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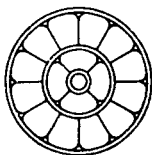
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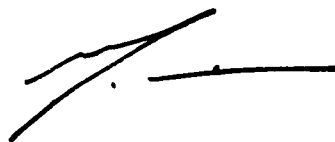
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLVIII

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*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

### CONTENTS

<i>The Mother</i>	
HER WAY OF WORKING	.. 699
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
CONTROL OF THOUGHTS	... 701
<i>Shraddhavan</i>	
WORRIES (Poem)	... 703
<i>Nirodbaran</i>	
A TALK AT AUROVILLE	... 704
<i>Amal Kiran (K D. Sethna)</i>	
LIFE — POETRY — YOGA	
SOME PERSONAL LETTERS	. 710
<i>Nilima Das</i>	
SRI AUROBINDO — THE SOUL OF INDIA	.. 716
<i>Shyam Kumari</i>	
MUSINGS ON PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS	. 722
<i>M. S. Srinivasan</i>	
RELIGION AND POLITICS: THE INDIAN SYNTHESIS	.. 728
<i>Jayantilal Parekh</i>	
PASSING THOUGHTS	... 735
<i>Georgette Coty</i>	
CHRISTALIS: A STORY	.. 739
<i>Jagat Kapadia</i>	
COMPACT CONCEPTIONS	... 745
<i>Ramraj</i>	
THE HOME-COMING	748
<i>Satadal</i>	
24TH APRIL, 1995	.. 751
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE	
<i>Kailas Jhavery</i>	
Review of ON THE MOTHER by DR. K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR	... 759

<i>Ramraj</i>		
THE HOME-COMING		. 748
<i>Satadal</i>		
24TH APRIL, 1995		. 751
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
<i>Kailas Jhavery</i>		
Review of ON THE MOTHER by DR. K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR	...	759
<i>P Raja</i>		
A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS	...	765

### STUDENTS' SECTION

<i>Speech by Arvind Akki</i>		
THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION		
SEVENTY-EIGHTH SEMINAR, 19 FEBRUARY 1995		
SOME GLIMPSES OF THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF THE MOTHER	..	768

## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

### HER WAY OF WORKING

YOU don't understand the way of my working. You can as well say, "You have the supramental force, why don't you use it and finish all this muddle?" But it is not like this that the work can be done. The world is not ready for the supramental force and if it is used without preparing the base, things will shatter completely. I have to prepare the base and then bring down the force.

Your human vision sees things in a straight line. For you it is either this way or that way. For me it is not like this. I see the whole thing as a mass of consciousness moving towards its end or goal. For every small movement I have to see what its reactions will be on the whole mass, what repercussions may follow.

When I say something should be done in this way or that way, your human mind takes it as a principle and tries to apply it rigidly in all cases. For me it is not like that. For me there are no rules, no regulations and no principles. For me each one is an exceptional case, to be dealt with in a special way. No two cases are similar.

In the movement of this mass of consciousness I know that a certain point should move in a certain direction for reaching the goal more easily. With this point in view I declare that this should be done or not done, but I find that sometimes there is a big obstruction in the way. Now, it can be dealt with in two ways: either I should allow the point to change its direction and leave the barrier alone for the time being till more and more light falls upon it and it gets changed, or I should break the barrier. As I have said, every small movement has its reactions and repercussions on the mass, so this breaking also will cause a chain of reactions which may affect a much larger field. I am no respecter of persons, but I have to see at every moment the changing circumstances due to the change of the person or persons concerned and the change of time and the channel through which the thing passes. I have to see with all these changes how best the thing can be done so that it may help the progress of the mass. I have to see whether it is worthwhile to break the barrier and have all the resulting consequences or whether it would not be better to leave it for the moment and tolerate the human stupidity. What appears to you to be contradiction is not contradiction when the whole thing is seen as one. There are various ways to reach the same end. So if I find that breaking will cost much more than what it is worth, then I allow you to go the way you like. But that does not prevent me from condemning the obstruction and saying that it ought to go.

