. But the price was cheap, since Pondicherry was a duty-free French port; things were far more costly in British India.

There was no Harpagon workshop then, so all the departments of the Ashram—household and domestic service, building service, sanitary service, electrical service, garden service, water-works—had jobs to be done by the Atelier, Pavitra's workshop. And he was glad to accept them! Of course there was no question of refusal, for in those days everything belonged to the Mother in spirit and in fact; if she approved any department's request, it was carried out. In Pavitra's case, the work was cheerfully done. Even though there were plenty of difficulties, he attended to every order, individual or departmental, as soon as it was physically possible. Yet with all the activity in that spacious hall (which gradually became too small), everything was kept neat and clean.

Pavitra's contact with the workmen and servants was a sight to behold. He treated them as if they were members of his own family. But to be able to follow his example, one has to change oneself first—it cannot simply be copied.

CONCLUSION

Mrityunjoy's account ends abruptly here, with the early 1930s. A record of Pavitra's subsequent thirty-five years in the Ashram remains to be written. He went on to establish a laboratory for chemistry and perfumery, and, later, the chemistry and physics labs of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education; of that Centre he was one of the principal creators and first director. In addition, he was a secretary to the Mother, handling much of her foreign correspondence. Pavitra also found time for other projects, such as the design of a public park in the centre of Pondicherry. Several books were prepared by him: *Le Yoga de la Bhagavad Gita*, a commentary comprising French translations of extracts from Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*; a compilation from Sri Aurobindo's major works entitled *The Future Evolution of Man*; another

compilation, *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Love*; a work of his own, *Education and the Aim of Human Life*; an original scientific thesis in French to which he attached much importance, *Probabilités, erreurs, statistiques* (still unpublished).

Towards the end of his life, Pavitra contracted leukemia, which severely weakened him. Still, he worked as much as he could. And every day he slowly climbed the stairs to the Mother's room in order to see her. He passed away on 16 May 1969, at the age of seventy-five.

In 1964, speaking to the students of the school, Pavitra ended his talk with these words:

PAVITRA: If you permit me to give you some advice that experience has taught me, I will tell you that what counts is giving yourself entirely to whatever you do. Whatever you do, do it fully, not half-heartedly. And try to do something that interests you. If you have to choose a career, an occupation, do something that attracts you, something you would like to do. Don't look for a petty, easy life that is sheltered, without many worries and troubles, without too much effort. That is not the important thing. The important thing is to do something that interests you, something you can give yourself to completely. And if you do that, you will always be guided. Because now, looking back on my life with the perspective that age gives, I can see that from the very beginning, in everything I did—even the stupidities (there were some), even in the stupidities and mistakes and all that—behind everything there was a Hand: a protective, guiding Hand that led me on.

Commenting on this passage, Mrityunjoy says: "People who wish to profit by Pavitra's example, should try to follow his last advice. He himself acted on these lines from childhood; up to the last two days before his death (when he was absolutely bed-ridden and could not move), he continued to work normally, quietly, steadily, methodically."

(Concluded)

POETRY-LIFE-YOGA

SELECTIONS AND ADAPTATIONS FROM RECENT LETTERS

HERE am I with a photo for you—the old fellow smiling and seeming to look steadily into the future in spite of being an octogenarian. Can you tolerate a few remarks by him on himself apropos of this “counterfeit presentment” (in Hamlet’s phrase)? I think the steady look plus the smile sums him up very well. He is not easily shaken by unfortunate memories or current difficulties—they touch on the outer life while he sips some inner nectar in a quiet way and trusts in a time to come when the spiritual vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother will be realised on the earth.

As you can see, his right hand is gripping the small table-like attachment to his chair: the gesture symbolises his resolve to hold on to the life he has chosen, come what may. Behind him is a cupboard, part of his library, containing records of the numerous achievements of man’s mind. They have helped to mould his consciousness, but he has his back to them as to a power of the past. Although they had their significant role to play he has to go beyond them to a greater Light that has beckoned him both to a new life and to a new literature.

On one side of him is a wooden chair with a heap of papers and envelopes, a slightly untidy pile: here are matters to be dealt with and put in order in the course of his work on *Mother India*, of which he has been the editor for nearly forty years. On the other side is a cane chair, quite empty to the eye but symbolic of the space he has kept in his life for the unthought-of, the unexpected, the invisible—the presence of a beauty which the soul must love before eyes can see it.

Now to your warm-hearted letter—half poetry half pathos. Your quotation from Scott’s “Lay of the Last Minstrel” is correct, but the concluding phrase—

The minstrel is infirm and old—

applies to your friend in Pondicherry, not to young and bouncing V in Los Angeles. The Wordsworth-line is quite apt to the occasion but a little out of joint, three verbal vertebrae are missing. Properly fixed, it reads:

Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

It is the *grand finale* of the famous “Ode on Intimations of Immortality” (a title which a schoolboy’s “howler” once turned into “Ode on Intimate Immorality”). For me, it is one of the profoundest lines in English poetry, lying, one might almost say, too deep for precise exposition. But to get some suggestion of its message we must read it along with the line preceding it:

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

We have also to keep in mind the broad background to the two lines.

Wordsworth recounts at first the wonderful sense—which he had in his childhood—of being a soul that had come fresh from “God who is our home”. In his grown-up condition he has lost that spontaneous sense but all is not lost with its vanishing. The years have brought him “the philosophic mind” after long experience of earth’s vicissitudes and the resultant brooding on his part over “man’s mortality.” He has acquired an insight, an inward look discerning a secret strength behind human suffering and a prospect beyond physical death. Nature which was an enchantment in the young days has taken on a more sober hue because it is gazed at with eyes that have learned to face heavy responsibilities and scanned tragic occasions, but a joy is still there—only it is not a glorious bubbling up from an immortal region which was felt as native to the child’s instinct: now it is perceived more quietly in what the poet calls his “heart of hearts”. This phrase, which illuminates his later reference to “the human heart by which we live”, can be taken as a clue to the line you have quoted. In that recess of the being the reflective mind has gathered the wisdom of its varied experience—sensitive feeling merges there with penetrating mental vision and a constant touch is kept on a level of awareness which is free from the shadow of sorrow that seems to accompany the uncertainties of earthly existence.

Behind this “level of awareness” is a series of mystic moments in which the surface of things has been suddenly pierced and the outer world is shot with

Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realised.

These moments change the very nature of ordinary time

and have the power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence.

It is important to note that this level where “thoughts” lying “too deep for tears” are found is reached in Wordsworth’s passage through “the meanest flower that blows”. The presence of Nature which was so vivid, so revelatory in the past comes back—but in a form not apparently striking like the “Fountains, Meadows, Hills and Groves” which once enraptured the poet: it comes in a common insignificant form—a tiny blossom nobody would mark serves yet with its non-descript simplicity to put him in contact with what is ever at peace,

eternally at rest, some element of the Divine in the human.

Here Wordsworth seems to go beyond the world-cry articulated unforgettably in that line of Virgil's in Latin—

Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt—

the quintessence of whose meaning is caught in the last of those three verses from the long speech Sri Aurobindo has put into the mouth of Savitri's mother:

All pathos and all suffering we make ours;
We have sorrow for a greatness passed away
And feel the touch of tears in mortal things.

Wordsworth points to some depth within us where we escape from what the modern Spanish thinker Unamuno has called "the tragic sense of life" and from the poignant and yet poised mood of the author of the *Aeneid*, which Tennyson has well worded in his fine poem to "Roman Virgil":

Thou majestic in thy sadness at the doubtful doom of human kind.

