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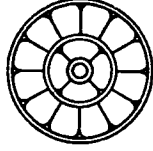
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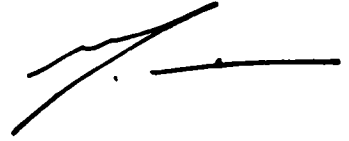


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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No. 9

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A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 8 JUNE 1955

There is an enormous wastage All that I receive from you is lost all the time Apparently everything is all right, and this continues, and it can so continue eternally. But if it has to change it will be a revolution, immediately, and that is why one doesn't want to risk it. There is hypocrisy everything is all right, but it isn't true, there is an enormous loss of consciousness

Is it possible to change this at once, change this consciousness?

CHANGE?

(Pavitra) *Change this, change this consciousness at once?*

Immediately?

(Pavitra) *In a few minutes One feels that it will be a revolution to change that.*

Yes, but a revolution can occur in half a second; it can also take years, even centuries, and even many lives It can be done in a second

One can do it Precisely, when one has this inner reversal of consciousness, in one second everything, everything changes . precisely this bewilderment of being able to think that what one is, what one considers as oneself is not true, and that what is the truth of one's being is something one doesn't know You see, this should have been the normal reaction, the one she had, of saying, "But then what is myself? If what I feel as myself is an illusory formation and not the truth of my being, then what is myself?" For that she doesn't know And so when one asks the question like that

There is a moment—because it is a question which becomes more and more intense and more and more acute—when you have even the feeling, precisely, that things are strange, that is, they are not real, a moment comes when this sensation that you have of yourself, of being yourself, becomes strange, a kind of sense of unreality And the question continues coming up: "But then, what is myself?" Well, there is a moment when it comes up with so much concentration and such intensity that with this intensity of concentration suddenly there occurs a reversal, and then, instead of being on this side you are on that side, and when you are on that side everything is very simple, you understand, you know, you are, you live, and then you see clearly the unreality of the rest, and this is enough

You see, one may have to wait for days, months, years, centuries, lives,

before this moment comes. But if one intensifies his aspiration, there is a moment when the pressure is so great and the intensity of the question so strong that something turns over in the consciousness, and then this is absolutely what one feels: instead of being here one is there, instead of seeing from outside and seeking to see within, one is inside; and the minute one is within, absolutely everything changes, completely, and all that seemed to him true, natural, normal, real, tangible, all that, immediately,—yes, it seems to him very grotesque, very queer, very unreal, quite absurd; but one has touched something which is supremely true and eternally beautiful, and this one never loses again.

Once the reversal has taken place, you can glide into an external consciousness, not lose the ordinary contact with the things of life, but that remains and it never moves. You may, in your dealings with others, fall back a little into their ignorance and blindness, but there is always something there, living, standing up within, which does not move any more, until it manages to penetrate everything, to the point where it is over, where the blindness disappears for ever. And this is an absolutely tangible experience, something more concrete than the most concrete object, more concrete than a blow on your head, something more real than anything whatever.

This is why I always say.. when people ask me how one may know whether he is in contact with his psychic being or how one may know whether he has found the Divine, well, it makes me laugh; for when it happens to you it is over, you can no longer ask any questions, it is done, you do not ask how it happens, it is done.

I want to ask about this point falling back into the ordinary consciousness, which is becoming more and more obstinate in me, personally, I feel it

That's a purely personal question

But why is it like that, when I know that it is absurd?

It is because, I think, you have kept the division in your being, that is, there is one part of your being which has refused to go along with the rest. It is usually like this that it happens. There is one part which has progressed, one part which holds on and doesn't want to move; so you feel it more and more as something which persists in being what it is. That's because you have dropped some of your baggage on the way and left it on the roadside instead of carrying it along with you. That will always pull you backward. Sometimes, unfortunately, one has to turn back, go and pick it up and bring it along, so one loses much time. This is how, indeed, one loses time. It's because one shuts one's eyes to so many things in the being. One doesn't want to see them, because they are not so pretty to see. So one prefers not to know them. But because one is ignorant of the thing it

doesn't mean that it doesn't exist any longer. One does this: one puts it down on the way and then tries to go forward, but it is bound by threads, it pulls one back like a millstone drag, and so one must courageously take it up and hold it up like this (*gesture*) and tell it: "Now you will walk along with me!" It's no use playing the ostrich. You see, one shuts the eyes and doesn't want to see that one has this fault or that difficulty or that ignorance and stupidity, one doesn't want to see, doesn't want, one looks away to the other side, but it remains there all the same.

One day you have to face the thing, you have to. Otherwise you can never reach the end, it will always pull you backward. You may feel ahead, may see the goal there, drawing near, all this more and more, you may have something which goes before and has almost the feeling that it is going to touch, but you will never touch it if you have these millstones pulling you back. One day you must make a clean sweep of everything. It sometimes takes very long but one must burn one's bridges; otherwise you go in a round, progress bit by bit until the end of your life, and then, when the time to leave has come you suddenly feel: "Ah! but... well, it will be perhaps for another time." This is not pleasant; why, it must be something frightful; for if one has known nothing, understood nothing, if one has never tried .. People are born, live, die and are reborn and live and die again, and it goes on, continues indefinitely, they don't even put the problem before themselves. But when one has had the taste, the foretaste of what life is, and why one is here, and what one has to do here, and then in addition one has made some effort and tries to realise, if one doesn't get rid of all the baggage of what does not follow, then it will be necessary to begin again yet another time. Better not. It is better to do one's work while one can do it consciously, and indeed this is what is meant by "Never put off for tomorrow what you can do today." This "today" means in this present life, because the occasion is here, the opportunity here; and perhaps one will have to wait many thousands of years to find it once again. It is better to do one's work, at any cost; there!.. losing as little time as possible.

Every time you are afraid to face yourself and hide carefully from yourself what prevents you from advancing, well, it is as though you were building a wall on the way; later you must demolish it to pass on. It is better to do your task immediately, look yourself straight in the face, *straight in the face*, not try to sugar-coat the bitter pill. It is very bitter: all the weaknesses, uglinesses, all kinds of nasty little things which one has inside—there are, there are, there are, oh! lots of them. And so you are on the point of attaining a realisation, on the point of touching a light, having an illumination, and then suddenly you feel something pulling you back like this (*gesture*), and you suffocate, you cannot advance further. Well, in these moments some people weep, some lament, some say, "Oh, poor me, here it is yet once again!" All this is a ridiculous weakness. You have only to look at yourself like this and say, "What petty meanness, small stupidity, little vanity, ignorance, bad will is still there, hidden in the corner,

preventing me from crossing the threshold, the threshold of this new discovery? Who is there in me, who is so small, so mean and obstinate, hiding there like a worm in a fruit so that I may not be able to see it?" If you are sincere you find it; but above all it is this, absolutely this: you always sugar-coat the pill. The sugar-coating is a kind of what is called mental understanding of oneself. So one coats as thickly with sugar as possible in order to hide well from oneself what is there, the worm in the fruit, and one does it always, always gives oneself an excuse, always, always.

What prevents me from opening myself to the influence is the suggestion, "Why hurry, why so soon, since the others are not doing it?"

This is a frightful platitude!

It is one of the most foolish excuses imaginable. No, there are others much more subtle and much more dangerous than that.

But even if you must be the one and only being in the whole creation who gives himself integrally in all purity to the Divine, and being the only one, being naturally absolutely misunderstood by everybody, scoffed at, ridiculed, hated, even if you were that, there is no reason for not doing it. One must be either a tinsel actor or else a fool. Because others don't do it? But what does it matter whether they do it or not? "Why, the whole world may go the wrong way, it does not concern me. There is only one thing with which I am concerned, to go straight. What others do, how is it my concern? It is their business, not mine."

This is the worst of all slaveries!

Here, it is said: "One must not enter on this path, far vaster and more arduous than most ways of yoga, unless one is sure of the psychic call and of one's readiness to go through to the end." Does this mean, Mother, that those who are accepted or those who are here in this Ashram are sure to go through and succeed?

Excuse me! But there is... I don't exactly know the proportion, but still it is certainly not most of the people here who are doing yoga. They happen to be here for many reasons; but those who have taken the resolution to do yoga, sincerely, do not form the majority. And as I told you, for you, children, those of you who have come here as children, how could you at the moment have even the least idea of what yoga is and come for the yoga? It is impossible. For all those who have come quite small, there is an age when the problem comes up, it is then that you must reflect, and then at that time I ask them. Well, have I asked you often about it? Since I am giving you these lessons, I speak to you about the thing, but it is very rarely that I have taken you individually and asked you, "Do you want to do it or not?"—Only those who have within themselves, who have had an impulsion, a kind of instinct, who have come and said, "Yes, I want to do

yoga ” Then it is finished But I tell them, “Good, these are the conditions, this is how it is And you know, it is not something easy. You have to start with an inner certitude that you are here for that and you want that; that’s enough ” You see, one may have a very good will, a life oriented towards a divine realisation, in any case a kind of more or less superficial consecration to a divine work, *and not do yoga*

To do Sri Aurobindo’s yoga is to want to transform oneself integrally, it is to have a single aim in life, such that nothing else exists any longer, that alone exists. And so one feels it clearly in oneself whether one wants it or not, but if one doesn’t, one can still have a life of goodwill, a life of service, of understanding; one can labour for the Work to be accomplished more easily—all that—one can do many things. But between this and doing yoga there is a great difference

And to do yoga you must want it consciously, you must know what it is, to begin with. You must know what it is, you must take a resolution about it, but once you have taken the resolution, you must no longer flinch That is why you must take it in full knowledge of the thing You must know what you are deciding upon when you say, “I want to do yoga”; and that is why I don’t think that I have ever pressed you from this point of view. I can speak to you about the thing. Oh! I tell you a lot about it, you are here for me to speak to you about it, but individually it is only to those who have come saying, “Yes, in any case I have my idea about the yoga and want to do it”, it is good

And then for them it’s something different, and the conditions of life are different, specially inwardly. Specially within, things change.

There is always a consciousness there acting constantly to rectify the situation, which puts you all the time in the presence of obstacles which prevent you from advancing, make you bump against your own errors and your own blindnesses. And this acts only for those who have decided to do the yoga. For others the Consciousness acts like a light, a knowledge, a protection, a force of progress, so that they may reach their maximum capacities and be able to develop as far as possible in an atmosphere as favourable as possible—but leaving them completely free in their choice.

The decision must come from within Those who come consciously for the yoga, knowing what yoga is, well, their conditions of living here are .. outwardly there is no difference but inwardly here is a very great difference There is a kind of absoluteness in the consciousness, which does not let them deviate from the path: the errors one commits become immediately visible with consequences strong enough for one not to be able to make any mistake about it, and things become very serious. But it is not often like that.

All of you, my children—I may tell you this, I have repeated it to you and still repeat it—live in an exceptional liberty. Outwardly there are a few limitations, because, as there are many of us and we don’t have the whole earth at our

disposal, we are obliged to submit to a certain discipline to a certain extent, so that there may not be too great a disorder; but inwardly you live in a marvellous liberty: no social constraint, no moral constraint, no intellectual constraint, no rule, nothing, nothing but a light which is there. If you want to profit by it, you profit by it; if you don't want to, you are free not to

But the day you make a choice—when you have done it in all sincerity and have felt within yourself a radical decision—the thing is different. There is the light and the path to be followed, quite straight, and you must not deviate from it. It fools no one, you know; yoga is not a joke. You must know what you are doing when you choose it. But when you choose it, you must hold on to it. You have no longer the right to vacillate. You must go straight ahead. There!

All that I ask for is a will to do well, an effort for progress and the wish to be a little better in life than ordinary human beings. You have grown up, developed under conditions which are exceptionally luminous, conscious, harmonious, and full of goodwill; and in response to these conditions you should be in the world an expression of this light, this harmony, this goodwill. This would already be very good, very good.

To do the yoga, this yoga of transformation which, of all things, is the most arduous—it is only if one feels that one has come here for that (I mean here upon earth) and that one has to do nothing else but that, and that it is the only reason of one's existence—even if one has to toil hard, suffer, struggle, it is of no importance—"This is what I want, and nothing else"—then it is different. Otherwise I shall say, "Be happy and be good, and that's all that is asked of you. Be good, in the sense of being understanding, knowing that the conditions in which you have lived are exceptional, and try to live a higher, more noble, more true life than the ordinary one, so as to allow a little of this consciousness, this light and its goodness to express itself in the world. It would be very good." There we are.

But once you have set foot on the path of yoga, you must have a resolution of steel and walk straight on to the goal, whatever the cost.

There!

SRI AUROBINDO ON THE CONDITIONS FOR OUR YOGA

THE first discipline necessary is self-discipline, *ātma-samyama*.

The first element in that is obedience to the law of the Yoga

All difficulties can be conquered, but only on condition of fidelity to the Way.

There is no obligation on any one to take it; but once taken, it must be followed or there can be no progress or success.

Difficult and trying is the Path—it is the way for heroes and strong souls, not for weaklings.

Remember the true basis of the Yoga

It is not founded upon the vehement emotionalism of the current *bhakti-mārga*—though it has a different kind of *bhakti*, but it is established on *samatā*¹ and *ātma-samarpana*.²

Obedience to the divine Will, not assertion of self-will is the very first *mantra*.

There can be no complete *utsarga*,³ if there is any kind of revolt or vehement impatience

Revolt and impatience means always that there is a part of the being or something in the being which does not submit, has not given itself to God, but insists on God going out of His way to obey it.

All that may be very well in the ordinary *bhakti-mārga*, but it will not do in the *adhyātma yoga*.⁴

The revolt and impatience may come and will come in the heart or the Prana, when these are still subject to imperfection and impurity; but it is then for the Will and the Faith in the *buddhi*⁵ to reject them, not to act upon them.

If the Will consents, approves and supports them, it means that you are siding with the inner enemy; and every time it is done, the enemy is strengthened and the Shuddhi⁶ postponed.

This is a difficult lesson to learn, but every Yogin must learn it, thoroughly.

It is hard, very hard indeed to know even the principle well enough; it is a hundred times harder still to master the lower nature in this respect.

Only do not associate yourself with the enemy 'Desire'!

¹ equality, equanimity

² self-surrender

³ setting free

⁴ spiritual yoga

⁵ intelligence, will, the discriminating principle

⁶ purification

Only consciously and fully assist the Master in the work of purification.
These are the keywords of our Yoga

Shuddhi is the most difficult part of the whole Yoga; it is the condition of all the rest.

If that is once conquered, the real conquest is accomplished. The rest becomes a comparatively easy building on an assured basis,—it may take longer or shorter time, but it can be done tranquilly and steadily

To prevent the *śuddhi* the lower nature in you and around you, will exhaust all its efforts, and even when it cannot prevent, it will try to retard

And its strong weapon then is, when you think you have got it, suddenly to break in on you and convince you that you have not got it, that it is far away, and so arouse disappointment, grief, loss of faith, discouragement, depression and revolt, the whole army of troubles that wait upon impure Desire.

When you have once found calm, peace of mind, firm faith, equality and been able to live in it for some time, then and only then, you may be sure that *śuddhi* is founded, but you must not think it will not be disturbed.

It will be, so long as your heart and Prana are still capable of responding to the old movements, have still any memory and habit of vibrating to the old chords

The one thing necessary when the renewed trouble comes, is to stand back in your mind and will from it, refuse it the sanction of your higher being, even when it is raging in the lower nature.

As that habit of refusal forces itself—at first that may not be successfully done, the *Buddhi* may be lost in the storm—gradually it will be found that the *aśuddhi*,⁷ even though it still returns becomes less violent, more and more external, until it ceases to be anything more than a faint and short-lived touch from outside and finally comes no more

Thus have the pioneers to hew their way through the jungle of the lower Prakriti.

Thus, have they to prepare themselves, who dare share the spiritual burden of the Master and are chosen in any degree to lead, help and guide others on the same way

These must not be cowards and shirkers who refuse the burden and clamour for everything to be made quick and easy for them

The master demands strong men and not emotional children.

The master demands endurance, firmness, heroism—true spiritual heroism;—demands manhood and then divine-manhood too

(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol 17, pp 154-56)

⁷ impurity

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

YOU are a very brave and generous woman. Few people would undergo so cheerfully the trouble to which you have been put—and in the thick of it feel concerned about other people's needs. I am proud to have you as my friend—and I am proud also of your life's partner, who is inseparable from you in my thoughts, and who would not be so, either in my thoughts or in real life, if he did not respond in every fibre to the same ideals of courage and generosity

Courage and generosity—these have been my own guiding stars too, though I cannot say I have succeeded so well in living according to their light. Of course, when I use these words I mean much more than physical courage and material generosity. The latter are great and rare things—but they are most precious when they are reflections of qualities which hold on many planes. Courage involves the readiness to face criticism for one's principles—to stand solitary on a dangerous height—to sacrifice comfort, reputation, happiness for the sake of one's friends. The last-named movement shades courage off into generosity. And, after all, the two qualities cannot really be separated. For courage necessarily implies the capacity of self-giving—and all giving is generosity. I would add that generosity means also the capacity to understand others, put oneself in their shoes and in their minds, make room for their viewpoints and claims, see even their case against oneself. Ultimately, the highest courage and generosity are to live for the Unknown, to love the Invisible, to launch out on an unchartered quest for the Infinite, the Divine, to lay the whole of one's time-existence at the service of the Eternal.

My friend who has come to you—as well as all who are intimately connected with him—is a devotee too of courage and generosity. I am happy that his stay has been indefinitely prolonged. The American Government can have no objection to his continued stay: they take no adverse account except of crime—and my friend is guilty only of what the Younger Pitt, in his maiden speech in Parliament, called “the atrocious crime of being a very young man”. But he is a young man belonging to the rare category described by R.L. Stevenson (another adherent to the ideals of courage and generosity): “We want young men who have brains enough to make fools of themselves!” Evidently, he means those who possess not only enthusiasm and energy but also the intoxicating vision of something new that is true beyond the fixed ways of the world—something for which they are ready to look rash and unwise in the view of the safely-settled rut-followers. Here we may have in mind those who go

Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone—

no less than such as fare forth in quest of a new passage to the Indies across the untravelled Atlantic. (3 2.1970)

*

It is most interesting that in my letter of the 4th I referred to the need for you to be in harmonious relationship with all around you, whether at the hospital or at home, besides feeling the Mother's presence all the time within you. A radiation of that presence towards whoever you work with, whoever you live with is very necessary for one who aspires to be the Mother's true child. Your letter of the 1st is accompanied by a prayer to her in which occurs the appeal: "Correct still more my attitude towards work, studies, towards my parents and other people." It is clear that our minds and hearts are interlinked with each other through the Mother's gathering of both of us into her single light.

