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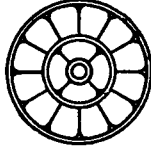
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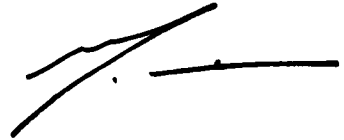


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLVI

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

<i>The Mother</i>	
LIGHTS	... 531
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
VISION OF THE FUTURE SOCIETY (COMPILED BY GOPAL BHATTACHARJEE)	... 538
<i>K. D. Sethna</i>	
AN OLD CORRESPONDENCE ON SRI AUROBINDO WITH K. M. MUNSHI	... 545
<i>Dinkar Palande</i>	
DID YOU KNOW? (Poem)	... 557
<i>Jaya Devi</i>	
AT THE FEET OF SRI AUROBINDO	... 558
<i>Sitangshu Chakraborty</i>	
ZEAL FOR THE LORD (Poem)	... 563
<i>Nirodbaran</i>	
TALK ON CHAMPAKLAL	... 564
SOME EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF "AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL" A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION	... 567
<i>Arindam Basu</i>	
AN HOUR AND A HALF WITH C. G. JUNG	... 570
<i>Samar Basu</i>	
AND SO THIS HAPPENS	... 574
<i>Suresh Hindocha</i>	
THE ONE WHO FEEDS THE SPARROWS	... 579
<i>Shyam Kumari</i>	
LET ME NOT OFFEND THEE (Poem)	... 584
<i>Wilfried</i>	
NEW AGE NEWS: AUROVILLE ANNIVERSARY	... 585
<i>R. Y. Deshpande</i>	
THE VISION AND WORK OF SRI AUROBINDO A REVIEW-ARTICLE	... 587

CONTENTS

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Nilima Das

*Review of SRI AUROBINDO IN BARODA, Compiled and Edited
by ROSHAN AND APURVA*

... 593

Dinkar Palande

Review of GROWING WITHIN by A. S. DALAL

... 596

Shraddhavan

Review of SRI AUROBINDO CIRCLE, 49th NUMBER

... 598

P. Raja

A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

... 601

STUDENTS' SECTION

Speech by Manoj Das Gupta

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

SPECIAL SEVENTY-THIRD SEMINAR, 14.2.1993

“HOW TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MOTHER ON THE PATH
TO THE DIVINE LIFE?”

... 604

LIGHTS FROM THE MOTHER

(Here are excerpts from the correspondence of a disciple with the Mother between 1967 and 1970. The full correspondence was published in the quarterly Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education from the issue of November 1991 to that of February 1993. Our acknowledgments are due to the Bulletin).

Something in my being rushes towards You and wants to remain at Your feet. This movement occurs repeatedly, almost spontaneously, without emotion. Is there a significance?

It is your psychic being, the terrestrial individualisation of your soul, which wants to realise the divine life during its human life.

28 January 1967

When I concentrate on You in my heart, sometimes Your image disappears and I see only a Light. This transition takes place instantaneously, but very smoothly. I have begun to love this Light. Its colour is white but sometimes it has a blue tinge. What do the two colours signify?

The white is integrality, totality. It is the light of the Mahashakti. When it is tinged with blue, it indicates Sri Aurobindo's presence.

9 February 1967

Since yesterday morning the lower vital has been raising its evil head and I am trying to reject its movements. I pray to You to enable me to act radically and without pity.

The direct struggle is sometimes difficult. But to let the impulsion subside by concentrating all one's energies in a psychic aspiration is a very effective method.

1 July 1967

Instead of struggling against my impurities I would like to shake them off like dust or burn them in the flame of Agni.

That is good.

But the most powerful remedy is to open more and more completely to the Divine Love, which is changed in our consciousness into love FOR the Divine; its very presence consumes all impurities.

19 August 1967

May I know how it is that of all the gods, it is Ganesh whose statue stands on Your table?

Because Ganesh is a friend who for twelve consecutive years gave me very concrete proofs of his friendship.

I will tell you the story some day when there is time.

29 August 1967

This afternoon I forgot one thing. The day before yesterday I spontaneously prayed to You to destroy all that is hostile in me, as Durga kills the Asuras.

Durga does not kill the Asuras; she controls them and makes it impossible for them to destroy.

In essence, all is the Supreme Lord and has to return to the Supreme Lord for an ultimate transformation.

Death is only an expedient—surrender is the victory.

11 October 1967

I await the day when my ignorant “I” will be changed by You into “That”.

“That” is at the very bottom of the “I”. Dig deep and you will find Him.

16 October 1967

One morning when I was reading these words of Yours, “And my body smiles at Thee with happiness as before my soul smiled at Thee!”, I saw a window opening upon a high and beautiful vista. But this horizon is very far from me!

It will come.

You must not forget how many years this body has lived. And now what it has achieved is contagious, and it passes its experience on to others according to their receptivity.

16 January 1968

As a trial we have written to the Government of India to register the Ashram as the copyright owner of one of Sri Aurobindo’s works. Now I am filling out the form for the Mother’s “Conversations”. The form asks for the author’s nationality. What nationality can I put? French?

Do not fill out the form for my book or books. I do not claim any rights of authorship and I refuse to answer the questions they ask.

It is true that this body was born in Paris and that its soul has declared that it is Indian, but I belong to no nation in particular. And as these administrations cannot understand this, I refuse to deal with them.

14 February 1968

Now I can see the possibility of having my whole being ruled by You, by Your Love. Would Mother hasten its accomplishment?

All is going well—as fast as it can—for the being is multiple and the different parts have a sort of periodicity in their action, and we have to wait for each part's turn to come, so that nothing is neglected.

7 March 1968

I wanted to offer You something nice, but I find only my weaknesses and imperfections.

That is the best offering, because it brings about a progress for the entire earth.

13 May 1968

Now I can conceive that the Divine is all and everywhere, but I still do not have the experience.

Because He is not on the surface and the appearance of things is false.

But if you concentrate in the psychic, you will at once feel that He is there, everywhere, luminous, radiant, vibrant with strength and love, and that without Him nothing could exist.

30 May 1968

What must I do to walk on the path without stumbling?

Fear nothing.

22 June 1968

What is the best attitude to have when I come to You?

To be happy.

25 July 1968

The aspiration of this morning:

Let me do nothing to delay the manifestation for which Sri Aurobindo sacrificed his body.

Yes, his work is in the process of being fulfilled inevitably; it is our own participation in it that we can make more and more perfect if we know how to avoid obstructing the Grace.

9 December 1968

Without being able to feel Your Presence constantly, O Divine Mother, life is no longer joyous. But also something protects it from becoming sad.

This is because the Presence is *constant* whether or not it is felt, and its protection is constant and effective even when it is not perceived.

15 December 1968

Mother has said, "In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, the transformation of the body is indispensable in so far as it can be done." Are there limits to the transformation of the body?

For the moment, yes. But in time, no. I am convinced that in two hundred years, for example, the physical body could be infinitely superior to what it is now—luminous, plastic, enduring, harmonious...

And our effort of today will have made it possible.

2 January 1969

With progress in the Yoga of the body, will there be change in the material environment?

A greater harmony will most certainly be manifested in the material world, in the same way as the earth's appearance has greatly changed with the advent of the human species.

4 January 1969

I don't notice any progress towards seeing the Divine everywhere and in everything.

According to the experience of this body which is here called Mother, it is first necessary to realise union with the supreme and transcendent Divine, and then one can find the same Divine in everything, but covered over with a more or less thick veil.

8 January 1969

A confession: I have not yet been able to receive from You the complete realisation of the Divine in myself.

Yes, I know this, and I am not surprised either.

Your mind is strong and well organised; it is, so to say, "the head of the house". It is very active and has a habit of directing everything. But to have the realisation of the Inner Divine, the mind has to keep quiet and remain still—at least for a time.

It will come.

10 January 1969

I hope that some day my mind will open upwards and that if necessary Mother will make a hole in it.

No hole is necessary. All that is needed is a silent aspiration and a receptivity turned upwards.

12 January 1969

A few hours after writing my last letter I opened Prayers and Meditations and the first sentence I saw was this:

“O Lord, deliver me from the mental influences that weigh upon me, so that, completely free, I may soar towards Thee.”

This is a very good response to your aspiration, and it shows you the process to follow.

14 January 1969

It seems to me, Mother, that if I can aspire to the Divine for the Divine Himself, the way could be shorter.

To aspire to the Divine for the Divine Himself, without any personal aim, is surely the best and shortest way—and the surest means of getting rid of the ego.

Blessings

16 January 1969

I have often seen Mother like a column of white light. This month there are streaks of gold

In fact, since the first of January a new form of Consciousness* has manifested upon earth and one of its characteristics is a golden luminosity; no doubt it is this that you see.

18 January 1969

Is it not the mind that prevents me from surrendering the responsibility for myself?

It is not the mind in its capacity of understanding and thinking. It is the ego (mental, vital and physical) that insists on keeping the responsibility for its life so that this life may conform to its egoistic tastes.

1 February 1969

* Elsewhere the Mother refers to this Consciousness as the superman consciousness or simply the new consciousness

In work also, Mother, instead of following the mind, I would like to be You faithful and simple servitor.

That is good.

To begin with, when you have a decision to make, instead of listening to the mental reasons for and against it, keep silent for a short time, concentrated in the depths of your heart, and wait for the indication that will come to you from there.

Persist in doing this even if you do not succeed at once, and you will definitely receive a sure indication in one form or another. The precision increases with the persistence.

3 February 1969

When Your Presence becomes concrete, O Divine Mother, existence becomes completely different!

This should become a constant fact, because the presence is constant.

5 February 1969

Doesn't irritation come from the ego, even when it is justified by the mind?

Most certainly. In fact the justification of the mind is very far from being a guarantee of truth.

Irritation is always the sign of a lack of understanding and narrowness of spirit, both of which are incompatible with the presence of the Supreme Consciousness.

7 February 1969

Your Love, O Mother, does not diminish at all when I oppose You with all my obscurity. I have had clear experiences of it.

This is because it is not a personal love, but the divine love, which is constant, invariable, above every circumstance and always at the height of its activity. The divine love is limitless and unfluctuating. In fact, in each one it is limited only by the incapacity to receive it.

9 February 1969

Man often says that he is searching for the Divine but the Divine is hiding himself. As for me, I find that it is the Divine who is searching for me and I who am hiding myself.

Yes, this is *absolutely true*. Once one has opened oneself and found the Divine,

one sees that He is always present, always active, marvellous in His mercy and solicitude, and that it was our own stupidity which prevented us from seeing it.

11 February 1969

The time I spend without the true consciousness no longer seems to be a life to me.

Truly it is not a life, it is hardly even a semblance of life, and most often a false semblance. But this can be eliminated from the being and be replaced by the constant consciousness of the Presence.

13 February 1969

In 1917 Mother spoke of a “dizzy rapidity along the road of Transformation” Here I am, a big laggard in comparison. What can my destiny be?

Why do you worry about it? Isn't the Grace there to remedy all the delays?

The only thing needed is sincerity—and it is there.

15 February 1969

Instead of merely understanding Mother's words, I want to receive what they contain and what is behind them.

That is possible when the mind knows how to remain quiet, turning in an attentive silence towards the Higher Consciousness.

19 February 1969

*In the Bulletin Mother has spoken of a body without a mind and vital. * Does this mean that the body has its own means of living, something different from what is called the vital force or Prana?*

It is a rather special case.

In all well-developed beings the body has a mind and vital, more or less rudimentary, which are particular to it and can be fully developed.

In this case there is also, and above all, a fully developed psychic which governs the whole house and directs all its actions. In addition, there is the superman consciousness which has manifested since the beginning of this year; this consciousness serves as a mentor to the body, which is learning from it things that the mind itself did not know.

3 March 1969

(To be continued)

* The Mother was speaking of Herself

SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION OF THE FUTURE SOCIETY

PASSAGES COMPILED BY GOPAL BHATTACHARJEE

(Continued from the issue of July 1993)

PART III (*Contd.*)

After the Material Formula the Vital

AFTER the material formula which governed the greater part of the nineteenth century had burdened man with the heaviest servitude to the machinery of the outer material life that he has ever yet been called upon to bear, the first attempt to break through, to get to the living reality in things and away from the mechanical idea of life and living and society, landed us in that surface vitalism which had already begun to govern thought before the two formulas inextricably locked together lit up and flung themselves on the lurid pyre of the World War.

The vital élan brought us no deliverance, but only used the machinery already created with a more feverish insistence, a vehement attempt to live more rapidly, more intensely, an inordinate will to act and to succeed, to enlarge the mere force of living, to pile up a gigantic efficiency of life.

It is only when these groping beginnings have found that for which they are seeking, that it can be successfully applied to the remoulding of the life of man. Till then nothing better is likely to be achieved than an inner preparation and, for the rest, radical or revolutionary experiments of a doubtful kind with the details of the vast and cumbrous machinery under which life now groans and labours.

A subjective age may stop very far short of spirituality; for the subjective turn is only a first condition, not the thing itself, not the end of the matter.

Search for Spirituality may Follow the Order of Upanishad

The search for the Reality, the true self of man, may very easily follow out the natural order described by the Upanishad in the profound apologue of the seekings of Bhṛigu, son of Varuna.

For first the seeker found the ultimate reality to be Matter and the physical, the material being, the external man our only self and spirit.

Next he fixed on Life as the Reality and the vital being as the self and spirit; in the third essay on Mind and the mental being....

Only afterwards could he get beyond the superficial subjective through the supramental Truth-Consciousness to the eternal, the blissful, the ever creative Reality of which these are the sheaths.

But humanity may not be as persistent or as plastic as the son of Varuna, the search may stop short anywhere. Only if it is intended that he shall now at last arrive and discover, will the Spirit break each insufficient formula as soon as it has shaped itself and compel the thought of man to press forward to a larger discovery and in the end to the largest and most luminous of all. Something of the kind has been happening but only in a very external way and on the surface.

It could not have been otherwise even if this vitalism had been less superficial and external, more truly subjective. To live, to act, to grow, to increase the vital force, to understand, utilise and fulfil the intuitive impulse of life are not things evil in themselves: rather they are excellent things, if rightly followed and rightly used, that is to say, if they are directed to something beyond the mere vitalistic impulse and are governed by that within which is higher than life.

The Life-power

The Life-power is an instrument, not an aim; it is in the upward scale the first great subjective supraphysical instrument of the Spirit and the base of all action and endeavour.

But a Life-power that sees nothing beyond itself, nothing to be served except its own organised demands and impulses, will be very soon like the force of steam driving an engine without the driver or an engine in which the locomotive force has made the driver its servant and not its controller.

It can only add the uncontrollable impetus of a high-crested or broad-based Titanism, or it may be even a nether flaming demonism, to the natural forces of the material world with the intellect as its servant, an impetus of measureless unrelenting creation, appropriation, expansion which will end in something violent, huge and "colossal", foredoomed in its very nature to excess and ruin, because light is not in it nor the soul's truth nor the sanction of the gods and their calm eternal will and knowledge.

Beyond Subjectivism

But beyond the subjectivism of the vital self there is the possibility of a mental and even a psychic subjectivism which would at first perhaps, leaning upon the already realised idea of the soul as Life in action but correcting it, appear as a highly mentalised pragmatism, but might afterwards rise to the higher idea of man as a soul that develops itself individually and collectively in the life and body through the play of an ever-expanding mental existence.

This greater idea would realise that the elevation of the human existence will come not through material efficiency alone or the complex play of his vital and dynamic powers mastering through the aid of the intellect the energies of

physical Nature for the satisfaction of the Life-instincts, which can only be an intensification of his present mode of existence, but through the greatness of his mental and psychic being and a discovery bringing forward an organisation of his vast subliminal nature and its forces.

It would see in life an opportunity for the joy and power of knowledge, for the joy and power of beauty, for the joy and power of the human will mastering not only physical Nature, but vital and mental Nature.

It might discover her secret yet undreamed-of mind-powers and life-powers and use them for a freer liberation of man from the limitations of his shackled bodily life.

It might arrive at new psychic relations, a more sovereign power of the idea to realise itself in the act, inner means of overcoming obstacles of distance and division which would cast into insignificance even the last miraculous achievements of material Science.

A development of this kind is far enough away from the dreams of the mass of men, but there are certain pale hints and presages of such a possibility and ideas which lead to it are already held by a great number who are perhaps in this respect the yet unrecognised vanguard of humanity.

It is not impossible that behind the confused morning voices of the hour a light of this kind, still below the horizon, may be waiting to ascend with its splendours.

Towards a Profound Revolution

Such a turn of human thought, effort, ideas of life, if it took hold of the communal mind, would evidently lead to a profound revolution throughout the whole range of human existence.

It would give it from the first a new tone and atmosphere, a loftier spirit, wider horizons, a greater aim.

It might easily develop a Science which would bring the powers of the physical world into a real and not only a contingent and mechanical subjection and open perhaps the doors of other worlds.

It might develop an achievement of Art and Beauty which would make the greatness of the past a comparatively little thing and would save the world from the astonishingly callous reign of utilitarian ugliness that even now afflicts it.

It would open up a closer and freer interchange between human minds and, it may well be hoped, a kindlier interchange between human hearts and lives.

Nor need its achievements stop here, but might proceed to greater things of which these would be only the beginnings.

This mental and psychic subjectivism would have its dangers, greater dangers even than those that attend a vitalistic subjectivism, because its powers of action also would be greater, but it would have what vitalistic subjectivism has

not and cannot easily have, the chance of a detecting discernment, strong safeguards and a powerful liberating light.

Matter to Spirit. Necessary Stage of Human Development

Moving with difficulty upward from Matter to Spirit, this is perhaps a necessary stage of man's development.

This was one principal reason of the failure of past attempts to spiritualise mankind, that endeavoured to spiritualise at once the material man by a sort of rapid miracle, and though that can be done, the miracle is not likely to be of an enduring character if it overleaps the stages of his ascent and leaves the intervening levels untrodden and therefore unmastered.

The endeavour may succeed with individuals,—Indian thought would say with those who have made themselves ready in a past existence,—but it must fail with the mass.

When it passes beyond the few, the forceful miracle of the Spirit flags; unable to transform by inner force, the new religion tries to save by machinery, is entangled in the mechanical turning of its own instruments, loses the spirit and perishes quickly or decays slowly.

That is the fate which overtakes all attempts of the vitalistic, the intellectual and mental, the spiritual endeavour to deal with material man through his physical mind chiefly or alone; the endeavour is overpowered by the machinery it creates and becomes the slave and victim of the machine.

That is the revenge which our material Nature, herself mechanical, takes upon all such violent endeavours; she waits to master them by their concessions to her own law.

If mankind is to be spiritualised, it must first in the mass cease to be the material or the vital man and become the psychic and the true mental being.

It may be questioned whether such a mass progress or conversion is possible; but if it is not, then the spiritualisation of mankind as a whole is a chimera.

A Sign of Great Promise

From this point of view it is an excellent thing, a sign of great promise, that the wheel of civilisation has been following its past and present curve upward from a solid physical knowledge through a successive sounding of higher and higher powers that mediate between Matter and Spirit.