You bring in your third quotation with an allusion to your birthday: "I seek your blessings, so that I may follow the sunlit path and discover one day (Oh that day!) the true V and exclaim 'I have drunk the Infinite in a giant's wine'..." Of course you have my blessings, for whatever they may be worth, and I am sure you will get to the sunlit path because of your simple warm spontaneous radiant nature, but your slight slip in the quotation of Sri Aurobindo makes you sound anxious to have an experience of the Infinite through the enjoyment of an actual alcoholic beatitude—sherry and port and champagne all rolled into a huge tidal wave pouring into your body as a consciousness-expanding stimulant! What creates this suggestion is your substituting "in" for Sri Aurobindo's "like". In poetry every word counts. No wonder someone has called the poet "a miser of sound and syllable."

(14.9.1988)

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The state in which you found yourself at the time of going back to the States was an ideal one—something independent of places. I remember lines from Milton where it is said that the mind is its own place and can make a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven. Our life in the Ashram casts us in a profounder region than the mind: there the first part of the Miltonic utterance holds, but the second part about the possibility of heaven turning into hell has no relevance. The depression to which the mind is exposed as an alternative to elevation has no bearing on the soul. The soul's very substance, according to Sri Aurobindo, is

sweetness and light and strength—it is a direct aspect of an emanation from the Supreme and, though it is not yet the Supreme in full, it is the Supreme *in potentia* in the sense that it can manifest within the function allotted to it all the divine qualities. I think that you have touched the soul-depth and caught something of its perpetual heaven-sense. This, of course, does not mean that the Ashram, centred upon the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, does not have a special atmosphere. But it does mean that this atmosphere, even if it is intensest here, has a radiant wideness which covers the whole globe and that, if one's soul is awake, one can always feel a subtle extension of the Samadhi wherever one is. There may be circumstances which have to be met until one's time has come for a permanent residence where Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had been physically present. In some cases it may have been decided by the Divine that one's work is set elsewhere than the Ashram. All kinds of possibilities are there. The main thing is to be aware that one carries in one's inmost recesses

A fire whose tongue has tasted paradise.

You are lucky to find a job to your liking waiting for you—and it is interesting for me to see that the sort of job you like is one which enables you to render help to people and does not only bring you the means to carry on your own life. I admire also your willingness to shoulder responsibilities which are new as well as to make successful a worthy project that somehow teetered on the verge of failure. You are a plucky little person with a big heart, and where courage and generosity are combined the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are most ready to come when called. These two qualities have always been guiding lights for me—never to lose heart, ever to be ready to face the challenge of circumstances and at the same time let the heart be roomy enough and warm enough for people who need help and would welcome a sense of companionship in meeting the tests of Time. I got quite a fillip when I came across some words of Sri Aurobindo's which confirmed my instinctive attitude to life. He has written: "Courage and love are the only indispensable virtues; even if all the others are eclipsed or fall asleep, these two will save the soul alive."

(11.10.1988)

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Your information that you were wearing a white silken gown presented to you gave quite a brightness to my thought. You must have looked most fittingly dressed. The colour suited your true self which always sends up the cry which the poet AE has voiced and which has haunted me through the years, leading me to quote it again and again to my friends:

White for Thy whiteness all desires burn...

All the more natural to you is the colour because from your very girlhood days you chose celibacy. I was deeply moved to know that you did not choose it by any kind of rule-imposition on yourself but by a spontaneous turn of your inmost being. In the inmost being the presence of God fills the whole world and leaves no space for anything else.

The combination of silk with the colour of purity and peace is apt from our Yogic point of view. For, we are not for impoverishment of life. We accept whatever affluence comes to us without our hungering for it selfishly. In our vision, earth-life has to flourish, to expand and glow—as an expression of the plenitude that is Eternity. Translated into terms of Time, this plenitude would be without the self-aggrandising impulse, the showy urge, the wasteful instinct. Peace and purity are in it along with richness. I may add: “How significant that what was silky white happened to be that particular garment known as a gown!” A gown covers the entire body, suggestively equating itself to the total span of one’s many-sided being. Few people are an unbroken unity in the midst of inner and outer variety. It is the soul which holds the secret of this unity—it is our quintessence in which the divine counterpart of every aspect of us is secretly waiting for manifestation in a pattern of new life weaving together the basic truths of that diversity of us which we know as mind and vital force and body. So K, the sincere sadhika, the devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the disciple of the Integral Yoga, comes appropriately to my inner sight as gowned in white silk.

The story of your service in the Education Department is quite impressive. The picture of you as a student of Deductive and Inductive Logic brings back to me vividly my own college days. In my Intermediate Arts I took up Logic and by good luck stood first in it in the Bombay University examination, bagging the prestigious Selby Scholarship in addition to the Hughlings Prize in English. I passed my B.A. with Philosophy Honours but narrowly missed First Class. At that time the examiners in Philosophy were extra-strict. I met one of them accidentally on a bus. He told me that he and his colleagues had been discussing whether they could give me the three or four marks that I lacked for the sixty per cent necessary to stand in the First Class. He said that they found my papers impressive but that I did not show sufficient knowledge of the prescribed text-books. How could I show it when I had scarcely read them? They were extremely dull and my knowledge of the subjects was gleaned from various sources of my own choice outside the syllabus. So when the examiner told me of the defect he and his colleagues had noticed I replied: “Sir, I did not sit in the exam as a student of Philosophy but as a Philosopher.” He gloomily commented: “That won’t do.”

A further point that had puzzled the examiners was how one who had appeared in Philosophy wrote in a style more literary than they would expect from a Philosophy-student. Their query got answered when they found that this chap

happened to get the Ellis prize in the compulsory papers in Literature. A Literature-student should have done so. The Ellis Prize was my last academic flourish. I went in for M.A. studies and planned a thesis on the Philosophy of Art. I made notes for it and drew up a table of chapters, but I never wrote out anything up to December 1927 for the examination which was to take place in April next year. On December 16 I arrived in Pondicherry to live in the Ashram—and soon decided not to continue in the old grind of intellectuality. I never appeared for my M.A. degree. I have no regrets. What better education could one have than absorbing the Light of Sri Aurobindo? Whatever I have written that might last beyond my life-time is the result of his grace. And can any grace be greater in a literary-creative sense than his letting me be the one and only person to see *Savitri* in the process of composition as early as 1936? And I am happy to record that portions of this masterpiece of spiritual poetry were sanctioned to appear in print for the first time in my book, *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*, every chapter of which had been read out to the Master before publication and had obtained his encouraging comments.

(8.10.1988)

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It is news to me that the psychology of Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, founder of the “Hare Krishna Movement”, which has swept over several countries, has been analysed on the basis of his writings by Professor Louis Van den Wynngaert with an approach through Genetic Epistemology (Piaget, *Le sens de la réalité*) and Philosophic Anthropology (De Waelens). His conclusions are unfavourable, reading in the Movement a certain extremism of emotion as well as what he terms “bi-polar logic”, both of which he considers “psychotic” and conducive to mental disequilibrium and fanaticism. I am in no position to pass final judgment but you are right in thinking that anything likely to upset the balance of thought and feeling and encourage fanaticism would not be a part of true spirituality and cannot be included in Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga. The quotations you have sent me on the case of a Muslim disciple and on that of a sadhak named Tirupatti are worth remembering.¹ I knew the former personally. Belonging to an aristocratic Hyderabad family and educated at Oxford, he was

¹ On the force behind fanaticism: “its intention is to make not only Islam but all spirituality and religion ridiculous through you. It hopes to disturb the divine work upon earth, even if it can do it only a little. It is trying to spoil your brain and destroy your intelligence...” (*Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 26, p. 484).

On Tirupatti’s condition. “... Especially he began practices that belong entirely to the most extreme form of Bhakti Sadhana, practices that are extremely dangerous because they lead to an excited, exalted abnormal condition, and violently call down forces which the body cannot bear. They lead to a breakdown of the physical body, the mind and the nervous system ... The result was that he entered into and persisted in an abnormal condition of mind which still continues and at times rises to an alarming height dangerous to the sanity of his mind and the health of his body.” (*Champaklal’s Treasures*, p. 201)

a very promising young man with a gentle devotional bent. But at one point—due, I think, to jealousy—he turned hostile and got possessed by an old-world Muslim fanaticism, some entity of the Vital Plane started acting through him. It spoiled his sadhana completely and, after one or two violent scenes, he had to leave the Ashram. Tirupatti belonged to a period before I joined the Ashram.