Ups and downs of the sadhak in us are natural. Don't worry about them. The progress towards perfection is never uniform until the whole of our being has been unified. The unification takes long but it is certain if the central self, the innermost psyche, grows more and more active in all our movements. It has the master-key to open every part of us to feel what Wordsworth calls

A greatness in the beatings of our heart

To aim at this unification is our immediate concern—the pervasive sense of the Divine within us. And as we move towards such pervasion an automatic concord gets created with our surroundings. But we must be patient. It takes long for the *grand finale* to be struck. With as much equanimity as we can muster we have to meet whatever wrong notes ring inwardly or outwardly. If we do this, they turn into stepping-stones towards the ultimate harmony. Of course, our equanimity has to be, as a phrase in *Savitri* goes,

A heart of silence in the hands of joy.

For we are offering our unwounded poise to the Holy Feet that are leading our pilgrimage to the *satyam-ritam-brihat*—the True, the Right, the Vast, the ideal set before the world from the beginning of our history by the Rigvedic Rishis. And we are doing the offering with a rush of rapture born of love—"hands of joy." Our equanimity is not of an intellectual Stoic: it is that of a spiritual Epicurean. An Eternal Face whose eyes are depths of immutable bliss and whose mouth is a moulder of ever-new beauty is our goal.

Don't tax yourself with the problem whether bodily divinisation will take place in this very life. Let all your inner self be a constant remembrance of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and let that remembrance shape your outer life to a

consecrated strength which is at the same time a dedicated sweetness. Thus you will lay the foundation of a future, whether in this life or another, of a divinised body
(9.10 1991)

*

Last evening I told you. “While coming home from the Samadhī I looked at the clear blue sky and the rich green trees and knew how much I loved them and I thought of all the people who were dear to me. There was no dryness within me, no bare aloofness. And yet I was aware that all ties had been cut: no lingering attachment to anything or anyone remained. I felt completely free, ready to leave all behind without the slightest regret. If I had to die that very minute, I would do it with a quiet happiness.” You remarked: “This should mean almost oneness with the Divine Mother.” I answered: “No, it may imply getting nearer to her, but in itself it was just a glad freedom from earth and life.” I have more than once quoted to you the Upanishadic rending of the knot of the heart-strings, by which the mortal enjoys immortality even in this body. My state was nothing so grand. There was no sense of liberation into the Supreme Self above both birth and death—the eternal One beyond space and time. Not the realisation of immortality, the entry into the Unborn and the Undying, but simply a smiling aloofness from the affairs of the world, an utterly painless readiness to give up everything. There was no desire left even to finish a number of literary schemes I had in hand. Not that they seemed worthless but the sense that they could fulfil anything in me was absent.

I may say I needed no fulfilment. No matter how many loose ends may quiver before my eyes, I was not conscious of any need in me to bind them together. A tranquil completeness, independent of any call of the world, pervaded my mind and heart. It was as if everything had already been accomplished somewhere and as if those whom I loved and valued could never be really lost to me but were essentially treasured up in some unknown depth of being. Would these people miss me? There was so much peace in me that I thought I would leave a mass of it behind to fill whatever gap might be caused by my departure. I had the expectation that they would calmly take my absence. In any case I am standing at a distance from all concerns while at the same time stretching my arms across the intervening vacancy to touch gently everything far away to show that I am not pushing anything off: only living with no hold upon me of any hope or fear of what is to come in the course of the world’s wayfaring. But I have the feeling of waiting for my painless death-in-life to fill—one day—with some felicity that will be a permanent poise in Sri Aurobindo’s eternity which is all-transcending yet denies nothing, the Divine Mother’s infinity which is all-accepting yet with nothing binding it.
(24.4 1992)

*

Nirodbaran has shown me your latest letter to him, raising a point which you consider legitimate apropos of some statements by the Mother whose drift had not struck home to you earlier. The point in general is whether one could do Yoga without a Guru: it becomes particularly acute when her discussion “goes on to specifically include even the ultimate experience, ‘le yoga du corps’ —‘the yoga of the body’.”

According to you, the Mother’s position may be summed up as follows. She does not deny that doing Yoga, including the Yoga of divinising the body, is possible without a Guru but her own experience has been always with a Guru and she can give only her own experience. She repeats that it is possible and when conceding others the possibility of even the culminating experience—physical divinisation—without a Guru she adds that if such an experience comes “as a necessity” it is “all right” (“c’est bien”).

In your view, this conversation of May 26, 1971—which you quote to me from the *Agenda*—with “M, a young disciple, professor of Mathematics at the Centre of Education” (evidently Manoj Dasgupta) entitles you to tell Nirod to think of a supplementary comment on what was to be concluded from his correspondence with Sri Aurobindo on April 11, 1937—namely, that physical transformation would not be possible except in the physical presence of himself and the Mother—that is, under the direct bodily guidance by the Gurus of the Integral Yoga. You are asking Nirod. “Could something new have intervened since the Master’s departure to make the Mother—especially in consideration of her September 1973 decision to withdraw, as reported by her son André—leave things more open than before?”

I am inclined to think that you are mistaken in putting this question to Nirod—mistaken because of two reasons. First, the Mother’s decision to leave her body was taken nearly two and a half years after the talk with M; so it is not proper to see any relation between it and that talk. She cannot be seen as weighing so much in advance the possibility of others doing what she herself would decide to leave uncompleted. Secondly, this very talk has shades which are not marked by you and which give on the whole a rather negative slant to her words. When she first says that it is possible, she adds: “But I don’t know under what conditions” (“Mais dans quelles conditions, je ne sais pas”). This implies that the conditions for the possibility are hardly imaginable by her. “It is possible” seems to be merely theoretical—not anything coming as a real concession by her. And such a situation is confirmed by her later declaration: “I don’t know, I can’t say, since I can speak only from personal experience—all else has no value” (“Je ne sais pas, je ne peux pas dire parce que je ne peux que parler d’expérience personnelle—ça n’a pas de valeur”). Finally, we have to be sensitive to the note almost of irony when she says: “I ought to say that if it comes to you like that, like a necessity, it is all right, but one must not seek to do it.. It is not very pleasant!” (“Je dois dire que si cela vient sur vous comme cela,

comme une nécessité, c'est bien, mais il ne faut pas chercher à le faire. Ce n'est pas très agréable!")) The sense here is: "This work of physical transformation is extremely difficult and very far from being enjoyable. Don't be so foolish as to go in for it—it's not something that all can do or should think of doing. But if it gets just imposed on you by any chance, if it comes as a sheer unavoidable necessity, as though willy-nilly you were chosen to do so nasty a job, then of course it's OK, it's destiny."

It strikes me that the Mother is here suggesting two things. The original question was whether one can do the Integral Yoga without a Guru—a Yoga which goes so far as to include the body's divinisation. The Mother's words towards the end bring in the suggestion that the work of divinising the body is not anybody's job. Elsewhere she has told us in effect, "This work has never been done before. I am attempting it for the first time because my body has been marked out for the experiment—Sri Aurobindo has asked me to undertake it. And it is not something I would encourage anyone to take up, for it can hardly be called pleasant." In short, the Mother does not believe that anyone except herself is meant to try this terribly hard experiment for the first time. And as for doing, without an embodied Guru, anything in the Integral Yoga—most of all physical transformation—her own experience tells her that it can't be done. What worth is there in going outside her experience and granting the bare possibility of such an achievement and granting even this without being able to conceive of any conditions under which the possibility would arise?

To my mind, when everything is properly probed, the passages you have cited do not alter the situation envisaged in Nirod's correspondence.

I am showing this letter to Nirod before posting it (26 4 1992)

*

I am glad that you have been moving further and further on the razor's edge which is the traditional description of the path of Yoga. Your steady eye on the two essentials I had marked out—equanimity and "Remember and Offer"—is bound to carry you far. Their special advantage is that they involve (or evolve) both the heart and the head. The offering is surely a movement as if of handing the Mother

.. a red, red rose
That's newly blown in June—

the rose of one's love-thrilled devotion-dyed surrender-kindled heart every time the circumstances of one's life are laid at her feet. But remembering is bound to be—at least to an extent—a stirring of the head which brings up before one an image of the beatific face belonging to the figure at whose other end are those

heaven-missioned earth-blessing feet Similarly, equanimity is not only—as one of my favourite *Savitri*-lines has it—

A wide unshaken look on Time's unrest—

a calm controlled attitude of detached impersonality ruling out all individual reactions of thought and judgment Equanimity is also a seeing of one's inner agitations which are as much part of "Time's unrest" as are the ups and downs of the outer world Here the changing history of the heart is to be faced with unaltered peace and an even tenor sought to be infused into it The emotions no less than the thinking processes have to remain unruffled

There is another point to be noted Equanimity is gained in two ways First, by a stepping back into some tranquil Vast that is ever there behind our throbbing human smallness Secondly, by catching all hurtful disturbing touches from the common world upon our heart before they pierce the surface and, without any attempt to think how to meet them, remembering the Mother and offering them to her. Thus at once we get free from them and some smiling Vast beyond us takes them up This Vast and that tranquil Vast are two aspects of the same luminous Liberty that sets the stage for our self-transcendence into spirituality. But they don't coalesce in our experience from the start The one seems to represent at its extreme realisation what the ancient seers called the Self of selves, an impersonal immobile common background to the varied flux of phenomena, the diverse play of personal lives. The other is a remote-appearing yet intimate creatrix of our souls, a super-Person from whom all personality emanates, a goddess-greatness immune to "the troubles of our proud and angry dust" but still concerned about them, quietly eager to help and resolve them To the Self of selves the world is a sort of aching illusion, to this goddess-greatness whom we may designate the Soul of souls the world is a struggling evolution with deific possibilities of a manifold perfection By constant reference to both by the Yogic formula I have suggested—which is really a putting together of Sri Aurobindo's recipes at work in most cases—the two super-realities enfold our lives as what I may dub a unified Power of Peace, a joint divine environment, as it were, calling forth, from behind, beyond, within us, a new superhuman manifestation. Gradually we are re-created by a distant yet receptive Silence and a transcendent yet responsive Vigilance alert to the rhythm of our human cry—serving by their combined or rather fused influences the cause of our sadhana

(5 5 1992)

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Thank you for your donation to *Mother India* A regular generous feeding like that is good for a 43-year old journal.

I am glad my latest letter has proved a source of increasing guidance after each further reading. On my part I have tried to bring out a sense of the spiritual passive-active truth behind the poise of equanimity as well as the active-passive truth permeating the gesture of “Remember and Offer” The two are really complementary. The one involves a vast withdrawal into a background peace which when brought face to face with the common world becomes a spread-out of silent power whose very presence is a pressure on things to become harmonious or to disappear. The other involves a constant catching hold of things because its practitioner has to confront life and actively seek to change world-values, but by separating them from their common context and by lifting each event and its significance towards the Divine Mother who watches all and secretly pervades all. Thus one dynamically dissociates events from the run of daily time and refuses to deal with them from the human source of life-manipulation. Into the invisible hands of the ever-unforgotten Supreme Creatrix they are delivered with one’s whole heart and then one stops worrying about them.

This shade of surrender is not usually read in the offering that is to go with remembering. Just the attitude of consecration is advised, bringing the feeling that every bit of work is done for the Mother. Then every bit grows a pleasure and one goes nearer and nearer to her and the work itself turns more efficient because her hidden omnipotence is tacitly invoked. What I have added to the meaning of the Aurobindonian formula is the action of offering in order to lead to one’s own inaction and to put all the initiative in the Divine’s court, so to speak, so that both the decidedly more luminous judgment and the undoubtedly more competent power of the Divine are brought to bear upon life’s vicissitudes. My addition too is Aurobindonian in essence but from another context of the Integral Yoga. Here one has deliberately to cease planning and shaping the course of things. Especially when an acute problem gets posed and hurtful circumstances tend to shake one’s nerves, one has to stop figuring out one’s response and, to save one from perplexity as well as from the possibility of wrong choice, one not only consecrates what is before one but also abdicates as thinker and doer. Thus a peaceful passivity results from the dynamic drive at the start.

(27.5.1992)

*

I have promised to tell you the inner story during the last phase of my recent illness. I had a hacking cough and along with it a daily rise in temperature during the afternoon and evening—generally 100 and once 101. This did not deter me from my usual typing work at home and my daily wheelchair-visit to the Samadhi from 4.30 to 5.30 p.m. during which hour the cough was surprisingly quiet, except for a slight outburst on rare occasions. Every third day I used to drop in at

our Ashram dispensary which is on my way to the Samadhi. There Dr. Datta would solicitously examine my chest and lungs, put the thermometer in my mouth and give me the needed treatment for whatever bacterial complication accompanied the virus infection he had diagnosed. We have no remedy against viruses—they come and go at their own sweet will.

The illness went on for nearly four weeks. The repeating fever made the body rather uneasy and there seemed no definite end to it. One afternoon I suddenly had the feeling that what I needed was mountain-air to set me right. But how was I to get that refreshing atmosphere which, as I remembered, had once got rid of a troublesome fever. I was in Poona (now Pune) and had planned to go to the high plateau of Panchgani. Half way up in the bus I felt the changed air sweep the fever out and I was perfectly well thenceforward. After my fracture-accident I was in no state to catch any bus winding anywhere upward. Besides, I disliked the idea of leaving Pondicherry. What was then to be done?

A voice within commanded “Read *Savitri*.” Immediately I took hold of the volume, concentrated a little and opened it at random. I read two pages at a stretch, audibly, getting the full impact of the rhythm. At the end I realised that something had gradually stood back from the feverish Amal. The fever had not gone but the real I was free from it. Then I recalled Sri Aurobindo writing that mountains were a symbol of the Universal Consciousness. It also struck me that what he had called the “overhead” planes—planes of consciousness above the mind-level—would surely be inner heights in a spiritual wideness, from where Sri Aurobindo drew the inspiration of his Yogic poetry, especially of his epic *Savitri*. This immense creation was meant to have again and again the Mantric vibration of the top overhead plane, the Overmind which had been the source of the supreme moments in the Rigveda, the Upanishads and the Gita. The breath of inspiration blowing through *Savitri* was indeed the archetypal mountain-air.

Every morning, day after day, I listened to my lips spelling out *Savitri*. For a couple of days, while I stood inwardly aloof the fever continued though at a lower pitch. Then it vanished completely and I inhaled the atmosphere of a super-Panchgani all the time. I informed Dr. Datta that I was quite well but I did not tell him how the virus infection had left me and the cough too had started subsiding. I was afraid he might think me too imaginative. If he happens to read this detailed account I am certain he will not shake his head. He is too much of a Yogi to do it and too trustful of “respected elders” to doubt them. (25.6.1992)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

“MY OPERATION AND ESHA’S ROLE IN IT”

AN ACCOUNT BY NIRODBARAN

(3)

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1992)

WHILE I was in the hospital, the nurses were very pleased with me. They began to shower compliments on me for my good behaviour and cheerful temperament. From my side, I was just as pleased with the gentle and smiling way in which they took care of me. I used to call one of them the Kanyakumari nurse because she came from Kanyakumari.

Even my friends were surprised to find me so bright and free of pain. In fact, I learned that Sri Aurobindo had told Esha he had removed all my pain.

Nevertheless, after a week or so, the doctors’ examination revealed that my bladder had still not regained its normal tone. It was not voiding itself completely, and so I would have to keep the catheter for a longer period. Now I had no other alternative but to submit to further hospitalisation. I was not prepared for this new turn of events. I had enjoyed perfect health till this illness, and had carried on my daily life in the best of spirits. Then suddenly all that had changed. What a reversal it was of my expectation that a prostate operation nowadays was a matter of a mere two weeks, as I had been given to understand!

The hospital routine resumed as before, with two assistant doctors paying me regular morning visits and cheering me up with their warm smiles. They still found me quite sportive. My Ashram attendants too were angels and made me feel as though I was at home still. Esha on her part used to pray fervently to Sri Aurobindo that my catheter should be removed so that I could go back to the Ashram. He answered that though he could get it done, it would harm my recovery. He assured her that eventually I would be cured and that she should not be impatient.

It turned out that mine was not a simple case. I was farther warned that even after the removal of the catheter I would have to be very careful, so that no complications might develop due to my age and prostatic abnormality. All these problems had resulted from my having waited too long, and now my ignorance could not save me from the consequences of my neglect. Fire burns your hand; ignorance of this fact does not save you. Such was the burden of the Guru’s argument. Doubtless I could have picked some holes in it, but since he was out of reach I had to submit calmly to my situation.

After about a week, however, I was discharged from the hospital, with the catheter in place, as they could do nothing further for me by keeping me there. (I attended the April Darshan) I was to come back a week later for a check-up.

When the time came, I duly presented myself for examination. A junior doctor examined me and did not find sufficient improvement in my condition. But when the surgeon arrived, he examined me and removed the catheter and made me drink plenty of water. Then he said he would return after a few hours, during which time I should try to urinate normally. I made frequent attempts without success at the start, and began to pace up and down the room. Finally after about two hours, the bladder was able to eject a thin stream of urine. When the doctor came and heard about it, he told me it was all right, and that I could go home. If I drank a lot of water my bladder should begin to function normally. He assured me that everything would be all right.

I did as I was told. My surgeon was due to leave for America the next morning. I was happy that my catheter life was over, and that I could once again move about freely in the Ashram. I had no inkling whatever of the dark catastrophe that was waiting for me, which reminded me later of a verse in *Savitri*: "O soul, it is too early to rejoice."