The human intellect in modern times has been first drawn to exhaust the possibilities of materialism by an immense dealing with life and the world upon the basis of Matter as the sole reality, Matter as the Eternal, Matter as the Brahman, *annam brahma*.

Afterwards it had begun to turn towards the conception of existence as the large pulsation of a great evolving Life, the creator of Matter, which would have enabled it to deal with our existence on the basis of Life as the original reality, Life as the great Eternal, *prāṇo brahma*.

And already it has in germ, in preparation a third conception, the discovery of a great self-expressing and self-finding inner Mind other than our surface mentality as a master-power of existence, that should lead towards a rich attempt to deal with our possibilities and our ways of living on the basis of Mind as the original reality, the great Eternal, *mano brahma*.

It will also be a sign of promise if these conceptions succeeded each other with rapidity, with a large but swift evocation of the possibilities of each level; for that would show that there is a readiness in our subconscious Nature and that we need not linger in each stage for centuries.

Adventure of Subjective Age of Mankind

But still a subjective age of mankind must be an adventure full of perils and uncertainties as are all great adventures of the race.

It may wander long before it finds itself or may not find itself at all and swing back to a new repetition of the cycle.

True Secret

The true secret can only be discovered if in the third stage, in an age of mental subjectivism, the idea becomes strong of the Mind itself as no more than a secondary power of the Spirit's working and of the Spirit as the great Eternal, the original and, in spite of the many terms in which it is both expressed and hidden, the sole reality, *ayam ātmā brahma*.

Then only will the real, the decisive endeavour begin and life and the world be studied, known, dealt with in all directions as the self-finding and self-expression of the Spirit.

Then only will a spiritual age of mankind be possible....

It is enough to say that a spiritual human society would start from and try to realise three essential truths of existence which all Nature seems to be an attempt to hide by their opposites and which therefore are as yet for the mass of mankind only words and dreams, God, freedom, unity.

Three things which are one, for you cannot realise freedom and unity unless you realise God, you cannot possess freedom and unity unless you possess God, possess at once your highest self and the self of all creatures.

The freedom and unity which otherwise go by that name, are simply attempts of our subjection and our division to get away from themselves by shutting their eyes while they turn somersaults around their own centre.

When man is able to see God and to possess him, then he will know real freedom and arrive at real unity, never otherwise.

And God is only waiting to be known, while man seeks for him everywhere and creates images of the Divine, but all the while truly finds, effectively erects and worships images only of his own mind-ego and life-ego.

When this ego pivot is abandoned and this ego-hunt ceases, then man gets his first real chance of achieving spirituality in his inner and outer life. It will not be enough but it will be a commencement, a true gate and not a blind entrance.

How Spiritualised Society would Live

A spiritualised society would live like its spiritual individuals, not in the ego, but in the spirit, not as the collective ego, but as the collective soul.

This freedom from the egoistic standpoint would be its first and most prominent characteristic.

But the elimination of egoism would not be brought about, as it is now proposed to bring it about, by persuading or forcing the individual to immolate his personal will and aspirations and his precious and hard-won individuality to the collective will, aims and egoism of the society, driving him like a victim of ancient sacrifice to slay his soul on the altar of that huge and shapeless idol.

For that would be only the sacrifice of the smaller to the larger egoism, larger only in bulk, not necessarily greater in quality or wider or nobler, since a collective egoism, result of the united egoisms of all, is as little a god to be worshipped, as flawed and often an uglier and more barbarous fetish than the egoism of the individual.

What the spiritual man seeks is to find by the loss of the ego the self which is one in all and perfect and complete in each and by living in that to grow into the image of its perfection,—individually, be it noted, though with an all-embracing universality of his nature and its conscious circumference....

It is this kingdom of God within, the result of the finding of God not in a distant heaven but within ourselves, of which the state of society in an age of the Truth, the spiritual age, would be the result and the external figure....

The Spiritual Age

The Spiritual age will be ready to set in when the common mind of man begins to be alive to these truths and to be moved or desire to be moved by this triple or triune Spirit.

That will mean the turning of the cycle of social development on a new upward line towards its goal.

For having set out...with a symbolic age, an age in which man felt a great Reality behind all life which he sought through symbols, it will reach an age in

which it will begin to live in that Reality, not through the symbol, not by the power of the type or of the convention or of the individual reason and intellectual will, but in our own highest nature which will be the nature of that reality fulfilled in the conditions—not necessarily the same as now—of terrestrial existence.

This is what the religions have seen with a more or less adequate intuition, but most often as in a glass darkly, that which they called the kingdom of God on earth,—his kingdom within in men's spirit and therefore, for the one is the material result of the effectivity of the other, his kingdom without in the life of the peoples.

(The Human Cycle, Vol. 15 of Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, pp 234-245)

(Concluded)

AN OLD CORRESPONDENCE ON SRI AUROBINDO BETWEEN K.M. MUNSHI AND K.D. SETHNA

Hamilton Villa, Nepean Sea Road, Bombay
7-9-51

Dear Mr. Munshi,

Thanks for sending me your speech on Sri Aurobindo. It is a good tribute, with genuine feeling and admiration behind it, and has some memorable phrases.

In one or two places there seems to have been a little hurry and therefore some carelessness. What you say about his poetry is perfectly true and well put, but by some mistake the quotations you have made are not from Sri Aurobindo's work but from mine! I feel very flattered by the unconscious compliment you have paid me.

I can't agree that even for a student of philosophy the philosophic works of Sri Aurobindo are too difficult. Compared to Kant, for instance, he is smooth sailing. It is his comprehensiveness and integrality that challenge the reader accustomed to the intense but one-sided philosophical treatment that our own thinkers have given to basic problems. Yet, with a grounding in the Upanishads and the Gita, one should be able to follow Sri Aurobindo in his multifarious original extensions of spiritual thought. The trouble is, I believe, that students of philosophy in India lack somewhat in suppleness of mind and are also under the obsession of India's own great spiritual past which they consider to be unsurpassable even by India's own spiritual present and future. We should be ashamed that while Stanford and Cornell Universities in America have made Sri Aurobindo a graduate and post-graduate course the country of his birth can see little further than Radhakrishnan and Bhattacharya who for all their Indian thinking are still philosophers in the Western sense and do not project their thought-systems from the illumined harmony of the God-realised soul.

You say in connection with India's fight for freedom: "He prophesied that after him will come someone who will achieve what he could not." I suppose you have Gandhiji in mind. But I don't think Sri Aurobindo exactly said that he himself could not have achieved India's independence. He did what was creatively possible in the short period he allowed himself and he left politics not because of any sense of inability but because of a greater and deeper call. Without answering that call he could not have even really done for India's independence what was necessary. Political independence without a spiritual new life ready to be drawn upon would hardly be freedom in the genuine Indian sense. Besides, the spiritual power that Sri Aurobindo won was actually the hidden sustaining energy of the nationalist movement; because it was occult the outer eye could not appreciate it but a flash of its presence is given even to this

eye by the strange fact that our Independence Day falls not on Gandhiji's or Nehru's or Patel's or even Tilak's birthday but on Sri Aurobindo's.

I believe it was Sri Aurobindo's idea that the two men who had the authentic creative and coherent and consistent power to lead India to political independence were Tilak and, after him, Chitta Ranjan Das. With their passing, politics in India lacked the full dynamic for quick and complete results. There were brilliant spurts and a host of concurrent and sometimes colliding movements but not the massive one-pointed vitality. Of course, all sincere and forceful workers helped the cause of freedom but it cannot be said that any one man had the gift to achieve the ultimate result. For one thing, none had the Tilakian and Dasian combination of fundamental vision with tact of the moment and there were a whole series of blunders which hindered rather than helped our cause. We have somehow stumbled into independence and one proof of our lack of authentic sight or constructiveness is that we achieved a fissured independence and brought to birth with it two monsters on either side of us.

One last point. Your distinction between a Yogi and an Avatar does not go to the root of the matter. You say: "A Yogi is one who attempts an ascent to Divine Consciousness. An Avatar is one who is born in Divine Consciousness." An Avatar is surely born and not made, in the sense that anybody and everybody can't be an Avatar, but whether the Divine Consciousness shows itself openly through the Avatar to the world from the very beginning depends on the purpose with which one or another birth of the Avatar takes place. No Avatar before Rama showed specifically the Divine Consciousness either from birth or during life. Even Rama, whatever he may have inwardly known himself to be, never quite showed the Divine Consciousness; he was there to establish the dharma of the ethical man and acted out a moral ideal in a manner that suggested to everyone the superhuman. He never asked people to transcend the human consciousness and unite with the Divine. The Divine Consciousness as such formed no direct part of what Rama exemplified or sought to manifest. And yet he was undeniably an Avatar. Secondly, it is not necessary that an Avatar, when his business is to manifest the Divine Consciousness as such, should show it from the very start. Even Krishna, as the Chandogya Upanishad says, became a disciple of Rishi Ghora (if I don't mistake the name) before growing aware of the Divine Consciousness in full: the awareness came almost at a touch, but the incident of discipleship is significant. Then take Chaitanya. The Krishna-being manifested here in an intensely recognisable way—but intermittently, as it were. In certain periods Chaitanya was a supreme Bhakta and nothing more, and he was certainly not born in Divine Consciousness. I don't argue that no Avatar was or could be born like that, but no surface tests can be applied. Again, an Avatar too has an instrumental Nature-being like any of us and develops a series of births; if he did not, he would be just a miraculous freak and hold no lesson or hope for evolving earth. An Avatar is especially a leader and exemplar of the evolution, and for this he need not be *born* in Divine Consciousness in any overt

way; to be an exemplar as well as a leader he may have to look quite human for a long time, or at intervals, as happened with Chaitanya. The Avatar's function is to come and put forth a great power at critical and crucial points of history—and particularly when a transition from one stage to another is to be made. That is why we have in the traditional Hindu account, a fish Avatar, an amphibious tortoise Avatar, a land-animal boar Avatar, a lion-man Avatar, a dwarf-man Avatar, a rajasic human Avatar (Parashurama), then a sattwic human Avatar (Rama) and then a guna-transcending superhuman “global” Overmind Avatar (Krishna). If we count Buddha as an Avatar too, he would represent on earth the clean break bypassing the Overmind into the Transcendent, but only the Transcendent's negative aspect and not Its positive Truth-Consciousness integral and creative and dynamic. After him, in between, there could be an Avatar (Chaitanya) intensely establishing in the human emotional-vital the possibility of an absolute love and surrender which might be the basis for calling down and receiving the power from above of a divine life. That Truth-Consciousness above the Overmind would be what the next Avatar would exemplify. And when he exemplifies it he would take into himself the whole human being and nature, represent all the sides and tendencies of evolving man, assume even the agnostic aspect of the modern mind and show ultimately how all Nature is to be taken into Supernature and how by the latter's descent an integral transformation is to be accomplished in terms of the Truth-Consciousness. The final Avatar who would bring God to earth and establish Him here was called Kalki by Hindu tradition and to identify Kalki we have to look for a figure whose goal is integral earth-transformation with the force of the supreme dynamic divinity of a Supermind which manifests the next stage after the Overmind by compassing not only the Transcendent's formlessness and absolute peace but also Its sovereign creativity of form and Its

Force one with unimaginable rest.

Can you find anyone who does these things better and more clearly than Sri Aurobindo? Do you think any mere Yogi can come to effect so revolutionarily evolutionary a change on earth as the ascent to and descent of the Supermind—and that too for the collectivity and not only for a few individuals?

Of course, most disciples of every spiritual figure in India claim their master to be an Avatar. But I am not proposing an apotheosis of Sri Aurobindo on a mere impulse of bhakti. I am presenting to you in outline a consistent vision of Avatarhood and its functions and methods and pointing out how logically and inevitably Sri Aurobindo fits into the scheme.

Appreciating once more the fine spirit behind your speech,
I remain,

Yours sincerely,
K.D. Sethna

No. C 187/51/PAM
1, Queen Victoria Road, New Delhi.
The 16th September 1951

My dear Sethna,

Your letter dated the 7th September to hand.

I am glad you like my tribute to Sri Aurobindo. Most of my speeches have to be prepared in a hurry and with the scanty materials at my disposal for the moment.

I understand *Advent* is going to publish it. Perhaps you might also like to do it; if you do, substitute any good quotations from Sri Aurobindo rather than from yourself.

If Kant is difficult, Sri Aurobindo may be difficult too. I take the normal philosophical student as one who is able to understand John Stuart Mill or Radhakrishnan easily, but 'The Life Divine' is rather difficult to follow even for such a student unless he has a grounding not merely of the Upanishads and the Gita but of some of the easier works of Sri Aurobindo.

I do realize that Sri Aurobindo's works ought to be prescribed in our University courses. Our University Professors of Philosophy, however, following western Professors, are intellectuals; they are not creative artists of higher life, as those interested in philosophy and yoga should be. Still we must not forget that quite a large number of intellectuals in our country have begun to appreciate the position of Sri Aurobindo as the prophet of Indian renaissance and the architect of an advanced philosophy and yoga.

As regards your next point—there I am again speaking from memory—Sri Aurobindo did say somewhere in the beginning of the century that someone will come who will achieve the purpose for which he was working. I have a distinct recollection of it and if I get hold of that passage, I will let you have it. A thing 'creatively possible' is different from 'actually realized'. Therefore, I cannot over-emphasize the services of Sri Aurobindo in disregard of those of Gandhiji.

You refer to the coincidence of 15th August. Does Sri Aurobindo need an adventitious importance of accidental coincidence of dates? You are a devotee and naturally prefer to surround him with a supernatural halo, but in doing so perhaps you convert the prophet of the new age into the head of a mystic sect.

I read your theory of Avatara with great interest. I will not try to combat it, for it expresses again the faith of a devotee. I can only give you my views on the matter. "Avatara" is the descent of God on earth in human form. The aspirant can only become first an aspirant, then a *Siddha* or *Mukta* or to use the language of Gita a *Brahma Bhuta*; and later on, can become merged in God, "enter Me". This is the basic idea of Aryan culture as developed in India. God descends on earth as a man and a man can merge himself into Him by complete surrender. This is the line of demarcation between Aryan and Semitic cultures. The latter does not envisage the descent of God on earth but only of his son or prophet.

The Aryan idea is at the root of integration of personality differently called 'Samsiddhi' or self-realization by Gita, 'Mukti' or freedom by Upanishads, 'Nirvana' or liberation by Buddhism and 'Kaivalya' or integration by Yoga and Jainism.

With our national weakness for easy apotheosis, we have been multiplying Avataras. Even Swami Narayana (early XIX century) claimed to be Sri Krishna come again and is worshipped as an Avatara by his sect. The other day a Sadhu came to me and, throughout a forty-minute conversation, referred to himself as Bhagwan. The basic concept of Avatara, however, is that he is very much more than a *Brahma Bhuta*, *Siddha* or *Mukta*. The line of demarcation appears to me to be at the point which separates an elaborate effort at self-discipline and the sudden unveiling of Divine Consciousness, leaving no trace of human weakness to conquer.

Where then, you will naturally ask me, do I place Sri Aurobindo? There is first Aurobindo the great speculative thinker, the intellect who postulated the mind; then the Over-mind; and then the Super-mind. The Siddha transcends his *samsiddhi*; becomes completely absorbed in God or call it Divine Consciousness, and then brings it down not only in himself but through himself to mind and matter in order to elevate them. To put it concretely—I may be wrong—Arjuna surrenders himself to Sri Krishna and becomes "God-minded", raises himself higher and merges into Vasudev-hood; (then comes the Aurobindonian thought) Vasudev-hood descends into Arjuna and through him uplifts the universe.

This is a sweeping advance on self-realization but this is speculative thought not individual evolution.

As regards the latter, Sri Aurobindo's life was a tremendous effort up to say 1928 for realizing the Divine. Assuming he reached 'Vasudev-hood' in 1928, and brought it down as you believe it, it is a question of faith. But this effort is scarcely consistent with the concept of Avatara. It may be stealing the thunders of Jove; but it is not the descent of Jove himself. But I am afraid I have no right to discuss this matter.

Whether he reached a stage of Siddhi or Vasudev-hood, whether he became a transmitting agency of God or was merged in Him, are matters beyond the reach of the ordinary mind. They are more within the sphere of faith. As Buddha says about God—

Om Amitaya! Measure not with words the immeasurable;
Nor sink the string of thought into the fathomless;
Who asks doth err: Who answers errs.
Say naught.

To me Sri Aurobindo has been a prophet, both of Indian nationalism and Indian renaissance; one who attained *samsiddhi* and transcended human limita-

tions of fear, attachment and wrath and gave a fresh validity to the destiny of man as Indian culture envisaged it. That is enough for me.

As I am too near him and I am not gifted with the higher faith of a devotee which you possess, perhaps we are destined not to agree.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
K.M. Munshi

Hamilton Villa, Nepean Sea Road, Bombay
19.9.51

My dear Munshi,

It was a pleasure to get your letter. Two or three points mentioned by you call for a short comment. I hope you'll forgive a little forthrightness on my part.

You think that to be a devotee is to overrate a man's greatness. But every devotee is not a brainless emotionalist seeing in a super-rosy light everything connected with the object of devotion. Besides, devotion is of various kinds; at its best it is only the opening of the deep heart-centre by which an ideal becomes dynamically operative in the emotions and in the life-impulses instead of remaining a high and dry intellectual light; it makes one's very bodily being respond to the ideal because it responds not just to a fine idea but also to its embodiment in a man, in the personality of him who gives us that ideal. Here there is nothing to unbalance the mind proper and distort the view and value of things.

On the contrary, I may say that if at times devotion runs the risk of exaggerating the truth it is yet the only power that can at its finest give one a perfect insight into the truth. Even God cannot be known truly unless he is deeply loved; love or devotion puts one *en rapport* with the inmost reality of a thing, or person, and, provided it is not the only power at work and one's consciousness is developed all round, it is the master-key to correct vision and appreciation. Besides, without it a great man is simply wasted. If Sri Aurobindo was great, what is the use of his greatness if we do not go to him as his devotees so that he may move us from the centre of us and make us his instruments? I am sure that Sri Aurobindo was on earth mainly for those who in some way or other could be his devotees, for they alone can make his mission a fruitful force on the largest scale.

Further, may I ask what is wrong with giving Sri Aurobindo "a supernatural halo"? Was he not a master of the spiritual consciousness and therefore one who has risen above Nature though never disdainful of Nature and ever wanting to transform and fulfil Nature? Without a supernatural halo he would be no Yogi at all and would be of little use in bringing about a radical change of human consciousness. He did have a supernatural halo and to recognise it cannot lead, as you fear, to a mystic sectarianism but rather to a proper appreciation of and

response to his extraordinarily wide and non-sectarian spirituality.