I can see some fine elements in the Hare Krishna Movement, a heart-urge has always some beauty, but ultimately it is the inner heart, home of the true soul, the psychic being, that has to come into play. The psychic being is well touched off in some words I may adapt from the Gita (VI.19): “A steady flame burning in a windless place.” The outer heart is liable to be swayed by the winds of the vital-emotional world and lose its right direction. I may quote to you a few crucial words of Sri Aurobindo about his Yoga of Supermind and Transformation:

“This is not a Yoga in which abnormality of any kind, even if it be an exalted abnormality, can be admitted as a way to self-fulfilment or spiritual realisation. Even when one enters into supernormal and suprarational experience, there should be no disturbance of the poise which must be kept firm from the summit of consciousness to its base; the experiencing consciousness must preserve a calm balance, an unflinching clarity and order in its observation, a sort of sublimated commonsense, an unflinching power of self-criticism, right discrimination, co-ordination and firm vision of things; a sane grasp on facts and a high spiritualised positivism must always be there....”

This was written in connection with the Yoga of Works (in the additional incomplete chapter added to the first part of *The Synthesis of Yoga*) but it should apply to all the branches of Yoga and be an indispensable part of whatever goes out from India to fulfil the words of Sri Aurobindo which you cite from Narayan Prasad’s *Education for a New Life* (p. 170): “India will send forth the future religions of the world.”

If I were to give an all-round hint on what a practitioner of the Integral Yoga would do well to cultivate, I would point towards a fourfold condition of being:

- (1) the sense of a wide tranquillity serving as a background to all one’s inlook and outlook;
- (2) a calm dedicated openness to the revelatory infinity above the mind;
- (3) a quiet intensity of devotion and surrender flowing like a broad warm stream from the deep heart towards Sri Aurobindo and the Mother;
- (4) a constant offering of all actions and reactions, all problems and questionings, to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, with as little effort as possible to determine or resolve them by oneself and with a happy waiting for the Divine to work them out.

Whenever I have heard from you two—fit life-companions of each other—
from Belgium, I have always had the impression of a pair of sincere humble
seekers of the Divine's Light and Love. (15.10.1988)

AMAL KIRAN (K.D. SETHNA)

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of December 1988)

The Mother's Message

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



Vol. Three 1959

No. 25

Now came May the 1st, 1960.

It was a Sunday. I opened my sliding window. Outside, the birds had set up a morning chorus which sounded like a symphony of spring. For, indeed, we had welcomed the advent of shining spring after a long lingering winter.

Trees broke into tender green leaves, flowers commenced to blossom riotously. New grass vivid and succulent sprang up. Our small garden was now full of life and colour. I inhaled the scent of lavish splendour.

The weather had turned quite mild in keeping with the season. But occasionally we experienced fine drizzles.

The sunshine spread its golden rays with a sweet warmth and caress as a slight mistiness evaporated.

These lines by Dorothy F. Gurney, are quite apt here:

The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,
One is nearer God's Heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth.

I went to Marble Arch where Sudha lived. Then we headed for Hyde Park. A profusion of flowers greeted us. Tulips, ablaze with colours ranging from deepest scarlet to pure white. There were Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Lupins, Snow-drops, Daffodils, Crocuses white and mauve. They stirred in the gentle breeze. Primroses spilled their luscious beauty. Butterflies of every hue and shape clung to the blooms sucking their nectar. The larks sang joyously.

Nature awoke to a new life. I had lost my heart to this enchantment. Everything seemed hopeful.

Now recalling that lovely scene these verses of *Savitri*, Book Four, crossed my mind:

Then Spring, an ardent lover, leaped through leaves
And caught the earth-bride in his eager clasp;
His advent was a fire of irised hues,
His arms were a circle of the arrival of joy.

Sudha and I sat on a bench near a pond, and tossed pieces of the biscuits we had brought with us into the water, watching the swans and other water-birds snap at them.

We took our snacks at a nearby café. Then we strolled endlessly under the tall trees. The atmosphere was packed with a drowsy silence which was soothing.

Then suddenly we remembered our teachers who had taught us flower-making. They had asked us to visit Victoria and Albert Museum to see the Seventeenth-Century silk flowers and the Eighteenth-Century French posy—also a Victorian flower necklet, 1870.

We went there. It took some time to locate them. Meanwhile we saw many interesting things.

The Seventeenth-Century spray of silk violets and snow-drops was a piece of art. We wondered who had worn it! Then there was the Eighteenth-Century

French posy which was made in a complicated and intricate way. It was meant to be worn on a wedding-dress.

Finally we saw the charming necklet. The white satin ribbon forming the necklet was a perfect background for the cloth flowers in their exquisite colours of fuchsias, sunflowers, daisies and pansies.

We emerged from the museum and looked up. Dusk had just fallen—everything was misty blue, mysterious, yet glowing. The twilight was entrancing when the sky was still undarkened and the street lights were lit.

We wished each other good night and parted

*

The following morning once again I picked up the threads of my life's pattern—colleges, lessons, errands and my bed-sitter.

I took a central line from Holland Park to reach my college. There was no need to change the tube train. Moreover, I had bought the pass, so it was easy to travel to and from the colleges.

After our classes Ursula, my German friend, and I peeped into shop-windows as we walked. We admired the gay spring and summer garments displayed tastefully, artistically.

We were so engrossed that we did not realise it was drizzling. Then to our dismay the grey sky opened up and it began to pour—a heavy shower of rain looked like a sparkling beaded sheet. There was an icy wind. The weather of London was crazy, unpredictable.

Now we wanted some shelter, so we edged through plate-glass doors and entered Selfridges—one of the best and biggest shops.

We took a lift and pressed a button at random. It whisked us upward disgorging us into an over-heated thickly carpeted millinery department—lined with racks of hats—different sizes, shapes and colours.

We smiled and nodded at the saleswoman. Then I picked up a smart white hat trimmed with pink rose buds, pulled it down at a rakish angle over my head and examined my face in a long mirror which was nearby. Ursula exclaimed: "Hey, you look stunning!" Then she chose a black velvet hat adorned with white feathers, and plonked it on her head. I said: "Hey, it becomes you!" Our laughter filled the room. We were highly amused when we sampled almost all the frivolous hats.

Afterwards we saw from the windows that the rain had stopped. There was no use loitering around. So we made our way to the basement where we had refreshment. Ursula said that she was going to get for us two tickets of the play—*My Fair Lady*—the following Saturday. I thanked her.

We took our tube trains to reach home.

*
3

Days ran out like sand. Now it was Saturday. Along with Ursula I entered a big theatre to see the play.

From nowhere a dais rose slowly and was level with the huge stage. On it there were musicians with various instruments playing the tune of the songs: "I could have danced all night..." "Lots of chocolate for me to eat..." and so on.

The music was intoxicating.

Then the lights went dim, the dais disappeared as the play began. We were terribly disappointed, because Rex Harrison and Julie Andrews were not acting. In their places some others did.

Nevertheless, I was thrilled to hear the King's English with a perfect accent.

This expressive language was and is my favourite. I was extremely eager to learn it more and more so that I might easily read and understand Sri Aurobindo's books—especially *Savitri*.

In my spontaneous letter dated 21.9.59 I wrote to Mrs Sarala Shah of Bombay:

"...During the summer I could not paint, although I have all the painting materials. As a matter of fact, this work needs a lot of time and concentration. But in my heart of hearts I know very well and feel sure that in the near future I shall have to spend several years in this vocation. For, I will express the whole of *Savitri* through paintings."

My God, how could I write such a thing when I had not the vaguest idea as to what I would do in the future?