Meanwhile my friends and acquaintances were glad to see me back, well and active without the catheter appendage. Now my bladder began to function hourly, though the flow was still small, and in the evening, I went to the Playground for meditation. Later that night till about 10 p.m. I passed small quantities of urine three or four times. Then all at once the pressure on my bladder increased. It tried to empty itself more frequently—every half hour or so—but found that it could do so only with great difficulty. Something seemed to be blocking the flow, and I began to feel acute distress. Now I discovered to my consternation that there was blood in the urine. Thoroughly alarmed, I tried to calm myself. It was now 11:00 p.m., and all had gone to bed and I did not want to disturb them. I was living in the Ashram compound which was kept locked from within. As my situation began to worsen I woke up an Ashramite and phoned the Ashram doctor. But he could give me no comfort. He only told me that it couldn't be helped, and that I would have to endure the pain and distress. He would come at six in the morning and have me taken to the Nursing Home.

Now my trial truly began. From eleven p.m. to six a.m., I went through hell. I had never had such a harrowing experience in my life. I had to void urine every half hour under great pressure and paroxysmal pain. As I went on passing bloody urine, I was crying in agony and praying desperately to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. There were even moments when I thought I would collapse and pass away. I had to exert my will to bear the crisis. At about three or four a.m. I couldn't bear it any more and sent word to Sudha, one of my intimate friends and assistants, regarding my pathetic condition. She was living outside the Ashram. She came in the early morning to ease my suffering, but by then the gravity of the crisis had passed. The urine flow was now less obstructed, and I had just fallen asleep out of sheer exhaustion. The doctor too came at six a.m. as he had promised, and said that he had informed the surgeon about my condition. The

surgeon had replied that what had happened to me was a possibility to be expected, and his assistant would come in the afternoon to do what was required. I informed Esha and asked her to pray to the Guru.

I was removed to the Nursing Home. When the surgeon’s assistant came later in the evening, he explained that blood clots must have obstructed the passage, and the bladder as it tried to void itself could not push them out. It was this that had caused my distress. The presence of blood showed that there was a haemorrhage in the bladder, which had caused the clots. The bladder, distended as it was, lacked the force to clear the passage. He washed the bladder and did whatever was needed. Then he said that it was best to replace the catheter for some time and that he would visit me after a week.

Catheter or no catheter, the fact that I had come out of one of the worst nightmares of my life could not but be due to the palpable intervention of the Grace. But why the nightmare at all? Only my Guru can say if he wants to.

(To be continued)

DYUMAN

BORN on June 19, 1903, Dyuman, the Managing Trustee of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, breathed his last on August 19 this year at 8 p.m. after a massive heart-attack at the Ashram Nursing Home. He had done his stint—and that meant unsparing work as usual—on the Darshan Day, August 15. The very next day he developed high fever and, a little later, had to be taken to the Nursing Home. He was buried on August 21 in the Ashram burial ground. The Mother had once called him “the perfect worker”.

A deeply devoted sadhak of Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga, he was one of the two last links with the earliest phase of the Ashram.

K.D.S.

AURA OF THE MOTHER'S MANIFESTATION

A MEMOIR OF CHAMPAKLAL SEEN BY CHAMPAKLAL HIMSELF

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1992)

I HAVE often wondered why the Mother called Champakbhai “My lion.” The qualities usually associated with a lion are nobility, courage and power. Champakbhai with his flowing beard and hair no doubt resembles a gentle lion in the photograph where the Mother refers to him as her lion. He looks royal too. But is it only because of this physical resemblance that the Mother gave him that name? I wonder. Could it be because of his courage that he was called so? Does not Sri Aurobindo write about Champakbhai apropos of a vision: “The one thing clear in it is that Champaklal is a prompt and effective fighter on the vital plane... Champaklal as a soldier means that he is a warrior in the vital field against the hostile forces.” And again, referring to the traditional idea of the lion as the *Vāhana*, vehicle, of Goddess Durga, the lion that was offered to the Goddess by Himalaya, Sri Aurobindo writes, “The lion is the attribute of the Goddess Durga, the conquering and protecting aspect of the Universal Mother.” Basing ourselves on these notes by Sri Aurobindo, we can surmise that in the subtle and occult worlds the Mother does use Champakbhai as the *Vāhana* for her battles against the anti-divine forces. The Mother even told someone: “Lions are really very beautiful, I have always one lion with me, but not visibly, because people are much afraid of a lion and their fear creates a mess .” With these clues in our hand we can say, though with a little trepidation, that Champakbhai may be a *vibhuti* of the Mahakali aspect of the Mother.

One more word regarding the courage of Champakbhai. It seems that in his childhood he liked guns very much and so when he went to Ahmedabad from his native place Patan, for giving a drawing examination, he took the opportunity to have a photograph taken with a gun. The long pipe-like thing which he is seen carrying in the picture published on p. 2 in the book *Champaklal Speaks* is the muzzle of a gun. And it seems that in those days Brahmans were not allowed to wear a pant and ties. “But in my childhood,” writes Champakbhai, “I used to like that dress and that is why I took my photograph in that dress. But now I like the Indian dress only.” And often, writes Champakbhai about his boyhood, he liked to wear a crown, made out of wire and paper, and throw on his shoulders a long robe, and pace up and down the hall in his house, imagining himself to be a king. These childhood games do indicate his warrior nature—one who is ready to battle for the Truth and perhaps that is what he has been doing in all his births.

It is quite a known fact by now that it was Champakbhai who used to collect all the little things belonging to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and keep them with great care—their clothes, nails, hair etc. The very first thing he kept of the

Mother was a burnt match-stick. In his own words this is how it happened:

“It was sometime in 1923 when I had just started work near Mother. She was writing letters to her mother. At times she would show me the address she had written on the envelope. She wrote it with a brush and it was so pretty to see. At times she used to seal the cover. The first time I was present when she did that, she lighted the candle (for sealing with lac) and kept the match-stick aside. After she finished, she gave me the match-stick to throw away. I asked humbly: ‘Can I keep it?’

“Mother looked at me and smiled. In an affectionate tone she said: ‘You can, surely. But you see, you will require a whole house to keep things like that.’

“And She smiled. Then She held the match-stick and placed it on my palm, gently putting pressure.”

It was because of this care for all things used by the Mother that one day he could come to Her rescue:

“The Mother had written something and torn it up. I collected those pieces and kept them in a special envelope—not for reading, but because I could not bring myself to throw away her handwriting. She had observed this and she started passing on such bits saying, ‘My handwriting. .’

“One day it so happened that she referred to a letter she had so torn and exclaimed: ‘What a pity. I tore up that letter.’

“I said to her immediately: ‘Mother, I will give the letter’.

“Mother: What? (I showed her the pieces I had preserved.)

“Mother: What shall I do with them?”

“Champaklal: Mother, I will give you your letter. So saying, I joined the torn bits and gave the letter, pasted-up, to her.

“Mother: Oh, Champaklal, you are an angel. You are an angel.”

More than helping the Mother with torn letters and worn-out things, Champakbhai has helped humanity by preserving for posterity the pared nails and the fallen hair of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. These have now become the sacred Relics. They are now being taken to different centres in India and installed in Shrines. The Mother herself had started sending out the Relics of Sri Aurobindo to different states in the country and each of the Centres which have received the Relics shall, in the future, become a great nucleus of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's Force and Consciousness. The Body of the Avatar touching the body of the earth has a unique effect in the process of transformation of Matter and Man. And as Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's attempt is to make Matter reveal the Spirit's face it is of the utmost necessity that there be the close contact of the Avatar's Body with the body of the earth in as many different places as possible. This will hasten Matter's awakening to the Supramental.

After the Mother left Her body, the work of installing the Relics came to Champakbhai, for he is the custodian of the sacred Relics. In his own words, the

work of installation began in the following manner: “As I was free (after She left Her body) and very fond of Nature, when the opportunity came, I went to see the Himalayas and thereafter other places also. As I was going out, some people asked me to instal the Relics. I had expected that and as usual I could not say no... However, now I would not like to go out, though, when people insist on my going, I cannot refuse”. In any case, Champakbhai’s going out is not for his own love of seeing and experiencing Nature. He goes out as a delegate of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo carrying with him and spreading wherever he goes Their aura, “especially Their love and consciousness.” There are many instances when people have seen in him the Mother’s form and even felt Her Force flowing through him. I shall narrate here two instances to exemplify this—I was myself a witness to one of them.

In February 1979 Champakbhai had come to Hyderabad to instal Sri Aurobindo’s Relics at the Institute of Human Study. There was, obviously, a great celebration conducted with dignity and solemnity. After the function Champakbhai was distributing a message of the Mother. In the queue was a middle-aged lady, who when she came near Champakbhai kneeled down and stared into his eyes. She was captured by his eyes. And then she started trembling and soon burst into a sob. After a while, she did pranam and slowly went away, helped by her husband. Later, when she was asked the reason for her crying, she said that when she had looked at Champakbhai she had seen the Mother in the form of Durga.

Another time, at Calcutta, when Champaklalji was staying at Umesh K. Dandania’s house, he was giving away some Blessing Packets to the people in the house. When Umeshbhai’s turn came to receive the Blessings, he looked into Champaklalji’s eyes. Lo and behold! he strongly felt that the Mother was looking at him. He was caught by the Grace and the Force of Her eyes. Umeshbhai understood afterwards why the Mother had once told Champakbhai when he had suggested to Her that he wished to donate after his death one eye or both his eyes to anybody who needed them, “No, no, no. Your eyes belong to me. Your eyes belong to me. This is a hostile suggestion. I do not approve of this giving of eyes at all.” In the month of December, 1986 on the 8th, when I asked Champakbhai why She said so regarding his eyes, he wrote: “If I say anything people may misunderstand... In your case misunderstanding is less because, I have noticed, you do not try to understand by thoughts and ideas. You have a free mind. Rarely people are free. In the beginning we used to learn like this. .” Instead of throwing more light on my question, Champakbhai gave a comment on the way he used to learn things from the Mother

However, while reading this article, he added the following note regarding the question of donating his eyes: “We are in the process of transformation—so the eyes or for that matter, no part of the body can be given. This must have been the occult reason why she did not allow my donating the eyes. However,

this may not be true for people in general, it does not matter for ordinary people, but, for sadhaks it is not good... For those living a moral life it is different, but those living a truly spiritual life must not give any part of the body. We want a perfection of the body and therefore each part of the body is important for us—not in an egoistic manner, but, from the point of view of our ideal wherein the body and its transformation is most important... Today She has given me light on the topic..."

Now, a word about the rarest sight that Champakbhai had. In his book *Champaklal Speaks*, we read, "Normally when the Mother came to Sri Aurobindo's room she would take his hand and kiss it. But today, when she came to him she bent her head before him, and Sri Aurobindo placed his hand on her head and blessed her." I asked Champakbhai, "We had heard that once before in 1926, on 24th November the Mother sat near Sri Aurobindo's chair facing the disciples while Sri Aurobindo blessed Her from behind. So, Sri Aurobindo blessed the Mother a second time in 1949, is it so?" Champakbhai clarified saying that in 1926, Sri Aurobindo did not place His hand on the Mother's head, but on her own hand when she blessed the sadhaks, whereas in 1949 he actually touched Her head and blessed Her

Regarding the question of blessing by touching, Champakbhai said that he has his own experience. In the beginning, says Champakbhai, he did not like people touching his feet. He used to direct people to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. But, later, when he saw that by touching his feet people felt happy, he relented and he let his feet be touched. Since then, it happened sometimes that when certain people touched his feet, he got for an instant a pain similar to a 'scorpion bite'. And sometimes it happens that when certain people stretch their hands to touch his feet, the feet themselves reject the touch by an automatic withdrawal. At other times, with some people the feet even go forward, without even his voluntary movement, to receive the touch. On reading this portion, Champakbhai added a small note saying "I had a feeling from the first time when I heard all about you that you can understand me. The feeling has remained even now... That is why I told you without any hesitation about my experiences."

Each time people touch his feet or pray to him, Champakbhai says he passes on consciously the person's prayers to the Mother and seeks Her Grace and Love. Recently, in August '87, Deepshikha Reddy sought Champakbhai's help in a particular thing and requested him to pray to the Mother on her behalf. He wrote in reply, "It goes without saying. Not to do so is alien to Champakbhai". He acts only as a mediator, not keeping anything with himself. However, sometimes people carry within themselves vital and hostile forces which attack his body. It happened so in 1980 when he went to Mr. Raju's grape garden at Hyderabad. During the distribution of grapes and fruits to the visitors who had gathered, one woman tightly caught hold of Champakbhai's hands and stared

into his eyes for quite some time. I could see the quiet but intense look of Champakbhai and the struggle in the woman's eyes. It was as though there was a veritable battle of forces and the woman's dark force was getting absorbed by the divine force in Champakbhai. After the distribution, Champakbhai took his lunch and when he got up to go to the rest-house, he suddenly sat down midway and then slowly collapsed on the ground. He did not allow us to touch him. He said that he would take five minutes to get all right and then, with his hands on his chest, quietly closed his eyes in the pose of a pranam. His lips moved, as though intensely calling the Mother. As if someone woke him up, he got up exactly after five minutes and resumed his walk towards the rest-house. As he clarified later, it was the attack of the hostile force on his body and he took some time to throw it out and offer it at Her Feet.

Another time, it was, I think in 1983 when Champakbhai had gone to Suryapet, A.P. for installing Sri Aurobindo's Relics, that a strange thing happened. As usual, I was sitting by his side helping him with the distribution of messages. One gentleman came with a copy of the Bhagavad Gita and gave it to Champakbhai. He wanted to receive it from Champakbhai's hands. As soon as Champakbhai touched the book, he went into a deep trance. He sat there erect and immovable resembling Michelangelo's sculptures. I felt that he had contacted the Lord of the Gita, Sri Krishna. Of course, one who carries within himself, in the cells of his being, the very breath of Sri Aurobindo, for him it is no difficult task to contact Sri Krishna, for, did not Sri Aurobindo say. "There is no difference between me and Krishna"?

It is indeed an elevating experience to be able to move with Champakbhai on his tours. We bathe constantly in the Mother's Grace and Champakbhai's love for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Many were the moments when the transaction between Grace and Love was at its acme and those of us around him shared the pure radiant joy and felt within ourselves a wide and spontaneous opening to Her Force and Love.

In 1981, when I returned to the Ashram after a stay of five years in Hyderabad, I tried to draw out from Champakbhai more information regarding his experiences with the Mother and about himself. I succeeded in getting some more information, but, as Champakbhai was often called upon to go outside Pondicherry, I could not continue my efforts. Recently, in December 86, when I complained to him regarding his stay outside Pondicherry, he replied, "Now I am not in a state to go out. But, as I say that I am not particular in doing this or that and that everything is equal to me, the Mother tests me and I have to stand up to her expectation. Most often, the reason for my going out is quite different than the one known to others. It is only after going to the destination that the Mother reveals the true reason by giving me the experience."

Indeed, Champakbhai's going out to different places outside the Ashram, is ordained by the Mother herself. Without speaking a word She creates circum-

stances and he goes. It is obviously not for his own transformation, for had it been so, She could have very well done it with Champakbhai living in what was previously Sri Aurobindo's bathroom. He is sent out for Her own specific work of transformation, for bringing to people Her own physical touch, love and grace. As he said in last December, "She makes me the witness of Her Grace and that is for my own progress." Another time, on 29-3-1983, he wrote:

A: Champakbhai, when you go to different places, is there a mass awakening to the Mother's Force?

C: There is a possibility of a general awakening, but not necessarily a mass awakening.

A: Do you find a greater opening to the Mother at Hyderabad and Andhra Pradesh in general since your first visit?

C: Yes. But going to Baroda, Orissa and Hyderabad is still necessary. I am not required to go to Delhi and Calcutta, except when some individuals call me when they need me.

A: Do you find a greater opening to Her Force among the rural people or the urban?

C: It is better not to discuss these things because it helps in no way. The thing to do is to watch quietly what She is doing for the transformation and we must be more sincerely open to Her and be grateful to Her.

A: Are you not one of those who have come with the Mother to do specifically Her work?

C: All answers to all questions can be found in *Champaklal Speaks* and *Champaklal's Treasures* and that too in the very words of Sri Aurobindo and Mother.

If one seeks truly, one shall find it. Similarly all answers can be found in Madhavbhai's book, *Mother and I* as well as in Huta's book *White Roses* and her present book, *The Story of a Soul*, which is coming out serially in *Mother India*. It will be a unique book when it is published as one whole. Those who want their Touch can read *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* by Nirodbaran. The value of these books is especially for the present times. That does not mean they are not forever. It is on the contrary much in the future that the value of *Champaklal Speaks* and *Champaklal's Treasures* will be understood. However, they can be useful at present for those whose nature is similar to that of Champakbhai's.

"I started my higher life after reading Sri Ramakrishna. I liked him very much and on reading him I lost all interest in ordinary life. However, it is only now that I understand his life.

"Similarly, it is only now that I understand the lives of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It is She who makes me understand Her life by giving me experiences. I believed I knew Them well, but it is only now that I realise that my understanding of Them was very poor."

It is an extraordinary example in humility to see Champakbhai writing about

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In every thought, every action, he is fully conscious that it is They who are doing everything and that it is They who are this whole wide world:

“This is the knot that ties together the stars; ·
The two who are one are the secret of all power,
The two who are one are the might and right in things.”

(Savitri)

Never for an instance does the ‘I’ come forward; Champakbhai is constantly aware of Them. One day he wrote, however, that he had still a very small dot of the ‘I’. Of course, that little ‘I’ consciousness is there only to make the divine play more captivating and his surrender at Her Feet more rapturous.

Long back, when someone compared him with Hanuman, Champakbhai replied, “I love Hanuman He is one among my ideals.” Another time, “I am not conscious myself that I am Hanuman. If you ask me I say categorically I am not Hanuman. But I can say that I have served Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to the full satisfaction of my heart. I can never say that I could have served Them more with my human weakness.” Of course, during his service, he always kept before him the incident when Hanuman carried the Gandhamadana mountain. While carrying it Hanuman thought for a moment, “Had I not been there who else would have accomplished this task?” Instantly, he broke his leg. “I served with the Hanuman-ideal in front of me,” says Champakbhai.

(To be continued)

V. ANAND REDDY

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

The Mother's Message

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



Now back to "The Story of a Soul" from "Labour of Love" and "More Light on the Mother's Paintings and Drawings and Her Other New Creations." I intend to give only outlines in the following several instalments. The full matter will come in book-form.