As regards Avatarhood I remember Sri Aurobindo saying that he didn't care a damn whether he was called an Avatar or not. He was interested in making the Supermind a permanent state of wide-awake consciousness in the embodied human and in converting every part of human nature into a form of its own divine perfection which preexists archetypally in the Supermind. He was interested also in establishing the Supermind as not only an individual consciousness but as a part of earth's collective being. Provided he did these things he never bothered whether the doing of them made people look at him as at an Avatar or as at only a *Brahma Bhuta* or *Siddha* or *Mukta*. But one saying of his is very suggestive; "I am not doing anything for myself, as I have no personal need of anything, neither of salvation (Moksha) nor supramentalisation. If I am seeking after supramentalisation, it is because it is a thing that has to be done for the earth-consciousness and if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others." It reminds me strongly of Sri Krishna's words in the Gita to the effect that, having everything, he has no need to do anything and yet he is all the time at work because that is how the universe goes on and progresses.

My view of Avatarhood is, as I have specifically stated, not a product of a muddled or fuddled devotionism. It is too systematic for that. Also, I may say that it is not my own invention. It is a paraphrase of Sri Aurobindo's own view of the process and purpose of Avatarhood as not a mere divine freak but a divine demonstration to man of how evolution is to be accomplished and human difficulties overcome and human nature divinised. Of course every Yogi cannot be an Avatar by the mere fact of his demonstrating something or other of the process of spiritual growth. But the Avatar, for all his special position, is a sort of *primus inter pares* closely connected with the evolutionary endeavour. Does not Sri Krishna speak of many lives of himself in the past and not only of a few supreme ones? This means that in many lives he played the role of a human Vibhuti and did not look like an Avatar in the conventional sense, although inwardly he was always the Supreme Divine Person. This means, to follow Sri Aurobindo's words, that in Avatarhood there is a Consciousness behind which is that of the Godhead and a frontal consciousness, human or apparently human or at any rate with all the appearances of terrestriality, which is the instrumental personality. Very naturally, therefore, there could be a phenomenon in which, instead of a withholding of the inward divinity so that only a Vibhuti manifestation is made or also what you call "a sudden unveiling of Divine Consciousness, leaving no trace of human weakness to conquer", the Avatar could keep his inward divinity back for a time and make his instrumental personality go through human-looking labours, what you call "an elaborate effort at discipline", for the sake of teaching humanity how all difficulties can be accepted and transcended.¹

¹ The phrase "no trace of human weakness to conquer" is rather ambiguous. Unless the "supramentalisation" of all our nature-parts, including the body, is done as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo, certain

Such a manifestation would be precisely in tune with the modern age, the age in which the evolutionary idea is most active and a visible practical example of a process of divinisation through an overcoming of the typical modern difficulties would be the most helpful. If you won't mind my saying so, your notion of an Avatar is too popularly "flashy", too rigid and traditional and one-sided.

But, of course, as I said before, the attaching of a certain label was something Sri Aurobindo never cared a tuppence for and the most important point is to understand Sri Aurobindo's mission and help the undeniable grandeur and immensity of it; the descent and establishment of the Supermind on earth, with the nucleus of the supramental race shining out from this dear India of ours. If we agree on this, all disagreements elsewhere can have no importance.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
K.D. Sethna

P.S. Have you seen the latest issue of *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*? It contains an early essay of Sri Aurobindo's, entitled *Vyasa: Some Characteristics* and part of his *Notes on the Mahabharata* proposing to disengage almost in its entirety the original epic of Vyasa in about 24,000 slokas from the present mass of 100,000.

Hamilton Villa, Nepean Sea Road, Bombay
3.10.51

My dear Munshi,

You must have received my letter of 19-9-51 replying to yours of 16.9.51. In it I touched upon a few points which stood out in my mind as of immediate importance. But on re-reading your letter I find that there are some other points which call for a short comment because they are based on insufficient information about Sri Aurobindo's spiritual life. As you are an admirer of Sri Aurobindo, I think you will be glad to have the correct facts.

You have written: "There is first Aurobindo the great speculative thinker, the intellect who postulated the mind; then the Over-mind; and then the Supermind." A little later, after giving what you consider to be "the Aurobindonian thought", you say: "This is a sweeping advance on self-realisation."

Now this is a capital mistake. The *Arya* in which, from 1914 to 1921, the Aurobindonian thought was first embodied in a comprehensive way was not a journal of philosophical postulation. At the end of an editorial note written by Sri Aurobindo in the *Arya* of July, 1918 he makes this quite clear. Here is the whole passage:

We had not in view at any time a review or magazine in the ordinary

fundamentals of human weakness, however subdued, are bound to be left. There never was any Avatar in the past completely supramentalised or even envisaging the supramentalisation of every nature-part

sense of the word, that is to say, a popular presentation or criticism of current information and current thought on philosophical questions. Nor was it, as in some philosophical and religious magazines in India, the restatement of an existing school or position of philosophical thought cut out in its lines and needing only to be popularised and supported. Our idea was the thinking out of a synthetic philosophy which might be a contribution to the thought of the new age that is coming upon us. We start from the idea that humanity is moving to a great change of its life which will even lead to a new life of the race,—in all countries where men think, there is now in various forms that idea and hope,—and our aim has been to search for the spiritual, religious and other truths which can enlighten and guide the race in this movement and endeavour. The spiritual experience and the general truths on which such an attempt could be based were already present to us, otherwise we should have had no right to make this endeavour at all; but the complete intellectual statement of them and their results and issues had to be found.

The concluding sentence leaves absolutely no doubt that when Sri Aurobindo wrote of all the major spiritual realisations and the special supramental realisation he was not acting the speculative philosopher; he was only putting into philosophical terms the body of a direct and concrete experience that was his already in 1914 when the *Arya* began publication.

This point being disposed of, the other point of yours—namely, that “as regards individual evolution, Sri Aurobindo’s life was a tremendous effort up to 1928 for realising the Divine”—has no meaning. On the strength of the statement I have quoted from Sri Aurobindo, the Divine had been most richly realised by the middle of 1914. I wonder what gave you the idea that right up to 1928 there was a tremendous effort only. If we examine the published facts of Sri Aurobindo’s life and draw upon his own published letters (of which 4 volumes are already out), we find the realisation of the Divine dating even much further back than 1914. At one place in the *Letters* are the words: “*Durgam pathastat* may be generally true and certainly the path of Laya or Nirvana is difficult in the extreme to most although in my case I walked into Nirvana without intending it or rather Nirvana walked casually into me not so far from the beginning of my yogic career without asking my leave.” In another place he says, in a letter meant for Aldous Huxley, that the realisations of Nirvana and, soon after, of the Ishwara and “others which followed upon them, such as that of the Self in all and all in the Self, the Divine in all and all in the Divine” presented to him “no long or obstinate difficulty.” So, long before even 1914, Sri Aurobindo was at home in God-realisation.

Turning to the booklet *Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram*, in which is given a sketch of his life based on authentic data, we read: “Sri Aurobindo began his

Yoga in 1904. Even before this he had already some spiritual experiences and that before he knew anything about Yoga or even what Yoga was. For example, a vast calm descended upon him at the moment when he stepped first on Indian soil after his long absence, in fact with his first step on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay. This calm surrounded him and remained for long months afterwards. There was also a realisation of the vacant Infinite while walking on the ridge of the Takht-i-Suleman in Kashmir, the living presence of Kali in a shrine on the banks of the Narmada, the vision of the Godhead surging up from within when in danger of a carriage accident in Baroda in the first year of his stay. But these were inner experiences coming of themselves and with a sudden unexpectedness, not part of a sadhana.”

The first great experience that was part of a sadhana was the one of Nirvana I have already spoken of. About this the booklet says: “Meditating only for three days with Lele, he (Sri Aurobindo) followed his instructions for silencing the mind and freeing it from the constant pressure of thought; he entered into an absolute and complete silence of the mind and indeed of the whole consciousness and in that silence had suddenly the enduring realisation of the indefinable Brahman, *Tat*, in which the whole universe seemed to be unreal and only That existed.” This silence remained with him ever since and when activity returned it was not broken by the necessity of any conceptual thought or personal volition. All the mental workings, speech, writing, thought, will and other kindred activities came from above the brain-mind. Sri Aurobindo had entered into what he afterwards called the overhead consciousness. And the entry was permanent.

This was in 1908—full twenty years before the date 1928 when, according to you, he was still making a tremendous effort at God-realisation. And the mention of the fact that all his speech and writing have come ever since 1908 from above the brain-mind shows how different from speculative thinking was the philosophical expression of the *Arya*. To continue quoting from the booklet: “Before coming to Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo had already realised in full two of the four great realisations on which his Yoga and his spiritual philosophy are founded. The first... in January 1908... was the realisation of the silent spaceless and timeless Brahman gained after a complete and abiding stillness of the whole consciousness and attended at first by the overwhelming feeling and perception of the total unreality of the world, though this feeling disappeared after his second realisation which was that of the cosmic consciousness and of the Divine as all beings and all that is, which happened in the Alipore Jail. To the other two realisations, that of the supreme Reality with the static and dynamic Brahman as its two aspects and that of the higher planes of consciousness leading up to the Supermind, he was already on his way in his meditations in the Alipore Jail.”

This means that by 1910—the year in which he came to Pondicherry—he could have rested on his spiritual laurels, for, in matters of God-realisation as traditionally envisaged he had nothing more to achieve. I don’t know where you

have picked up the utterly apocryphal story that up to 1928 he was still making efforts at realising the Divine. What Sri Aurobindo has made tremendous efforts for was not God-realisation. We must not mix up God-realisation with the descent of the Supermind into the whole of embodied nature, down to the very physical cells. As said in the letter for Huxley, God-realisation of the completest kind presented to Sri Aurobindo no long or obstinate difficulty. "The only real difficulty," the letter continues, "which took decades of spiritual effort to work out towards completeness was to apply the spiritual knowledge utterly to the world and to the surface psychological and outer life and to effect its transformation both on the higher levels of Nature and on the ordinary mental, vital and physical levels down to the subconsciousness and the basic Inconscience and up to the supreme Truth-consciousness or Supermind in which alone the dynamic transformation could be entirely integral and absolute."

The reason of the difficulty is stated by Sri Aurobindo in a letter to Dilip: "As for the Mother and myself, we have had to try all ways, follow all methods, to surmount mountains of difficulties. A far heavier burden to bear than you or anybody else in the Ashram or outside, far more difficult conditions, battles to fight, wounds to endure, ways to cleave through impenetrable morass and desert and forest, hostile masses to conquer—a work such as, I am certain, none else had to do before us. For the leader of the way in a work like ours has not only to bring down or represent and embody the Divine, but to represent too the ascending element in humanity and to bear the burden of humanity to the full and experience, not in a mere play or Lila but in grim earnest, all the obstruction, difficulty, opposition, hampered and only slowly victorious labour which are possible on the path."

In other words, the difficulty arises not so much because the work is so radically new as because Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have to give their work a significance for all humanity and not make it a glorious isolated triumph open perhaps at most to a few gifted individuals. And we may add that by the very difficulty they have accepted for us our own path becomes easier.

I hope this letter will dispel the mistaken picture of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual life that you have somehow formed.

I shall be happy to hear from you again.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
K.D. Sethna

1, Queen Victoria Road, New Delhi.
6th October, 1951

My dear Sethna,

Your letter to hand. I feel myself incompetent to enter into a controversy with you. You had close personal touch with Sri Aurobindo. You have read his

works thoroughly. To me, since 1909, Sri Aurobindo has been a distant star. The only light I received was the casual reading of his writings and glowing brilliant vision for a few fleeting moments.

I was no doubt observing and intermittently contacting him from 1901 to 1909—more particularly in 1907 at the time of the Surat Congress; I was never in his circle. I drew the inspiration from *Bande Mataram* and from one or two friends who were in close contact with him. I knew Lele, and Pandya who was in close touch with him. We heard about Sri Aurobindo's yogic developments only from 1904 onwards. But in his outer aspects, it would not be right to say that he had developed that 'wide calm' which later on became the principal characteristic of his personality. His Uttarpara speech, which, for many years, became my annual swadhyaya, also gave me the same impression.

Anyway, we need not measure the measureless, as I said before. He had, as I have said of late, one of the most mature and wide-visioned minds that I have known or read of both in insight and individual evolution. He, in my opinion, was one of the greatest of philosophers and Yogis that I have read of; and he has presented to the world a mighty and successful achievement of integration of personality giving thereby a message to the modern world and to Indian culture a fresh validity. That is quite enough for my purpose.

I have been reading of late Sri Aurobindo's criticism of *Savitri*¹ in 'Mother India'. I wish Sri Aurobindo's comments on literary criticism may be collected in book-form.

Who is Rishabh Chand? His exposition is masterly.
More when we meet. With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
K.M. Munshi

¹ Editor's Note What is meant is critical comments in answer to questions put by K D Sethna on *Savitri*

DID YOU KNOW?

DID You know
When hurtling down
The liquid-gold cascade
Under luminous white foam
Tinged with blues and purples
To the dark brown earth
That on the return
You will have to traverse
An arduous path strewn with needles
Red and white hot
And burning frozen cinders
Of earth's passions?
Surely
it is the ever-bright flame,
Diamond-sharp and sapphire-blue
With a laughing silvery twinkle
Of Her all-seeing glance
That gave You the certitude
Of final triumph,
That You will carry our souls
Guiding our multihued selves,
That You will hew a fresh path
Paved with rose-gold petals
For our tender feet to tread
Following Your footsteps.

O Lord's hand,
You are not just
The pointing index
Nor the little finger of hope
But the whole wide hand
Clasping and carrying—
Despite our perfidy,
Using our unwilling love—
Our selves, slippery
Like slithering eels.

My human mind says
You did not know
What You were 'in' for
When bliss-formed
You came.
O Glory Divine, O dazzling Light,
I close my eyes and gratitude-filled
Thank the Supreme that You came
And in spite of apparent return
Are near, ever near for always.

DINKAR PALANDE

AT THE FEET OF SRI AUROBINDO

SOME REMINISCENCES OF EARLY DAYS IN PONDICHERRY

(On special request we reproduce from two old issues of Mother India these reminiscences. Written in the Ashram, they are of Jaya Devi who lived for a long time there and died at a ripe old age. Those who knew her in Pondicherry remember her last as a frail old lady with a most angelic face, through which the very soul of devotion to the Divine seemed to come out in a soft radiance. She wrote originally in Bengali. The present English translation is by Dr. Sisir Kumar Ghose.)

I

FAR back in 1926, I had an urge to visit Rameshwar. My younger brother Upen (Dr. Upendranath Banerji) casually said to me: "Sister, let's go to Pondicherry, you'd be able to see A.G. there." The initials stood for Aurobindo Ghose. "Let us," I replied. We decided to leave in June (Bengali Asharh). Expecting to meet A.G. at Pondicherry we came here. The day after reaching Pondicherry, at about eight in the morning we went towards the Ashram to have A.G.'s darshan. While going up the stairs I was so upset, thinking: "How shall I look at him?" But again the thought followed: "Why are you so worried at the prospect of meeting a great soul?"

On the verandah of the house where Anilbaran was later to stay, A.G. was sitting in a chair. What a wonderful sight! It was as if light were flooding out from all sides. He was engaged in reading a newspaper. Holding the leg of his chair I sat down on the floor. With a smile he asked me: "From where have you come?" "Sir, we are from Calcutta." "What brought you here?" "I had a desire to visit Rameshwar. But Upen said we should go to Pondicherry because a Mahapurusha lives there and I would be able to see him. I agreed and so I have come to see you." "Won't you be going to Rameshwar?" he asked. "No. I shall not go there any more. Having seen the living Rameshwar, I have no need to see an image of stone." "Well, this human Rameshwar that you have seen, do you have faith in him?" "Oh yes, I have full faith," I answered.

Hearing this, he placed his hands on my head and gently said: "Then you may stay here." "I have planned to stay for only three months. How shall I stay longer than that?" I asked. "Have you no attachment to the world and are there no obstacles ahead? Better not to return to Calcutta. Stay and see how things develop," he said. There was some more talk, about the nature of my sadhana and my chosen deity (ishta devata). I answered frankly and fully. Yet I had a feeling that all had not been told.

Those days there were no Bengali ladies staying in the Ashram. I used to

visit him every day. He would make me sit near him and listen to everything carefully. After four or five days I asked A.G.: "Why are these chairs here?" "They are for people who listen to my words and practise meditation—they sit in these chairs." Somehow I didn't like the idea. So I said: "Lord, this doesn't look proper. That the sadhaks, your disciples, should be sitting in the chairs along with you doesn't look nice. Better to have mats or carpets on the floor. While you sit in the chair, the rest can sit below." He only smiled a little and kept quiet. Two days after, I noticed that the chairs had been removed and a *durree* spread out on the floor.

In those years the Ashram was less crowded and I used to go and see him every day. One day I asked him: "Lord, why do they call you A.G.?" "A.G.? Who says A.G.?", he counter-questioned. "These sadhaks speak like that, I have heard it." Then he said, with a smile: "Well, it's a good idea of yours." Seven or eight days later, I found on the notice-board: "Sri Aurobindo." I was told the Mother had given that name. This made me rather happy.

After two days, I went to see him with a pair of garlands which I had woven with my own hands and rolled inside a handkerchief. Looking at the hidden object in my hands he asked: "What is it you have brought?" "A pair of garlands," I answered. "What will you do with garlands?" "One I shall place round your neck and the other at your feet," I chirped gaily. Pleased with my reply, he said: "Well, give me one, and there, within the house, is your Mother, go and give her the other garland." "Lord, where is the Mother? In which room? I do not know anything; please guide me a little." He then explained: "As you go up the inner staircase you will find a room in front. The Mother lives there. You will give the garland to her." "Lord, permit me to go there," I said. Smilingly he agreed: "Yes, now go."

I came down, wondering with whom to go. But, I also thought, what was there to worry about in going to the Mother? "Oh my mind, take me there. When the Lord has said so, I will certainly be able to meet her." On reaching down with this thought, I found Purani's wife Lilavati standing in front. I said to Lila: "Dear sister, please accompany me a little." "Where to?" inquired Lila. "First let us go up the inside staircase. Then I shall tell you," I said. "Then let us go," she answered. After we had gone up the stairs we saw a room in front. I went inside with the garland in hand. There I saw the Mother standing, in a red-bordered sari. She came a little closer to me and I offered the flowers and made my pranam to her. The Mother had a veil on, and when I gave her the garland she was smiling, but since I didn't know any English I couldn't speak with her. After a while, I came away. Lilavati followed suit. When she had come we went to our respective places.

Next day, at darshan, I said, "Lord, I was able to meet the Mother. She was standing inside the room. But since I didn't know English I could not talk with her. So I came away after giving the flowers to her. Lord, I wish I were

independent and could learn many languages and move about freely from place to place. Make me a man. I have no wish to stay a woman any longer.” He smiled and said: “Very well. What’s the worry? You’ll be free, men and women will become equal. What is there to be afraid of?” “Let me go now,” I said. “What will you do when you go down?” “Oh, someone becomes angry. He says, ‘You talk with him too long and I don’t get any chance.’ ” “Who is the person that speaks to you like that?” These words from the Lord made me uneasy. “No,” I hurried to add, “he isn’t quite angry, he just says...” “No, you do as you are doing,” the Lord said. Since the Lord put it like that, I stayed on a little longer before going away. On the other hand, X was quite angry. Barinda¹ and he wanted to know what had happened. “The Lord asks me to stay on and he makes many enquiries. It all takes time. This inconveniences X and he gets annoyed,” I told Barinda. “A.G. loves to hear Bengali. So he goes on talking with you. What’s there to get upset about?” said Barinda. “No, X doesn’t really get angry, but his darshan is delayed, that’s what he says.” Then I returned home.