Now I am really amazed who made me do so?

Sri Aurobindo wrote in *Savitri*:

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

(*To be continued*)

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ATONEMENT

SOME sacred sun must await my aeonic night
To crown with its rosy glow and to atone
For this long meandering on alien shores
That are strangers to all light.
Though swayed by the many enticements of the mart
Yet I held my gaze fixed eastward
To await that hoped-for promised dawn.
Life tasted like a cake of chalk,
Shadowy substance of a careless dark.
Only the faith in the approach of Thy peerless feet
That will incarnadine my east
Barely kept afloat my frail barge
On these tumultuous seas of Time.

SHYAM KUMARI

EXPECTATION

LIKE the radiant smile of a Mother is the day.
The cloudless sky, the coconut groves, the yonder bay,
All appear unearthly. A mighty peace
Takes the whip hand but rules with a kiss.

A glory unbounded, a beauty beyond measure
Reigns supreme. What miracle pours the Transcendent's treasure
Freely again upon our poor abominable earth?
The sordid grows suddenly pure and misery melts into mirth!

With a whisper of secrets comes running the messenger wind;
The trees thrill, the ocean chants, and my soul gets entwined.
If the world still is blind and deaf the nation,
My spirit joins Nature in a vast expectation.

ABANI SINHA

CORRECTION

The last line of the poem *You* by Marta Guha on p. 811 of the
December issue should read:

Joy, you are hidden in the pain.

SAVITRI'S HOUSE OF MEDITATION

(Continued from the issue of December 1988)

Part Two

THE debate between the two opposing powers could continue interminably. Logic-chopping could be an endless pleasure. And yet it is true that Savitri was not going to win back Satyavan from Death on the strength of the extensive arguments she had put forward in this long dialogue. She is also aware that a wordy duel or the armoury of dialectic is not going to bring the issue to a resolution. Abstract exchanges rarely produce concrete results. For Savitri it is an extremely serious matter, of life and death itself and she cannot afford the luxury of this vain or futile exercise. For Death also it is a challenge, questioning the very foundations on which the laws of this world are established; if they are to fail everything would come down with a crash. The Ordainer of the World himself would prove to be the Destroyer of the Order. Therefore, while they are adducing reasons for their convictions and contradicting each other, great universal forces too get simultaneously released with each word they utter. The occult dimension gets enlarged in this battle. It is a clash, an impingement of force upon force; equally strong enemies are in battle-array and the whole atmosphere is charged with their action-thoughts.

In that great struggle Savitri is not as yet certain of her success. True, the percussions of her words travel far on the membrane of infinite space, touching the very edge of the dark universe. Wave after wave spreads engulfing in its folds the sable realms of Time and Fate and Death and yet its abysses seem to deepen into a bottomless Nothingness. In the twilight zone there is a hope of the Morn, a breaking of the Dawn of the Ideal; but what Savitri notices is the thinning and disappearance of her thoughts and words and visions as though

All utterance, all mood must there become
An unending tissue sewn by mind
To make a gossamer robe of beautiful change.¹²

Something sweet and gladdening has no doubt touched the nether pit of gloom and grief; yet in that early haze and mist all the bright hues of her dream-imagination get faded as if tricked by some melancholy's magic. What remains of that ethereality and ideality is only

A floating veil of visions in her front,
A trailing robe of dreams behind her feet.¹³

How can she then get Satyavan back? A higher power ought to supervene if she

is to win. The inadequacy of her present effort can be removed only by invoking a superior might-and-wisdom, her effort complemented only by going to the source of all-existence wherefrom success flows with the surety of a down-flowing stream. Savitri resorts to her "silent will"; she does not speak now; the conscient force retires within. She steps into her Meditation's House. It is there alone that the firm truth of her soul really dwells. Not by debate but by silence, by gathering in that House the needed force shall she march towards her victory.

Savitri's entering into her House of Meditation is reminiscent of a similar situation, though at a somewhat different point of the narrative, in Vyasa's Savitri-episode. The day of Satyavan's death has arrived. Savitri has successfully completed the difficult three-night vow of fasting and standing at one single place throughout. On the fated day, well before the sunrise, she gets ready and lights a bright fire and makes sacrificial offerings to the gods. She then goes to her parents-in-law and pays them respect. Afterwards, she goes to the various hermitages of the Ashram and gives her worshipful obeisances to the Rishis. They all bless her with auspicious words dear to a young devout wife. Savitri, accomplished in the Yoga of Meditation, at once steps within, in her House of Meditation, and wills the blessings of the great Truth-Seers to come true.

एवमस्त्विति सावित्री ध्यानयोगपरायणा ।
मनसा ता गिरः सर्वा प्रत्यगुह्यात् तपस्विनाम् ॥

Savitri was a Yogini of an exceptional merit and had advanced greatly on the occult-spiritual path to draw strength directly from the origin whence the words packed with mantric power come. By repeating in her heart of hearts the benediction-words of the holy sages and saying "Be it just so!" she fixes the force of those utterances in her consciousness.

Presently, in her combat with Death she seeks in her silent will a strength to vanquish the enemy. She must first get out of the gleaming haze and see in the clear flame, ever-burning in her heart, the face of the World-Mother who alone will show her the way and lead her and give her the cherished victory. Then, to adopt Yeats's line, "At the stroke of midnight God shall win." It shall bring the eternal Noon.

And what do we see in the Meditation's House of Savitri? The soul's firm truth:

Imperishable, a tongue of sacrifice,
It flamed unquenched upon the central hearth
Where burns for the high house-lord and his mate
The homestead's sentinel and witness fire
From which the altars of the gods are lit.¹⁴

Immediately everything reverses. Savitri, following Yama, Satyavan ahead of

them, becomes inwardly the leader of the march. The procession moves on, but her will now compels from behind the mighty god. Savitri can go to the end of things and recover from the hollow gulfs the soul of her lover. By the power of Dhyana Yoga, and of the sacrifice performed in the House of Meditation, she recognises the real nature of the problem with an altogether different perspective. The dire immense Subconscient thrown by Time into the Past comes alive in the form of a dark granite rock guarded by Death, the Subconscient that obstructs the path of the high Advent. Her meditation must prepare itself to negotiate with it and dissolve it. She is face to face with an Adversary who carries the burden of all history in his person and who is now standing in her way. Savitri has actually touched the core of the deep and ancient Agony that resides in the heart of the Earth in its long and arduous travail of evolution. It is certain that a turning-point has arrived and hence a might envisaging a decisive action must now take charge of the forthcoming event. Something that was never attempted must happen. If transformation of earthly nature is to be possible, then Savitri's Love must triumph by conquering Death. A sign "iridescent with the glory of the Unseen" must blaze in her inner sky to help her and guide her; it must protect her against the danger of the path. The occult Horror must disappear. The issue posed by the "ancient disputants"—Earth and Love and Doom—is now in full focus for Savitri to tackle it.

A flaming warrior from the eternal peaks
Empowered to force the door denied and closed¹⁵

must conquer the absoluteness with which the clutches of the ever-hollowing Inconscience personified by Death has held the world. The bounds of consciousness and Time have to be overpassed to reach the infinity of the Eternal and the All-conscient. The moment for the flaming warrior to receive that power to force the door open is at hand; Savitri must prepare herself for that. By entering into the House of Meditation, by fixing herself there and summoning the higher power, the action of the incarnate Force should get directed towards one single goal, the abolition of all that resists the supreme Law of Love in the creation.