On 5th August 1960 in the afternoon I entered the Mother's Dressing Room and stood in front of her. She studied my face for a long moment, her eyes full of

warmth and compassion for what seemed to be almost an eternity without words. Our eyes spoke to each other. Then slowly I knelt down at her feet. She folded me into her arms. The sweetness of relief filled my heart. My soul whispered: "Oh, at last to my true home!"

After spending almost two years in London I came back to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

On 9th August the Mother gave me the book, *The Eternal Wisdom*, to finish the work which had been left over: typing the quotations of the second part. I did the work.

*

I showed the Mother the flowers and the bead-bag I had made in London. She regarded them with enthusiasm. She was amused to see the tools used for making the flowers out of silk and other fabrics.

I told her that I wished to make a rose-spray for her gold-silk dress which I would stitch and embroider with beads. Her eyes shone with delight.

Later I made dresses and bead-bags for her.

Vasudha who was present there expressed her wish to learn the art of flower-making from me.

I taught her the technique.

I also showed the Mother my Diploma of the secretarial course which she read with interest.

After that I destroyed it.

August came to a close.

I painted the face of a woman and showed it to the Mother. She encouraged me:

"I like it. I am very happy that you still remember the Truth. The beauty of the soul must come out."

In 1957 the Mother spoke about me to Gauri Bhattacharya who was looking after the Mother's room at the Playground and attending to her needs.

These were the Mother's words:

"Elle a quelque chose de très gentil en elle. Je vais sortir ça."

Gauri's translation:

"She has something very nice in her and I am going to bring it out."

*

On 12th September during our meeting in the Meditation Hall upstairs, the Mother said:

“When you were in London I was watching all your movements from here (*pointing at the centre of subtle vision between the eye-brows.*)

“In whatever situation you were, whatever difficulties you went through, your aspiration for the Divine was straight like a sword (*gesture*). I congratulate you.

“When you came from London and met me, I was really amazed to see the flame of the aspiration grown more luminous—very high and steady.

“I saw the vision of your aspiration in 1957 during our meditation in my room at the Playground.

“But just now I saw the flame—erect—rising up, and then it merged into the golden light above. As the huge sea-waves splash against rocks and their glittering spray sprinkles all over, so this flame which merged into the infinity of golden light sent sprays of sparks flying on all sides and when they came down they showered on the world and enveloped it with Light.

“Child, this is the beauty of your soul. This beauty is now established firmly in you and it will never perish.

“Paint the vision I saw this morning.”

I respected her wish.

*

On 26th September when the Mother met me in the afternoon, I said: “Mother, during my stay in London, I was strangely and strongly inspired to express *Savitri* through painting. Was it the imaginations of my mind, a fantasy?”

Instantly she held my hands—a happy smile touched her mouth at my words: She said eagerly.

“You know, my child, I had a great wish to express through paintings the visions I had seen in 1904 onwards but I had no time. ”

Many hints direct and indirect about the spiritual paintings she had been giving me since 1957.

Early on the following morning the Mother sent through Dyuman a Souvenir Book, *The Mother* She had placed a marker on page 49 and drawn my attention to these lines from Sri Aurobindo, with a red pencil:

“What I am trying to do everywhere in the poem is to express exactly something seen, something felt and experienced... *Savitri* is the record of a

seeing, of an experience which is not of the common kind and is often very far from what the general human mind sees and experiences.”

I went to the Mother in the afternoon. She directed me:

“First you must do a painting on a small board with various colours—different blues, pinks, yellows, greens and reds.

“I will certainly help you I will put my Force into you so there will be a link between two consciousnesses. Go ahead ”

I doubted:

“But, Mother, I am not very good at drawing, perspective and landscape—how is it possible for me to express the epic?”

She shed light on the subject:

“You see, these things are not necessary, because the epic is full of visions and they can be expressed by giving only an impression. The most important thing is that in painting you must bring vibrations, feelings, liveliness and consciousness.”

I told her:

“Mother, how can I paint until I read *Savitri* word by word? First I must understand the epic intellectually.”

Later she arranged my reading of *Savitri* with Ambalal Purani and said:

“My Consciousness will be with you when you read *Savitri*.”

*

On 1st November, on my spiritual birthday the Mother met me in the morning and assured me:

“Now the divine beauty is establishing itself in this world and you are the true child of this Beauty We are going to express the beauties of the Higher Worlds upon earth through paintings ”

*

At that time in order to test me the Mother asked me to do *Savitri* paintings

according to selected verses from the poem.

I painted seven pictures. But it was sheer folly on my part not to have asked the Mother how they should be done. Nevertheless she saw the paintings and indicated some alteration of them.

Then suddenly I realised that the Mother's direct help and guidance were imperative in this regard.

*

I worked for some time in *The World Union Organisation* as the Mother wished. But I never felt easy with it. For, it was not my real work.

I was given numerous clippings from newspapers and psalms from the Bible—in extremely small print. I had to type forty to fifty pages whose sense I could hardly perceive. The idea of the Organisers was to adopt the theory of Vinoba Bhave to go from place to place and preach. I thought this method was not in tune with Sri Aurobindo's Consciousness. My soul disagreed.

It was raining heavily when I attended the first meeting in November 1960. The Mother gave me the leaves—Sweet Marjoram, “New Birth”—and said with certitude:

“Today is the new birth of the World Union. Distribute these leaves to people present there.”

I handed the leaves to the Organisers with the Mother's message.

I really got fed up with the tedious typing and boring meetings. So one morning I took to the Mother the Bible given to me and explained the situation. She still wished me to continue. Then I gave her a definite reason for discontinuing:

“Mother, I feel that first unity must be formed in oneself, then among the co-workers. After that in the Ashram, in the town, gradually in India and eventually in the world.”

She nodded with a slight smile and put out her hand to touch my cheek gently. She said with conviction:

“Child, I set you free. You have a glimpse of the Eternal Truth in your heart and this Truth must unite with the Supreme Truth.”

Sri Aurobindo's words are apt here:

“Art can express eternal Truth, it is not limited to the expression of form and appearance.”

One of the Organisers came to persuade me to resume the work. I politely refused and that was the end. However, the following message given to *The World Union* by the Mother appealed to me very much:

“The World is a unity—it has always been, and it is always so, even now it is so—it is not that it has not got the unity and the unity has to be brought in from outside and imposed upon it.

“Only the world is not conscious of its unity It has to be made conscious.

“We consider now is the time most propitious for the endeavour.

“For, a new Force or Consciousness or Light—whatever you call the new element—has manifested into the world and the world now has the capacity to become conscious of its own unity ”

(To be continued)

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SUNLIT ROAD

THAT I may not be bewitched by the past,
 That I may be forced to walk onwards,
 The Eternal Lover donned many a mask
 My roses slept for centuries in unborn buds,
 Life was lacerated by thorns and thistles,
 Spring lay prisoned in the icy embrace of agelong winter,
 Love stayed a word unknown, misfortune a constant wooer.
 Time flamed on and my tears were bright,
 Thus forced on from light to light;
 Not a moment's rest on earth's roads,
 Nor, from the oppression of ordinary toil, respite.
 Dispirited and sad perforce I searched,
 Till beyond a sudden bend was glimpsed
 The vista of a straight sunlit path.
 In a joyous flash I knew
 Each defeat was just the needed step,
 And a sweet comrade on the way to the Infinite.

SHYAM KUMARI

IN MEMORIAM

SOLI ALBLESS passed away on July 15 this year in Bombay. My association with him lasted a long time and it was a very pleasant and sharpening experience. For, he had, according to Sri Aurobindo, “a remarkable mind”

Although an architect by profession, he struck me on an initial acquaintance as a suitable partner when *Mother India* was about to be launched in February 1949 by Keshav Dev Poddar (later renamed Navajata) with me proposed by him and approved by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as Editor. I picked him out as Associate Editor.

Not long after, he joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and, when the Mother shifted the office of *Mother India* to Pondicherry before I could make my own transference there from Bombay, he was extremely helpful. In our “Review of Culture”, which was a fortnightly and not a monthly at the start and continued so for nearly two years, his articles under the pen-name “Synergist”, or otherwise, were notable for their acumen and sweep

Along with Keshav Dev, myself and Yogendra Rastogi who was the Manager of *Mother India*, Albless must be regarded as one of the pillars on which the fortnightly came to stand as an important agent of constructive Aurobindonian thought, both political and spiritual, in the journalistic field in the early years after India’s independence

On settling in Pondicherry, he soon came to be on close terms of discipleship with the Mother and was part of the team of planners and builders of her special second-floor room. Twice he went abroad—first to Brussels and then to São Paulo—to attend international conferences as the spokesman of Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual philosophy.

Both straightforward and humorous, besides being a forceful thinker and a sincere sadhak, he was a cherished companion to me until about twenty-five years ago when he chose not to be an inmate of the Ashram and a worker for *Mother India* and went back to his architect’s profession in Bombay

26.7 1992

K.D. SETHNA

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EDITOR

WHAT IS YOUTH?

Along with the Mother's answer to this question we are giving a short essay written a long time ago by an American in his 70s. Following it is a note by an American columnist about how this essay has impressed the business-world of Japan. It is a note worth taking to heart by enterprising spirits in our own country.

THE MOTHER'S MESSAGE

MY little ones, you are the hope, you are the future. Keep always this youth which is the faculty to progress; for you the phrase "it is impossible" will have no meaning.

*

To be young
is to live in the future
To be young
is to be always ready
to give up what we are
in order to become
what we must be
To be young is never to accept
the irreparable

YOUTH

By Samuel Ullman (Born 1840)

Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind, it is not a matter of rosy cheeks, red lips and supple knees: it is a matter of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigour of the emotions; it is the freshness of the deep springs of life.

Youth means a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the love of ease. This often exists in a man of 60 more than a boy of 20. Nobody grows old merely by a number of years. We grow old by deserting our ideals.

Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. Worry, fear, self-distrust bows the heart and turns the spirit back to dust.

Whether 60 or 16, there is in every human being's heart the lure of wonder,

the unfailing childlike appetite of what's next and the joy of the game of living. In the centre of your heart and my heart there is a wireless station: so long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, cheer, courage and power from men and from the Infinite, so long are you young.

When the aerials are down, and your spirit is covered with snows of cynicism and the ice of pessimism, then you are grown old, even at 20, but as long as your aerials are up, to catch waves of optimism, there is hope you may die young at 80.

WORDS THAT WON JAPAN

By Margaret Mason

In my newspaper column some months ago, I reprinted a short essay on youth by Samuel Ullman, an author unknown to me. Then I got a call from Ullman's great-grandson, Richard Ullman Rosenfield, a psychologist. He told me that he had been intrigued with the "spiritual journey" of the essay, especially in Japan.

General Douglas MacArthur, who led US forces in the Second World War, I learnt, often quoted Ullman's "Youth" essay and kept a framed copy over his desk throughout the Pacific campaign. It's believed that the Japanese picked up the work from his Tokyo headquarters.

Unlikely as it may sound, this essay, written more than 70 years ago, is the underpinning of much Japanese productivity and the basis of many businessmen's life philosophies. Many carry creased copies in their wallets.

"Anyone worth his salt in Japanese business knows and uses this essay," says one longtime Japan observer. "It is our Popeye's spinach," said Tatsuro Ishida, who was deputy chairman of Fujisankei Communications Group

"It touches me at the core of my heart," says Kokichi Hagiwara, the 67-year-old Japanese chairman of National Steel in Pittsburgh. "This kind of enthusiasm is indispensable. We must have the spirit of youth to make change."

Some Japanese leaders see the essay as a bridge between the two cultures. If Westerners can understand Japanese reverence for it, maybe they can better understand the Japanese businessman's quest for spiritual sustenance in the midst of material abundance

When one of Ullman's grandsons, Jonas Rosenfield, was having dinner in Japan a few years ago, "Youth" came up in conversation. Rosenfield told his dinner companion, a Japanese business leader, that the author was his grandfather. The news was staggering.

"You are the grandson of Samuel Ullman?" he kept repeating, says Rosenfield "He couldn't get over it."

Then the executive pulled a copy of "Youth" from his pocket and told

Rosenfield, "I carry it with me always."

Three years ago, several hundred top businessmen and government leaders gathered in Tokyo and Osaka to celebrate their admiration for Ullman's essay. Testimonials abounded, including one from Konosuke Matsushita, founder of the Panasonic Company, who said, "Youth" has been his motto for 20 years

SAMUEL ULLMAN was born in 1840 in Germany and went to America as a boy. He fought in the US Civil War and settled in Birmingham, Alabama. He was a hardware merchant with a penchant for public service that continues 67 years after his death. In the last few years more than \$36,000 from Japanese royalties on a book and a cassette reading of his work has gone to a University of Alabama scholarship fund. Not bad for a man who started writing in his 70s.

(Courtesy *Reader's Digest*)

SATYAJIT RAY: AN ARTISTE

IT was not a case of getting one or two prizes and receiving some honours through extraneous influences; what was happening in Ray's case, prizes and honours were pouring in not only from Governments and other organisations in India but from various parts of the globe. If we look into it, we shall be convinced about the greatness of the great in his own field. We must admit that he won the mind and heart of most of the film-connoisseurs of the world and he continued to do it with his creations till the end.

His *Pather Panchali* (Song of the Road) was adjudged the best human document in IXth International Film Festival at Cannes in 1956. Thereafter he was awarded Golden Lion (Grand-prix), Cinema Nuovo and Critic's Award for *Aparajito* in 1957 at Venice, Silver Medal for music of *Jalsaghar* in 1959 at the Moscow film festival, Southernland Award at the London film festival in 1959 for *Apur Sansar*. Other international awards were Silver Bear for *Mahanagar* and *Charulata* in 1965, Golden Bear for *Ashani Sanket* in 1974, Festival Award for *Jana Aranya* in 1975, Svarna Kamal for the best film and the best direction of his last film *Agantuk* in 1991. He remained juror in different international film festivals in 1960, 1962, 1963, 1965, 1971, 1972 and 1975. In 1969 he received the Megsaysay Award from the Philippines. In 1975 the British Film Society named him as one of the most distinguished Directors in the last half century. He was awarded the Indian Dada Saheb Phalke Award and Nehru Prize from Soviet Desh. He was the second man after Charles Chaplin to receive a Doctorate from Oxford University in 1976. And the French Government conferred on him the Legion d'Honneur through its President François Mitterrand coming personally to honour him in Calcutta. The India Government awarded Padmashree, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan and Bharat Ratna, the last one in this year after his receipt of the most coveted Oscar award. Doctorate was awarded by various Universities, the pioneer among them being the Calcutta Visva Bharati, Rabindra Bharati, Bardhaman, B.H.U. Delhi University, Jadavpur University, the Royal College of Arts, London, etc. He was given fellowship of the Sangeet Natak Akademi and the British Film Institute. His name was included in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1974 and the British Federation of Film Society honoured him as the greatest Film Director of the 2nd half of the 20th Century. And he was invited to deliver lectures in many parts of the globe. However, this is not an exhaustive list of the titles and awards won by him. Many more can be added. It all proves his great popularity particularly in the international arena apart from his inherent and cultivated qualities. True that he was more popular outside and Indian appreciation followed. It seems his films were more enjoyed in foreign lands than in India and more in Bengal than in other provinces in our country. The language and culture of his films and the general cinema culture in India are some of the reasons.

A peep into his affairs from very birth would throw light on the birth of a Director preparing himself through the particular and interesting circumstances of his life. Different congenital attributes of his character were found developing in the congenial conditions of his family and house, finally to culminate in a very synthetic form to give birth to a great cinema director. He was from his early days an upcoming musician, a photographer, painter, dramatist and organiser. Satyajit Ray was born on 2 May 1921 to Sukumar Roy, a distinguished writer and painter and Suprabha Roy, a very good singer. His grandfather Upendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury came from erstwhile East Bengal to settle in Calcutta. He purchased the house at 100 Garpar Road where Satyajit was born. Upendra Kishore was a writer and painter of distinction. The story of *Gupi Guyne Bagha Buyme*, the famous film of Satyajit, was written by his grandfather. Upendra Kishore used to play the violin, the organ and drums. He was a friend of poet Tagore. Ray's aunts were Kanak Biswas, Sahana Devi and Malati Ghosal who were good singers and were associated with and affectionate towards Rabindra Nath. Atul Prasad Sen and Manju Gupta were of the same family. His grandfather from his mother's side, Kalinarayan Gupta, was also a composer and singer. Naturally, Ray later boasted of having been born in a family full of songs and music. But little Manik, as Satyajit Ray was called, lost his father at the age of a little over two years. After a few years their ancestral property was lost to a money-lender. Manik accompanied his mother at the age of 5 to live with his maternal uncle P.K. Das at Bhowanipur, Calcutta.

At the new place he was presented with a gramophone and there was a very old record of Beethoven's Concerto which he played for years on end and the music was entirely recorded in his memory. Sometimes young Satyajit would sit before a wide-open window beholding the vast azure sky with floating white patches of clouds and would softly whistle the tune of a piece of western music.

A Printing Press was their family business at Garpar Road. The child would move amidst machines, process-camera, composers' boxes and block-making instruments, smelling machine oil and turpin oil. He would often keenly observe how his other grandfather Dhanudadu brought out and enlarged the face of a single man from the ancestral group-photo. His mother gifted him a book titled *Romance of Famous Lives* and he inherited the *Book of Knowledge*. Manik read the lives of great composers and kept them alive in his memory. Later he got the works of Mozart, Bach and other great composers and became familiar with them. With all these Manik usually lived alone. Though sometimes relatives and other children came to give him good company, he would feel at home living only with books and music, with photography and other hobbies. All these helped his personality to grow, the inner being of an artist to take the appropriate shape. At the age of ten he was given a Box Camera which he often used.

In the lonely afternoons the particular intonation of the hawkers selling

various wares on the streets would keep the boy spellbound. The sun entering through the window rails and other holes would portray the picture of passers-by upside down on the walls and the boy would, with the help of a rough-surfaced glass, catch the pictures vividly. The words and sounds from the road would make the whole thing more lively. All this and his play with stereoscope and magic lantern increased his interest in film-making. As he grew up, one of the photographs of his College days won a prize of one pound from a British journal. A relative of his, Nitin Bose, was a good film director who influenced Manik. Manik would dream that he would go to Germany to learn the art of film-making (this was influenced by the fact that his camera had come from that country) to be a Director. And interested as he was, he collected and read books on film-making and the lives of the great film-makers. He loved to see cinemas, would often go to see the movies. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" moved him to tears.