After all, sooner or later each and everything in this mass of consciousness has to move towards the same goal. But to lead the consciousness towards that goal I have to allow human beings to move with me and I have to appear in their

own form and speak in their own language. I have to adopt a crude expression. I can see the stupidity of the way in which I have to speak and lay down rules and regulations, but this is a concession that I must make to humanity; otherwise it would not be able to understand anything. Even when I speak in their own language, people misunderstand me and make a mess. If I were to speak in the language of the light, then the whole thing would pass over their heads and they would be left gaping without understanding anything.

X has a very well-developed mind. I can say that his mind is very open towards the light. Twice I tried to speak to him in the language of what Sri Aurobindo calls the mind of light, but even he could not understand it. He could catch a little, but the fullness of the sense escaped him.

With the others it is still worse; they fail to understand anything and look dazed. For the sake of these people I have to make a compromise. I say that a certain thing is stupid, but I see that you cannot remain without doing it, so I have to tolerate it. I see the relative value of things and adopt the way that may be helpful in making the progress. In your interest and in the interest of the progress of the whole mass of consciousness, I may have to allow a good many things, but it does not mean that I am blind to them and cannot see their stupidity. Sometimes it is necessary that you should have an experience and so the thing is allowed. But when I say No definitely, it is dangerous to oppose it. There can be many reasons for the same action; but it is not possible to explain them to your mind.

In this particular case I had said No. Then Y intervened. Now Y is a very nice person and he is very sincere in some parts. I know that he is weak and has the habit of grabbing and possessing. I could have refused. But that would have given a big shaking to him. It would have been difficult for him to adjust himself. As I told you, I see the relative values and I saw that the thing was not worth the shaking and so I have given my permission. But that does not prevent me from saying that it is not the right thing.

*(Collected Works of the Mother, Centenary Edition, Vol. 13, pp. 96-98)*

## WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

### CONTROL OF THOUGHTS

To reject doubts means control of one's thoughts—very certainly so. But the control of one's thoughts is as necessary as the control of one's vital desires and passions or the control of the movements of one's body—for the yoga, and not for the yoga only. One cannot be a fully developed mental being even, if one has not a control of the thoughts, is not their observer, judge, master,—the mental Purusha, *manomaya puruṣa, sākṣī, anumantā, īśvara*. It is no more proper for the mental being to be the tennis-ball of unruly and uncontrollable thoughts than to be a rudderless ship in the storm of the desires and passions or a slave of either the inertia or the impulses of the body. I know it is more difficult because man being primarily a creature of mental Prakriti identifies himself with the movements of his mind and cannot at once dissociate himself and stand free from the swirl and eddies of the mind whirlpool. It is comparatively easy for him to put a control on his body, at least on a certain part of its movements; it is less easy but still very possible after a struggle to put a mental control on his vital impulses and desires; but to sit like the Tantric Yogi on the river, above the whirlpool of his thoughts, is less facile. Nevertheless, it can be done; all developed mental men, those who get beyond the average, have in one way or other or at least at certain times and for certain purposes to separate the two parts of the mind, the active part which is a factory of thoughts and the quiet masterful part which is at once a Witness and a Will, observing them, judging, rejecting, eliminating, accepting, ordering corrections and changes, the master in the House of Mind, capable of self-empire, *sāmrājya*.

The yogi goes still farther; he is not only a master there, but even while in mind in a way, he gets out of it as it were, and stands above or quite back from it and free. For him the image of the factory of thoughts is no longer quite valid; for he sees that thoughts come from outside, from the universal Mind or universal Nature, sometimes formed and distinct, sometimes unformed and then they are given shape somewhere in us. The principal business of our mind is either a response of acceptance or a refusal to these thought-waves (as also vital waves, subtle physical energy waves) or this giving a personal-mental form to thought-stuff (or vital movements) from the envining Nature-Force. It was my great debt to Lele that he showed me this. "Sit in meditation," he said, "but do not think, look only at your mind; you will see thoughts *coming into it*; before they can enter throw these away from your mind till your mind is capable of entire silence." I had never heard before of thoughts coming visibly into the mind from outside, but I did not think either of questioning the truth or the possibility, I simply sat down and did it. In a moment my mind became silent as a windless air on a high mountain summit and then I saw one thought and then