In the heart of Savitri, in the inner chamber of her House, the holy Yajna, the sacrifice that brings the power of God in for the fulfilment of works, is constantly being performed by the secret deity abiding within. That verily is the truth of Savitri's soul. That truth now ought to grow brighter and become stronger by drawing energies from the flames of sacrifice. It is by sacrifice that the Supreme created the universe and it is by sacrifice that the creatures, and the gods too, grow in the rich-golden plenitude of Light and Love and Joy of the utmost immortality. Seekers of the riches, the Rishis "meditate the all-achieving laud of the divine" and call the heaven-touching Fire for help and succour in

their spiritual endeavour; they invoke the Master of Sacrifice, they invite "to birth the immortal in mortals, the divine who brings in the divinity." Indeed, the all-pervading Brahman, who is the giver of all fruit, is himself established in the great sacrifice. All flows from sacrifice. Savitri well-versed in the lores of tradition and an expert in the Yoga of Meditation enters into the deep cavern of her secret soul; kindling her silent will she gets in touch with that divinity who is the source and fount of all action. "A house was there all made of flame and light" and what she observes in that house is the house-lord with his mate engaged in sacrifice.

In that large and luminous House of Meditation the hearth is bright-ablaze and the firm truth of Savitri's soul is flaming, quenchless and imperishable, and the fire that witnesses all action and gives to the sacrificer the needed protection is burning ceaselessly. The Yajamana seated there with his Grihapatni is offering Hutas to Agni. The Purohitas have arranged the sacrifice in the right order and the Ritviks are chanting the sacred Riks. The tongues of flame leap high up to kindle even the altars of the gods, the gods who shall come there as guardians for the aspirant. Presently the invocation is to the Fire who is watching everything and who shall guard Savitri against the dark formidable Adversary. Armed with that might she shall chase them and follow him through the "enchanted dimness".

"Agni is a mighty benefactor of his worshippers. With a thousand eyes he watches over the man who offers him oblations; but consumes his worshippers' enemies like dry bushes, and strikes down the malevolent like a tree destroyed by lightning. All blessings issue from him as branches from a tree."¹⁶ That is how A.A. Macdonell describes the action of the "mighty benefactor" who, when his worshipper is in difficulty, when the Dread and the Darkness surround him and hurt him, gives them protection. Rishi after Rishi has hymned Agni not only to complete his felicities but also to get this god's protection. Thus, for example, Kanwa Ghaura:

पाहि नो अग्ने रक्षसः पाहि धूर्तेरराणः ।

पाहि रोषत उत वा जिघांसतो बृहद्भानो यविष्ठय ॥

(I 36, 15)

Protect us, O Agni, from the Rakshasa, protect us from the harm of the undelighting, protect us from him who assails and him who would slay us, O Vast of lustres, O mighty and young.¹⁷

Or Kata Vaishwamitra:

तपो ष्वग्ने अन्तरां अमित्रान् तथा शंसमरुषः परस्य ।

तपो वसो चिकित्तानो अचित्तान् वि ते तिष्ठन्तामजरा अयासः ॥ (IV. 18. 2)

Wholly consume our inner foes, consume the self-expression of the enemy

who would war against us, O lord of the riches, consume, conscious in knowledge, the powers of ignorance; let them range wide thy ageless marching fires.¹⁸

Or Virupa Angirasa:

धन् मृध्राण्यप द्विषो दहन् रक्षांसि विश्वहा ।
अग्ने तिग्मेन दीदिहि ॥

(VIII. 43. 62)

Smiting away the foes and things that hurt, burning the Rakshasas, on every side, O Fire, shine out with thy keen flame.¹⁹

Into the House of Meditation Savitri has entered; there "The homestead's sentinel and witness fire" is constantly burning. There the Vedic-Brahminic rites are ever in progress for the welfare of creatures and of the entire creation. The great Ahavaniya Fire, located in the East and in the form of a square, is receiving the holocaust; to its West, eight paces farther away, the cooking of the offerings is in progress in the Grihapatya Fire which is in the shape of a circle; the Anvaharyapachana Fire at its South, and hence also known as Dakshinagni, in the form of a half moon, is added to the Grihapatya Fire to speed up the cooking of the sacrificial food, the Havis; the Sabhya and Avasathya to the North and North-East of the Ahavaniya Fire, respectively, complete the ceremonial Fire-Altar. The construction of the Fire-Altar itself was an elaborate process extending over a period of one year. Located in a prominent place of the whole sacrificial area, it was built in five strata of bricks, 10,800 bricks in all with the lowest having 1950. The Altar looks like a great Bird, the Golden Hawk, in its flight high up in the upper skies. The Hotri has taken charge of the whole ceremony; the Ritwik is inviting and summoning the gods for the sacrifice; the Potri or the Purohit has assumed the responsibility of the right conduct and sequence of the offerings; the Adhwaryu is standing in front of the sacrificer, the Yajamana, the paterfamilias, and is guiding him and helping him in the details of the eternal cosmic Yajna. The Chief Priest assisted by these four, each one of them in turn assisted by three, is the Master of the mighty Ceremony. The Hotri is chanting the hymns of the Rig-veda; the Udgatra in his melodious voice is doing the Saman recitation of the Riks; the Adhwaryu is busy with the material arrangements of the Sacrifice; the Brahman takes care of this holy Action by supervising everything assiduously. The Fire is bright-lit, the flames leaping to heaven; indeed, "only with an offering in the well-kindled Fire, Samiddha Homa, can the oblations be successful and fulfilling, Samruddha." The Sacrifice itself becomes the only determining Act. Destiny is created or moulded by it; the decrees of Fate are fixed or altered by it.

The birth of Sri Rama, the Avatar himself who had come to change and

reshape the destiny of mankind, was a result of the boon which his father King Dasharatha of the Ikshwaku line had received after performing the Ashwamedha, the Horse Sacrifice, conducted under the supervision of the celebrated Rishi Rishyashringa. The bricks of the altar had been prepared by following the strictest measures as prescribed by the holy treatises; the priests well-versed in the sacrificial architecture erected the altar, all the while chanting the appropriate hymns; the sacrificial fire to be worshipped by the Yajamana was placed ceremoniously by the expert Brahmins; the fire in its form and shape looked like Garuda, the divine Eagle himself, with his wings and tail distended; the Bird was with wings of gold.

इष्टकाश्च यथान्यायं कारिताश्च प्रमाणतः ।
 चित्तोऽग्निर्ब्राह्मिणैस्तत्र कुशलैः शिल्पकर्मणि ॥२८॥
 स चित्त्यो राजसिंहस्य संचितः कुशलैर्द्विजैः ।
 गरुडो रक्मपक्षो नै त्रिगुणोऽष्टादशात्मकः ॥२९॥²⁰

According to the Bhagavata Purana it is Lord Vishnu himself who represents all the sacrifices in his person; he is the Lord of Sacrifice, Yajneswar. The seven sacrifices, Agnistoma, Atyagnistoma, Uktha, Sodashi, Vajapeya, Atiratra, and Aptoryama, are the seven parts of his body. In him are present all the mantras and the deities worshipped by the devotees reside in him and the materials used for the sacrifice are found in his being. Indeed, all the activities originate in him and he is the very sacrificial Act itself. When he as the divine Boar traced the lost Earth and brought it out from the depths of the fathomless Ocean, all the gods and the immortal Rishis sang his lauds and hailed his great sacrifice. In him all sacrifices, by which the creation grows, are founded.

But in Savitri's House of Meditation who are the officiating priests seated at the altar? And who is the Yajamana with the Grihapatni, the participator in the holy Action, engaged in the Yajna? To whom is he offering the well-prepared oblations? When was this altar built and who lighted the flame and kept it ever-burning? Are seasons the bricks used in this construction so that completion may come to creation in the cycles of Time? Wherefrom was the fuel procured? Was it Agni himself who, as soon as he was born, measured out the shape of the sacrifice? Is he not "a god to the gods", the leader who goes in front of the gods? The very first verse of the Veda extols him as the chief priest and one who is the divine Ritwik summoning the gods for the Sacrifice:

अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम् ।
 होतारं रत्नधातमम् ॥

(I. 1. 1.)