His widowed mother Suprabha struggled hard to bring up the boy in keeping with the tradition of the family. She became a teacher, did embroidery, leather works and modelling. And she herself taught Manik up to the age of eight and a half years when he was admitted to the Ballygunge Government High School. Before that Manik was admitted to a school at Darjeeling for a short while. Later, the master admitted most humbly the great sacrifice made by his mother. He admitted that from her example he learnt to work 18 hours a day. During his school days he learnt swimming and was fond of indoor games.

(To be continued)

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

THE RETURN OF GEOCENTRICITY

To the common observer the existence of Matter is absolute and real. He considers the material universe as self-existent, moved by some fixed miraculously existing laws. Its very tangibility constitutes for him its reality, and since he knows no other kind of existence than the material, he ascribes absoluteness to Matter. The vastness of the material universe revealed by Science is therefore all the more awe-inspiring, almost frightening, to him. Once it was ignorantly believed that the Earth is the centre of the universe. Science came and thrashed away this childish belief and asserted the fact that the Earth is less than even a grain of sand in the vastness of the physical universe. What importance can then the evolution of Consciousness, supposed to be going on here on a speck of dust, have in the context of the whole? If Life were a purposeful evolutive out of Matter, it might be argued, surely there could have been a more decent proportion of scale between the size of the raw material and that of the product?

The question of the relative importance of Earth in the entirety of the material universe is surely very pertinent. The immensity of the universe baffles us and reduces the apparent significance of manifest life on earth to a pittance. Life, in this perspective, appears as a product of chance in the totality of Matter. More importantly, the problem of human life is very intimately connected with the question of material existence. For, if there were nothing except Matter, bare and absolute, life merely a freak of chance in the vastness of the material universe, the value of human life and aspiration would hardly be significant. But if Matter is something derived and not absolute, a purposeful creation, then it is different. Still the question of scale remains.

The medieval ages did consider the Earth as the centre of the universe and allotted great significance to it from the religious point of view. They even looked upon Earth as the physical centre of Existence. Meanwhile Science progressed and established the hard physical fact of Earth being next to nothing in the physical universe. Religion, in defence of its geocentric attitude, tried to resist this approach and even persecuted those who advocated it, the truth was however bound to prevail in the course of time.

Today we are on the threshold of another age and are asking ourselves this question again. If the evolution of Consciousness is the process and the full emergence of the submerged Sachchidananda in Matter the final purpose of world-existence, then what is the importance of this our planet in the total scheme?

This question could be answered with the double concept of Concentration and Assimilation. The effort of transformation has got to be concentrated on a certain point and cannot be scattered overall in the material universe. Earth as a planet is sufficiently large to house the diverse cultures, trends and characters needed for a multi-faceted growth, and also sufficiently small for communication

between different groups to be possible. An evolution of consciousness on different planets at the same time would ask for a possibility of communication for the purpose of mutual assimilation; and, just as it was not possible for animals to cross continents in the pre-human stage of evolution, it is not possible for the mental man with a gross body to cross interstellar spaces.

The next step therefore is reserved for the beings higher than man, the supramental race. With the advent of the higher consciousness the exchange between various centres in the physical universe would be freely possible, and the Light would spread everywhere. The idea of earth alone being important and the rest a waste can therefore also not hold ground, but the rest has to await its hour. The fact however remains that at present the Earth leads the evolution of consciousness in matter; thus the old doctrine of Geocentricity returns to us in a marvellous new garb

A.D. SAVARDEKAR

THE JUMP

LIFE has rushed through me like a storm,
 Devastatingly,—all its bitterness, sweetness, depth,
 And passion, fury,
 Have poured their hurricane-voice-howls and passed.
 Only joy remains, of knowing that nothing remains,
 That I am free to choose, choose to be or let forever go.
 No rancour, no pain, what anger can survive this intensity
 Of absolute clarity—what emotion can resist
 The dissolving limpidity of gaze,
 Thought and mind are immobilized, foot still lifted, the step untaken,
 The surprise of Liberty discovered, the élan abstracted from form.

ARVIND HABBU

QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1992)

PART II—SECTION 2

Towards the Epicyclic System

WE ended the last section by briefly mentioning the ‘problem of the planets’. Here we begin by examining in some depth what exactly constitutes this problem, after this we shall look at the attempts made to solve it. Apparently the planets seem to behave just like the sun, wandering westward in the fixed background of the stars and gradually moving eastward along the ecliptic. Earlier astronomers had explained this motion by using the idea of crystal spheres. Each planet was fixed to a sphere and as this rotated the planet seemed to orbit the earth. But, as the heavens began to be scrutinised more thoroughly, new observations totally changed the course of astronomy, making it a mathematical game.

It was observed that all the planets followed a peculiar motion as they orbited the earth. Though, in general, they moved eastward on the ecliptic, occasionally they were interrupted by a retrograde westward motion. Also, as they retrogressed, they deviated from the line of motion; but soon after the forward motion commenced, they were back on the ecliptic. It was found that Mercury retrogressed once every 116 days; similarly Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn showed, respectively, a retrograde motion every 584, 780, 399, and 378 days. It must however be noted that in no case the period of the planet’s rotation around the earth is a perfect multiple of the retrogressive duration. Let us take the example of Mercury: this planet has three retrograde cycles as it orbits the earth once; but the fourth retrograde cycle does not take place where the first did, rather it begins before reaching that spot on the ecliptic. (Do not forget that our reference is the fixed sphere of the stars.)

This clearly indicates that the planetary motions were quite complicated. A theory that could predict the motions and the positions of the planets, an explanation convincing enough to understand this behaviour of the wandering stars, was the need of the hour. Advanced mathematics of the time fulfilled this demand pretty well and in good detail. However, it should be noted that not all the ideas met with success. The few that initially did, brought into focus other irregularities, in any case, we shall not fail to notice that none of these attempts were oriented to provide the true structure of the universe, there were no physical ideas or concepts related with it. They were directed to inventing mathematical devices—devices that were merely a means of calculating the

apparent positions of the planets and not a mode to arrive at the cosmological picture of the system

Let us quickly glance at a few prevailing situations; this will throw some light on why astronomy took such a turn and why the imaginative and speculative bent of mind gave way to innovative mathematics. We have already presented in the previous section the influential role played by the two-sphere universe and how it had a kind of grip on contemporary thinking. Mythological explanations were left far behind and the symbolic age was about to come to an end: the new science of the sky of the day was the two-sphere universe. This, along with other prevailing scientific pursuits, no doubt, indicates that it was a period of high creative activity. But, in contrast, as we shall see shortly, it was Aristotle's work that took away the spirit of speculative-imaginative approach from the earlier mind.

Sometime during the 4th century BC Eudoxus, in an effort to explain these peculiar motions of the planets, proposed his theory of the homocentric spheres. He considered a set of concentric spheres and placed the planets on the inner sphere of this set. For example, in the case of Jupiter he assigned four spheres and the planet was found on the innermost of the four. The first sphere was connected to the second by an axis at two points diametrically opposite. The second was connected to the third and the third to the last in an identical manner, but each had a different axis. It was the simultaneous rotation of these spheres on different axes that produced the observed motion of the planets, including the retrograde motion.

This explanation was short-lived; nevertheless, it left a stamp on the subsequent developments of astronomical and cosmological thought. "By a historical accident the century which they [the homocentric spheres] seemed to provide the most promising explanation of planetary motion embraced most of the lifetime of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who incorporated them in the most comprehensive, detailed and influential cosmology developed in the ancient world,"—writes Kuhn.

At this stage it is important to say a few words about Aristotle's "influence" on society. Aristotle, it must be underlined, was an extremely knowledgeable mind, a weighty philosopher, and a natural scientist. His personality not only made him a highly respected character but gave his writings a stamp of unchallengeable authority. His voluminous writings on natural sciences were the first attempt "to systematise the whole amount of knowledge of nature accessible to mankind." Even in the field of astronomy such was the depth of his encyclopaedic work that, analyses Kuhn, "no comparably complete cosmology ever incorporated the mathematical system of epicycles and deferents which, in the centuries after Aristotle's death, was employed to explain planetary motion."

The influence of Aristotle lasted right through the Middle Ages; even

Copernicus evoked his astronomy and physics in order to present the heliocentric view of the universe. Thus, importantly, it can be suggested that with this influence began the degeneration of imagination which for such a long time had helped astronomers in the attempt to work out the true structure of the universe. In other words his formalisation of knowledge rigidified existing ideas and, negatively, stifled creativity. It had become extremely difficult for the medieval mind to make departures from 'Aristotelian' systematisations.

The homocentric spheres were replaced by the device of epicycles and deferents sometime in the 3rd century BC. This new mathematical device consisted of a small circle—the epicycle—whose centre was located on the bigger earth-centered circle—the deferent. The epicycle which carried the planet rolled eastward on the deferent while the deferent itself orbited the earth westward. This mechanism immediately accounted for the gross irregularities of the retrograde motion of the planets. And, initially, its success seemed to have sealed the matter of irregularities. But it was not quite so. On the contrary, it disclosed secondary irregularities, and when these were done away with geometric modifications, new sets of irregularities surfaced. And so on.

More realistically, the mechanism of epicycles and deferents had proved to be an extremely flexible, versatile and powerful technique. It definitely achieved a degree of accuracy as never before in predicting the motion and position of a planet, but all at the cost of complexity, on the quantitative (tedious lengthy tables) as well as the qualitative levels. And, by the time Copernicus stepped on the astronomical stage, this chain reaction only brought about an elaborate and complicated system of compounded circles,—“circles within circles”. The wonder is that it was this system that found its place in the theology of the following era.

Incorporation of such a faulty system into the Scripture and its consequent hardening, we may state *en passant*, can have disastrous effects. It is in this context that we shall recognise the “enormous change” later—while dealing with Galileo.

At this stage let us quickly look at the progress made in ancient India in the field of astronomy. In that period the Rishis, the upholders or leaders of the society, sought for deeper knowledge and directed all their spiritual practices to unite themselves with the Eternal. Knowledge for such a practice, it is clear, cannot be passed on from generation to generation in the form of writing since it is acquired by growing in experience. However, this very endeavour had to be supported by studies in several auxiliary topics. Instructions in these were imparted by the teacher to the disciple orally. Understandably, therefore, there cannot be written texts or notes in any of the subjects such as astronomical observations, medical practices, administrative ideas. They started appearing only at a very late stage.

Going back to the Vedic times, it is found that performances of yagnas and

rituals depended on the position of the *nakshatras*. “Jyotisha was mainly intended to help in arriving at the most favourable time for performing Vedic karmae and was, therefore, made part of the Vedas—as one of the Vedangas”—states a religious teacher. Thus the study of astronomy had to be given full-time attention in the disciplines of a Vedic student. Astronomy, Jyotish or the Eye of the Vedas, was one of the six Vedangas which helped the student to probe deeper into the esoteric contents of the Vedas.

Jumping over long centuries to 500 AD we witness the earliest solid work on astronomy: here we are referring to Aryabhatta and his magnum opus *Aryabhattiya*. In this book he presents the system of epicycles as a method of calculating the position of the planets. The question that can be raised is whether Aryabhatta borrowed the epicyclic system from the Greeks. But, just by this work, it is hard to decide if the Greek ideas had influenced Indian astronomy. It could well have been the other way round; or even that the latest developments were exchanged by the two civilizations. That is a different field of research altogether and we shall refrain from probing into it.

In any case, the ideas presented in the *Aryabhattiya* were incorporated in the *Surya-Siddhanta*, the first major authoritative and consolidated document of Indian astronomy. The voluminous writings that encompass a large number of astronomical topics clearly indicate that the knowledge which came down from generation to generation was highly developed and advanced.

Coming back to the Greek and western Astronomy during the four centuries following the invention of epicycles and deferents no major advance was made in the field. Around 150 AD an important event took place in the history of astronomy. Ptolemy's contribution to the study of the skies. On the one hand, the system Ptolemy presented was a mere geometrical representation of the celestial motions and did not profess to give a totally correct picture of the universe. On the other hand, his contribution to astronomy in its developments were outstanding and carries enormous professional authority. For 1400 years it remained the “Alpha and Omega of theoretical astronomy” and, as an immediate consequence, it gave a new turn to the ‘problem of the planets’.

Ptolemy surely is remembered for adding a mathematical device—the equant—to the existing list. But, more importantly, he is associated with a new approach to the study of the heavens and the technique he designed to resolve the problem posed by the irregular planetary motions. He was the first to put together the compounded circles to account for the observed regularities and irregularities in the apparent motion of the seven ‘wandering stars’. He presented this work in the *Almagest*, a book, as Kuhn says, “that epitomizes the greatest achievements of ancient astronomy” and one that “was the first systematic mathematical treatise to give a complete, detailed, and quantitative account of all the celestial motions”. The work was an enormous success: on the level of results it was excellent and as a method it was powerful and versatile.

It should be recognised here that the Ptolemaic system was a scientific one and differed vastly from those of antiquity. The two prominent differences are, in the Ptolemaic system is seen the distinct absence of speculative imaginative approach and the influence of mythology. Secondly, there clearly exists an attempt to explain observations by mechanical devices and mathematics, however rudimentary they may seem today.

A quick scan of the contents of these last two sections will help us recapitulate the broad developments we have outlined. In the symbolic age of the ancient civilizations, gods and goddesses were a part of astronomy and all natural phenomena were believed to be governed by supernatural powers. On the psychological level, for man, these explanations defined his position in Creation and gave meaning to his practical and spiritual activities by recognising and accepting the role of these powers. Around 600 BC mechanical explanations of the structure of the universe began to replace these gods and goddesses; it was a period where the symbolic-mythological age was being replaced by the speculative-rational. Then came the two-sphere universe with its structural framework that aided the astronomer in connecting apparently unrelated data and helped him retain long lists of information in a meaningful manner. Conceptually economical and logically convincing, this model since then got ingrained into the human consciousness. But with detailed observations of the night-sky emerged the problem of the planets—composed of peculiar irregular motions. The approach to solving this behaviour of the planets, characterized as the Ptolemaic astronomy, had no room for mythology and basically was scientific in nature. The proposition of the homocentric spheres was among the earliest attempts to solve this problem of planetary motion in a complete manner. It however did not last long and a much more powerful and versatile method—the system of epicycles and deferents—replaced it. This system was used as a mathematical tool for the coming 1500 years and, by the time Copernicus came, had become painfully elaborate and complicated with its compounded circles.

Before we conclude this section it is also important to note, as all along we have emphasized, that the homocentric spheres and the system of epicycles and deferents were a mere mathematical means, a method, by which astronomers could calculate and predict the motion of the planets. They never projected the physical picture of the worldly system. This approach lasted right through 1800 years—from three centuries before Christ to the coming of Galileo (past Copernicus). And the one cause largely responsible for the degeneration of the speculative-imaginative bent of mind was the systematisation of knowledge by the mighty Aristotle. In this entire stretch of time no system did ever arrive to explain the several irregularities observed in the heavens; thus the system was left incomplete and faulty. One is then quite stunned to note that it was this 'faulty or incomplete' system that was retained by the Church and made a part of the scriptures. We cannot escape the inevitable question: why and how did the

Church incorporate such a faulty or incomplete system in its doctrinal theology?
That analytical study is the thrust of the section to follow.

(To be continued)

VIKAS DHANDHANIA

A POEM-LETTER TO AMAL KIRAN

YOUR words,
In the pages of 'Life-Poetry-Yoga',
Like soft strains of music
Subtly touch my heart
To become a rose of my inner being

The whirlwinds of the outer thinkings stop;
A sweet calm
Settles in the mind
And makes me hear a tale of delicate dreams
Which I forgot once but remember now

How many wonderful secrets
You tell about our true self—
And our deep relation of love
With our Mother Eternal
Whose sparks we are
And whom we should adore
In the silent chamber
Of sincere devotion,
Offering to Her all our difficulties
To be transformed into opportunities!

May the Mother's white light
Enwrap you all the time
And utter through your soul
The winsome words of inspiration
That bring the message
Of the unknown world
Yet to be born!

ARUN KUMAR SEN

GOLCONDE, LE CORBUSIER, THE ASHRAM AND AUROVILLE

Below is a wide-ranging article by a student of architecture, Sarah Allen, the 19-year old grand-daughter of the late Louis Allen who was a member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram

THIS dissertation began as a building case study but as I progressed with my research I realised that the community for which the building was designed was of far more importance than I had previously realised I investigated the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright and Auguste Perret upon the architect's work, but I began to see that the relationship between the building and the philosophies of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram was of greater significance and I aim to illustrate this and the enlightened spirit of its founders through the design and construction of Golconde in the late '30's to mid '40's.

And I conclude this dissertation with a brief analysis of the city of Auroville. To explore its implications further was too expansive a topic for this essay but it does add weight to the enlightenment of the Ashram's founders in responding to, almost predicting, major world events and the significant role of spirituality in the 20th century

*

Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) was born in Calcutta He had his education in England for fourteen years and, in the last two, he studied classics at Cambridge On his return to India he entered the world of politics, founded the Nationalist Party and spent the next ten years in the fight for India's independence

During this time he began to practise Yoga which he had previously considered a "life-denying affair " After his first fundamental spiritual experience Sri Aurobindo said that from that moment his "mental being became a free intelligence, a Universal Mind." He was imprisoned for a year by the British Government and soon after being released in 1910, retired to Pondicherry on the south east coast where he completely withdrew from political life and sought to develop his Yoga

In 1914, Mirra Richard (1878-1973) and her husband arrived in Pondicherry. She was French. From the age of twelve she had practised occultism and was described as possessing "many psychic and spiritual powers." Upon meeting Sri Aurobindo for the first time she realised that he was the being of whom she had seen many visions since childhood Sri Aurobindo called her The Mother and on 24th November 1926, when he went into complete seclusion to hasten his inner Yogic work, he entrusted her with the care and management of the

community that had grown around him. It is on this day that the Sri Aurobindo Ashram was said to have begun.