One day in the early hours I was sitting near the window of my room on the upper storey of the Guest House.² All of a sudden I noticed a young person, seventeen or eighteen years of age, near the window below. But how handsome and radiant! The entire road seemed to be lighted up. A small stick or baton in his hand, he was tying up a number of beautiful white cows to the window below and running and playing with them. I saw it all so clearly. The night was nearly gone, and a faint light was trickling through the dark. A little afterwards it all brightened up, but there was nothing more to be seen. At the time of darshan I asked: “Lord, what is the significance of this that I have seen? And oh, how beautiful!” “How did it strike you?” he asked. “I thought it was Sri Krishna; who else can have such beauty, such radiance?” “Who could that Sri Krishna be?” he asked. “Who else but you?” I answered. “You think it was I?” “Yes, of course.” Then he said: “What you have seen is true and well,” and he put his hands on my head, adding: “Well, well.”

Another day at the time of meditation I saw in a vision that I had gone to a big hall full of lotuses, out of which flames of light rose up and my eldest son was blowing them out. But the lights would come up again. Next day I asked him: “Lord, why did I see it like that during meditation?”

“Within you the light has shone. Your son is trying to put it out. He will not succeed. Nothing to cause worry.”

¹ Barindra Kumar Ghose, Sri Aurobindo’s youngest brother—Editor

² At present the Children’s *Dortoir* behind the Playground

II

It was the month of Asvin in 1926. At the time of Sri Aurobindo's daily darshan I said: "Lord, the month of Asvin is here. Every year I celebrate Mahastami puja. I am wondering what to do now; shall I return home or what?" "Why, won't there be puja here?" he asked. "Yes, it's possible; the worship of Shiva-Durga. If I can perform your worship and the Mother's, then perhaps I need not go from here. That is why I am wondering..."

"Well, you can do that."

On the day of Mahastami Sri Aurobindo and the Mother sat in two chairs side by side. With the usual offering I performed the puja. I put garlands round both. Oh, it was as if Shiva and Durga had come down to accept the worship! It is impossible to describe all that I felt. It was ineffable, beyond thought. After the puja he left the room. The next day he asked: "You have to go now? You have done your puja." I said: "Yes, my Lord, it was a puja such as I had never thought of." "Well, well," he said.

In the old days the Mother did not leave the Ashram compound. She would sit for meditation in an upper-storey room. There were about twelve or thirteen of us including Bijoy Nag, Roti Nag, Rajani, Monibabu, Upen, etc.—with whom the Mother would sit in meditation. There were then only two Gujarati girls, I happened to be the only Bengali girl.

One night I dreamt that I was floating in the air while an elephant, hoping to catch me, was prowling below. All the time Upen was as it were pushing me up. I seemed to roam about, as if I had been in a state of daze or stupor.

In the morning I went for darshan. As usual I sat holding the leg of the chair. Then I spoke of the previous night and asked: "Lord, why did I dream like that?" "You are on the upward way. But the natural body does not like you to escape like that and so it is pursuing you. Upen is putting you up. It is the body that is obstructing." He said many other things as well, which I cannot now call to mind.

Next day Barinda said to me: "Didi, for long Sri Aurobindo hasn't tasted Bengali food. Now that you are here, what about preparing some dishes?" "All right," I answered.

Bijoy Nag procured a big *hulsa* fish, dressed it up and all that. I cooked it in an aluminium pot. Those days we had no crockery. Sri Aurobindo sat down for lunch in the room below with five disciples around him. I placed the pot near his plate. He only smiled but did not say anything.

One day a sadhak from Chandernagore came to Pondicherry for Sri Aurobindo's darshan. He had set out on a pilgrimage and expressed a desire to see Sri Aurobindo *en route*. The next day I went to the darshan at eight in the morning. I told Sri Aurobindo, "Lord, a sadhu from Chandernagore is here for your darshan. He will come today."

“Have you seen him? What sort of sadhu?” he inquired.

“I don’t know anything, Lord. But he didn’t seem to be quite open and pure. You will see,” I said.

After I had come away the sadhu said to me: “Didi, I am going for darshan but I have a feeling of fear about it.”

“What is there to fear in visiting a holy person? Go,” I said.

The sadhu left. But he could hardly walk up the stairs, his heart was trembling so. Reaching the door near the upper veranda he saw a luminous glow emanating from Sri Aurobindo’s body. His eyes were dazzled and he was unable to have the darshan.

Somehow he reached the house where I was staying. There he fell into a kind of fit. After lying on the ground for a while he got up and said to me: “Didi, I didn’t have a darshan of Sri Aurobindo, I could not bear so much power. I am going today.”

The day after, at darshan time I told Sri Aurobindo: “Lord, the sadhu could not have your darshan. He said, ‘When I was going up the stairs, my heart began to beat violently. Still I reached the upper storey but then I saw a flamelike light which blinded me. It was as if I lost consciousness and somehow reached your place. I shall not stay here any longer. I am going.’ Saying this, he left last night.” On hearing this Sri Aurobindo said: “He is like a chest, so tightly closed that he has only been wasting his energy. He has not gone round the four quarters... Except for that egoism, there is nothing else in him.

“Lord, why didn’t you give him something?” I queried.

“One needs strength to receive strength. One cannot have that merely by speaking of it. It will be a long time before that sadhu can go round the four quarters. It is doubtful if he can do it in this life.” After saying this he kept quiet. I also came away.

November came along. A strange feeling of joy took possession of all the sadhaks present. The whole of Pondicherry was fragrant with incense, a great delight seemed to be at play. There was the feeling one has during the time of Durga Puja, but this was more intense. I told Bijoybabu and Barinda: “Brothers, I am feeling so happy inside. Such peace! Why is it like this?” “Indeed, sister,” answered Bijoybabu. “What feelings of peace and delight!” At the time of Sri Aurobindo’s darshan I said, “Lord, for the last few days I have been filled with such a sense of peace and delight. The whole of Pondicherry has a festive air, an incense and perfume everywhere. Why is it like this, Lord?”

Smiling, he said, “You are able to feel this?”

“Not only I but all the sadhaks are able to feel this great wave of peace and delight. We are dancing with an inner joy. Why, O Lord?”

“Wait and see, there will be more delight to come,” he said.

On November 24 a little before evening all the sadhaks were asked to assemble. One after another we trooped to the upper hall. Sri Aurobindo and

the Mother blessed us all with both hands. I was told: "Mahashakti, the Supreme Consciousness-Force, has descended into Sri Aurobindo." I could myself see light and glory bursting out of his body.

Next day when I was carrying with me two garlands of *tulasi* leaves, I heard that Sri Aurobindo would not come out again but stay in his room. Disappointed, I placed the garlands on the door of his room and turned back. One chapter of our life was over.

ZEAL FOR THE LORD

BE it darkness of night
 Or brightness of day
 A constant soothing vastness
 May fill the void mind.
 When the ego
 Doesn't bring turmoil
 A healing grace may be felt.
 When our zeal for the Lord
 Eats us up
 A candid flame within
 Burns straight unhindered towards heaven.
 What was awaited
 On the morbid bed of Earth
 Is now a distinct reality,
 Be it amidst common work
 Or in the static posture of a yogi.

SITANGSHU CHAKRABORTTY

NIRODBARAN'S TALK ON CHAMPAKLAL

(Continued from the issue of July 1993)

Part II (contd.)

Visits to Auroville and the Matrimandir

THESE visits were more often to the Matrimandir than to other parts of Auroville, after Auroville had been taken over by the Government of India. Westerners were in charge of the Matrimandir and were slowly building it up. In the early stages of its construction there were few workers and we were not very familiar with them. We enjoyed our visits there mainly for the scenic beauty and quiet atmosphere, both "Maharaj" and myself being lovers of Nature. We spent part of the evening with a few chosen friends before returning home.

We visited the Matrimandir at various stages of its construction. If I recall rightly, our first visit was when the outer frame of the globe was up and the Central Hall was under construction. In the book, *Visions of Champaklal*, he mentions our visits and the wonderful experiences and visions he had there. Their meanings and interpretations are also attempted in the book. These visits took place in 1978 and 1979, before his trips to the West.

Maharaj would very often go into meditation or trance with eyes closed for quite some time, and the rest of us would walk around leaving him in that blissful condition. Unfortunately for us he could not then communicate to us the visions and experiences he had during his meditations owing to his vow of silence. Now when we read about them in his book, we cannot but marvel at their beauty and grandeur, the wonderful mysterious beings present there, and the Mother and Sri Aurobindo enveloping with their mighty Presence Auroville and the Matrimandir.

It was after one of these visits that, impressed by the colossal structure hanging as it were in space, I was inspired to write about it. Mine was only a poetic expression of my feelings while Champaklal's visions were concrete experiences to which I had no access. These experiences assure us that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were and are still actively behind their own grand visions of the future of Auroville.

A tragic event that took place during the construction of Matrimandir is still vaguely alive in my mind. A young Western woman while working at a great height fell from the scaffolding and was so badly injured as to be reduced to a wheelchair existence. She expressed her desire to see Maharaj. Piero, the Italian architect, knew us and communicated to us her wish. What we saw was extremely pathetic. She was a huddled figure lying in bed, and could hardly speak. Only with her eyes she gazed at Maharaj and seemed to implore his blessings. Maharaj, as was his nature, caressed her with his touch, consoled her

with silent love and blessings. She was taken care of very lovingly by friends and by one in particular for the remaining 11 or 12 years of her life.

Another visit that was memorable was to the Plant Nursery of Narad, an American Aurovilian. Maharaj speaks about it in his book. On p. 91 he says, "Our brother Narad had arranged on 21st February 1979, the Mother's birthday, a flower show at his place in Auroville.... For me to go to his garden would have been a joy even on any other day, to see brother Narad with his plants as if he were near the Mother. The plants speak to him.... When he is near the plants, his face beams. It is a happy sight to see him and the plants together.... As soon as we reached his place, we entered into a joyful and devotional atmosphere.... All the flowers were expressing themselves and it was very difficult to move away from their presence."

That was Maharaj, lover of man, lover of beauty and perceptive of the inner reality.

We had been to the Meditation Hall of the Matrimandir in its early stages of construction. But by the time it reached its final phase, Champaklal had lost the use of his limbs due to a stroke and was almost confined to his room. Even in this condition he visited the Matrimandir a few times. All arrangements were made to take him there by car and then carry him up in a chair to the Meditation Hall by the workers of the Matrimandir. By then he had become very well known to the Westerners there and every time he paid a visit all of them, even the children, would gather to sit or stand silently around him in an attitude of great respect. There are quite a number of pictures they took on these occasions: Maharaj in his lovely gown, with glowing face and flowing beard surrounded by an assembly of over a hundred people. He was present too when the Matrimandir crystal was ceremoniously installed. It is a pity he did not leave any description of the experiences he must certainly have had on these last visits.

Visits to the West and the East

Maharaj toured widely in the West. I can only give a brief sketch of his journeys, drawn from conversations with his companions, and from his books. England, France, Austria, Germany, Italy, Geneva, Mont Blanc, New York, California, Mata Giri: wherever he went he was accompanied and looked after by a few young people who regarded him as their "Dadaji", and they met Indian and Western devotees of the Mother who were extremely happy to have him in their midst. Though the meetings were silent ones—as Maharaj was under a discipline of silence—he kept a notebook and pencil with him and communicated with all in writing, as well as noting down his own observations and experiences.

In Germany he visited the Berlin Wall and meditated there. I am tempted to surmise that our Maharaj may have contributed his mite with an occult push to the notorious Wall. People soon gathered around him, attracted by his extra-

ordinary appearance: his bright calm face, flowing white beard, silken grey hair, a noble figure robed in a silk gown, looking like a splendid patriarch of old! In Paris, near "Leonardo da Vinci Palace", when he innocently picked up some coloured pebbles and began examining them, some children excitedly pointed to him and exclaimed, "Look, look, Leonardo!"

In Paris, he was overwhelmed with joy when he went to the Mother's house at Val de Grace. In the garden of the famous French painter, Claude Monet, he had a vision and lay down on the lawn, arms fully stretched, hands together, eyes closed in an obvious deep trance. There is a lovely picture of this pose in his book.

In Montreal, Canada, he met our people from India settled there who had established Centres and taken Sri Aurobindo's relics to instal in them.

In South Carolina, U.S.A., a wonderful thing happened. He was in his element in a place of scenic beauty, far away from human habitation, amidst hills, trees, fountains and groves, when he felt a pressure on his head and sat down under a magnificent tree and went into spontaneous meditation. His companion took a photograph of him then and when he developed it a beam of white light falling over him and enveloping him became clearly visible.

His journeys to the East included Indonesia, Singapore, Cambodia, Japan, recorded in many photos, specially of the cultural aspects of these countries. He saw in Indonesia Hindu and Muslim architecture flourishing side by side without any sectarian spirit. Unfortunately, his vow of silence deprived us of any living description of his experiences, except for some spontaneous expressive gestures of delight at times.

One peculiar feature of all these wanderings was that he returned with a lot of baggage containing gifts and offerings given to him by the people wherever he went. It was as if a conqueror had returned with booty of all sorts! A good bit of the money from the offerings he received he gave for the project of greening the arid places of the Ashram's Lake Estate, carried out by the students and teachers of our Centre of Education. The successful development and growth of plants and flowers at "Merveille" was partly due to his contributions.

On the night of his return from every trip, he would unpack the gifts in his room, separate them, classify and make lists of them in his meticulous way, till the wee hours of the next morning, oblivious of time, space and, unfortunately, me, who would be trying to get a decent night's sleep in Sri Aurobindo's room, next to his. A few times he very considerably drew the curtain between the rooms, thus reducing my hardship. He never forgot to give us some presents from the booty.

(To be continued)

SOME EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of July 1993)

TODAY I will digress from my usual story.

The other day I was reading in the *Udbodhan*, the Ramakrishna Mission magazine in Bengali, about an incident that had taken place after the death of Thakur. His passing came as a great shock to his disciples and disorganised their lives. They had to confront a very hard reality. They decided to go on a *parikrama* as sannyasins and visit various places. Coming to an empty house they decided to pass the night there. They had gone without proper food throughout the day, but that did not affect them. They were so full of joy and laughter, telling each other all sorts of stories concerning their life with Thakur, that they did not feel any hunger or bodily discomfort. It was as if they were simply bathed in bliss. As I was reading this story, I at once remembered that I had seen this scene in one of my dreams. I had seen Vivekananda with his brother-disciples in this mood of hilarity as if the whole house was flooded with Ananda, and they didn't have a care in the world.

Another wonderful story has been recorded in *Kathamrita* about Thakur. It seems one day he saw in a dream or a vision an exceedingly beautiful woman. He could not make out who she was. Then he noticed that Hanuman was kneeling before her. He at once realised that she must be Sita, and at that very moment she looked at Thakur and smiled. The smile was ravishing beyond description. Only a goddess can smile that way, he thought. And the most strange part of it was that Sita told him, “I give you this smile.”

You know Thakur was not good to look at, but after that incident, when he smiled, nobody could equal his sweetness.

These anecdotes from the *Udbodhan* about the experiences of Thakur and his disciples, and stories from the *Kathamrita* are a constant source of inspiration to me. As I don't know good English and cannot fully appreciate the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's books, I read instead these Bengali books with love, devotion and worship. *Kathamrita*, as also the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, I have read so many times that they have become a part of my life. They are like nectar to me. I had avidly watched the Mahabharata serialised on the TV, and when a recording of it was shown in the Beach Office of the Sri Aurobindo Society, I saw it again with equal pleasure. If they show it again, I won't miss it, the irresistible attraction being mainly Sri Krishna. The Beach Office's showing of the *Bhagavat* was a special treat for me. I enjoyed these shows all the more because I have no difficulty in understanding Hindi. The name Sri Krishna

reminds me of an occult experience I had long ago. I was preparing to leave Calcutta for good. I wanted a picture of Sri Krishna to carry with me. Sri Krishna, as you know, was my childhood Deity or Ishta Devata. I looked and looked for his picture in many quarters. Bow Bazar, Bara Bazar, but could not find any single one to my liking. One day I found in an odd kind of a shop such a picture almost dazzling. At once without bargaining I bought it. Next day or some days later as I was passing by that quarter, I looked for the same shop. It was not there. I was a bit piqued. When I enquired from the neighbour-shops they said that there had not been any shops of my description in their recent memory! I understood the Lord's Grace. Once more I was reminded of his promise that he would never leave me.

Since I am in a reminiscent mood, let me recount one or two stories of my early life.

Once we had gone to Dakshineswar to see Tarak Maharaj, a direct disciple of Thakur. I was then only 6 or 7 years old. But we were told he had not been keeping well and was not seeing anybody. We were turning back when he called us. As we came to him he sat up on the bed. My mother asked his pardon for having disturbed him. He replied, "This body is given to do some good to others. Otherwise what is its purpose?"

"Then please tell us something about Thakur being called a *Kalpataru*. We have read about it; still to hear of it from you as one of his direct disciples has a special value."

"Very well. Listen then. You know Thakur was suffering from cancer at the time. One day, four Powers descended into him. He came down very slowly from the upper floor to tell us about it. A few of us were chatting in the garden. He called us and said, 'Today I shall awake in all of you the Divine Consciousness which will help you to have the vision of the Divine.' Saying this, he pressed our foreheads with the tip of his finger. In this way, we went into meditation and had the Darshan. Thakur perhaps perceived that his time to depart was near and before going he offered his disciples this boon which earned him the name *Kalpataru*."

Everybody came for this special blessing except Latu Maharaj, another close disciple, who stayed away despite repeated calls. His answer was: "I don't need all these siddhis. I have served him and that's enough."

Latu Maharaj was a Hindustani. He used to work as a servant. When Thakur saw him he perceived at once that Latu was not an ordinary man and asked his employer for him. The employer offered Latu to Thakur most gladly. Since then Latu Maharaj had been in the service of Thakur.

When Thakur left his body, Vivekananda made a rule that the disciples should get up at 2 a.m. and practise meditation. On hearing this Latu Maharaj packed his luggage and was on the point of leaving the Ashram. Vivekananda asked him why and he replied, "Look here, Loren," (he couldn't pronounce

Vivekananda's lay name: Noren), “I don't understand the meaning of all these rules of yours and I can't accept them. I have served Thakur—that's enough for me. I can't accept orders from anybody else.”

Vivekananda, much ashamed, said, “No, no, these rules are not meant for you. They are for these young boys. They should learn some discipline. You can go your own way.”

To continue with my story of Tarak Maharaj. Tarak Maharaj used to keep different kinds of toys on his bed such as bells, dolls, etc. I would play with them while my parents were talking with him. My father once asked him why he kept these toys. He said, “You see, the mind soars often to the Sachchidananda plane and it is very difficult to bring it down. These toys with which I amuse myself serve to keep my consciousness tied to the earth by bringing it down from above.”