another coming in a concrete way from outside; I flung them away before they could enter and take hold of the brain and in three days I was free. From that moment, in principle, the mental being in me became a free Intelligence, a universal Mind, not limited to the narrow circle of personal thought as a labourer in a thought factory, but a receiver of knowledge from all the hundred realms of being and free to choose what it willed in this vast sight-empire and thought-empire. I mention this only to emphasise that the possibilities of the mental being are not limited and that it can be the free Witness and Master in its own house. It is not to say that everybody can do it in the way I did it and with the same rapidity of the decisive movement (for, of course, the later fullest developments of this new untrammelled mental power took time, many years) but a progressive freedom and mastery of one's mind is perfectly within the possibilities of anyone who has the faith and the will to undertake it.

\*

The error comes from thinking that your thoughts are your own and that you are their maker and if you do not create thoughts (i.e. think), there will be none. A little observation ought to show that you are not manufacturing your own thoughts, but rather thoughts occur in you. Thoughts are born, not made—like poets, according to the proverb. Of course, there is a sort of labour and effort when you try to produce or else to think on a certain subject, but that is a concentration for making thoughts come up, come in, come down, as the case may be, and fit themselves together. The idea that you are shaping the thoughts or fitting them together is an egoistic delusion. They are doing it themselves, or Nature is doing it for you, only under a certain compulsion; you have to beat her often in order to make her do it, and the beating is not always successful. But the mind or nature or mental energy—whatever you like to call it—does this in a certain way and carries on with a certain order of thoughts, haphazard intelligentialities (excuse the barbarism) or asininites, rigidly ordered or imperfectly ordered intellectualities, logical sequences and logical inconsequences, etc., etc. How is an intuition to get in in the midst of that waltzing and colliding crowd? It does sometimes; in some minds often intuitions do come in, but immediately the ordinary thoughts surround it and eat it up alive, and then with some fragment of the murdered intuition shining through their non-intuitive stomachs they look up smiling at you and say, "I am an intuition, sir." But they are only intellect, intelligence or ordinary thought with part of a dismembered and therefore misleading intuition inside them. Now in a vacant mind, vacant but not inert (that is important), intuitions have a chance of getting in alive and whole. But don't run away with the idea that all that comes into an empty mind will be intuitive. Anything, any blessed kind of idea can come in. One has to be vigilant and examine the credentials of the visitor. In other words, the mental being must



be there, silent but vigilant, impartial but discriminating. That is, however, when you are in search of truth. For poetry, so much is not necessary. There it is only the poetic quality of the visitor that has to be scrutinised and that can be done after he has left his packet—by results.

*(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 24, pp. 1257-59)*

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## WORRIES

Too much on my mind!

A jumble of worries  
 Jostle and shove inside my head:  
 An overloaded lift, stuck between floors.

Cut the cord, Lord!  
 Let them hurtle—crash,  
 Smash to smithereens  
 At the bottom of the shaft!

Or better, haul them up—  
 Up into the open empty blue above the roof.

Released into light,  
 Let them spread wide wings  
 And sweep away—  
 Singing.

SHRADDHAVAN

## A TALK BY NIRODBARAN

AT PITANGA HALL, AUROVILLE, ON SUNDAY FEBRUARY 26, 1995, AT  
4.30 P.M.

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1995)

Now something about the Mother, the Mother's creative power. Here you don't see it, but those of you who have seen the Ashram know what the Mother has done there—it has become a microcosm. As the Mother had envisioned, it has become a beautiful world by itself, self-sufficient, and with great freedom and variety the Ashram work is going on. There will be always some trouble, there will be always some petty voices but the work is going on. You know those lines in *Savitri*:

God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;...  
And belief shall be not till the work is done.