The word 'Ashram' has come to mean a hermitage or a retreat from life. However, Sri Aurobindo felt his teachings called for a total acceptance of life and chose to use 'Ashram' in the earlier sense as 'house of the Teacher'. His aim was not to start a religion or to found a cult but to develop a way of life that would help man in his spiritual evolution. The Mother was responsible for putting Sri Aurobindo's gospel into practice. She established the true role of money in society and all members of the Ashram remained free to pursue their quest unimpaired by the demands and compulsions of social circumstances on their time and energies. Each was expected to work in one of the many services provided for the community—laundry, dining, building, etc. All work had the same value. There was to be no hierarchical status and it was to be a means of growth in both spiritual attitude and consciousness by eliminating ego and desire. This was imperative for the creation of a Divine Race.

"I want to make a vast and strong equality the foundation of my Yoga. I do not want tens of thousands of disciples. It will be enough if I can get as instruments of God one hundred complete men free from petty egoism. I do not want to be a guru. What I want is for someone awakened by my touch...to manifest from within his sleeping divinity and to realise the divine life. Such men will uplift this country."

SRI AUROBINDO

*

Antonin Raymond was born in Czechoslovakia in 1888. He emigrated to America in 1910 and about six years later received an invitation from Frank Lloyd Wright to join him at Taliesin. After serving in the army he went back to work for Wright in 1919 on the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo where he was chief assistant architect. He left Wright's employ before the project was completed to set up his own practice in Japan.

In 1935 Raymond agreed to design a dormitory at Pondicherry for the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. He moved there during the initial construction stages, with his wife and two assistants—George Nakashima and Francisek Sammer (who had been a student of Le Corbusier and had gone to Moscow with him in 1933).

Pondicherry is situated on the Coromandel coast in South India. The French East India Company was founded there by Colbert in 1674. As the wealth of the company grew so Pondicherry's formal plan was enlarged. By 1752 the French had reached the summit of their expansion in India. The wealthy merchants built 'garden-houses' which still stand today. They have wide verandas and open courtyards. The rooms inside are double height and quite shady and thus the

whole building is kept wonderfully cool. In the early 1950's the French voluntarily relinquished control of Pondicherry and it became part of the Indian Union. The Ashram now owns a considerable part of the town including many of the old French buildings.

Golconde was built on a narrow strip of ground in the 'Ashram sector' and has accommodation for about 50 people. The toilets and bathrooms are located in a central section from which two wings radiate to the east and west in which the rooms are situated. Below, in a semi-basement are the utility rooms. The landscaping is very simple. Trees are planted at the rear to screen the rooms from the street and there are lawns at the front. A series of pools with a channel forms a ribbon around the whole building rather like a small moat

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Antonin Raymond described Golconde as an Indian monastery chiefly because of the seclusion of the inhabitants and the way of life they chose to lead, but this metaphor addresses the building too. The 3m high wall that surrounds it encloses a silent world. It is a place for the individual to be alone and only at 3 o'clock in the afternoon do people gather for tea in the semi-basement overlooking the garden. Walking along the corridor to my room I was reminded of cloisters—the sliding wooden doors enclosing the rooms on one side and the louvres which, when completely open from the floor to the ceiling, provide views of the garden on the lower floors and of Pondicherry and the wider world on the floors above. Thus one enters one's cell; for the rooms are reminiscent of monks' cells with no more furniture than is necessary: a bed, wardrobe, desk, shelves and a deckchair, all made of hand-sawn teak and beautifully finished. As a rule residents are not permitted to enter one another's rooms, no music is allowed and all possessions must be kept in their appropriate places. Upon a metre-wide sill is a *kuja*¹ and a glass. It seems appropriate that the only object allowed to adorn the horizontal, utilitarian surfaces should have such graceful curves and contain water—the primary source of life. I can imagine someone making distant journeys while sitting on this ledge looking at the trees, creepers and pools below. If, however, the resident of Golconde is to follow the teachings of Sri Aurobindo he must not devote himself solely to his inner world but must seek his spiritual consciousness in life too; and it is therefore important that he joins the community for meals at least, which are eaten in a separate building, the formal Dining Room of the Ashram (although there is a small dining room in Golconde for the older inhabitants).

This whole idea of individuality and collectivity is prevalent throughout the works of Le Corbusier. He too saw the monastery as embodying the image of the ideal communal life and his visit in 1907 to the Carthusian monastery at Ema

¹ An earthenware water pot

outside Florence was to influence his future communal projects. The main part of the monastery dates from the 16th century and it is from this part that the innumerable cells project providing private apartments for each monk. Corbusier always saw isolation as important for nurturing a creative elite and his design for the maison Citrohan embodied this—a studio house for the single artist. The Immeuble Villas (1922) were blocks of studio houses linking together the individual ‘cells’ of the maison Citrohan—symbolising the single artist uprooted and alone. All the communal facilities were on the top floor away from the domestic drudgery.

An interesting parallel can be drawn here with Golconde which was built as a dormitory for those practising yoga, where, in well-proportioned and beautiful surroundings, creativity could be enhanced. It is possible that the idea to design such cells was inspired by an experience Sri Aurobindo had two years before arriving in Pondicherry: In 1908 he was imprisoned. He lived in the most appalling conditions for a year, but he wrote that “The only result of the wrath of the British Government was that I found God.” Sri Aurobindo described the 9' × 5' cell as his ashram and immersed himself into his Yoga.

Corbusier considered the home as a monastic cell and rarely does he consider the family, always the individual. The failure of the Unité d'habitation in Marseilles (1952) is for this very reason. Each apartment was designed for the single human being living completely alone while sharing the advantage of a larger collective order. “...Go in by a single door; take one of the four lifts (twenty people to each) which serve the eight superimposed internal streets.” Then the scene suddenly shifts away from the collective world: “...You will then be alone, you will meet no one, you will be in peace, sunlight and space and the green world outside will stream in through your windows.” Compare this to the cells in Golconde where the absence of glass in the windows provides more direct contact with the exterior. Corbusier in the Marseilles block goes further to express isolation in the structure by imbedding each apartment in a reinforced concrete frame so that none touches its neighbour. In Golconde each room is divided from the other by thick walls. However, from the exterior the individual units disappear into the wider context of the louvres which cover the whole of the façade. When finally closed in the cell one can break away from the whole and the collective. The north facing façade is a concrete grille that is divided into 1.5m squares. Each of these appears to represent a room and one imagines hundreds of people living there; but on the south-facing façade, not really visible from the street, the overhanging windows in fact show the rooms as being quite large and far fewer. It seems appropriate that they are not distinguishable from the exterior—the homogeneity of the whole dominates and is, therefore, of as much importance as the unit—a metaphor for the way of life of the Ashram.

It may seem relevant here for me to continue discussing Corbusier's works, especially the Dominican monastery of Sainte-Marie de La Tourette near Lyons.

This is said to be Corbusier's masterpiece in realising the dualism between individuality and collectivity and a previous reference to Golconde as an Indian monastery could provide a link but again and again Sri Aurobindo and the Mother wrote that it was important for man to reject asceticism and ego and Corbusier's own description of the monastery directly opposes this philosophy: "The violent, almost hostile forms of one hundred monks' cells perched above a chaotic nature, defensive, aloof, withdrawn and yet unequivocally bold.. " Sri Aurobindo saw that "The purpose of the dormitory was not primarily the housing of disciples; it was the creating of an activity, the materialisation of an idea by which the disciples might learn, experience, develop, through contact with the erection of a fine building." Referring back to the teachings in the Ashram this was to be a building ritual where the community would be brought together to help the individual conquer his personality

The labourers were, for the most part, unskilled and as a result the drawings had to be meticulously detailed showing not only the fittings but, as they were not standardised, every thread and dimension too. These nuts, bolts, hinges, etc were all cast from melted-down brass pots as funds were limited ¹ There were also drawings showing the reinforcements in the concrete: they were not just of a typical section but of the whole floor! The steel for the reinforcements arrived by a freighter from France and it was brought ashore in boats made of palm trunks lashed together They were dragged to the site by bullock carts and, upon arrival, were so bent they had to be hammered straight It is quite astonishing then that the building is of such high quality and so well finished. Raymond himself described the conditions under which the building work was done as being remarkable "When compared to those we had known in this materially bewildered world..."

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The construction of Golconde began ten years before the independence of India and in this light it stands as testimony to the *avant garde* ideas of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Before his arrival in Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo was a key figure in awakening India from its slavish mentality under the British. He spiritualised politics, placing God at the head of the National Movement "If we want India's independence we have to offer everything . Surrender yourself to God and take the plunge in the name of the Mother " ² He developed the theory and practice of passive resistance as early as 1906, and saw the power of Yoga as a way to liberate India.

He also had radical views on education While in Calcutta he became

¹ The Nizam of Hyderabad donated some money to the scheme and so Golconde was named after the diamond mines of Golconda in Hyderabad in acknowledgement

² 'The Mother' here is India

principal of the National College there and felt that the chief aim of education “should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use ” Sri Aurobindo saw the teacher as a helper and guide not an instructor. This was continued and contributed to by the Mother in Pondicherry She established the Ashram school in 1943 and later the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, which tended to the physical, creative and mental needs of the child. The physical programme was extensive and involved the participation in a different sport each afternoon which would provide qualities of leadership, obedience, courage, rhythm and collective effort. The purpose of creativity was to sharpen the quality of the sense-faculties, and broadening the child’s outlook was to aid the development of its mental abilities. These activities were to facilitate the child’s growth in the direction of his aptitudes and talents, achieving his full potential. The idea was that nothing could be taught but that all knowledge came from within in response to the stimulus provided from outside.

Not only was the liberation of children a concern of the Mother’s but she felt that the 20th century would see women’s liberation too. She wrote that woman would be truly free if she overcame her admiration of and dependence on masculine strength, stopped seeking the security of the home and overcame her desire for bearing children. She went further to say that man would be the equal of woman if he overcame his desire for possession, overcame the need for the comforts of home-life and rejected his desire for sex This was practised within the Ashram by those who aspired towards a divine consciousness.

Almost in response to this liberated way of thinking Golconde too incorporates within its structure innovative uses of concrete which are highly effective. There was to be no mechanical means of ventilation within the building but because of the generally humid conditions and suffocating heat in the summer it was imperative that passive ventilation was developed This was in the form of curved roof tiles 4’ × 6’ made from thin precast concrete. They were laid above the concrete roof slab providing a channel through which air could flow There is also a strong visual element to these tiles the result of which is a gently undulating roof line.

Ventilation and protection from the glaring sunlight was considered throughout the whole building. The high boundary wall holds in air which is cooled by the plants, lawns and pools In the semi-basement the projecting first floor provides shade for the utility rooms located there. On the floors above, the high ceilings assist air-circulation while the galleries provide deep insulating areas in front of the bedrooms (I am reminded here of the colonial ‘garden-houses’ mentioned in the introduction) Even the sliding panels, when closed, were designed to allow air to flow through them. Raymond twisted the building away from the grid that the rest of the town is planned on to face south-south-east, allowing all the rooms to benefit from the prevailing south breeze The sun

does not enter the rooms directly but hits the east wall

A further method of induced circulation was used by making the south garden area full of shade, and the north area open to the sun. This heated the north-area-air which went up and drew in the cooler south-area-air

The whole structure is of reinforced concrete which Raymond advocated as a truly modern material. He believed that simplicity was the ideal of beauty and this could be achieved through lightness and precision. Concrete was the most suitable material to realise these qualities "...In concrete the window overhangs can be executed in a permanent fashion. In concrete wide sills are made possible. By cantilevering the floors beyond the columns, continuous windows become feasible, and it is only concrete which made it possible for me to make whole walls disappear." The wooden form shuttered concrete was vibrated at the time of casting, which was a new technique in India, then after setting, the area was smoothed over with carborundum stone. The frame is clearly expressed throughout the building but the feeling is dominantly Japanese.

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When Raymond first arrived in Japan he was struck by the functionality of the traditional architecture. He described a Japanese farm as growing out of the ground like a mushroom "...It developed from the function absolutely honestly.. The structure was the only ornament and expressed positively on the outside. All materials were natural and worked by craftsmen." It is interesting to point out here that the Mother also visited Japan at about the same time, 1916-1920. She too was struck by the aesthetic nature of the Japanese civilization and the importance given to the values of beauty and harmony, but also, significantly, functionality too.

In the Japanese house everything serves a purpose as in Golconde where the Mother iterated that each piece of furniture or object was to have its own use—everything was to have its own place and there was to be no misuse. Pure architecture in Japan is found in the oldest and most sacred shrines—the Ise Shrines which symbolise the origin of the country and its Imperial Dynasty. They are of a simple post-and-beam construction and all the structure is visible, no surfaces are painted. Matter is at all times subservient to the idea and this is expressed clearly in the domestic architecture. The Japanese house is the evolution of natural form, and nature is the key to existence for the Japanese. The garden and house are perceived as a whole, one entering the other. Raymond stressed that eliminating the inessentials and arriving at clean, almost ascetic forms and spaces was fundamental and he underlined the importance of designing structurally and functionally from the inside out.

His own residence in Tokyo (1923) illustrates this. It has been hailed as the first example of an exposed concrete structure in Japan and Frampton dates the

arrival of the International Style in that country to Raymond's house. The interiors are furnished with cantilevered steel furniture which predates that of Mart Stam and Marcel Breuer but the concrete frame is detailed to recall traditional Japanese timber construction. The garden was designed as a 'room'—almost part of the living room and he subtly integrated the local vernacular—rope rain-leaders instead of down-pipes.

Although Raymond does not incorporate the local vernacular into Golconde he does use South Indian materials. Black Cuddapah stone was used for the floors—when highly polished it has the appearance of marble. In the rooms and on the east and west walls outside a special plaster was prepared made from rivershell lime instead of firm limestone and white marble powder ground very fine on a traditional grinding stone and then in the plaster was mixed some jaggery or unrefined sugar. It was traditionally used in South Indian houses and known as Chettinad plaster with a quality far superior to the plaster used today.

I wish to return, though, to the discussion of function, its relevance to the Ashram and the links between Golconde and the theories of Le Corbusier. Parallels can be drawn between Golconde and Corbusier's liners in 'Towards A New Architecture'. Corbusier decries the western love for carpets, wallpaper, carved and gilt furniture, etc., and upholds "An architecture pure, neat, clear, clean and healthy." Raymond also sought an heroic departure from "The miasma into which 19th century architecture had fallen." There is a particular photograph in Corbusier's manifesto of a promenade on the 'Aquitania'. Referring to this he asks the architect to note the "satisfying and interesting volume, unity in materials; a fine grouping of constructional elements, sanely exhibited and rationally assembled." What a fitting description this could be of the "long-galleries" in Golconde! I previously described the monastery as a metaphor for Golconde, so too can the metaphor of an ocean liner be applied in terms of its pure functionality—high ceilings, deep corridors—all in exposed concrete not only used for its modernity but because it keeps the building cool. There is no fabric to soften the lines, instead timber is used for the doors—its warmth breaks up the grey surfaces of concrete ceiling and stone floor.

Raymond is truly involved in the new "Spirit of construction." Economy and mass-production are of concern to both men. The element of repetition in the grille and the louvres could represent the unit repeated again and again as in the *Unité d'habitation*. Corbusier does say, nevertheless, that architecture should transcend construction and response to needs. "Architecture is the art above all others which achieves a state of platonic grandeur, mathematical order, speculation, the perception and harmony which lies in emotional relationships. This is the aim of architecture." I feel that Raymond does rise above the mere physical attributes of expressing the structure and it was his experience in Japan that enabled him to do so. "By seeking the essence in things, in the silence thus created one hears the voice of form, substance and space." There is harmony

between the idea, the act and the material in Golconde: this is its beauty.

And the Ashram? Every day the Ashramites are served the simple ingredients of rice, dal, curd,¹ bananas, lemon and bread which provide the necessary vitamins and minerals to sustain a healthy body. Mahatma Gandhi said: "Eating is necessary only for satisfying the body and keeping it a fit instrument for service food must therefore be taken like medicine, under proper restraint." Food was not meant as medicine in the Ashram but to nourish the body and develop it as a strong base which would respond to the call of the spirit. The children's physical programme was extended to the whole community encouraging the participants to be aware of the potentialities of the body; "regulation of its movements and functions with an eye for its sound growth and beauty of form "

The human is almost treated as a 'functional being'—he needs only those things necessary for his survival and growth—basic foodstuffs and simple quarters. The residents of Golconde are not even allowed the pleasure of listening to music (for pragmatic reasons as it would disturb the neighbours!). "The aim of ordinary life is to carry out one's duty ." Expanding on Gandhi's statement about the body being an instrument for service, this quote suggests that there is something more than the skeleton, the human structure, something deep in the subconscious that man must try to become aware of.

References in 'Towards A New Architecture' has placed Golconde in the forefront of the modern movement in India; (it was in fact the first high-strength reinforced concrete building in that country), and in so doing emphasises the significance of the Ashram as a forward-thinking community in implementing, for example, the Mother's theories about women's liberation. As I have mentioned before, she helped to explode the myth about the inferiority of the female and, almost in recognition of this, a delegation of Russian gymnasts visiting the Ashram presented her with an emblem of Russian womanhood. The rigidities and limitations of the education-system were rejected too for a child-centred education with the teacher as a guide. Education was not to be contained within the classroom but drawn directly from life.

I believe that these improvements in the social conditions could be put into practice because of the unique environment that had been created. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had successfully isolated the community from the tumultuous events occurring in the world around them.² This was done by

¹ Yogurt

² In December 1941 when Japan entered the war India was threatened by invasion. Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to negotiate with Congress and the Muslims to form a central government to mobilise Indian forces to fight the Japanese. He also offered a new Indian Union and a constitution to be decided by India's own representatives after the war. Sri Aurobindo sent a message to Cripps approving this "I welcome it as an opportunity given to India to determine for herself and organise in all liberty of choice her freedom and unity." Cripps replied "I am most touched and gratified by your kind message allowing me to inform India." Congress rejected the proposal. The outcome was India's partition.

discouraging the Ashramites from indulging in activities that would arouse sensationalism, such as reading newspapers. So too in Golconde the dramatic is rejected and the building has a timeless quality removing it from the turmoil of pre-independence India.