A rare feature of Tarak Maharaj was that even from his boyhood he had been free from the sex-urge. Vivekananda had a great respect for him and would address him as *Mahapurush*.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

AN HOUR AND A HALF WITH C.G. JUNG

(Continued from the issue of July 1993)

I ASKED Jung whether I was right in thinking that the collective unconscious was an aspect and a level of the human psyche only. He answered that my idea was correct. Two questions were raised in my mind by his answer. First, whether the images of the Hindu gods and goddesses could be considered as archetypes. Jung said that he had not thought of them as such but that he felt after my query that they could be described as archetypes. I did not pursue the matter, for I had a more important question to ask, which was whether he believed if there was and would be anything abiding if humanity perished after a holocaust, nuclear or otherwise. I remarked that since the racial unconscious was an aspect of the human psyche, if humanity perished, the collective unconscious would also cease to be. Jung's answer was forthright. He said he was not a metaphysician, that he was a doctor interested in the problems of the human psyche and their solution, in the disorders of the human mind and their causes.

The dangerous confusion that can be created by regarding the contents of the "inner world" as spiritual is evident from the writings of some experts on Jung's psychological system. For example, Frieda Fordham in *An introduction to Jung's Psychology* explains Jung's idea of self thus: "The feeling of godlikeness, of being a superman, which comes through the inflation¹ is an illusion. We may for a brief time possess phenomenal courage, or be infinitely wise or forgiving, but this is something beyond ourselves, and something that we cannot master at will. We do not really understand the forces that made human beings in this way, an attitude of humility in the face of them is absolutely necessary. But if the ego can relinquish some of the belief in its omnipotence, a position can be found somewhere between the ego with its hardly-won values and unconsciousness with its vitality and power and a new centre of personality can emerge differing in its nature from the ego-centre. Jung calls this new centre of personality the self." In a footnote the author adds, "The term 'self' is not used as in everyday speech but in the Eastern manner, where Atman, Purusha, Brahman has been a familiar psychological concept from time immemorial. In Hindu thought the self is the supreme principle, the supreme oneness of being" (Pelican Book, 1966, pp. 61-62). The ego, she says, can only be regarded as the centre of the conscious, while the self, however, can include both the conscious and the unconscious (p. 62). What does Frieda Fordham mean by saying that Jung uses the term self "in the Eastern manner"? Are the self of Jung's psychology and the self as conceived in Hindu thought identical? On the next page she says, "Jung clearly maintains that the concept of the self is not that of a kind of universal consciousness which is really only another name of the unconscious." It may be

¹ By inflation Jung means possession of a person's psyche by one or more archetypes

noted that the Jungian self is an archetype. Any discriminating reader with a modicum of knowledge of Hindu thought will see the confusion to which the same word used with completely different significances can lead. Jung himself is careful not to make any metaphysical pronouncements. But his followers are not so discriminating, and the common reader can be easily misguided.

Many people among whom can be counted poets, artists, and intellectuals believe that Jung has made a significant contribution to the understanding of religious symbols, and therefore of religion. I have said above that a symbol tries to represent an archetype. I will now say something about one archetype which is very pertinent to what I think about Jung's position regarding religion. That archetype is God. The God archetype like other archetypes, for example the mother archetype, is the origin of the God complex and belongs to the collective unconscious. From out of a certain individual's experiences of the world the encounters which are relevant to the God archetype cling to it to form the God complex. When the attachment of the experiences relevant to the God archetype becomes more strong, they force themselves into the conscious, and there is formed the God complex. It is not possible nor is it necessary to elaborate the relationship between an archetype and a complex and the process of the formation of the latter from the former. What I wish to emphasize is that both archetype and complex pertain to the psyche—in Jung's sense of the term, that is, to the human mind.

Let me quote Jung on this point. "... when I say as a psychologist that God is an archetype, I mean by that the 'type' in the psyche. The word 'type' is as we know derived from *τυπος*, 'blow' or 'imprint', thus an archetype presupposes an imprimatur. Psychology as the science of the soul has to confine itself to its subject and to guard against overstepping its proper boundaries by metaphysical assertions or other professions of faith."

He continues that "even if we should have set up a God, even as a hypothetical cause, it would have implicitly claimed the possibility of proving God, thus exceeding its competence in an absolutely illegitimate way. Science can only be science; there are no 'scientific' professions of faith and similar *contradictiones in adiecto*. We simply do not know the ultimate derivation of the archetype any more than we know the origin of the psyche. The competence of psychology as an empirical science only goes so far as to establish, on the basis of comparative research, whether for instance the imprint found in the psyche can or cannot reasonably be termed a 'God-image'. Nothing positive or negative has thereby been asserted about the possible existence of God any more than the archetype of the 'hero' points to the actual existence of the hero" (*Psychology and Alchemy*, Vol. XII. *Collected Works* p. 14).

This statement of Jung about the nature and function of science is admirable and of course quite right. But that should not blind his readers to the fact that he has not said anything affirmative about a reality which is not a component of the

collective unconscious or more generally the human psyche. And it is not necessary to point out that there is no true religion without at least the faith, if not the intuition and experience, of a self-existent, self-aware Reality. It is said by many that Jung has 'opened' the 'inner world'. Well, religious practices may and do 'open' the 'inner world' in the case of many seekers. But that world is not the spiritual world but part of the universe which is phenomenon and not noumenon.

It is hardly necessary to point out to discerning students of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga that there is almost nothing in common between his metaphysical psychology and the analytic psychology of Jung, except certain key terms which, as said above, mean vastly different things respectively in the two systems. People not too careful may be misled by phrases like the integration of personality as used by Jung. Personality here primarily corresponds to the mental nature of man. Sri Aurobindo would certainly say that it is highly desirable to bring about as much harmony as possible in the outer personality which comprises in his system the physical, vital and mental nature. But he would also say that it is not possible to do so except to a little extent if the spiritual soul, what he calls the psychic being, does not come to the front and actively take over the work of effecting a balance of the outer parts of the human nature, to wit, the physical, vital and mental nature. The psychic being as realised and explained by Sri Aurobindo is not an archetype, a content of the racial or collective unconscious, whatever that may mean, of the analytic psychology of Jung, who has no room in his system for what Sankhya, Yoga, Vedanta and Sri Aurobindo term spirit, self or soul and is quite an inadequate rendering of Atman or Purusha.

I visited the Jung Institute in Zurich, talked to many teachers, research scholars and therapists there. I asked them whether the symbols as understood by Jung represented anything outside the psyche in Jung's sense of the term. It was explained to me, as I have already said, that a symbol was an attempt to express an archetype and that therefore it cannot be said to have any relation to anything outside the psyche in Jung's sense of the term which is really what is broadly called the mind in the yogic psychology. While Jung as a psychologist has done admirable work with an amazing wealth of scholarship to unravel the universal character of symbols as seen in dreams and fantasies, his sight is entirely confined to the world of symbols only. Even God is an archetypal symbol for him. For Sri Aurobindo, however, a symbol is a reality of one plane of being and consciousness representing a reality of another plane and God is not an archetypal symbol but the Ultimate symbolised, of which or of whom there can be and are innumerable symbols none of which is adequate.

God is the self-existent and self-aware Reality of whom there are many aspects. He is transcendent of and immanent in the world including the psyche, as the word is understood both in Sri Aurobindo's sense and in Jung's. Only one

of the two aspects, to wit, the transcendent, cannot be affirmed as the nature of the Reality. But the important point is that even as such it is not an archetype in the mind of man. And without faith in such a Reality there neither is nor can be any genuine religion and spirituality.¹

(Concluded)

ARINDAM BASU

¹ After finishing this article I have read in an article on archetype by Beverley Moon in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Ed M Eliade, Vol I, p 381) a reference to an interview in the BBC programme "Face to Face". In it in answer to a question by the interviewer whether Jung believed in God, he said that he had no need of belief because he knew by experience. I heard this programme but do not remember Jung claiming direct knowledge of God by experience though he did say that he knew. I think he did not reply how he came by that knowledge. Can it be that he meant by God nothing else but an archetype?

AND SO THIS HAPPENS

(Continued from the issue of July 1993)

'MAY I put a question, sir?' asked the editor.

'Yes, certainly,' the professor replied.

'Is it not an admitted fact that all the socialistic countries of today's world are far more developed than any of the non-socialistic developing countries? It is also learnt from different agencies that it is the inspired leaders who have raised their standard of living. They are zealous, hard-working and enthusiastic. They are educated and at the same time painstaking; they know how to eradicate poverty and fight with illiteracy and other social ills. The socialist leaders possess sound body and mind. In the world of sports—the dreamland of the youth—it is they who top the list. If the rational mind of present-day India wills to welcome this ideal, then what is wrong with it?

'Nothing,'—said the professor. 'It is natural for rational and sub-rational minds to feel vehemently attracted by that side of the coin which you have just described. But there is also the other side which shows quite opposite phenomena. However, you have affirmed, perhaps unknowingly, what Sri Aurobindo has indicated, 'It is the energy of the individual which is really the effective agent of collective progress.'²⁸ And this is the truth which the State-idea ruthlessly ignores when under its rigorous rule the individual has to give up his liberty. 'Man must learn not to suppress and mutilate,' says Sri Aurobindo, 'but to fulfil himself in the fulfilment of mankind.'²⁹ A society is not composed only of average and below average men. There are also people, maybe far less in number, who are above average, men of enlightened rationality. The other side of the coin shows how the State-machinery acts to deal with these reactionary and not progressive,—according to their philosophical vocabulary,—elements. To these vigorous and intelligent minds the falsity of the ideal becomes more and more clear as days pass on. They can easily imagine what can be the result of an education that seeks to 'drill the citizens in a fixed set of ideas, aptitudes, propensities'. It is not difficult for them to understand that if freedom of thought is negated and the minds of all are forced to a single standardised way of thinking, then mental man must stop short in his growth.

'The common or average men of whom you just spoke "may remain content for a time in consideration of the great and visible new benefits of order, economic development, means of efficiency, and the scientific satisfaction of the reason which the collectivist arrangement of the society will bring..."³⁰ But these intelligent minds (who are above average), will become intolerant of the oppression and tyranny of the ruling body. They will grumble, then revolt and finally suffer the consequence. The history of their sufferings is not focussed through any media-agencies. But it is certain that these facts cannot be kept

concealed for ever; by the pressure of circumstances some day the machine will collapse and the truth shall be revealed.

'Here lies the central defect of the State-idea. Let me read out the passages in which Sri Aurobindo depicts it so finely:

"This is the central defect through which a socialistic State is bound to be convicted of insufficiency and condemned to pass away before the growth of a new ideal. Already the pressure of the State organisation on the life of the individual has reached a point at which it is ceasing to be tolerable... whatever the perfection of the organised State, the suppression or oppression of individual freedom will still be there as a cardinal defect vitiating its very principle. For a thoroughgoing scientific regulation of life can only be brought about by a thoroughgoing mechanisation of life. This tendency to mechanisation is the inherent defect of the State-idea and its practice."³¹

'Then how can the problem be solved?' questioned the editor. 'It is not easy for the present man to rise above his level, nor is it possible for him to do away with his ego overnight. To bring about inner change is a distant consummation. Then where is the remedy? We have taken up the job of our own accord. So we have to draw up certain short and long term projects, and some well-defined and practicable action-plan to combat all the factors responsible for the predicament. You gave exclusive stress on transformation of nature and widening and heightening of consciousness for which perhaps we have to wait another millennium until through the process of evolution a new race appears on earth.'

The professor remained silent for some time, then smilingly said, 'I have already told you that I have no ready-made solution. I discussed the problem on the basis of Sri Aurobindo's observation. And what Sri Aurobindo has explained in a rational way is not his mental thought nor is it his philosophical views but what he has realised through yoga.'

The editor felt ashamed of what he had remarked, and apologised.

The professor said, this time also with a smile, 'Just now you told me that Sri Aurobindo's observation would not come true even in the foreseeable future. Sri Aurobindo had anticipated such a doubt; so, he comments forthwith, "This is not certain"; that is to say you may not wait for another millennium. Then he has asserted, "but in any case, if this is not the solution then there is no solution; if this is not the way, then there is no way for the human kind."³²

In another context in *The Hour of God* he has assured, "If earth calls and the Supreme answers, the hour can be even now for that immense and glorious transformation."³³

Yet the editor looked disheartened. None-the-less with wistful eyes he

gazed at the professor awhile and then humbly said, 'What you have elaborated are all future possibilities and what we are to counter is the present crude and difficult reality. The gulf between the two appears to be not easily bridgeable. So, men are becoming more and more frustrated. To save them from the clutch of frustration we must provide them with something so that they may become hopeful and boldly pass through the present crisis.'

The professor was in contemplation. The editor stopped the recorder and waited. A few minutes passed in silence. Then the professor said solemnly, 'You have just pointed out a very serious issue. I was thinking about it. It is true that Sri Aurobindo's philosophy contains elaborate analytical explanations and an ultimate conclusion of what is to come and what is to be; but there is also his applied philosophy, that is to say the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, the Yoga of Transformation, the only way that shows how things have to be done. He knows very well where the earth and her people stand. He knows too that he has still to work. And he is at work. All these things the pragmatic mind cannot appreciate. Besides, they are not presently relevant to what we are discussing, and that is why I remained silent on these points. You are right that men are becoming frustrated, and we have to provide them with some sort of viaticum so that they may pass through the crisis. But I'm afraid many of us may not know the nature of this crisis. It is not an economic crisis as many assume, nor is it a crisis of character. According to Sri Aurobindo's vision it is an evolutionary crisis. We are not familiar with the phrase "evolutionary crisis". Have you come across the phrase anywhere? Perhaps not. Yet in these two words lies the significance and nature of the crisis. Let me say a few words on them so that you may realise how difficult it is for us to move across the crisis; and you may also have an idea of the process of human evolution and Nature's role in it.

Man is a mental being; in him has emerged the mental consciousness. Man's mind has reached its acme. Or, in other words, as a mental being man has reached his journey's end, whence he finds no way to proceed farther: he is moving in the cycle of the body, the life and the mind—the three terms of his being. Man's mind, though it has reached its zenith, is not happy. It wants many more things to achieve and possess. With this discontentment it is restless. It feels a tremendous pressure from within to shatter the barriers of mind and move farther. But the way is not known to him'.

'When the mind of man has reached its summit, as you have just indicated, it may well be taken for granted that the evolution is complete. Man is the highest and the best product. It is true that he is not happy, he is not satisfied; and that is because he has not yet been able to fully realise the truth of which he is an ardent seeker. His scientific mind is confident that he will be able to seize upon it tomorrow or the day after. So it seems to me, as also to many other persons who believe that man needs to evolve no further. He is self-complete. Is there any error in our estimation?' The editor questioned.

Appreciating his argument, the professor replied, 'When I say that man's mind has reached its summit it means that all 'tomorrows' and 'days after' have ended, or else it cannot be said that it has reached the highest peak. If at this stage he feels dissatisfied, it must mean that he has not reached his journey's end: hence is the necessity of further evolution,—that is to say the unfoldment of a higher, wider and greater consciousness than the mental which is still latent in him. This unfoldment is a very difficult task; for Nature herself cannot do it, nor can man complete it by his own effort. Of course Nature is there to aid man but man must consciously collaborate and receive her aid and progress. He must know, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out in *The Hour of God*, that "Man's greatness is not in what he is, but in what he makes possible."³⁴ and that "Man cannot by his own effort make himself more than man; the mental being cannot by his own unaided force change himself..."³⁵

'So, you understand, my friend, that at this stage of human evolution man has to choose his own destiny. The choice is imperative,—whether he shall realise the Truth or remain stunted and move in the cycle of birth, growth, decay and death. Anyway evolution must continue until man achieves the *highest good*.

'Now we understand that despite the amazing development in his outer life the highest good still remains unachieved, and that is the reason for his discontentment. Naturally he cannot remain at this stage for long. His inner urge must impel him to fulfil Nature's intention in him. Thus man shall be able to move across the crisis and complete his journey.

'Then we come to realize that what is happening here and elsewhere in the world is the result of Nature's working in humanity. She is preparing the earth and getting the human race ready to accomplish the final stage of human evolution.

'From this perspective you should evaluate the nature and the characteristics of the problem which the author raised in his story; whatever solution may evolve out of your appraisal, you have to see whether it provides man with the scope of developing his inner nature.

'I wholeheartedly congratulate your sincere endeavour and firmly believe that this work must yield in the long run a great result.'

The professor paused and remained silent for a while, then in an enchanting voice said, 'with a few lines from *Savitri* I would like to conclude my discourse. Please listen:

"Our outward happenings have their seed within,

.....

Absorbed in a routine of daily acts,

Our eyes are fixed on an external scene;

We hear the crash of the wheels of Circumstance

And wonder at the hidden cause of things.

.....
 The outward and the immediate are our field,
 The dead past is our background and support;
 Mind keeps the soul prisoner, we are slaves to our acts;
 We cannot free our gaze to reach wisdom's sun."³⁶

The editor was spellbound; he could not speak at once. He stopped the recorder and then humbly said, 'I know not how our readers will take it but to me this discussion is of immense value. This has opened my third eye and I am confident that I will be able to see and judge things from this new perspective from now on. I believe that this will ever guide me henceforth in my profession as journalist.'

The professor got up and taking his hands said, 'If that be so then I'm sure the mass will be enlightened, for it is the mass-media and especially the press that lead the people. So, cheer up, young journalist, and go ahead.'

(Concluded)

SAMAR BASU

REFERENCES

- 28 *The Ideal of Human Unity*, p 390
- 29 *Ibid* , pp 393-94
- 30 *The Human Cycle*, p 284
- 31 *Ibid* , pp 285-86
- 32 *Ibid* , p 297
- 33-34 *The Hour of God*, p 55
- 35 *Ibid* , p 46
- 36 *Savitri*, pp 52-53

THE ONE WHO FEEDS THE SPARROWS

I dedicate this story to my grandmother Mrs. Zaverben Hindocha who left her earthly abode for a spiritual one on 1st August 1987. It was she who provided the all-endearing and all-enduring inspiration for this little story.

Now he was completely alone in this world. He had lost both his parents during a devastating epidemic when he was too young to understand such tragedies of life. Now he had lost his grandmother who had brought him up single-handedly. He just could not let her sweet memories seep out of his mind. They seemed to linger on and on, like a powerful and tenacious perfume, to offer a guiding trail through his now mundane existence.

He searched through his memories of her woven inextricably into the matrix of his entire life. He remembered how he used to sit quietly by her side when she performed her early morning worship after a bath. He used to observe her every move trying to comprehend them in his own childlike way. They always seemed very mysterious to him and sometimes even pointless. He would often ask her why she did all these boring things so early in the morning. She would then give him lovingly one of her brightest smiles and tell him that it was good to perform these religious practices as it would earn her merit in the eyes of the Supreme Lord, who would surely keep a place for her in heaven when she died. Then she would offer him sweets or fruits offered to the Lord. That part of the worship was the most pleasant to him and he remembered how impatient he felt during those tedious worship sessions.

Later she would go out with a pot full of grains to feed the birds. The birds always seemed to know when she was coming and they waited for her with their sweet songs and the peacocks danced for her by showing off their majestic plumage. Sometimes the tiny squirrels came down to feast on the leftover grains. The sparrows always darted around her as lovingly as she fed them.