Here is a book... *On the Mother*. It is a chronicle of the Mother, written by Srinivasa Iyengar. It runs to over 800 pages. It is all about the Mother's work; those of you who want to know her thoroughly, I would advise you to go through this book—you will see what she is, what she has done, what she is going to do. I marked one thing... what he says actually is: "More and more people started visiting the Ashram to know at first hand what was going on. They went round the Samadhi and the meditation hall, and then to the other 'nerve centres' of the Ashram like the university centre, the physical education department, the main library, the printing press, the dairy and the bakery, the dining hall, the Harpagon workshop, the agricultural farms, the handmade paper factory, the embroidery departments, the swimming pool. They were duly impressed and they asked questions and sought clarifications. How was it all organised so as to run with such smooth efficiency? How was it all financed? How was the interlinked problem of authority and responsibility solved in the organisation of the Ashram? It was but common sense that too much should not be claimed where all was the work of Grace. It would be advisable to let the inquisitive visitors see the work for themselves instead of making them listen to elaborate claims or instant elucidations. This was the context in which the Mother gave her New Year message for 1954:

My Lord, here is Thy advice to all, for this year:  
"Never boast about anything, let your acts speak for you."

As if anticipating this advice, the Mother said on 30 December 1953 in the Playground:

“Now we are becoming almost a thing of public interest, in the sense that there are lots of visitors coming and lots of people concerned about what we are doing here, and then they are taken round and told what we have supposedly done and what we are going to do and all that. And there was truly a great need to say: ‘I beg of you, don’t speak so much about what we are doing: do it.’ It is always better to do than to speak, and in the least details also.” It applies to Auroville as well.

The Mother is not only the Avatar; at the same time she is the greatest occultist. You know that her teacher, Théon himself, said that she is a great occultist. Let me quote what Sri Aurobindo has said. He said that he had realised the supreme truth, but that he could not create—he said, “I was waiting for the Mother to come and take up the work of creation.” The Mother was born as a European, and had a vast practical experience. She had the knowledge and the power, and she had gone to Algeria to get occult knowledge. With all these powers at her command she came to India, and Sri Aurobindo gave her the charge of the Ashram. She has built up the Ashram with Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual support.

I think this is enough, and our time is up.

Narayan: There is one thing... when the Mother stopped playing tennis with you...

N: Not stopped—she was not calling me. She was calling this man and that man, but not me.

Nar: And she did this out of love for you?

N: Of course the Divine cannot be without love. But her love can be very cruel to our human eyes. The human mother too beats you—with love.

Nar: You have described the Mother as if she was a Mahakali—at the time when Sri Aurobindo was ill.

N: Yes, yes, that incident I remember... What happened was like this: Sri Aurobindo’s accident was very serious. Dr. Manilal was our chief doctor. The Mother asked him twice. “How do you find it, how do you find it? You are not giving out the whole truth.” Then the Mother burst out: “Tell me the truth! I know the truth! Don’t hide anything from me!” That was thunder... tremendous—Mahakali.

Nar: You disciples in the Ashram—are you still feeling the presence of the Mother every day?

N: No. If I were, I would be a different man altogether! Now we are passing through a great darkness. Since you raise the subject, I must admit we are passing through a very bad time,—most of us; because this sadhana is a collective sadhana. What happens to me will happen to many others. What the Christians call “The dark night of the soul”. One day I prayed to the Mother, “Mother, save me. I can’t bear this...” I heard her telling me, “Don’t call me! I am too busy! I am too busy!”

It may give you some hope, some courage, to hear what she is busy with: "I am too busy with the Supermind, bringing down the Supermind. Much time has been lost—I cannot delay." That is what I heard. "I am too busy with bringing down the Supermind."

And in another context she has said, "You must endure. Things are hard, very, very hard." That is the instruction. We get many letters from outside; the devotees, our sadhaks outside are passing through a very bad time, very bad indeed. If you understand, this is because the work is going on in the dark waters of the subconscious. And it is due to its effect that we are going through a great darkness. But I believe that one day our Dawn will rise. And we will witness that glorious day Sri Aurobindo has predicted. He has predicted that in 40 years there will be a tremendous change, though many of us will not be there to see it. But what is time after all to the Divine?