But Agni is also at the same time Grihapati, the house-lord himself, and Vishpati, the Lord of the Worlds, and he is too the Destroyer of all Evil. With seven ton-

gues he consumes the food. And who is the Grihapatni, the Spouse of Agni seated with him and offering the oblations, the Havis? Indeed, it is Aditi under the name of Swaha born as Daksha's daughter on the plane of manifestation, a bright and youthful bride in rich golden-red attire, who is herself presiding over the Yajna and fulfilling the cosmic Act; they together are performing the Good.

In the Meditation's House of Savitri it is Agni who is the blazing deity, the power and fiery force drawing energies from the great Tapas of the Supreme himself. He is the "conscious force or Will with knowledge which pervades the world and is behind all its workings."²¹ Savitri steps into that House where her "silent will" joins the Will of the Divine.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

(To be continued)

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NOLINI KANTA GUPTA ON SRI AUROBINDO

Compiler's Note

EVEN to take the name of Sri Aurobindo is a blessing, for this very simple act puts us directly in relation with some thing of Divinity. Reading what Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta has written about Sri Aurobindo is a powerful movement for opening the doors to our psychic being, for establishing a contact with the universal spirit. It can also open for us the portals of the Divine Mystery. We may be allowed a glimpse of the high purpose of the Gods and an understanding of the significance of the Divine's descent and of His life-*lila*.

Nolini-da was called the *Manas-Putra* of Sri Aurobindo: "born of his musings". In this article he—the faithful son, disciple and servitor—helps us understand the meaning of Sri Aurobindo's life with a rare insight.

SHYAM KUMARI

THE GREATNESS OF THE GREAT*

I

The greatness of a person is the greatness of the Impersonal in him. He has little concern about himself. His thoughts, feelings and acts are in relation to a wider frame of reference. The wider the frame, the higher the status of the being; there is an ascending scale in the structure of human life and society. There are gradations that mount from narrower ranges, moving towards vaster and vaster ranges, taking the person into greater and purer degrees of impersonality. We start, for example, from the lowest and narrowest range, namely, the family, and extend ourselves more and more to the next range, the nation, then to mankind and then still farther to transcendent ranges.

Sri Aurobindo from his very birth was such an impersonal personality—and, in the very highest sense. He had never the consciousness of a particular individual person: all reference to a personal frame of his was deleted from the texture of his nature and character. There was some reference to the family frame in a very moderate way, almost casually: the stress was much more on the next higher frame, the national. In its time the national frame was very strong and played a great part; and yet even there it was not an end in itself, the frame of humanity always loomed large behind. In fact it was that that gave a greater and truer value and significance to the national frame. The national is but a ladder to humanity, it is a unit in the human collectivity. It serves as a channel for international and global welfare, but there is yet a still larger frame, the frame of the spirit, the transcendent consciousness. Indeed it was this that lay at the bottom

* Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta, Vol 5, pp 3-8.

of Sri Aurobindo's consciousness as the bedrock of his being which gave the whole tone and temper of his life, its meaning and purpose. Even when not overt and patent this noumenal personality was always there insistent from behind; it gave a peculiar rhythm and stress, newness and freshness and a profound element of purposefulness to the whole life, even to the activities of the earlier and narrower frames. For it was like viewing everything through the eyes of infinity and eternity, the eye wide-extended in heaven as the Vedic Rishi says, the third eye.

In other words, the yogi, the divine, the impersonal man in Sri Aurobindo was the real person always there from the very birth. Thus we see him starting life exactly with the thing where every one ends. In his inner being he had not to pass through the gradations that lead an ordinary person gradually towards the widening ranges of consciousness and existence. In all the stations of his life, in every sphere and status Sri Aurobindo was doing his duties, that is, his work—*kartavyam karma*—selflessly, which means with no sense of self, or perhaps we should say, with supreme Selfhoodness; for such is the character, the very nature of the born yogi, the Godman. The duties done for and within a frame of life tend always to overflow, as it were, the boundaries and do not always strictly follow the norm of the limited frame. For example, even while in the family life, in the midst of relatives and close friends he was never moved by mere attachment or worldly ties, he was impelled to do what he had to in the circumstances, unattached, free, under another command. Again, when he chose the larger field of national life, here too he was not limited to that frame, his patriotism was not chauvinism or a return to the parochialism of the past; his patriotism was broad-based upon the sense of human solidarity and even the broad-based humanity was not broad enough for the consciousness in him; for humanity does not mean mere humanitarianism, charity, benevolence, or service to mankind. True humanity can be or is to be reached by pushing it still farther into the Divinity where men are not merely brothers or even portions of the Divine but one with Him, the self-same being and personality.

Thus, Sri Aurobindo was an ideal worker, the perfect workman doing the work appropriate to the field of work according to its norm, faultless in execution. As a family man, as a citizen, as a patriot, he carried out his appointed function not in any personal sense with the feeling or consciousness of any individual personality but a large impersonal personality free from ego-sense which is the hallmark of a luminous cosmic consciousness, based upon a still higher and transcendent standing.

Sri Aurobindo was a man of action absolutely in the Gita's sense of the word. He set an example, he was an exemplar showing by his life his way of "standing and walking" as the Gita puts it—the actions that should be done and the way of doing according to the stage and the field given to oneself. This does not naturally mean that one has to be bound to the current frame, bound to the con-

ventional, attached to what is customary, transitional and formal; on the contrary as I have said, Sri Aurobindo in his stride was always transgressing and overflowing the borders, he was a revolutionary, even an iconoclast, for nothing short of the supreme and complete and integral truth satisfied the urge of consciousness in him; in this sense each step of the scale served as a jumping board to the higher, indeed to the highest inherent or hidden in every one of them.

It was this secret ultimate truth that overshadowed, brooded over all these stages and steps and occupations he passed through: they only led up to that transcendent reality, but it was the sense, constant sense of that reality that lent a special character to all his *karma*. This urge towards the supreme reality, this transcendence, did not mean for him a rejection of the domains passed through: it is a subsuming, that is to say, uplifting the narrower, the lower statuses, integrating them into the higher: even as the soil at the root of the plant is subsumed and transmuted into the living sap that mounts high up the plant towards its very top, to the light and energy above.

In the scheme and pattern of human existence in the hierarchy that is collective life, Sri Aurobindo sought to express the play of the supreme Truth, express materially that which works always in secret and behind the veil. The Supreme Reality is not merely the supreme awareness and consciousness, but it is a power and a force; and it holds still a secret source that has not yet been touched,—touched consciously by the human consciousness and utilised for world existence. Man's genius has contacted today in the material world material forces which are almost immaterial—the extra-galactic radiation, the laser beams and other energies of that category which are powerful in an unbelievable unheard-of degree. Even so in the consciousness, there is a mode of force which is not only a force that knows but creates, not only creates but transforms. That force at its intrinsic optimum can enter into dull matter and, transforming it, transform into radiant matter, radiant not only with the physical, the solar light but the light of the supreme Spirit.

This is the force which Sri Aurobindo has disclosed and put at the disposal of mankind. This is the force he has set free that is creating a new world,—re-organising and remoulding, through a great travail indeed, our ancient sphere that will cradle the earth of the golden age.

II

In Sri Aurobindo particularly the impersonalisation is in reality a re-personalisation. Impersonalisation need not mean de-personalisation, that is to say, a complete negation and annihilation of all personality: impersonalisation really means the negation of the ego or rather the replacement of the ego by the true person, the ego being only a deformation or degradation. The basic ego-sense lies in the individual; but it has its formations in the collectivity also

at all the different degrees and levels of consciousness. We have spoken of the mounting frames of reference, and accordingly there is a family ego, a national ego and even there is a humanity ego. The collective ego is as strong as the individual ego. It is only in the transcendent consciousness, the consciousness of the Divine who is the one true Person, that the inferior egos are eliminated or sublimated and can find their true person.