He also used to feed the birds along with her. He remembered specially her happy smile and the urging waves of her hand to encourage him. She used to tell him that these birds were beggars without speech. So how could they tell you how hungry they were and would you please give them something to eat? He did not believe this yarn of hers and once or twice asked her what was the real reason for feeding the birds. Again she would tell him that it was good to do so, without assigning any plausible reasons. It was always to earn merit in this life so that her next life might be more agreeable than the present one. He normally used to accept whatever explanations were given to him but on occasion he wanted to know much more than these simple ones. All he got for his persistent questioning would be as always a final statement that he would understand more when he grew up.

After a frugal breakfast, they both used to go to his father's field to plough and seed or to weed out useless grasses or to reap the harvest. It was often hot and tiring work. After a short rest they would go back together to their modest hut for a short afternoon nap to escape the hottest part of the day. Then it was time for studies. She would teach him how to count, read and write on a broken slate and later allowed him to read her religious books, which were many and varied. He was always enthralled by all the stories of gods like Lord Siva with his fiery third eye and goddesses like Lakshmi who bestowed great wealth on her worshippers and the valorous deeds of Lord Rama and the mischievous pranks of Lord Krishna.

The evenings were always spent at the temple on the hill near the village which seemed to invite them every day with the ringing of many bells inside. He always looked forward to their evening visit to the temple, with its majestic triangular dome rising steeply towards the heavens. It was not out of religious devotion that he went there, but it was for those delicious sweets and fruits and nuts offered to the Lord as a part of worship and distributed to all, children specially. Grandmother used to sing songs of worship there, clapping her hands, and he would accompany her hesitatingly with his tiny voice. She used to watch him with interest and give him her beautiful smile and urge him to sing along with her by gentle nods of her head. It was so nice to be there with her.

There were many rituals held in the temple and he just could not understand them or their purpose. The priest used to wave a flame in front of the presiding deity while chanting sacred songs of worship. Most of them did not make any sense to him nor did the rituals but he did not mind them at all as by now these had become for him merely meaningless routines.

Then the priest brought the flame in front of everyone present there for them to wave their hands over the flame and then over their heads. When he asked his grandmother the significance of this strange custom, she merely repeated her only explanation that it was good to do so as it pleased the Lord. He could not understand why they had to bow down before the deity with their hands joined together.

Sometimes they met his distant cousin who was not happy at all that he did not inherit the land which was tilled by them. He used to quarrel with his grandmother for his rightful share of this land. She always tackled him with aplomb by saying that there was no proper record of his claim anywhere either with the village elders or with them. He hated this quarrel and could not understand why people would dig up reasons for such mindless and heated arguments. Yes, the land did belong to a common ancestor a long time ago and it was willed onto the rightful heirs, fair and square, so why this needless conflict? It was beyond his simple and straightforward nature which just wanted everyone to live their lives and let others live in their own way. Sometimes his grandmother used to remark that the cousin was not really a bad sort but it was his

greedy wife who used to incite him with all kinds of silly arguments.

Life without his grandmother was very strangely lonesome. He missed her tremendously and he tried his best to follow her routines of feeding the sparrows and going to the temple just to remember her and thinking how pleased she would have been if she could have seen him follow her teachings. He missed her loving smile and the tender care and affection showered on him without limit.

Then one evening he felt a sudden chill and later that night he had a raging fever. The fever took away all his vitality and made him so weak that the next morning he was not able to stand up. It was another fine morning and he could hear the birds chirping outside in anticipation of his appearance. He felt very unhappy and sorry at not being able to go out and feed them. There was no one to look after him now. His grandmother would have fussed over him endlessly and tried to cure him with all sorts of remedies she knew till he was perfectly well. As he could not even feed himself, his condition became worse day by day till he slipped into complete unconsciousness.

When he woke up, he swore that he could smell a distinct aroma of creamy rice pudding spiced with nutmeg, a speciality of his grandmother and his favourite dish. For a moment he was almost sure that his grandmother would come to his side and tell him to get up and eat up the whole pudding like a good boy, wasting no part of it. There was no one there but he found that someone had come there and cooked the dish and fed him, as there were still traces of it on his shirt and the cooking ashes were still warm. The pot and the bowl had been washed and put away neatly as always. It was a mystery to him as he could not fathom who would do such a nice thing for him, especially as he knew very few people in the village and none who were friendly enough to go out of their way for him.

It was a glorious morning, with the radiant sun spreading his benevolent warm rays on all living things with equal grace. The birds were singing their beautiful songs and seemed to invite him to share their joy of greeting the rising sun. He went out, his feet faltering weakly, with a pot full of grains to feed them and they all swooped down at once and fluttered and twittered all around him with a show of affection. He felt very happy indeed with his heart filling up with love for them as he watched them frolic around him. The squirrels also joined the birds in their long overdue feast.

Then he wondered how they had managed without any grain to eat while he was sick for so many days. Who looked after them? Who fed them? All of a sudden he felt an awesome and mighty presence which seized his entire being and made him close his eyes. His spine became straight as a ramrod and his head rose spontaneously towards the sky and he sucked in air as if he had been hit by a thunderbolt. He heard a deeply powerful and timeless voice within that seemed to echo endlessly across eons and universes. In spite of its tremendous potency that voice was very sweet and gentle in its timbre and it said, with a merest tinge

of reproach, "Who are you to feed the sparrows? It was I that fed the sparrows even as I am doing now." Tears welled up in his eyes and his heart filled up with an absolute joy that he had never experienced before in his entire existence. There was a sense of unimaginable elation within him along with a loving oneness which encompassed the universe in its entirety.

When he opened his eyes, he saw that a baby squirrel had clambered up on his outstretched hand and was enjoying a nice meal fearlessly by eating the grains lying in it. Again he felt that supreme sense of spiritual oneness with the squirrel—oneness which manifested as a universal and divine love in his heart and mind. Yes, now he understood why his grandmother wanted him to feed the sparrows and why she could not tell him of the Divine Reality felt by her. That Reality had to be experienced to be believed in as existing. He stroked the squirrel's head with loving gentleness and put it down carefully.

Everything now seemed totally different to him and he viewed the world with the eyes of one truly new-born. He went back into the hut and laid himself down as he was still weak from his illness. He soon fell asleep with a beatific smile on his face. His recent experience was already too much for him to bear physically and he slept till late afternoon. As evening fell he prepared to go to the temple as always.

At the temple the bells were ringing with their deeply sonorous notes. A particular bell held his attention in an extraordinary way. Its melodious sound somehow seemed to remind him of that voice he had heard in the morning. It bore in its single note the universal invocation "OM M M..." As the harmonious note died away, it re-emerged as an eternally reverberating OM in the infinite universe of sound—the NADABRAHMAN. He listened intently to the bell, enraptured by its capability of revealing the hidden divinity in sounds, songs and music. Now he could understand the true meaning of the bells at the temple and the reason for singing religious songs there.

The priest started his worship as usual with his apparently random waving of the sacred flame. He had seen the priest do this often enough to be bored stiff but this time he was in a very different frame of mind. His heart leapt with joy when he could consciously perceive that the priest was actually tracing out an incandescent OM with the flame. The luminous OM sketched with the sacred flame was now permanently etched in his mind's eye. He was surprised that all these years he had never seen it and his grandmother had never told him what this waving of the flame meant.

When the priest came to him with the sacred flame, he reached out with his hands over it and then touched his head, eyes and his heart. Now it was perfectly clear why his grandmother used to make him do these things. He at once became conscious of the Divine Presence within as a result of this quite ordinary activity. Yes, they were worshipping the Deity, with the sacred flame, without and then

within themselves by remembering his universal presence.

When the priest offered him the usual sweets as prasad, he sensed again the same awesome joy he had felt that morning. They had offered sweets to the Deity without and the same were being offered to the Deity within. It was not he but the Divine within who was consuming the sweets. He at once recalled how his grandmother used to pray before eating anything and he now knew what she had been doing. It was such a simple, straightforward and sure way to achieve instant self-identification with the Divine.

He left the temple and started his way downhill. When he had reached the bottom of the hill, he could not resist looking back and bowing to the Divine with his hands together in prayer. When he raised his joined hands towards the temple, he was amazed by the striking similarity between his joined hands and the shape of the temple. It was yet another revelation to him as he now understood that when he greeted people with his joined hands he was really forming a small temple over his heart where the Divine resided. So it was an invitation to worship the Divine within him as he was worshipping the Divine in the person he was greeting—in the same spirit of oneness experienced by him.

He met his cousin and his wife with her forehead sporting a large red spot just over the eyebrows. He often used to wonder about this red spot and even asked his grandmother why she did not wear it. She merely said that it was customary for women to put this red mark on the forehead to show that they were married. As always, he felt that there was a deeper significance behind this simple fact. He even asked the priest once who repeated a similar explanation that left him very much dissatisfied. His curiosity was again aroused and he wanted a proper explanation. After all there had to be good reasons behind all these ancient customs he had come across.

Why was the spot red? Why not blue or black or yellow? Why on the forehead and not on the nose or chin or cheeks? Then the reason struck him suddenly. It was the third eye of Lord Shiva! He remembered the story told him by his grandmother about how Lord Shiva had destroyed the lord of lust, Kamdev, who had been turned into a heap of ashes by a red shaft of fire from Lord Shiva's third eye. So a married woman used a red spot to remind immoral men that if they looked at her in a lustful manner then this third eye could open and burn them down.

He smiled at his cousin and his wife and greeted them with warmth and an unusually polite bow with his hands joined together. Yes, he was now one with them too through the universal Divine even though they did not wish him well at all. He asked his cousin for a pen and a piece of paper. He told him that he was giving his land to him and he wanted the paper to make a deed to that effect. His cousin just could not understand this strange behaviour of his and asked him in a surprised manner how he would survive without the land to take care of his

needs. "What will you do now?" the cousin asked.

His gentle eyes lit up brilliantly with a spiritual fire as he gazed towards the distant Himalayas beckoning him towards their sacred summits. As he turned to start his journey towards his true destiny, he said "I go to serve the ONE who feeds the sparrows."

SURESH HINDOCHA

LET ME NOT OFFEND THEE

I QUESTION Thee sometimes, O my Lord:
 Let me not offend Thee.
 With what high hopes
 Thou must have bestowed
 Thy jewelled-spark-soul upon me!
 An innocent fool I fathom
 High seas in search of That,
 Who abides blithely in my own depths.

Lead me to Thy Fire-cavern
 Where I'll see Thy golden Face
 And will be drawn inexorably by Thy gaze
 To emerge in Thy argent Dawn,
 To merge in Thy pure Bliss.

SHYAM KUMARI

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

Auroville Anniversary

For the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Auroville the Journal *Auroville Today* has brought out a special issue with contributions of several distinguished authors and personalities. I am presenting here some interesting extracts from their articles.

AUROVILLE, you are celebrating the 25th anniversary of your foundation. Accept the greetings of an old friend who was present at your birth and inauguration and has often returned to visit; who thinks of you with gratitude and longing. I greet all of you who live here in admiration of your effort, your courage and your constancy.

— *Dr. Karl Pfauter, former German Consul-General in Madras.*

*

Auroville is not just an idea. It is the future, the future of the world. It is the only model that I know of that has survived, and I believe in it more than ever before. I've come here today to breathe the Auroville spirit.

— *J.R.D. Tata, Industrialist.*

*

This [financial contribution to the Birthday celebrations] is a very clear expression of UNESCO's, not just interest, but support and appreciation of an experiment that we definitely want to succeed because today's world-problems are due to lack of understanding between human beings.

— *C.L. Sharma, Deputy Director-General of UNESCO.*

*

What I know of Auroville is enough to awaken my curiosity and interest. I suspect it's an expression of a new kind of human consciousness that we will need to survive in this world.

— *Ervin Laszlo, Author; former Director of Research to the United Nations.*

*

The completion of the unique inner chamber of Matrimandir in Auroville, with its huge crystal globe and twelve mystic pillars, is an event of deep significance, representing a creative synergy between the many individual and collective efforts that made this possible.

— *Dr. Karan Singh, Chairman, Auroville Foundation.*

*

When people come here and judge that there is no spirituality in Auroville they do so because they are bound to traditional norms. I think it is the same with many Aurovilians who actually expect traditional things in spirituality. But true spirituality is extremely simple—Sri Aurobindo and Mother have said this hundreds of times.

— *Georges Van Vreckhem, Aurovillian and Dutch Translator.*

*

Your joy, as Aurovilians, will have to be in the transition—as process people rather than product people—because the flowering of this place will probably be several generations down the line.

There are very few expressions on earth at present that have Auroville's level of aspiration. The challenge will be to keep it up. It's an incredible game that you're playing

— *Ram Dass (Richard Alpert), American New Age Author.*

THE VISION AND WORK OF SRI AUROBINDO

A REVIEW-ARTICLE

To discover the full meaning of Christ's question in the Sermon on the Mount "What are you doing to excess?", the young C.F. Andrews wrote it out in Greek and placed it on his study table. He would look at it every day to get a completer import of it and wonder whether "to excess" would also cover to love one's enemy. As the good Christian in him would urge him to "fight the good fight", he would also go to the extreme length of forbearance and love in the face of evil. For him, later on, "Gandhi, a Hindu, had pointed towards a 'Christian' solution and made it appear practicable". But in the context of World War II and many other contexts his solution failed to seize the true Indian spirit. Not to understand that all destruction is not evil and not to recognise the hour of God when mighty changes and transforming actions are involved is a grave failure which in its wake leaves a chaotic world. Not to see the War behind the War is not only to be myopic, as in the case of a Hindu 'Christian', but to seek help from one against whom the real War is being fought, as in the case of a misguided nationalist, is, to say the least, just fatal. Nazism stood for the destruction of all that is elevating and noble in us and its triumph would have been the loss for ever of *Lebensraum* for the life of the Spirit. But "Sri Aurobindo stood alone in his sunbright seeing of the war's inner significance"; in it he "saw much more at stake than a political, social or cultural issue. He saw an issue beyond the human, the growth of God in man opposed from regions occult to our normal consciousness. And he saw that secret opposition as the most colossal in history and not confined to a brief outbreak." He saw indeed the Diabolic standing against the Divine. It is in this context that we witness the forthright spiritual journalism of K.D. Sethna reporting to us the danger when "we have an incarnation of adverse forces, the dark deities, and they shape out a collectivity, a nation, a State with the purpose of goose-stepping on the world and smashing the entire fabric of civilisation". There cannot be Christian solutions to the problem of the Divine vs the Anti-Divine; the Anti-Divine has to be broken and our recognising this is what we are "doing to excess". Nor can there be Christian solutions to problems such as philanthropy; St Francis took Lady Poverty as his bride but "manifesting an infallible Benevolence" is another thing and, as Sethna would say, trying "to bring down some ray of truth which would really solve the terrible problem of life" is what is expected as a part of spiritual endeavour. If there is the Augustinian in Sethna lingering here and there, he soon leaves him behind to move in the radiant ambience of his Master in matters mundane as well. In his *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo*¹ there are

¹ *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo* Second Revised and Enlarged Edition By K D Sethna Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry Published in 1992 Price Rs 125

Christian or Western elements peeping out at times and there are what may look like hesitating hues in some regions; but a sharper turn and a more solid form are also acquired in the richness of the process. The Publisher's Note to the Second Edition tells us rightly that the book is always marked "by the clarity and penetrativeness and power of exposition set in a variety of keys and pointed in a multitude of directions". Sethna writes in his introduction that the topics covered in the book were "basically written with an eye to the wide world of inquiring minds and questing hearts", holding the ideal of "interplay of light and life" in their propositional developments.

The variety of topics in this 'little' book is indeed very amazing and encompasses spiritual, yogic, philosophical, literary, social-political aspects with the stamp of an interpretative thinker, even at times of a *manishi*, something which comes only from concrete contact with a radiant Presence. Here we have a wide-ranging mind which traverses freely the metaphysical tracts with a luminous brevity, presents spiritual issues with a focussed attentiveness shedding on them the light of an intimately grasped intuition, interprets world-events and social events on the firm basis of an occult truth seized by the alertness that springs up from the soul itself, discusses with friends and philosophers in the mode of informality matters pertaining to mysticism, dispels the doubts of a "perpetual doubter doubting for the doubt's own sake" till the doubt itself is doubted, moves with lyrical ease and epic grandeur in poetry of the poet of integralism, with thoughts that wander through Eternity, and even makes speculations regarding each grey cell bursting to omniscient gold: the spectrum of the Vision and the Work extends far beyond the immediate visible in both the directions.