Dr. De: You are a doctor, and a devotee. Have you noticed anything of the work of the transformation of the cells? We read so much about it.

N: Yes, I can tell you about that... Have you not seen our poet friend Amal? He wrote these two lines in one of his poems:

"The core of a deathless sun is now the brain  
And each grey cell bursts to omniscient gold."

When the Mother read the poem she said, "The first two lines are sheer revelation. They catch exactly what took place."

This is the poet's vision. When he read that poem to the Mother, the Mother was surprised, "How did you get this? Who told you that? You have got the right thing—it is exactly what is happening in my brain."

Some people who were close at that time have seen some light in the Mother's physical body. But I believe that some sadhaks also were experiencing changes in their subtle bodies.

Another thing about my relation with the Mother: though it was not so close as Champaklal's, still she had some softness for me. But for one purpose or another—that I also saw—she deliberately did not take me into her closeness. Always there was some distance, always. But... this is not due to any dislike for me. To tell you the truth the Mother said on one occasion about me, "He has no faith." I was a doubter. Sri Aurobindo said I was a pessimist. The enemy of our sadhana is doubt. One's doubt can also affect others, do them harm.

Let me tell you about an experience. Soon after Sri Aurobindo had left, I was passing my sad days near the Samadhi. The Mother used to stand for a while in the corridor of her house and look at the Samadhi. One day at that time I suddenly felt giddy and had to sit down. I wrote to the Mother about it. She replied, "A dark Force came from you towards me. I had to repel it; it went back towards you and caused giddiness." That is why I think she kept me at a

distance. But whenever there was a necessity, a call, I was there.

About the book, *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, I think it was about two years before her passing that I proposed to the Mother, “Mother, I would like to write something about my association with Sri Aurobindo.” Formerly when I had proposed it, the Mother said, “No. I don’t want anyone to give too much importance to Sri Aurobindo’s outer life.” So she did not allow it. But after many years when I said, “Mother, I have made a script, would you like to read it, would you like to see it?” She replied, “Yes, you can come. I would like to see it.” She fixed a time. It was very difficult, because there were plenty of people who were waiting to catch the Mother’s time and get a chance. But she said, “Yes, you come” and fixed a time. And every day I used to go and read. To cut the story short, at the end of it, she wrote, “Thanks to Nirod, I came to know many things, many sides of Sri Aurobindo which I didn’t know.” And she became very soft and kind and sweet. For about two years, or one year at least, I enjoyed this sweetness of the Mother. It was a great reward at the end, after her coldness. Was I free from my doubt?

Elizabeth: I don’t know if you remember me—I lived in the Ashram in 1954 and 55. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have had a great influence on my life. The Mother always said, “No religion”, but I have sometimes wondered whether we are not also making a religion out of them now?

N: Where is religion? Tell me, where do you see it?

E: At the Matrimandir, I feel it’s clear that it’s no religion, but...

N: Where is religion, tell me what is your idea? There is no picture, there is nothing to signify...

E: Because I think she wanted us to find it within ourselves.

N: That is right. That is all right. But the Mother herself used to give us pictures, photos of herself and Sri Aurobindo, because we are not such advanced sadhaks. Each one of us has been guided by her according to our inner condition. She does not go by a strict orthodox rule. She understands what is our necessity... hundreds of people of different religions used to go with their problems to her—in one second the Mother gave the solution. You must have some idea of her consciousness: it is not by prejudice and not by sectarian rules that she guides her actions. Everything that the Mother does, Sri Aurobindo has said, comes from the higher knowledge. She was living on the higher intuition plane; otherwise she could not do so much work. This work, that work, every work done perfectly, smoothly, even if there was resistance. How many creations she has made in that way in the Ashram! Seeing what it was before, we can mark them. It’s all her free, spontaneous divine power at play. People go to her with a problem and at once in a word or two she gives you the remedy. That was the Mother—and that was what Sri Aurobindo said about the Divine Mother—there is here no question of religion.

E: But I sometimes feel...