I think it is necessary to return to one of Le Corbusier's works at this point to analyse the atmosphere in India at this time in contrast to that surrounding Golconde. Ahmedabad was a major industrial city in India during the days of the Raj. It was here that Gandhi set up his ashram. He organised the workers in the textile mills against the employers who sustained his ashram and it was these mill-owning elite who commissioned Corbusier to build their headquarters along the banks of the Sabarmati River. The building was completed in 1952 and Corbusier has woven into its fabric not only India's history but the joy of liberation too. It is an incredibly powerful building where taut curves are constrained within its geometry and all elements play against each other.

The neglected state in which the building has been left today is a result of the lack of understanding that the present occupants have for their surroundings as compared to the enlightened, philanthropic chiefs for whom it was built. Understanding the basis of the Hindu religion is the key to understanding the Indians' attitude towards their surroundings. The Hindu religion, sometimes dismisses the world as illusory and often, as a result, very little care and attention are paid to living conditions. Beautiful surroundings are not felt to be important in the quest for a divine life and it is significant to note here that many of the occupants of Golconde are western. I am not implying a racial superiority in terms of taste or aesthetics here but there seems to be an emphasis in the Indian culture on the spiritual world and not on the material one.

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo wanted to teach their followers that both were important. Regarding America, the Mother says "The civic sense of the people . each one owns a happy responsibility for maintaining the hygiene and sanitation of the society." She felt that having reached a technological peak, many Americans were now becoming interested in spirituality. In the Ashram, as a result of these observations, a culture grew in which neatness, order and elegance were developed as part of "The divine manifestation in the physical." This combination of eastern and western philosophies was further expanded in the writings of Sri Aurobindo:

"All philosophy is concerned with the relationship between two things, the fundamental truth of existence and the forms in which existence presents itself to our experience. The fundamental truth is truth of spirit, the other is truth of life, truth of form and shaping force and living idea and action. The west laid emphasis on truth of life and for a time completely rejected truth of spirit. The east laid emphasis on truth of spirit and neglected the possibilities of life. Both divergences are coming closer together."

It would appear then, that a perfect community had been created, or a community that would in time reach perfection when the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had been understood. In this light Golconde is the physical apotheosis of these teachings. However, the Mother always urged her followers to "Go beyond" the position in which one may find oneself at a particular moment in time.

On February 28th 1968, the inauguration of the City of Dawn—Auroville—took place in which 130 countries participated. It was founded upon freedom, equality and brotherhood and has the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as its base and it was to be a city where the society living there could not be claimed by any nation. Golconde was built at the end of a period when the whole of the west had seen movements fighting against style, aiming to build a pure architecture that would represent the new machine age. After the Second World War machines were no longer celebrated as the pinnacle of man's achievements. In the west 1968 saw a huge swing towards the anti-establishment movements. There were Vietnam demonstrations in the U.S., student riots in France and 'flower power' became the byword for the passivist generation. The west turned to the east searching for spirituality and found Auroville. It attracted many western 'free spirits' and these pioneers developed building programmes experimenting with new technologies and ecological materials. The master plan, however, was never clearly defined and instead of being one homogeneous community there are now many small groups each endeavouring to fulfil its own programme. Some of the major projects designed by the chief architect, Roger Anger, are incredibly expensive. Some have taken nearly twenty years to complete and may strike one as inefficient and out of date but there is a progressive spirit in Auroville that, if channelled in the right direction, could be of value not only to the community itself but also to the rest of India. In Golconde all abstract speculation was banished to fulfil the needs and demands of both client and inhabitant. It is a direct response to the needs of the individual and yet could be significant for a community founded upon the same philosophy.

I began the main body of this essay discussing the individual and the cell—Golconde was designed so that the individual could become conscious of "The Divine Presence" within himself while surrounded by an atmosphere perpetuating order and harmony. I shall end with the beginnings of a new community—Auroville was created in the Mother's words, "To establish an ideal society in a propitious spot for the flowering of the new race, the race of the Sons of God."

SARAH ALLEN

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1992)

AFTER the partition of Bengal there came a general outburst of revolt which led to the rise of the extremist party and the great National movement. “. Sri Aurobindo’s activities were then turned more and more in this direction and the secret action became a secondary and subordinate element. He took advantage, however, of the Swadeshi movement to popularise the idea of violent revolt in the future. At Barin’s suggestion he agreed to the starting of a paper, *Yugantar*; which was to preach open revolt and the absolute denial of the British rule and include such items as a series of articles containing instructions for guerrilla warfare. Sri Aurobindo himself wrote some of the opening articles in the early numbers and he always exercised a general control; when a member of the sub-editorial staff, Swami Vivekananda’s brother, presented himself on his own motion to the police in a search as the editor of the paper and was prosecuted, the *Yugantar* under Sri Aurobindo’s orders adopted the policy of refusing to defend itself in a British Court on the ground that it did not recognise the foreign Government and this immensely increased the prestige and influence of the paper. It had as its chief writers and directors three of the ablest younger writers in Bengal, and it at once acquired an immense influence throughout Bengal. It may be noted that the Secret Society did not include terrorism in its programme, but this element grew up in Bengal as a result of the strong repression and the reaction to it in that Province.”¹

“. Sri Aurobindo had to establish and generalise the idea of Independence in the mind of the Indian people and at the same time to push first a party and then the whole nation into an intense and organised political activity which would lead to the accomplishment of that ideal. His idea was to capture the Congress and to make it an instrument for revolutionary action instead of a centre of a timid constitutional agitation which would only talk and pass resolutions and recommendations to the foreign Government; if the Congress could not be captured, then a central revolutionary body would have to be created which could do this work. It was to be a sort of State within the State giving its directions to the people and creating organised bodies and institutions which would be its means of action; there must be an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance which would render the administration of the country by a foreign Government difficult or finally impossible, a universal unrest which would wear down repression and finally, if need be, an open revolt all over the country. This plan included a boycott of British trade, the substitution of national schools for the Government institutions, the creation of arbitration courts to which the people could resort instead of depending on the ordinary courts of the law, the creation of volunteer forces which would be the nucleus of

an army of open revolt, and all other action that could make the programme complete ”²

The Swadeshi and the Boycott movement gathered momentum and became an important plank in the Nationalists’ programme and propaganda. Political activity was claiming Sri Aurobindo’s whole time and energy and his interest in the Baroda service naturally suffered diminution. He had, however, not yet decided to relinquish his post at Baroda College. On February 19, 1906 he took two months’ privilege leave and later he obtained a year’s leave on loss of pay. Almost the entire leave-period was spent in Bengal in organising the secret revolutionary movement.

On 14th April he attended the Bengal Provincial Conference at Barisal, which was specially scheduled to discuss the Bengal situation created by the partition. Sri Aurobindo says of himself in the third person: “Sri Aurobindo took part in the Barisal Conference and was in the front row of three persons in the procession which was dispersed by the police charge. After the breaking up of the Conference he accompanied Bepin Pal in a tour of East Bengal where enormous meetings were held,—in one district in spite of the prohibition of the District Magistrate.”³

For all practical purposes he had left the Baroda service for good, he arrived in Calcutta in July 1906 to begin a hectic period of his life. He took up residence at first with Raja Subodh Mullick, and after a few months moved to a separate house where Mrinalini and his sister Sarojini joined him.

One of Sri Aurobindo’s political aims was the propagation of National Education. He had often earlier expressed contempt for the system of education then prevailing. He had first-hand experience of the evil effects of Education imparted by the British Government to Indian students, while he was teaching in Baroda college. He said: “...the University cannot and does not pretend to complete a man’s education; it merely gives some materials to his hand or points out certain paths he may tread, and it says to him,—‘Here are the materials I have given into your hands, it is for you to make of them what you can’; or—‘These are the paths I have equipped you to travel, it is yours to tread them to the end, and by your success in them justify me before the world.’ ”⁴

Sri Aurobindo aimed at a pattern of education that was soul-oriented and had relevance to the need of the country. To give a practical shape to his ideas of National Education, Raja Subodh Mullick, one of Sri Aurobindo’s close collaborators in the secret movement and afterwards in Congress politics, donated a lakh of rupees for the founding of the Bengal National College, with the proviso that Sri Aurobindo should be offered a teaching post in the institution on a salary of Rs. 150. Though this was just one-fifth of the salary he was drawing in Baroda, Sri Aurobindo accepted the proposal. The management of the institution was left in the hands of Satish Chandra Mukherjee of the Dawn Society which had been founded in 1902 and was being run by him for giving a spiritual direction to

education He was an instrument in the formation of the National Council of Education in 1906 after the partition of Bengal. Sri Aurobindo joined as Principal when the Bengal National College was opened on August 14, 1906.

On advising the National College students Sri Aurobindo said: “ .. When we established this college and left other occupations, other chances of life, to devote our lives to this institution, we did so because we hoped to see in it the foundation, the nucleus of a nation, of the new India which is to begin its career after this night of sorrow and trouble, on that day of glory and greatness when India will work for the world What we want here is not merely to give you a little information, not merely to open to you careers for earning a livelihood, but to build up sons for the Motherland to work and to suffer for her. That is why we started this college and that is the work to which I want you to devote yourselves in future .. ”⁵

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCES

- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 26, p 24
- 2 *Ibid* pp 26-27
- 3 *Ibid* , p 46
- 4 *Sri Aurobindo Speeches*, 1974 Edition, pp 4-5
- 5 *Ibid* pp 8-9

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

[Not] Alone against Hitler

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1992)

IT is a terrible fate if you have more vision than others, telling people what appears true and obvious to you, and yet you are either ignored or ridiculed. Manchester's book reads like a gripping novel. You witness how all circumstances conspire to open Europe's doors to the Fuhrer. Again and again there is the lone warning voice of a single man, and then the arrogant refusal to listen. But Churchill is a born kshatriya and starts getting active. He recruits numberless visitors—among them high military officers and top Foreign Office officials—as his spies against his own government to inform him about the military capacity, latest inventions and technical developments of both sides. Many of his informers take great risks in supplying him with classified information. All this is necessary because Hitler has Chamberlain in his pocket. By the time Churchill became Prime Minister, he was probably the best informed man in the country. It should be mentioned that nearly the whole top echelon of the Foreign Office was eventually on Churchill's side after events in Europe had proved that his vision and his predictions were correct and that war was inevitable. At the same time there were forces in the bureaucracy which systematically suppressed all information supporting the position of the "war-mongers." *The Times* too was firmly on the wrong side all those years, censoring or modifying information coming in from their correspondents on the continent.

If you know whatever Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said on Churchill, on France, Germany and the working of forces in this period, you can read a book like Manchester's with a more subtle understanding. But his own insight is not lacking either. Just take this passage:

Even after the fall of Poland, after Fleet Street had printed evidence of Nazi crimes in Poland—the random murders, then mass executions, the tortures and the seizure of Poles to work in German munitions factories—the prime minister [Chamberlain] seriously considered a negotiated peace with a Reich purged of the more extreme Nazis. He had a "hunch," he wrote, that the war would end in the spring of 1940. "It won't be by defeat in the field," he wrote, "but by German realization that they *can't* win and that it isn't worth their while to go on getting thinner and poorer when they might have instant relief." If negotiations were successful the Germans might "not have to give up anything they really care about." One pictures Neville Chamber-

lain in hell, sitting at one end of a table with Satan at the other, each checking off items on his agenda, and a slow, awful expression of comprehension crossing the late P.M.'s face as he realizes that he has just traded his soul for a [German] promise of future negotiations.*

Churchill was not a yogi or man of the future. He was a man of the 19th century, defending the best of the past against the worst of hell, with a special gift. Manchester writes, "The inescapable fact is that Hitler and Churchill both were ruled not by reason but by intuition." That is true, but we should add that the one received his messages from the Asura, the other from the Divine. Persistently listening to the latter, the undaunted Englishman finally became Prime Minister of his country after the invasion of the Low Countries and France. In a speech of 18 June 1940 he said:

Hitler knows that he will have to break us on this island
or lose the war.

If we can stand up to him all Europe may be free
and the life of the world may move forward
into broad, sunlit uplands.

But if we fail, then the whole world,
including the United States, including all we have known and cared for,

Will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age
made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted,
by the lights of a perverted science.

Instead of a Dark Age we got a New Age, very much struggling against resistances which are formidable, but certainly not as terrifying as those faced by Winston Spencer Churchill in his time. The "sunlit uplands" are open to those who walk the "sunlit path".

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* It is interesting in this context to read Sri Aurobindo's following commentary on the two politicians

"In a photograph of the Munich Pact I saw Hitler with Chamberlain. This man with a great diabolical cunning in his eyes was looking at Chamberlain who looked like a fly before a spider at the point of being caught—and he actually was caught." *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. I, p. 99

Appendix

I am giving here some quotations from Manchester's book which shed more light on Churchill's personality and also on other issues.

William James once wrote that men of genius differ from ordinary men not in any innate quality of the brain, but in the aims and purposes on which they concentrate and in the degree of concentration which they manage to achieve. Napoleon, himself great, called it the mental power "*de fixer les objets longtemps sans être fatigué*"—to concentrate on objectives for long periods without tiring. Churchill possessed it. His eyes were focused on Hitler to the exclusion of all else. (p. 203)

In the early summer of 1939 the Foreign Office received an account of a conversation between James Marshall-Cornwall, a British general, and Count Schwerin von Krosigk, Reich finance minister and a member of the German cabinet [who was opposed to the Nazis]. Krosigk had told the general that Chamberlain should "take Winston Churchill into the Cabinet. Churchill is the only Englishman Hitler is afraid of" (p. 428)

Both as a politician and as a historian [Churchill] was an unrepentant romantic. He did indeed divide those of whom he wrote into white hats and black hats. But that is how he saw life, as a struggle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness (p. 434)

[Churchill's wife Clementine] saw, as he did not, how powerful his position would be if, when his hour struck, he were free of any tainted association with the appeasers. Afterward he agreed, writing of his years in the wilderness "Now one can see how lucky I was. Over me beat the invisible wings." (p. 164)

He had come to power [in 1940] because he had seen through Hitler from the very beginning—but not, ironically, because his inner light, the source of that insight, was understood by Englishmen. Churchill's star was invisible to the public and even to most of his peers. But a few saw it. One of them wrote afterward that although Winston knew the world was complex and in constant flux, to him "the great things, races, and peoples, and morality were eternal" (p. 687)

[Sir Stafford] Cripps was one of the very few on Labour's side of the House who shared Churchill's contempt for appeasement; he begged the front bench to rearm before Hitler struck. But he was also ascetic, a vegetarian, a man who shunned coffee and tea and quit smoking cigars because he thought the habit

vulgar. "My God," said Churchill when told of this. "Cripps has cut his last tie with human civilization." (p. 383)

Once [Hitler] had moved into the chancellery, [he] let it be known that his door would be open to English political figures, and pilgrimages became fashionable. His guests returned glowing with optimism (...) (p. 81)

In this context, it is interesting to quote Sri Aurobindo's following commentary.

[Hitler] is possessed by some supernormal Power and it is from this Power that the voice, as he calls it, comes. Have you noted that people who at one time were inimical to him come into contact with him and leave as his admirers? It is a sign of that Power. (*Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. I., p. 98)

[Lord Halifax, after visiting the German dictator] told Chamberlain of Hitler's solution for the turmoil in India: "Shoot Gandhi." That, too, amused the P.M. It occurred to neither of them that the Führer had been serious. (p. 243)

The incident reported here would have surprised many Indians who had illusions about Hitler, though not Sri Aurobindo, as we can see from the following statement made in May 1940:

S: Gandhi writes in the *Harijan* that there is not much to choose between Imperialism and Fascism. He finds very little difference.

Sri Aurobindo: There is a big difference. Under Fascism he wouldn't be able to write such things or say anything against the State. He would be shot. (*Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. II-III, p. 393)

(Concluded)

SUDDEN TALES THE FOLKS TOLD

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1992)

27. THE MISERLY MISER

A MISER once went in search of a bride for his only son. All that he carried with him was a small cloth bag, the size of the pocket on a boy's shirt. It contained nothing but a handful of ragi flour.

He moved on foot from village to village, meeting people and looking at the girls old enough for marriage. He found none of the girls a good match for his son.

Tired, the miser one morning sat under a banyan tree on the bank of a pond. The chill cool breeze made him stretch his legs and go to sleep. When he woke up it was already afternoon. To his surprise he saw a man of his own age seated by his side.

The miser involved the stranger in a conversation and found that the latter was in search of a bridegroom for his daughter. On further enquiry, they found that they were of the same caste. Their properties too were in no way inferior to each other. Since the bride happened to be the only daughter of the stranger, the miser readily agreed to have her as his daughter-in-law.

Both fellows were happy. "Our problems in life are over," they congratulated each other. They decided to meet again after a week to fix the date for the marriage in consultation with an astrologer.

When they were about to depart, the stranger showed a bag smaller than that of the miser and said, "Come on, let us share the lunch I have brought."

"Thank you. I too have brought something to eat," so saying the miser waded his way to a clean spot in the pond. He then dipped the bag once into the clear water. Raising the bag above his head, he hurriedly drank the water by baling it with his hand.

The stranger looked askance at the miser. When the miser had drunk his bellyful of water, he reached the bank.

"Like father, like son. I don't want to give away my daughter in marriage with your son," said the stranger in an angry mood.

"Why? Why did you change your decision all of a sudden?" asked the miser in a sad tone.

Without giving any reply, the stranger waded his way with his cloth bag into the pond. He held the bag just above the surface of water, thereby allowing only the shadow of the bag to fall in the water. Holding the bag in the same position, he went on drinking the water by baling out with his hand till his belly became full.

It was the miser's turn to look askance at the stranger.

Belching his way to the bank, the stranger said to the miser, "You are a spendthrift. Like father like son."

The miser stood dumbstruck. The stranger went on his way in search of the best miser to marry off his daughter.

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28. DOGS ARE DOGS

It was cow-dust hour. A bitch was resting on a heap of garbage in one corner of the village street. She cocked her ear and a second later raised her head only to see a herd of cows pass through the street. She suppressed her instinct to bark and became very pensive.

A couple of minutes passed. The bitch's paramour came running towards her. Finding her inert, he gambolled and played in order to attract her attention. But he failed.

"What made you become so pensive today?" yapped the dog.

The bitch growled: "Whenever we give birth, we bring into the world not less than half-a-dozen pups. But these cows and buffaloes. .they don't give birth to more than one at a time. Yet how is it that these horned animals outnumber us?"