Sethna's prose-style also assumes equally varied profundities depending upon the subject in hand; but in these profundities there is always the search for the Aurobindonian depth which is really the unifying element in the whole work. To explain Sri Aurobindo, to remove misunderstandings about him, to locate his place in the firmament of the spiritual stars, to tell that there is an integralism in his word-power, to suggest "unAurobindonian despair" as more apt-sounding, to describe the phases of the Mind of Light, to heighten the heart of matter's mystery in the Yoga of Transformation—all varying subjects and they need corresponding keys in the development of the rich orchestrated theme. Let us see a few examples. There is the Socratic tête-à-tête in epistolary writings while clearing misunderstandings about mysticism: "No, Prof K, mysticism does not take birth from cheap negatives and it is not a flight from life's call. The basic call of life, of all evolutionary Nature, is the struggle for the Divine, the pursuit of a more-than-mortal Truth and Goodness and Beauty." But he does not pause with it; he can be hard-hitting too when it comes to the question of defending Aurobindonians who are dubbed "frustrated fugitives from life's demands"; thus he tells the Professor that the "don has left a big hole in his learning: no wonder he misunderstands so much. To talk about spirituality in general and the Aurobindo-

nian brand in particular without getting intimate with the writings of Sri Aurobindo, our greatest modern Yogi, is rather rash." Similarly, he tells the Abbé Jules Monchanin about the absurdity of his remarks, following the lead of the prejudiced Indologists, that Sri Aurobindo lacked proper professional competence and had no adequate linguistic base in presenting the esoteric theory of the Veda; Sethna runs through Sri Aurobindo's principal arguments and maintains that the "conclusions at which he has arrived about the matter and manner of the Veda are set forth after a scrupulous review of old and current theories and follow a clear chain of philosophical, historical and psychological arguments". The Vedic Rishis themselves had recognised the difficulty in understanding the text and had posed the query: "one who knows not That, what shall he do with the Riks?" Sethna's hard-hitting answer is, "he will make the mess which Monchanin, following Renou's lead, approves and encourages". Sethna's penchant for playing on words is well-known and in the present work we have some samples; here is one pertaining to a lion and a bull in the manner of Chesterton: "A bull is one who is never cowed, yet never bullies. In the same vein I may define a lion as one who leaps to lie on another. A lion is a beast of prey, seeking to be on the offensive. A bull is a beast of burden, brave but preferring to be on the defensive. A lion is always independent, a bull usually looks up to a master. To play Chesterton again, a lion in his might ever roars, 'Let me prey!' A bull with all his strength still bellows, 'Let me pray!' "

Coming to the significance of the English language in post-independent India Sethna has, naturally enough, very definite views about it. It is often said that never on earth was a more momentous question discussed than when Macaulay in 1835 fixed the English tongue as a medium of education for the Indians. Did he commit an egregious blunder in this? Even if this was a blunder then, can it be considered so today also? The extreme nationalist spirit would surely like to drive this tongue out without offering a truly suitable alternative to replace it. But in a more statesmanlike manner Rajaji pleaded for the English language as being quite expressive of the Indian ethos; in fact he maintained it to be Goddess Saraswati's gift to us which, being a gift, should not be squandered away. But perhaps vernaculars for the flowering of our innate genius, simplified Sanskrit as the integrating language, and English for science and international relationships should constitute the synthetic formula without introducing the pernicious high-low complex in the scheme of things. This is necessary when we recognise the universalisation of man himself and should be viewed as more than a statesmanlike proposition. Indeed, Sethna would go one step further and assert that in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* "we have proof as ample as we could wish that, while our vernaculars more easily provide us with footholds for climbing beyond common-places into the revelatory intensities of literature, English alone enables at present the soul of India to attain the absolute peak of self-expression." This conclusion is certainly a little extreme in assertion, particularly when he says

“English alone” although it is toned down to some extent by the qualifying phrase “at present”; in the light of Sri Aurobindo we cannot categorically state that the best the vernaculars will offer us are only footholds leaving the absolute peaks of self-expression to the “tongue that was Shakespeare’s and is now Sri Aurobindo’s”. If this argument is to be extended further it would make all non-English languages, including French and Sanskrit, vernaculars; nor is the uniqueness or superiority of *Savitri* for the “present” only. Unquestionably English is the “most highly developed of modern languages” and truly enough the “transcendent speech”—to use a *Savitri*-phrase—has found in it a receptive mould to mould itself to receive her flaming transcendences, yet we cannot bind or tie her anywhere in any specific manner. What Sri Aurobindo has most wonderfully done is to give to the Word that was more than half-blind the seeing power: English has become the instrument of Pashyanti Vak, has become *deva-bhasha*, God’s Tongue. And yet that does not complete Sri Aurobindo’s Vision and Work: he has opened out, established, the possibility for the Transcendent Speech, Para Vani, herself to enter into the material sheath of this world in her varying moods of delight in the manifestive play of the Spirit. In that way he has gifted to each language a method and means to discover its own soul—a multiplicity of the Joy of such a divinity. Greater in this greatness shall be the seer-poets of the future, singers of the hymns of this Goddess, and in it is the greater greatness of the ‘English’-*Savitri* given to us by Sri Aurobindo.

Not that all this would come as something new to Sethna; but the problem may perhaps lie with the mode of presentation and discussion he has adopted in this work under review. More than half of the book consists of letters, reviews, comments, reminiscences, and stray thoughts giving it more the impression of a collected rather than a gathered or organic whole. The stringing together is around Sri Aurobindo no doubt, but the pieces do not quite form a single coherent or a well-worked-out thesis on any specific aspect keeping his universality as the supporting factor. Thus, while discussing the theories of Maya and Lila, Sethna has very beautifully put Sri Aurobindo’s position, according to whom “the Supreme is totally defined by neither of these conceptions. Each has certainly a validity in experience. The sense of World-Illusion comes by experience of the utter freedom of the Divine from the universe of forms, an entire independence that can be asserted by turning away from the phenomena of body, life and mind as if they were trifles and even phantoms adding nothing to the essential self-existence of the Spirit. The sense of World-Play comes by experience of a constant sustainment of phenomena by that self-existence as if they emerged from its conscious force and expressed, overtly or covertly, its boundless delight.” If these were the only World-views, Sri Aurobindo’s theory of Supramental Evolution and Transformation would be totally out of place. But one proof among many that can be cited to disprove this is the incarnation of the Divine Soul from age to age. If we admit this occult fact then we cannot escape

the inevitable conclusion that we are living in a mode of creation in which the Divine is as if working out a manifestation of its delightful multiplicity emerging from the Divine's secretly withdrawn state of utter Inconscience. And in the process he evolutionarily involves himself in "carrying on the evolution". Indeed, there is the eternal Avatar and there is a series of Avatars in the issue of the transformation of the Inconscience into the Splendours of the Infinite. Going by the connotation given by the Gita to the term Avatar, we have the Divine or the Lord himself taking a human birth to carry on the evolution in a more definitive way in its moments of extreme crisis, the moments of intense spiritual crisis poised for an unprecedented leap of consciousness. The Avatar of the Gita hints at the process too: "I loose forth myself" in which that 'myself' is his Supreme Self, his Purushottamahood, and not anything from any other place. Sethna, however, views it somewhat differently. Says he: "Avatarhood, essentially manifesting the supreme Godhead, takes place from various planes of being by an incarnation of the central Divine Personality poised on a plane. It can take place from the Mind plane to establish the rule of an ideal and Spirit-touched Dharma answering to the finest mental aspiration; or from the Overmind plane to bring a many-sided direct impulsion from a spiritual state that is vaster than the mental and beyond all merely ethico-religious rule. Again, it can take place straight from the supreme Truth-Consciousness, the Supermind, where the ultimate marvel of the Transcendent is organised for time-creation and the all-transformative archetype of earth-existence is dynamic." We have no such hint in the Gita, nor in the parable of Vishnu's ten Avatars, nor in any other ancient Indian scriptures; Sri Aurobindo also does not give it to us anywhere. But if this is true then Sri Aurobindo as the Supreme's incarnation would be from his plane of Supermind or Truth-Consciousness; in other words, the Supreme stationed on the supramental plane incarnated himself as Sri Aurobindo. That would be considerably short of the Mother's statement that he "came on earth from the Supreme to announce the manifestation of a new race and the new world, the Supramental"; she also said that what Sri Aurobindo represents "is a decisive action direct from the Supreme". Of course it is possible that the central Divine Personality poised on the Supramental plane can incarnate here in a human form and be an instrument for direct action from the Supreme, but certainly this is not what is meant by the Mother's statement of Sri Aurobindo incarnating from the Supreme.¹ It is likely that Sethna did not go into

¹ K D Sethna's Note "As far as I remember my article was shown to the Mother before its publication. In any case, I don't think that the concepts here fall short of the Mother's statements on Sri Aurobindo. Supermind is the all-creative and all-transformative form of the Supreme, the transcendent Divine in connection with our created universe, all "decisive action direct from the Supreme" has taken place from the Supermind with the object of bringing about—in the Mother's words—"a new race and the new world, the Supramental". Therefore to say that Sri Aurobindo is the Avatar who has come from the Supermind is to say in other words what the Mother has declared about him. It does not seem to me legitimate to dissociate in any valid sense the Supermind from the Supreme."

these details because what he has presented here is only in the nature of a comment on the Mother's message of April 24, 1957; maybe we could await a completer treatment from him on this subject of Avatarhood.

"The Mother saw the all-consummating Avatar in Sri Aurobindo" but that is one side of the Yoga of Supramental Realisation and Transformation; to accomplish this Yoga it is necessary that his dynamic Force should also incarnate with him simultaneously. With deep insight and a warm sense of intimacy Sethna, whom we should now endearingly call Amal, has very vividly given us his Mother whose one sun-splendid "aim was to carry the world with her and to prepare it for the full manifestation" of the Divine in the earth-consciousness. That is indeed her full Avatarhood in which Sri Aurobindo saw the "Shakti that would make his Yoga an organised starting-point of a new chapter of earth's history" There is Sri Aurobindo's assurance to her that if the past attempts fell short of fruition "this time it will not be so." One of the greatest acts of her surrender to the Guru of the Supramental Yoga is the dissolution of an entire superhuman world she had created and which was on the verge of appearing on earth; Sri Aurobindo had indicated to her that it was a Creation from the Overmind which would delay the appearance of the Supramental by long millennia. Their work continued. And to wipe off the original score and to pay the debt a "dread mysterious sacrifice" had to be made; Sri Aurobindo put the "strategy" into action and "at the very time of his withdrawal the Supramental Power made its permanent base in the Mother's body, beginning with the brain-mind. This is what is known as the "Mind of Light"—tells Amal. The grim occult battle continued and Amal recounts some of the victories won by the Mother subsequent to this, including the "consent of material Nature to the demand of transformation". That is tremendous indeed and now things can unroll with an assured confidence in the triumph of the ultimate objective. The twin Avatars have left it to the Supermind to take charge of the terrestrial evolution with their constant push from the subtle-physical intimately close to the earth. Man's collaboration will further hasten the hour.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo in Baroda, compiled and edited by *Roshan* and *Apurva*, published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry, pp. 181, price Rs. 65.00, (First Edition February 1993).

A SINCERE and committed writer's words carry some conviction. The compilers and editors of this book are to be congratulated specially for compiling not only the "Notes" scattered over the pages of the journal *Archives*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, but also material from other sources, thus making everything relevant available in a handy volume for which they deserve high praise. Praise is appropriate too for the faultless printing and get-up in a volume like this which will certainly find a large body of readers. The language of this book is very simple and illuminating. Roshan and Apurva have displayed commendable critical acumen in the selection of biographical materials.

While giving us a biographical account of Sri Aurobindo's return from England and his service at Baroda from 8 February 1893 to June 1906, the compilers do adequate justice to the various facets of Sri Aurobindo's personality.

Roshan and Apurva have succeeded admirably in depicting soul-movements and their many-sided rapidity. The compilers have run through pages after pages to open up Sri Aurobindo's life in Baroda. Sri Aurobindo was pre-eminent in more ways than one. He was poet, philosopher, interpreter of Indian culture, spiritual explorer, patriot and revolutionary leader. He was a patriot but worked behind the scenes till 1906. The compilers show, above all, a Supreme Seer and Yogi who integrated life and Spirit, visualising the vast field of all existence through numerous spiritual experiences which transcend the human consciousness. This spiritual seeker travelled from mind to Overmind and from Overmind to Supermind.

The book consists of six chapters and a chronology of events (1872-1908), with impressive and suggestive photographs of Sri Aurobindo by himself as well as those with his friends and with his wife.

The compilers begin with the chapter "Arrival in India" with Archival notes. Accounts showed that on 6th February 1893, Sri Aurobindo, then twenty-one years old, returned to India by the mail steamer *Carthage* having spent fourteen years in England, with the vision and aspiration to liberate Mother India. The writers narrate the strange and unasked-for experience of Sri Aurobindo the moment he reached Apollo Bunder, Bombay at 10-55 A.M.: "A vast calm descended upon him... this calm surrounded him and remained for long months afterwards."

The writers move on to Sri Aurobindo's service from 8 February 1893 to

June 1906 and his change of houses in Baroda. First he joined the Settlement Department, then he was shifted to various departments such as Stamp, Revenue, Secretariat and drawing up important despatches. From 1897, he became part-time lecturer in French at the Baroda College. The compilers collected the materials from the *Archives* and several other sources. They say, "Sri Aurobindo's services seem to have been utilised, from time to time, partly in the Government Department and partly by the Maharaja himself in a confidential capacity. Whenever he thought fit, he would send for Sri Aurobindo for writing letters, composing speeches or drawing up documents of various kinds which needed special care in phrasing."

Sri Aurobindo stayed a long time with Khasirao Jadhav. But he often shifted his residence from one place to another.

A.B. Purani once remarked, (Purani, *Evening Talks*, series one, pp. 305-06), "During the next thirteen years, the period of active service in Baroda State, Sri Aurobindo lived at one time or another in as many as half a dozen houses in the city of Baroda." But he was indifferent to the house as such, whether it was a palace or a hovel.

The second chapter begins with personal and family life. Here we have authentic accounts of Sri Aurobindo's meeting with his family and it reveals the affectionate side of his nature. He was by no means aloof and indifferent but interested in life and the people around him. Yet the overall impression is one of inwardness, quiet, poise, easy humour. The writers have drawn on a statement of R.N. Patkar to give an idea of Sri Aurobindo's life at Baroda. "He was remarkably simple in his mode of living. He was not at all fastidious in his tastes. He did not seem to care much either for his food or dress, because he never attached any importance to either." In England, according to Sri Aurobindo's father's strict instructions, he had an entirely anglicised education and drifted away completely from the Indian culture and heritage. The compilers pinpoint, "At Baroda he made up the deficiency, learned Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages, especially Marathi and Gujarati." He plunged into a deep study of Sanskrit and mastered it and read the *Upanishads*, the *Gita*, the *Puranas*, the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and the dramas of Kalidasa, etc. So the Baroda period was wonderfully productive in terms of interpretation of ancient Indian culture as well as in his own literary creation. "Books, books were his major occupation."

The writers cite some letters of Sri Aurobindo to his sister Sarojini and his wife Mrinalini. His letter to Sarojini shows him as an affectionate brother. He was concerned about their difficulties.

The compilers have done painstaking and stupendous research-work in collecting letters to Mrinalini from the Archives of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram which revealed material regarding his married life and his relation with his wife. These letters convey to us Sri Aurobindo's first confession of faith, the first

verbal statement of the sleepless aspiration of his soul. Here we perceive his inextinguishable thirst for God, his intense yearning to see Him. From the scanty external facts we come to know how Sri Aurobindo was aware of the afflictions of his wife for which neither of them was responsible as somehow they had drifted apart. He was getting involved deeper and deeper in politics. In his letter to his wife he expressed himself in the following terms:

“Know that the only mantra for womankind is this: ‘The husband is the Supreme Guru.’ The wife shares the dharma of her husband. She must help him, counsel him, encourage him in whatever work he accepts as his Dharma.” And he depicted his “three madnesses” Sri Aurobindo was never indifferent to her thoughts and feelings. These letters were perhaps an enigma to Mrinalini.

The third chapter leads us to know how Sri Aurobindo was highly revered and loved by his students for his profound knowledge and his insight into literature. The writers point out his career as a professor in Sri Aurobindo’s own words: “I was not so conscientious a Professor as Manmohan. I never used to look at the notes and sometimes my explanation did not agree with them at all.” One of his students remarked: “His mastery of the English language was phenomenal.”

On page 84 and 85 of this book the reader will find the quotation from Bhavan’s Journal where Shri K.M. Munshi says: “Prof. Arvind Ghosh, later to be known as Sri Aurobindo, was our Professor of English, though at times he acted as Private Secretary to Sayajirao III, the Gaekwad of Baroda. To the students of our college, Prof. Ghosh was a figure enveloped in mystery. He was reputed to be a Poet, a master of many languages and in touch with Russian nihilists. Many stories of his doings were whispered from mouth to mouth among the students almost with awe.” The writers further highlight Sri Aurobindo as a Teacher from Archival Notes.

The fourth chapter deals with the political life of Sri Aurobindo. Addenda I, Bhawani Mandir, says: “The Shakti, we call in India Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of Shaktis ” Addenda II—The Ganganath School and a list of early political writings. The writers give a detailed picture of Sri Aurobindo’s political thought, its ultimate goal and the means to achieve it. Sri Aurobindo’s political goal for India was nothing less than complete freedom from foreign domination. It was enunciated at a time when the idea appeared utterly impractical and impossible of achievement. From a study of his writings it is understood that his political thoughts lie in two directions. Firstly, in accordance with his idealistic and spiritual approach which we have noted, he looked upon the motherland as a Divine Mother for whose emancipation her children must strive with all their power. It was not only for her own sake, however, that India must be free, but for all humanity, because it is her *Swadharma*, or essential nature, to guide the world on the spiritual path. Sri Aurobindo’s talks and writings were variations on one dominant theme: “Nationalism.” It is clearly expressed in this book (page

119). The compilers cite *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*, where Sri Aurobindo says: "There is a mighty law of life, a great Principle of human evolution, a body of spiritual knowledge and experience of which India has always been destined to be the guardian, exemplar and missionary."

Secondly, there was a need for an organisation of the national will in a strong central authority. That is why the compilers have very lucidly mentioned on pages 116 and 117 the three sides of Sri Aurobindo's political ideas and activities: public propaganda and "undermining of the foreign rule through an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance" and, if necessary, an armed insurrection.

The last chapter sets forth the spiritual experiences of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo said: "My own life and my own yoga have always been since my coming to India both this-worldly and other-worldly."

In the midst of his political activities Sri Aurobindo had certain experiences of unusual psycho-physical phenomena. After his visit to Swami Brahmananda at Chandod in Gujarat, and his visit to a temple of Kali by the Narmada he had wonderful spiritual revelations. From the materials and sources of this book one can indicate the early landmarks of his inner life: his meeting with Vishnu Bhaskar Lele and the experience of the silent Brahman consciousness that never afterwards left him.

This book is obviously oriented towards a marked beneficial impact on the reader's mind. It touches on the whole early course of Sri Aurobindo's life, moving from the budding patriotic early childhood into the more dynamic period of revolutionary activities.

It will surely appeal to anyone with a serious interest in the life and work of the Master Yogi.

NILIMA DAS

Growing Within—The Psychology of Inner Development: by A.S. Dalal. Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1992. Pp. 192. Price Rs. 55.

This latest book of A.S. Dalal is a gem. Who should read it? Anyone who is fired by this sentence from Sri Aurobindo: "It is by a constant inner growth that one can find a constant newness and unfailing interest in life. There is no other satisfying way." Not un-often man finds life to be a routine, a bore; earning, eating, worshipping lose their thrill, spice and joy. But how does one, wanting to go inwards, start to work for it? This compilation from Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's published writings is sure to be a help; a guide to the what and why and how of man's inward turning, inner journey.

The eighteen-page introduction is a 'must' for someone fairly new to the subject, and the exposition therein of the contents of the book is well done and

will be especially appreciated by those conversant with modern psychology. The book proper is divided into nine sections. Starting with the emergence, the awakening and growth of consciousness, it goes on to describe the basic requisites of this path; the first steps and foundation and then the means and methods. The next two sections deal with the difficulties and pitfalls and inner experiences. Finally, there are the two sections on probably the most difficult and essential portions of this guide to the inner journey—namely “The psychic being and inner growth” and “Reversal of Consciousness—the new Birth”. The book ends with a glossary and an index.

Any compilation has to be selective, and hence is open to the criticism of excessive miserliness or over-enthusiasm in its selection. In his small preface A.S. Dalal has clearly spelt out his object. In his own words it is: “to help seekers in understanding and recognising the processes and experiences of inner growth.” He also wants to make the work meaningful to all seekers of self-growth, irrespective of their belief-systems. In order to diminish the puzzlement of the general seeker, as distinct from one following Sri Aurobindo, he refrains from treating in this book the “features of the growth process peculiar to Sri Aurobindo’s yoga”. One may regret that he has taken this stand, but one has to concede that right to the author and give thanks for explaining such a stand right at the beginning. I do feel that inclusion of those features—one of the most important of which is the concept and experience of the Mother taking up the Sadhana—would have further enriched this compilation.

To a sadhak already aspiring, and having had a little glimpse of the inner life, I would suggest that he starts the book with the last chapter—a superb compilation of the words of our Masters explaining “the reversal of consciousness”, then return to the first three chapters. Now he may read the introduction.