Thus the true process of impersonalisation is re-personalisation; in other words, to be conscious of, to grow into and become the true reality of the being behind the ego formation. It means divinisation of the person. The individual divinises himself into the individual Divine and then around him, first of all, in his inner consciousness, the frame or field changes also into a divine structure. Thus even the family for such a consciousness changes not only its connotation but even its denotation. We may in this connection remember Christ's words with regard to his true family. The nation too assumes its Divine reality, a transcendent personality appears as an expression of the Divine afflatus, each one a particular mode of fulfilling the cosmic purpose. Humanity too undergoes a sea-change and its personality attains a glorious stature in the *sahasra-shirsa Purusha* as hymned by the Vedic Rishi.

This is the cosmos that Sri Aurobindo has expressed, created in his consciousness and therefore in the consciousness of the cosmos itself. This transcendent formation the future is holding ready-made in the womb of the World-Purusha (or rather World-Prakriti) and the day is approaching when this new creation will manifest itself upon earth. The true truth of things is always there up somewhere in the Supreme—in the Parabrahman—from time sempiternal; the question is when and how to bring it down. He who does that is the Avatara, he who comes down and embodies it.

To recapitulate: Impersonalisation involves or culminates in divinisation which means the descent of the Divine, the supreme Person, from above or His emergence from within (both mean the same thing), with the result that all other inferior or external formulations are subsumed, integrated into the supreme Reality forming one single body and personality.

Such is the content of Sri Aurobindo's consciousness, such is the work that is being pursued under the stress of that consciousness towards the realisation of a new, a divine world.

We end as we began, only giving a positive turn to what we said: the greatness of the Great is the greatness of the Divine in him.

In conclusion, here is, in his own words, what he stood for and worked for, what he promises for the future of earth and mankind:

All then shall change, a magic order come
Overtopping this mechanical universe.
A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world.

On Nature's luminous tops, on the Spirit's ground,
The superman shall reign as king of life,
Make earth almost the mate and peer of heaven
And lead towards God and truth man's ignorant heart
And lift towards godhead his mortality.

... ..

Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine.¹

¹ Sri Aurobindo: *Savitri*, Book II, Canto 1, *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 29, pp. 706-7.

“THE LION OF PUNJAB”—LALA LAJPATRAI

A TALK

LALA Lajpatrai was born on 28th January 1865 in a small village—Dhudike—in the Ferozepur District of the Punjab. He had a brilliant career as a student. After passing the first Certificate Examination in Law of Punjab University, he started his practice in 1883 at Hissar—when he was hardly 18. He soon became a leading lawyer of the district and in 1892 he transferred his practice to the wider field at Lahore.

The bondage of motherland made him restless and like many contemporary patriots such as Tilak, Gokhale, B. C. Pal, he also threw in his lot to free India from the shackles of the mighty empire. In 1888, he joined the Indian National Congress. In 1905, he visited England, with Gokhale, to carry on the political campaign for the cause of the country. After his return from England he put his heart and soul into the Swadeshi Movement which was started as a result of the partition of Bengal. He came to be regarded as a revolutionary, and, on 9th May 1907, he was deported to Mandalay for six months. On his deportation the paper ‘Bande Mataram’—(which was stated to have been edited by Sri Aurobindo Ghosh)—wrote in May 1907: “Men of the Punjab: Race of the Lion: For one Lajpat, a hundred Lajpats will arise in his place and with a hundred times louder cry to free India.”

In 1913 he went to America in order to plead the Indian cause before Americans, but he was refused permission to return and had to stay in exile till February 1920.

Lala Lajpatrai realized that the greatest need of the country was a number of whole-time national missionaries pledged to a life of service and sacrifice and for which he established the Servants of the People Society at Lahore in 1921 for the Social Reconstruction of the country. After the partition of India this Society shifted its activities to its headquarters at New Delhi and established many branches all over the country, and this remains as a symbol of his far-sightedness and vision. The numerous activities of this Society include a Charitable Medical Hospital, Higher Secondary School with a special section for the mentally retarded and deaf children, a Library with a reading room, Nature Cure and Yoga Health Centre, a Craft Centre for Women, an Elders’ Home, etc.

As a great educationist, Lala Lajpatrai was responsible for the foundation of the D A V College at Lahore and other places. It was chiefly his interest in education that took him to America in 1913, where he visited many educational institutions in order to improve the education system in India. He believed in the equality of mankind as human nature is one; he also said that India needs earnest, widespread, persistent effort to teach and preach the gospel of life. He wrote books like *Young India* which is both revealing and inspiring.

On the 30th October 1928, at Lahore, while he was leading the boycott procession for the Simon Commission from England, he received blows on his chest which ultimately brought his death on 17th November, 1928. For his fearlessness and selflessness, he was called "The Lion of the Punjab", and on his death, rich tributes were paid by outstanding personalities, as under:

Mahatma Gandhi wrote—"Lajpatrai is dead. Long live Lalaji. Men like Lalaji cannot die so long as the sun shines in the Indian sky. Lalaji means an institution. From his youth he made his country's service a religion, and his patriotism was no creed. He loved his country because he loved the world. His nationalism was international, hence his hold on Europe and America. They loved him because they knew him."

Pandit Motilal Nehru wrote: "Lala Lajpatrai was one of those outstanding personalities whose place it is impossible to fill. It would indeed be difficult to find another man with public activities covering such a wide field as those of this remarkable man. His earnest patriotism did not allow his inexhaustible energy to run in any particular channel, but found avenues for useful work in almost every department of life which goes to build up a nation."

F.W. Pethick Lawrence said: "Lala Lajpatrai's great sympathetic nature, his love for freedom, his generous heart for all those who are oppressed made his presence a spiritual inspiration. Lalaji was a man who had suffered much on behalf of his country but his heart was not sore or bitter and was big enough to understand what lay behind the tyranny of the oppressor and the weakness of the oppressed."

Pandit Madan Mohan Malavya said: "Lala Lajpatrai loved his country intensely and worked for it incessantly and unselfishly. His pure patriotism, his robust independence, fearlessness, sincerity and earnestness easily won him the respect which he so widely enjoyed."

The great French writer Romain Rolland declared: "Lala Lajpatrai possessed the penetrating insight into men and nations, the quick infallible glance, the bold, just determination, the exactitude and precision in all details of action, which make the master mind of great statesmen. I considered him to be the equal of our greatest European politicians, but to these gifts of an active mind, which the West is accustomed to consider as belonging to itself alone, he added the soul of Ancient India, of the old Rishis—heroic faith, unlimited selflessness and absolute sacrifice."

For such inspiring qualities we remember Lala Lajpatrai with gratitude on his 123rd birth anniversary.

RATANLAL

(By courtesy of All India Radio, Pondicherry)

A PERMANENT CALENDAR

Key Day: 1st January day for non-leap years and Jan.-Feb. of leap years;
2nd January day for March to December of leap years.

MONTHS	JAN	APR	SEPT	JUNE	FEB	AUG	MAY
	OCT	JULY	DEC		MAR NOV		
D A T E S	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	29	30	31	CURRENT YEAR WINDOW			
			<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px 10px;">SUN 1 - 1 - 1989</div>				

It is a permanent calendar because excepting the reference day which you write in the current year window everything else remains unchanged.

Write the 1st day of any year you want in the current year window, it will become the calendar of that year.

HINTS FOR USE

In the vertical column of the required month you will find dates falling on the key-day. From there move forward or backward to arrive at the required date.

Example: 21 Feb. 89 on what day?

89 is a non-leap year, key day for February 89 is Sunday. 5, 12, 19, 26 of February 89 fall on Sunday. 19 Sunday, 20 Monday, 21 *Tuesday*. 21 February 89 is on Tuesday....

DATTATREYA (Bakery)

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Twenty-fifth Annual Conference

14 August 1988

(Continued from the issue of December 1988)

ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA

Speech by Srijita Roy

SRI AUROBINDO'S birth anniversary tomorrow, which we are celebrating in this Conference, is a solemn occasion for all of us to recollect the great aim and significance of his teaching and to dedicate ourselves to its realisation with renewed fervour. The best way to do this, in my view, is to remember and fulfil more earnestly the essential requirements of his Integral Yoga. So I have selected this as the topic of my speech today.