"A very reasonable question, indeed," howled the dog "But too difficult to answer, unless the Creator Himself helps us "

"Didn't you notice the herd that passed by? Too difficult to count, those hooved ones... Come, let us go to the God who created this village and the living things in it." So saying the bitch galloped towards the village temple. The dog ran after her

Together the canine couple barked their doubt before God.

God smiled and said: "Dogs! There's hardly any unity among your clan. But the solidarity of the cattle is laudable. That is the reason why they outnumber you in spite of the fact that they prefer to stick to one calf a year."

The dog couple blinked at each other in utter ignorance.

"What has unity and solidarity to do with our doubt?" the bitch whispered. The dog grinned

God smiled again. Deciding to demonstrate the truth in his words, He asked the dog-couple to stand aside and watch. With a sway of his hand He created two rooms, side by side. With another sway He made a dozen dogs enter into one room, and a dozen cattle into another room. Locking both the doors of the rooms, he said, "Wait here till I come back." He then disappeared perhaps to redress the grievances of the other villagers who had come with coconut, camphor and joss sticks.

An hour later He returned. The dog-couple wagged their tails in all humility

God unlocked the door of the first room and flung it open. The dozen cattle came out of the room one after another and moved in a herd to a nearby meadow. "This is what is known as unity and solidarity," explained God.

Unlocking the door of the second room, God said, "Now let us see what you dogs are incapable of." No sooner did God fling the door open, than two dogs rushed out of the room. One was found bleeding from its mouth and the other bleeding profusely from its bitten-off ear. The third limped its way out, yelping all the way. Blood was dripping from its severed tail. Two others were struggling to drag themselves out. The rest were found dead, their carcasses torn to pieces.

"What a gory violence!" howled the canine couple.

God smiled. Their doubt cleared, the couple wagged their tails and ran out of the temple.

At a distance they saw a pup licking a dry bone. They rushed towards the bone barking the life out of the pup.

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29. THE MAN WITH TWO WIVES

A man in his early fifties decided to have one more wife. One day he slyly said to his wife: "You are, like me, my dear, growing old. I think it's better to have a young woman to assist you in your chores."

The wife read the mind of her husband. She too cunningly replied: "What better pleasure can there be in this world to a wife like me than to serve her husband? I am quite satisfied with what God has given me. Allow me to serve you till I breathe my last."

The husband tried his luck through various other means, but his wife was adamant.

Months passed. The wife was surprised to find a dramatic change in the appearance and the gait of her husband. Suspicion rose in her heart. She took less than a week to find out that her husband had married a young woman and had her housed in the adjacent village.

The old wife being a bold woman didn't weep over her fate. She planned to make her husband look as old as possible, so that his young wife would hate him.

She consulted a village physician and bought from him a herbal paste that would turn all black hairs into grey. And one night when the husband was fast asleep, she smeared the paste here and there on his head.

The herbal paste worked well. The tufts of black hair here and there on his head turned grey.

The husband thought that the change was due to his old age. But the young wife, very much interested in the physical appearance of her husband, asked him to lie down and rest his head on her lap. She plucked away as many white hairs as

she could from his head. "I'll make you look young again within a few days I'll remove all your grey hairs " she said

The husband was very pleased

When he returned home, the old wife noticed his head Many of the grey hairs were missing She guessed who had removed them, and for what purpose She was quick in taking her next step.

"Oh, my dear! Why so many grey hairs amidst the lush growth of black hairs? Lie down and rest your head on my lap. I'll remove them," said the old wife.

The husband jubilantly rested his head on her lap The old wife, under the pretext of removing the grey hair, plucked out the black ones.

Thus both the wives vied with each other and did their jobs well.

Should I tell you that the husband turned completely bald within a few days? Such a fate awaits you if you go in for one more wife.

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30. HOW GOES THE WORLD WITH YOU?

"Everyone looks at the world from his own point of view," stressed the minister in the course of a discussion he had with the king

"I don't agree with you," said the king.

The minister thought awhile and said: "I can easily prove it, your Majesty! All that you have to do is to ask your barber 'How goes the world with you?' when he comes here to shave you in the morning. Ask him the same question for three consecutive days. You will find the truth of what I have said."

On the morning of the next day, the barber came. The king waited till he had finished his job. And when he was about to take his leave, the king asked, "How goes the world with you?"

"Poverty, your Majesty!" came the barber's reply "The world is full of poor people People struggle to make both ends meet."

As soon as the barber had left the king's chamber, the minister entered and inquired The king repeated what the barber had said.

"I have already arranged to drop a piece of gold, the size of a lemon, into the barber's house Wait till tomorrow to know the different answer he would give to the same question," said the minister.

On the morning of the next day, the barber came. He was all smiles. The king didn't wait for the barber to begin his job. Curiosity drove him to ask the question "How goes the world with you?"

"The world is rich, your Majesty Everyone in the world is rich by a lemon-sized gold piece," said the barber in glee.

The king became pensive. The barber began to shave him

No sooner did the barber leave the king's chamber than the minister entered.

After repeating the barber's different answer to the same question, the king commented. "I think there is an iota of truth in what you have said, my minister!"

The minister became jubilant. "Wait till tomorrow, your Majesty. The barber will give you yet another answer to the same question. And you will believe fully in what I have said."

On the morning of the next day, the barber came. He was very sad. Perturbed, the king asked the same question.

"Wretched, your Majesty! The world had become so wretched that the people have lost the little gold they had to thieves," replied the barber.

When the barber had left, the minister entered the king's chamber. The king repeated the barber's third different answer to the same question. "Poor fellow!" he commented, "He has lost your piece of gold to a thief."

"Yes, your Majesty! I got back my piece of gold. I myself arranged to have it stolen from his house," said the minister.

"It is true that everyone looks at the world from his own point of view," said the king beaming with satisfaction.

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31. THE MOTHER-IN-LAW OUTWITTED

On a certain evening a husband returned home from work, and told his wife: "I have to accompany my master on a business errand. He and I will visit various ports to sell our goods.. I do not know how many months it might take for my return.. And I can't refuse the offer."

"Why should you? By such a wide travel you will gain not only wealth but also enough experience which might be of immense use in the long run. So strike while the iron is hot," his wife advised him.

"But how can I leave you alone? You have no parents to go to," said he.

"So what? Your mother, my mother-in-law, is still alive in the next village and I will go and stay with her till you return from the business trip," the wife suggested.

The husband agreed. His wife saw him off and then hired a bullock cart to reach the village where her mother-in-law lived, looking after land and cattle.

The mother-in-law was kind towards her daughter-in-law except in matters pertaining to food. She gave her only a limited quantity of food that was not enough to satisfy the hunger of even a ten-year-old.

The daughter-in-law never asked for more for she knew that it was useless. But at the same time she did not go hungry. Whenever the mother-in-law was

busy either in the cattleshed or in the farmyard, she would gulp down whatever eatables she found in the kitchen and feign ignorance when matters came to light. The mother-in-law cursed the cats and the dog in the house.

A few days later the mother-in-law found to her great horror that a bag of peanuts, kept with bags and bags of paddy and ragi, was growing leaner day after day. "This can't be the work of my cats and dog," she mumbled and suspected foul play. She knew that none other than her daughter-in-law had access to the granary. She decided to spy upon the activities of the daughter-in-law.

It didn't take much time for the daughter-in-law to understand that she was spied upon. Hence she decided to outwit the mother-in-law and awaited the opportunity.

One evening the daughter-in-law, when she was busily engaged in cleaning the coop, found a groundnut without its shell. A sudden idea dawned upon her. Carrying the nut in her hand, she rushed to the granary where her mother-in-law was engaged in counting the bags of paddy, ragi and groundnuts.

"What happened? Have you seen a ghost?" asked the mother-in-law.

"What is this? I've never seen such a nut before! Is it an edible one?" she asked bubbling with curiosity.

The mother-in-law looked at the nut shown by her daughter-in-law. She was taken aback. "What an ignoramus you are! Haven't you ever seen a groundnut before?"

"No! Not one before."

"Where did you find it?" the mother-in-law asked.

"In the coop," the daughter-in-law responded.

Then the mother-in-law opened the bag of groundnuts that had become thinner and scooped a handful of nuts and showed them to her.

"Is it edible? Has it to be cooked and eaten? Or can we eat it raw?" the daughter-in-law asked all the time sporting an innocent countenance.

The mother-in-law promised her that she would fry for her a handful of nuts in the evening. When the daughter-in-law went to continue with her household chores, the mother-in-law felt sorry for suspecting the childlike girl. Thereafter she began chasing away the cats and the dog when they came anywhere near the granary and never allowed the hens and the cocks to stir out of the coop.

(More Tales to follow)

P. RAJA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Of Love and Terror—by *Elizabeth Stiller*. Published by Writers Workshop, 162/92 Lake Gardens, Calcutta-700 045 Pages: 107 Price: Rs. 120 (hardback), Rs. 100 (Flexiback).

“Among the mounds of cindered dead
We walk in silence feeling nothing ” –

thus begins a poem ‘After This Fire’ from the first collection under review by Mrs. Elizabeth Stiller. Why have we become so immune to the havocs in life? How is that “we can do nothing now / But walk and remember / And in time...forget”? What else can we do when havoc itself has become life!

The 68 poems included in this volume were written before and subsequent to her coming to India, “the loved country of her soul”. Daughter of an internationally known scientist, Dr Walter A. Jacobs, Elizabeth grew up near New York City. After her education, she taught painting and design and acted in 22 plays. After her involvement in the peace movement during the Vietnam War, she developed interest in Indian Philosophy. As she found the truths for which she had been searching in the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother she came to the Ashram in 1973 and found her “true home” Hence her poems reflect the change from the Western malaise to new possibilities and hope.

One by one from this tree
All have forsaken me.

Yet as leaves red turn
And seeds again return
To earth
For new birth

I must be for them a tree of light
In my lonely night.

Since she desires to be a tree of light, she is not afraid of death for she knows for certain:

“Should death come, all parts of me
Shall become part of many things.”

Several of her poems exhibit the thoughts of death haunting her. She considers ‘Death’ as the “New Lord”, “Our God”, “Our King” She feels that ‘Death’ is

the blissful state that can break all chains that bind us. If not today, “Some other day / Death will come along”

What pervades her poetry is the sense of loneliness. There is no escape from it as one grows old. This idea is admirably portrayed in the poem ‘An Old Lady Looks at Lilacs’. The sight of lilacs in the “decaying room” makes a “lonely lady” in a “lonely room” think of a “dust of lilac years”. Aren’t we “hostage to dust”?

Elizabeth Stiller’s intense meditations, in poems like ‘Little Poems’ and ‘Genesis’, are broodingly alive and involve our minds at once. As a keen observer of Nature she paints with ease landscapes in words. It must be mentioned in passing that her students exhibited their works in many places in U.S.A. And she perceives the ‘Divine Performance’ everywhere. Her philosophical musings mediate beautifully between her lyrical memories of time past and a deeper sense of cultural and religious destiny. The influence of later Eliot is particularly strong here.

Not only are death, loneliness, nature and old age the themes of her poems. She is open to her surroundings too. ‘The Years of the Child’ is a pungent attack on poets and pen-wielders who write pages on poverty, but never in the least take any step to wipe the tears of a hungry child. Here is the second part from that long poem.

With characteristic toss of head and hair,
The famous poet enters where
His cronies, known humorously as “The Bunch”,
Wait for him...today he pays for lunch

As he rode to the “Pen Club” in his car
The shutters of his mind somewhat ajar,
Onto his careless retina an image leapt.
He wept,
For he had seen starving, wan, in pain,
An orphan child. He could not bear to look again.
Before one eats, it is not good
To be so moved. It can affect digestion of one’s food.
And yet, can he, a Poet, push aside
A feeling so significant and wide?
And so he stores the sentiment away
To be reconstituted later in the day.
A drink or two, the pleasant meal they have been keeping,
Will dissipate the ill-effects of weeping

Now, after the sweet,
He leaves his seat

- At the still-ample table
 While he is able
 To push himself away. To stay means over-eating
 Which is too heating
 And might cause sleep.
 Thus he would fail to keep
 His rendez-vous at two with his Poetic Muse.
 He knows that she will not excuse
 Absence or delay,
 Demanding her 100 lines a day.
 Her reprimand can not be brooked,
 And he is booked
- For tea at three with those amusing and adulatory people
 With “many promises to keep” he’ll
 Go those “many miles” before
 He shuts his bedroom door
 To sleep, to re-create or shape in dreams a new creation.
 Now, though he cannot see the immediate relation
 Of the morning’s experience to his present self,
 He puts his pleasant life up on the shelf,
 Takes down, for the light distortion of his feeling,
 His Poetic License; and to the Muse appealing.
 He makes beginning...the Proem
 of his Poem,
 Penning the immortal lines, compassionate and sweet,
 “I weep for the orphan child starving in the street.”

Not many of the poets published by Writers Workshop deserve any attention. But Elizabeth Stiller is of a different mould. Serious in tone, but salted with humour and sugar-coated with lovely images, her volume *Of Love and Terror* is a feast for all lovers of poetry.

P. RAJA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Seventy-first Seminar

23 February 1992

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1992)

HOW TO PREPARE OURSELVES TO BECOME THE TRUE INSTRUMENTS OF THE MOTHER'S GREAT WORK FOR EARTH AND HUMANITY? •

Speech by Rama Mehra

THE time has come for humanity to take another step forward in evolution, which is from mind to Supermind. This is the great work of the Mother. At this moment the most important and imminent need is to make ourselves ready to receive and express the supramental Truth in our life and action. The supramental Truth manifested in February 1956 in the inner atmosphere of the earth, from where it is now insistently pressing to emerge in the external life of the world. By making ourselves ready to receive this Truth, we will serve it sincerely and whole-heartedly. To do this rightly it is very necessary to guard against our common human tendency to seize upon that Truth for utilising it for the satisfaction of our egoistic desires and interests. This is a gross error which can only tend to deflect the Truth from its right course and lead to false or deformed consequences.

The complete rejection of ego is the indispensable necessity of receiving the supramental Truth and undergoing the supramental change. So Sri Aurobindo insists that "The first condition of the supramental change is to get rid of ego."¹ It is only when this is done that one can be a true instrument of the Mother's Great Work for earth and humanity without any distortion or error.

The only way to wholly reject the ego and serve the Truth is to be free not only from our vital desires and interests but also from all our mental standards and principles and to submit totally and exclusively to the will of the Divine alone and let it act freely and spontaneously in and through us. We have to be free not only of the blinding compulsions of our lower nature but also of all the moral and religious ideals of our higher nature to which we attach so great a value and even consider as sacred and inviolable. We have to break all these bonds if we are to be the perfect servants of the Truth. If we do not do so then

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Cent Ed., Vol 20), p 266

instead of ourselves serving the Truth we shall only try to make the Truth our servant. But the supramental Truth will not allow itself to be deviated in this manner because it is uncompromising in its insistence on expressing the Divine Will only and no other.

True love is the secret key of perfect surrender. So we can say that to love the Divine and obey His will in all sincerity is the most perfect way to serve the Mother and become her fit instruments. Love is the most perplexing problem of human life with which everyone has to contend and find a solution. Love in its true form is never an egoistic movement of self-satisfaction. Its intrinsic impulse is self-giving, total and unreserved. True love is entirely motiveless; it loves for love's sake alone without any demand or expectation of a return. It does not bargain or claim anything; it simply gives itself with total abandon. That is why its effect is to liberate us from the narrow confines of the ego, to widen and enlarge the consciousness, to bring a great surge of light and joy and elation in life. Therefore one who aspires to find true love must turn to the Divine, for it is only in the personal relation with the Divine that love in its purity can be found.

Needless to say that Truth is one, and that the Divine is the only Truth, though the ways and lines of its manifestation are many. One can serve the Truth in the field of spirituality as well as in the field of science and of arts, and in all spheres of practical life as also in their endless divisions, subdivisions and branches. And through all these we shall invariably arrive at the same goal.

One can serve the Mother and be an instrument for her work by one's sincere will and endeavour to grow more and more in consciousness and knowledge. One can serve Her also by offering one's material wealth and money to the Divine, to the cause of the Truth. In fact every event and circumstance of life can be made an occasion to serve the Truth, and to express and realise It.

In order to serve the Mother we must try to be her faithful and docile instruments for the victorious manifestation of the Truth in every strand of our terrestrial existence. For this it is essential for us to develop the capacity to discriminate between what is Truth and what is falsehood, between the Divine and the undivine. We should try to be conscious of the forces which are at work behind the surface. In general, all that helps to bring us closer to the Divine—to its light and joy, peace and presence, harmony and beauty—is moved by the impulses of Truth; in the same way, all that lowers our consciousness and arrests our inner progress and draws us away from the Divine towards ignorance and obscurity springs direct from falsehood. The Mother says, "If we allow a falsehood, however small, to express itself through our mouth or our pen, how can we hope to become perfect messengers of Truth? A perfect servant of Truth should abstain even from the slightest inexactitude, exaggeration or deformation."¹

"The Truth we seek," says the Mother, "is made up of four major aspects:

¹ *Words of the Mother* (1949 edition), p. 222

Love, Knowledge, Power and Beauty.”¹ The psychic being serves as an instrument of true and Divine Love, the mind in the same way should try to serve as an instrument for expressing the true Knowledge, the vital likewise should be instrumental in manifesting the Power and Strength of the Spirit, whereas the physical should serve in expressing the harmonious Beauty of the secret Divinity. To be a perfect instrument of the Mother we must serve her by all these four parts of our being.

Sri Aurobindo says, “The secret of success in Yoga is to regard it not as one of the aims to be pursued in life, but as the whole of life.”² He also says, “It is not possible to enter utterly into the spiritual truth of the Eternal and Infinite if we have not the faith and courage to trust ourselves into the hands of the Lord of all things and the Friend of all creatures and leave utterly behind us our mental limits and measures. At one moment we must plunge without hesitation, reserve or fear or scruple into the ocean of the free, the infinite, the Absolute.”³

This is true surrender which is the greatest secret of Sadhana. Therefore the best way to be a true instrument of the Mother’s Great Work is to surrender to Her sincerely, totally, unreservedly and absolutely.

¹ *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed), Vol 12, p 8

² *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Cent Ed, Vol 20), p 65

³ *Ibid*, p 197