This book has to be read and re-read in different ways. I think here of a frequent visitor to the nursery in Auroville; sometimes starting with the wonderful section on Orchids and then returning to the part full of different-coloured Frangipanis (champa); sometimes starting with the Bougainvilleas—in short, according to the needs of the inner season.

For any sadhak of Sri Aurobindo’s yoga I would say this book is an essential buy to be again and again savoured, assimilated. For others aspiring for growth it is a good guide book. I congratulate Dr. A.S. Dalal for a job well done: very admirably indeed. This book is my fairly constant companion.

Thank you, Dr Dalal.

DINKAR PALANDE

Sri Aurobindo Circle, 49th Number: Sri Aurobindo Society Annual, 1993. Price Rs. 30/-

“Good wine,” they say, “needs no bush.” Similarly the *Sri Aurobindo Circle* should need no review: the regularity of its appearance and the constancy of its quality means that those who can appreciate this kind of *soma* must know by now where to find it.

This year the opening photo section is devoted entirely to the Mother: a lovely snap of her leaving the tennis ground in October 1950 is followed by a series of portraits taken on the auspicious date of 4.5.67. Finally there is a colour reproduction of one of her early paintings, surely a masterpiece. Apart from this the Mother is represented in this issue by two talks, on the sadhana of the body and the work of the physical transformation, given nine years apart on June 26 1958, and 24 June 1967. The first was given in the Playground, the second privately in her room; the differences between them hint at the enormous ground in her unique sadhana that she had covered in the interval. A third item is also given under the Mother’s name, but here I would like to issue a word of caution. Some years ago I was involved in helping to translate this series of ‘Visions’, which were retrieved not from among the Mother’s own papers but from the monthly *Revue Cosmique*, the organ of the followers of the occultist Théon. The Mother has often spoken about her association with Théon and his wife Alma, who were the first people to help her gain some external knowledge about the inner experiences she was having, and to guide her in occultism. For a time, around 1906 and 1907, when this series of ‘Visions’ was published, she was helping to edit and publish their magazine in Paris. This involved, too, translating into French the material supplied by the English followers of Théon (whose remarkable wife was also English), and the Mother has referred in conversation to the tussles she used to have with one such contributor. As Théon and Alma are clearly recognisable in several of the ‘Visions’—as the ‘fine-looking old man’, and the ‘young fair-haired medium’ who are the major protagonists, it seems quite probable that different disciples, the Mother among them, may have contributed visions or dreams they had of their teachers. So to say that these accounts are almost certainly by the Mother is to overstate the case a little. As I remember, the Mother’s son, M. André Morisset, advised against publishing them as her own accounts of experiences she had had. They are of course of some interest in giving something of the flavour of Théon’s movement and showing how very far were the Mother’s first steps into occultism from the purity and vastness of her later development. There is an interesting remark from Sri Aurobindo in this connection, which I will not quote here, but which might usefully be added if it is intended to print more of these ‘Visions’.

The rest of the issue is centred firmly on Sri Aurobindo. First come several short and pertinent messages, some in facsimile, and then a series of longer

extracts from his writings. A transitional section of poems, by Sri Aurobindo himself and then by disciples, is followed by six articles on his work by regular contributors, all quoting extensively from his writings. The first, ‘“The Mystic Drake”’ by Kishor Gandhi, deals with some lines from *Savitri*. His discussion both illuminates and is illuminated by some of the extracts from Sri Aurobindo on earlier pages, especially ‘The Bright and Dark Personae in every human nature’ and ‘Mixture of Truth and Error in human evolution’. This kind of mutual reflection between article and selected passages is very pleasing, and might be made more use of. What I missed in this item was any reference to the context of the lines (they occur in the debate between Savitri and Death) and, even more, an examination of the ‘recondite and occult’ symbolism of the title phrase: why exactly does Sri Aurobindo here refer to a drake, who three lines later seems to have become a dragon, reminding us of the ‘griffin forefront of the night and day’ in Book One, Canto One? While dragons and griffins are resonantly symbolic, drakes, to this poetry-lover at least, carry no such significance. Can any reader cast light on Sri Aurobindo’s use of this figure, precisely here?¹

There follows a talk given by K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar in Madras some years ago. Evidently it has been decided to print it now because of its intrinsic merit and genuine relevance. K.D. Sethna’s ongoing series ‘Sri Aurobindo and Greece’ concludes in this issue with extensive quotations from *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, comparing the Greek spirit and the Indian in the arts, architecture and philosophy, rounding off with Sri Aurobindo’s vigorous condemnation of ‘bastard Gandharan sculpture’, side by side with the possibility, exemplified in his own life and writings, of a true fusion of Greek and Indian motives.

Dr. Prema Nandakumar’s new series, continuing in this issue, on Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation of Indian religion, is refreshing in that it quotes widely, not only from the Master but from other Indian spiritual poetry, ranging from the Vedas to the Alvars. Then I found Jugal Kishore Mukherjee’s piece on ‘The Humour of Sri Aurobindo, the Poet-Maker’ interesting, less for the examples of the Master’s humour at the end, than for the preceding five and a half pages in which the epithet given to him is justified and illustrated by potted biographies of six Ashram poets; here Jugal’s own fine style and sense of humour come into play.

A.S. Dalal takes the recent publication of a book by D.C. Dennet, ‘an impressive elaboration of a theory of consciousness avowedly based on materialism’ as the starting-point for his article. The first half expounds, with abundant quotation, Dennet’s views; the second is a compilation of passages from Sri Aurobindo exemplifying his experience of consciousness.

¹ Note by the editor of *Sri Aurobindo Circle* “In the *Chambers Dictionary*, one of the meanings given to ‘drake’ is ‘a dragon’ ”

Some mention should be made of the poets represented on pages 50-62 (Sri Aurobindo, Arjava, Amal Kiran, Nolini, Nirodbaran, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Gleaner, Romen Palit, and Lal Kamal). The work of the first five of these is likely to be familiar to many readers, but the last four are less easily accessible. I know the work of H.C. was much appreciated by Sri Aurobindo, but found the example given here rather feeble. Gleaner's work is always appealing; although 'A Poem' on page 60 does not match her very best work, it was, of all the poems printed here, the one I was most grateful to the editor for selecting. Isn't it time for a collection in book-form from this fine poet?

The issue closes well with an interesting review by Sachidananda Mohanty of the new edition of Kishor Gandhi's *Social Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the New Age*.

SHRADDHAVAN

A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

(Continued from the issue of July 1993)

7. THE GREATEST REWARD

IN times of yore, poets—imaginative to the core—paid flowery tributes to the Tamil kings and noblemen, who in turn drove away the poets' poverty by rewarding them magnanimously. Some poets collected their royalty in glittering gold coins and some in the form of fertile lands. A few were also lucky enough to be presented with cities.

"Ask and it shall be given," were the words uttered to the poets. No king or nobleman went back on his word once the poet threw open his heart. To cut matters short, poets enjoyed royal patronage and commanded respect from the society.

Paranar, a celebrated poet of the Sangam period, whose songs were so powerful and instructive that he "evoked esteem and praise from the whole Tamil world," once went to a mountain tract known as Kalnadu. It was ruled by a royal chieftain named Pacon, renowned for his philanthropic activities and for his undiluted love for poets.

Paranar who came with great expectations found to his dismay that Pacon was not in his palace. No guard or courtier opened his mouth to speak of his whereabouts.

"What if Pacon is not here? Let me sing of the glory that is his," so saying the poet moved out, stood facing the portal of the palace and burst into a song.

As he was half-way through the song, out peeped from the balcony of the palace a charming lady whose beauty could make a delicious languor ripple through the hearts of a thousand men like a warm tide.

Unabated, Paranar continued to sing. Yet he didn't fail to note the lines of sorrow running on her face. As soon as the song was over, the lady burst into tears.

"Why? O beautiful woman of the mountains, what makes you cry? Is it the subject or the content of the song? Or is it the song itself?" asked Paranar.

The lady gave commands. Paranar was ushered into the queen's chamber. The charming lady, Kannaki, who was the queen herself, sobbed out the whole sad story and added: "I have laid my heart bare to you because you belong to that privileged class of people—the poets. I have a lot of faith in the poets, whose powerful tongues can lacerate the unruly and put them on the right track. Please help me."

Paranar consoled Kannaki and before leaving the palace he vowed, "If I come back, it will be with your husband. If I fail let my heart refuse to beat."

A few hours of journey on foot brought Paranar to Nallore, a temple-city

infested with dancing-girls and harlots. On enquiry, he found the house that had entrapped Pacon. He stood at its entrance and repeated the song he had sung at the palace.

The door opened. Pacon made his appearance.

With his dishevelled hair and crumpled clothes he looked more like a rogue than a ruler. His eyes were blood-shot with lust. "Come in, O Poet!" he said.

"Calling me into a house of ill-fame, eh!" Paranar said in a mocking tone.

Pacon looked troubled and downcast.

"By the bye," continued the poet, "am I speaking to Pacon who out of sympathy had parted with his costly shawl to save a dying peacock from bitter cold?"

Pacon nodded his head in assent.

"No. I doubt it," said the poet. "You can't be Pacon. The Pacon I've heard of can't tolerate the suffering of even a feathered creature. But you have left your beautiful wife to die in sorrow while you find pleasure in living with a woman of easy virtue. How could you ever be Pacon?"

As the sense of shame gripped his throat, Pacon found it difficult to articulate even a sound.

"All those who have heard of you, speak high of you. Perhaps no one has heard of you as a philanderer. Cursed be the poet in me who sang in praise of you..."

Pacon mustered courage, cleared his throat and said: "Your words, my dear poet, jab my heart like a sharp awl. I am the same Pacon, your good friend. Do not doubt it. Thank you for the song. Now what would you like to have as the reward?"

"Reward? And that too from a man who is cloistered in a house of ill-fame? No! I take rewards only from kings and nobles and not from lechers like you."

"Stop it!" growled Pacon. "It's none of your business to interfere in my affairs. You sang in praise of Pacon. And Pacon is here, standing outside, and not inside, the notorious house to reward you. But don't ever again insult me with your sharp-edged words. Ask and it shall be given."

Paranar could see Pacon fuming with anger. He had realised his limitations. Yet he didn't want to leave the matter at that. "If the front door doesn't open, try the back door," he said to himself. Seconds later he asked: "All right! You've just now said that you would give me whatever I ask for. Will you keep your word?"

"Every syllable of it."

"Suppose you go back on your words..."

"Don't you ever worry. It has never happened. It'll never happen. Ask and it shall be given. What do you want?"

"I want you."

"What? Me!"

“Yes.”

“And what do you want to do with me?”

“I need not answer this question. Don’t go back on your word. History will speak of you as one who failed to keep his word.”

“Well then! Take me.”

“Follow me,” said Paranar and started walking towards Pacon’s chariot parked a few yards away.”

“Where?” asked the perturbed king.

“Shut up and follow,” curtly replied the poet. “Once you’ve offered yourself to me, you are my slave. Do what I say.”

Pacon’s plight can’t be expressed in words. Half-heartedly he left the place.

The horses craving to go back home developed wings on their hooves and reached the palace in no time.

The presence of Pacon put the sorrow on the face of Kannaki to flight. Everyone in the palace rejoiced. The people welcomed their king with gaiety and fanfare.

“You are mine,” Paranar said sternly looking at Pacon. “You are at my mercy. I’ve every right to do whatever I want with you. And so I present you as my gift to this beautiful lady, Kannaki. You will be her husband—only hers—for ever, till death parts you.”

Pacon promised to do so.

As Paranar took his leave, Kannaki looked at him with her eyes brimming with tears of gratitude. Those were the greatest reward that a queen could give to a wide-visioned poet.

(More legends on the way)

P. RAJA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Special Seventy-third Seminar*

14 February 1993

HOW TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MOTHER ON THE PATH TO THE DIVINE LIFE?

Speech read by Manoj Das Gupta**

A PROPER answer to the question posed in the subject of this Seminar needs initially a clarification of two points implied in it. First, what precisely is meant by the Divine Life in the Mother's vision? Second, what are the essential conditions required to follow the path laid down by the Mother for the realisation of the Divine Life, which in fact is the aim of the Integral Yoga?

I shall try to answer briefly the first question. The Divine Life of which the Mother speaks is to be understood in terms of terrestrial evolution. That evolution, starting from Matter to Life and from Life to Mind, has produced the present race of mental beings living the human life, a life of egoistic Ignorance, besieged by limitations and imperfections in every sphere, from which there seems to be no escape however much one may try to ameliorate it. There are a great many thinkers and philosophers, especially in the modern world, who hold the view that the mental stage is the consummation of the evolutionary process and that there is nothing beyond it. The human race therefore can at the most bring about some reform in its life by social, political, economic, moral, religious and scientific means but it can never create a perfect life on earth radically freed from all the imperfections and limitations from which it now suffers.

But the Mother and Sri Aurobindo do not consider mind to be the ultimate stage of terrestrial evolution and man its final product. For them mind is a transitional stage in evolution which will be exceeded by a superior grade of evolutionary ascent which Sri Aurobindo has termed "the Supermind" and which, when it manifests upon earth, will radically transform the present imperfect human life into the perfect Divine Life embodied in a superior evolutionary being, the Gnostic Being.

But it is very necessary to emphasize that this idea of a farther step in evolution which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have propounded is not merely a

* Specially organised to celebrate the 115th birth anniversary of the Mother and the Golden Jubilee of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education

** Revised and enlarged

product of their utopian imagination but an assured truth based upon their own spiritual realisation. It is therefore not just a pleasant dream of the ideal future but a certitude which must some day become a reality established upon earth as Life and Mind have established themselves.

We have also to bear in mind that following the law of evolution whenever a new principle manifests upon earth, before it is generalised in a new race, it has initially to be realised by a group of few individuals who are ready to receive it, from whom it will go on extending till a whole new race is created.

But these few individuals who will be the pioneers of the New Race have to undergo an extremely arduous discipline to make themselves ready to manifest the New Truth. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have laid down the disciplines of Integral Yoga which is the Path to be followed by those who have an ardent aspiration to collaborate with them in this Great Work of supreme importance for the future of humanity because that is the only solution of the acute crisis in which it is plunged at the present moment and in which, if rightly interpreted, is “concealed a choice of its destiny”¹ as Sri Aurobindo has said.

This brings us to the second question posed in the subject of this Seminar, viz.: what are the essential conditions required to follow the path of Integral Yoga laid down by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for the realisation of the Divine Life? For to follow in the footsteps of the Mother means also and at the same time to follow in the footsteps of Sri Aurobindo, because the realisation of the Supermind and the laying down of the Path of Integral Yoga is a joint creation of both, for they are the same Person with an identical Consciousness.

The essential conditions to be followed by those who aspire to collaborate in this Great Work of transforming the present human life into the Divine Life has been explained by Sri Aurobindo in a long passage which is so intensely charged with his supernal Truth-Power that I prefer to read it in the original, so that its vibrations may sink deep into our consciousness and awaken in our hearts the yearning to undertake the journey to the Divine Life by following in the footsteps of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Here is the passage:

“If you desire this transformation, put yourself in the hands of the Mother and her Powers without cavil or resistance and let her do unhindered her work within you. Three things you must have, consciousness, plasticity, unreserved surrender. For you must be conscious in your mind and soul and heart and life and the very cells of your body, aware of the Mother and her Powers and their working; for although she can and does work in you even in your obscurity and your unconscious parts and moments, it is not the same thing as when you are in an awakened and living communion with her. All your nature must be plastic to her touch,—not questioning as the self-sufficient ignorant mind questions and

¹ *The Life Divine* (Cent Ed., Vol 19), p. 1053

doubts and disputes and is the enemy of its enlightenment and change; not insisting on its own movements as the vital in man insists and persistently opposes its refractory desires and ill-will to every divine influence; not obstructing and entrenched in incapacity, inertia and *tamas* as man's physical consciousness obstructs and clinging to its pleasure in smallness and darkness cries out against each touch that disturbs its soulless routine or its dull sloth or its torpid slumber. The unreserved surrender of your inner and outer being will bring this plasticity into all the parts of your nature; consciousness will awaken everywhere in you by constant openness to the Wisdom and Light, the Force, the Harmony and Beauty, the Perfection that come flowing down from above. Even the body will awake and unite at last its consciousness subliminal no longer to the supramental superconscious Force, feel all her powers permeating from above and below and around it and thrill to a supreme Love and Ananda.

“But be on your guard and do not try to understand and judge the Divine Mother by your little earthly mind that loves to subject even the things that are beyond it to its own norms and standards, its narrow reasonings and erring impressions, its bottomless aggressive ignorance and its petty self-confident knowledge. The human mind shut in the prison of its half-lit obscurity cannot follow the many-sided freedom of the steps of the Divine Shakti. The rapidity and complexity of her vision and action outrun its stumbling comprehension; the measures of her movement are not its measures. Bewildered by the swift alteration of her many different personalities, her making of rhythms and her breaking of rhythms, her accelerations of speed and her retardations, her varied ways of dealing with the problem of one and of another, her taking up and dropping now of this line and now of that one and her gathering of them together, it will not recognise the way of the Supreme Power when it is circling and sweeping upwards through the maze of the Ignorance to a supernal Light. Open rather your soul to her and be content to feel her with the psychic nature and see her with the psychic vision that alone make a straight response to the Truth. Then the Mother herself will enlighten by their psychic elements your mind and heart and life and physical consciousness and reveal to them too her ways and her nature.

“Avoid also the error of the ignorant mind's demand on the Divine Power to act always according to our crude surface notions of omniscience and omnipotence. For our mind clamours to be impressed at every turn by miraculous power and easy success and dazzling splendour; otherwise it cannot believe that here is the Divine. The Mother is dealing with the Ignorance in the fields of the Ignorance; she has descended there and is not all above. Partly she veils and partly she unveils her knowledge and her power, often holds them back from her instruments and personalities and follows that she may transform them the way of the seeking mind, the way of the aspiring psychic, the way of the battling vital, the way of the imprisoned and suffering physical nature. There are

conditions that have been laid down by a Supreme Will, there are many tangled knots that have to be loosened and cannot be cut abruptly asunder. The Asura and Rakshasa hold this evolving earthly nature and have to be met and conquered on their own terms in their own long-conquered fief and province; the human in us has to be led and prepared to transcend its limits and is too weak and obscure to be lifted up suddenly to a form far beyond it. The Divine Consciousness and Force are there and do at each moment the thing that is needed in the conditions of the labour, take always the step that is decreed and shape in the midst of imperfection the perfection that is to come. But only when the supermind has descended in you can she deal directly as the supramental Shakti with supramental natures. If you follow your mind, it will not recognise the Mother even when she is manifest before you. Follow your soul and not your mind, your soul that answers to the Truth, not your mind that leaps at appearances; trust the Divine Power and she will free the godlike elements in you and shape all into an expression of Divine Nature.

“The supramental change is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of the earth-consciousness; for its upward ascent is not ended and mind is not its last summit. But that the change may arrive, take form and endure, there is needed the call from below with a will to recognise and not deny the Light when it comes, and there is needed the sanction of the Supreme from above. The power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence and power of the Divine Mother. The Mother’s power and not any human endeavour and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal’s Ananda.”¹

¹ *The Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 25), pp. 36-41.