The aim of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is the divine perfection of the human being and life. There are three basic elements which constitute this perfection. The first is to unite with the Immanent Divine. The second is union with the Universal Self or the Cosmic Spirit. And the last is to realise the Supramental Truth-Consciousness and to transform our life with its transcendent Light and Power.

To follow the path of the Integral Yoga there are some indispensable requisites. Firstly, there must be the inner call. The nature of the call may vary from individual to individual and awaken in any part of the being. But in its essence it is a psychic urge, for there is always the psychic push behind it, of which the external consciousness is hardly aware. A mere mental ideal or a vital longing, often mistaken for the inner call, cannot take a sadhak very far on this path. So, it has to be a sincere call of the soul, and not mere promptings of the external mental and vital nature which rise up often when one has turned away from the ordinary life and its sufferings. The mind, for example, accepts or rejects theories that support or oppose its bent, but the psychic gives the force of a single-minded aspiration. Hence Sri Aurobindo says: "A positive inner call, a strong will and a great steadiness are necessary for success in the spiritual life."¹ With this call of the soul the attainment of the goal is sure. It might be a long process, through a lot of sufferings, but Sri Aurobindo says: "The spiritual

¹ *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed., Vol 23), p 545

destiny always stands—it may be delayed or seem to be lost for a time, but it is never abolished.”¹

Another important necessity is sincerity. Sri Aurobindo repeats several times that the aim of the Integral Yoga is to open oneself to the highest divine Truth and allow the mind, life and body to be transformed into its image. But for this to happen the *ādḥāra* has to be purified and prepared, made plastic and receptive. And to prepare the *ādḥāra*, there has to be a complete sincerity in all the parts of the being, *i.e.*, they should always insist on the Truth and nothing but the Truth. In this endeavour of building up an absolute sincerity the self-deceiving ego and the mind’s justifications of the ego’s working are the greatest obstacles to be overcome. The vital also very often covers itself with a cloak of Yoga, imagines the being to be divinised, while in reality it is just its old self in new forms. So there has to be a radical change of the human nature. But without complete sincerity this is not possible. To explain what sincerity means Sri Aurobindo says: “Sincere is simply an adjective meaning that the will must be a true will.”² And he also warns: “If you simply think ‘I aspire’ and do things inconsistent with the aspiration, or follow your desires or open yourself to contrary influences, then it is not a sincere will.”³ And the Mother says: “Sincerity *alone* is your protection on the spiritual path.”⁴

Another necessity is a vigilant, constant and unceasing aspiration. The word ‘aspiration’ means a call to the Divine. It is the soul’s seeking for the Divine. It may awaken in the mind, the heart, the vital or the body, but essentially the psychic gives the true aspiration. The Mother says: “A real aspiration is something full of courage.”⁵ It is the courage to have “a taste for the supreme adventure.”⁶ Aspiration need not be expressed in words. But when expressed in words it is what we call a prayer. With an aspiration full of courage, one can fling himself into the great adventure of the divine discovery and divine realisation without any reserve or any calculation. For this to be possible, the sadhak has to be fully confident and sure of his goal. That is why Sri Aurobindo says: “Prayers should be full of confidence without sorrow or lamenting.”⁷ Besides being confident, the aspiration should be steady, without any wavering or impatience. One should not expect immediate results, nor feel disheartened when one does not get them. “One should be satisfied with what one gets and still aspire quietly without struggle for more—till all has come. No desire, no struggle—aspiration, faith, openness—and the grace.”⁸

Another quality to be developed is faith which is necessary for success even

¹ *Ibid*, p. 550

² *Ibid*, p. 560 ³ *Ibid*.

⁴ *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed), Vol 8, p. 248.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 41

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 40.

⁷ *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed, Vol 23), p. 569.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 567

in the ordinary life. For example, when a scientist proceeds with his experiments, he continues to do so in spite of many failures till he gets the required proof. Thus he does because he believes that what he is following after is true. In Yoga also faith has to be there before the experience. But what is faith really? Sri Aurobindo says beautifully that faith "is the gleam sent before by the yet unrisen Sun."¹ It is that quality of the being by which the sadhak feels sure that he can reach the Divine in spite of the dark and gloomy periods of Yoga. Sri Aurobindo assures us: "That he who desires only the Divine shall reach the Divine is a certitude and more certain than two and two make four."² But to desire only the Divine an unshakable faith is required which often falters, especially during the initial stages of Yoga. But this need not dishearten us, for Sri Aurobindo says: "Even if there is much darkness—and this whole world is full of it and the physical nature of man also—yet a ray of the true Light can prevail eventually against a tenfold darkness. Believe that and cleave to it always."³

Along with a strong faith, the sadhak has to develop complete surrender, *i.e.*, he must leave the results of his efforts in the hands of the Divine. His attitude should be, "Let the Divine do what he thinks to be true and right." Most of us, in doing Yoga, make some effort and expect an immediate result. When we do not get it we lose trust in the divine grace. So Sri Aurobindo warns us: "Reject the false notion that the Divine Power will do and is bound to do everything for you at your demand and even though you do not satisfy the conditions laid down by the Supreme. Make your surrender true and complete, then only will all else be done for you."⁴ But the ego is the main obstacle in fulfilling all the conditions of Yoga and more so in the case of making an absolute surrender. The ego regards all submission as lowering of itself, for it cannot understand that true submission to the Divine greatens the being and widens the consciousness. So one has to carefully master and control the ego, and consciously surrender to and obey the Divine Will only. For without surrender the sadhak will always resist the Divine Force pouring into him from above and thus hinder his own progress. So the knot of the ego has to be cut in each part of the being. The physical, vital and mental parts have to give up their own ways and accept the way of the Divine. And then gradually the total surrender is made. But right from the beginning the attitude of the surrender has to be true, *i.e.*, the central will has to be sincere and vigilant always.

And finally whatever method is followed in Yoga, perseverance is essential. Sri Aurobindo says: "The power needed in Yoga is to go through effort, difficulty or trouble without getting fatigued, depressed, discouraged or impatient,

¹ *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), p. 22.

² *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 23), p. 585.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *The Mother* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 25), p. 4.

and without breaking off the effort or giving up one's aim or resolution."¹ And this patience and steadiness depend on how much the sadhak is able to maintain the contact with the Divine Shakti. It is natural for impatience or over-eagerness and doubt to arise on the way, but they have to be rejected. One should always try to aspire steadily and keep the heart free from depression, "*anirvinncetasā*", as the Gita says. For this sadhana is a difficult one, and during the initial stage, progress is generally very slow. In one of his letters to a sadhak, Sri Aurobindo says: "Give the Divine a full sporting chance. When he lights something in you or is preparing a light, don't come in with a wet blanket of despondency and throw it on the poor flame.... At the beginning and for a long time the experiences do usually come in little quanta with empty spaces between—but if allowed its way, the spaces will diminish and the quantum theory give way to the Newtonian continuity of the spirit."² So without being impatient, one should steadily persevere on the path. That the spiritual path is full of thorns is true, but there is not the least bit of doubt that it is supremely worth taking.

So, in an ardent aspiration for the Divine Light, Truth and Ananda to manifest upon earth, I end my speech with Sri Aurobindo's inspiring Gayatri Mantra:

तत्सवितुर्वरं रूपं ज्योतिः परस्य धीमहि ।
यन्नः सत्येन दीपयेत् ॥

"Let us meditate on the most auspicious (best) form of Savitri, on the light of the Supreme which shall illumine us with the Truth."³

¹ *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 23), p. 623.

² *Ibid*, p. 628.

³ *On Himself* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 26), p. 513 f n., Sri Aurobindo's translation.