N: No, no, you must feel rightly, understand properly—because the occult knowledge you don't have. When the Mother gives her photo we feel something from her. She doesn't give her photo to everybody. She gives Sri Aurobindo's photo to me, her photo to somebody else—in that way she works. All her knowledge comes from above—not by the human rule, human understanding, human custom. Otherwise, so many of us would have gone to Hell, this Ashram would have been another common Ashram long ago! These are truths that guide us. You see at the Samadhi that hundreds of people are coming every day. You cannot apply one rule for all. If you don't want, then don't go there. But it's not a religion. The Mother doesn't force you. I'll give you an example. When people used to go to see the Mother, a distinction was made on one occasion. Indians and French people, and other Westerners were going all at the same time. But the Mother said that the Westerners should come at the end. She said, "Westerners don't believe that a human being can be divine."

E: I do.

N: Good, maybe—how far do you?... The Christians say that only Christ is the Divine—nobody else can be. Then they don't do pranam to the Mother, because of that. They don't believe... pranam is something very sacred—otherwise they would do it. They call her, Douce Mère, Douce Mère, give us love, all that, but they will never do pranam. But she does not mind, does not object—it is not that she does not permit them to come; this is their custom, this is their way. And she gave proper value to it. Let me tell you what happened one day. We had always a scheduled time. Now four or five or six people were there; so we had to go away quickly. I saw that I was the last person, so I went away quickly without doing pranam. Next day, she asked me, "Nirod, why didn't you do pranam to me?" I said, "Mother, there were so many people, you were in a hurry, so I went away." "Oh, then it is all right." But on the other hand she could be very strict too. I'll give you an example. We were two doctors—Doctor Sanyal and myself. Sanyal was the Mother's doctor at that time. So... you know in Sri Aurobindo's room there is a door... we used to wait there for the Mother's coming. Sanyal used to have the Mother's darshan. She used to come—hurrying—and stand before Sanyal. Sanyal was a great bhakta, like a child, not like me—I still had some doubts. The Mother would come from there, walking swiftly straight to Sanyal. She would not look at me, she would not give even a glance, simply ignored me as she had at the tennis. He would do pranam and embrace the Mother's legs. She used to pat him and go away. Consider my feeling, but I had to bear it.

So I'll end on this note: what the Mother wants of us is to change our nature. It will not do to have great realisations, etc., etc. without your nature changing, not remaining the same. And the work precisely which is going on is this change of nature. If the nature does not change, the Mother's work will be postponed—or humanly I can say the Mother's work will be a failure. But that can't

be. The tremendous power that has come down, the Supramental power, is working vigorously, there is no doubt about it. I told you Sri Aurobindo's Power has increased tenfold.

Srimayee: One last question... It is not so normal for Europeans to bow down to the Mother. But she wanted us to do it?

N: No, I don't think so. The Mother does not impose anything.

S: Okay. I'll put it in another way: do you think there is something we get by bowing down to her?

N: That is a different question—You ought to know that!

S: No, because it is relevant to people living here...

N. You have to think and feel. Otherwise why would the Mother allow pranam? Why the darshan? You have been there, I'm sure you and many other people have received something.

S: But if you would articulate, for others, if you can tell...

N: No, no, I can't articulate, it must come from within. No articulation.

S: Because people feel it is a form of religion, that is why...

N: It is not such a form. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have emphatically denied it. It is spirituality. not religion. The two are quite different. Your own experience must tell you that you are receiving something. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo gave darshan, receiving us, giving us blessings, and all of us have received something. There's no question about it. Whether you did pranam or not, in her occult way the Mother used to transmit force and blessings. We have got them, we remember them. There is in yoga an awakening of Kundalini, Shakti, Radha... the Mother used to evoke that Kundalini by her touch... I know many times she used to press, hard, very hard, on my spinal column. And in the Darshan everybody got Sri Aurobindo's touch. One touch, one look has transformed people... It is a question of experience, whether you have experienced or not experienced, whether you have faith or no faith, that is up to you. We have the Mother's word for it, she does not compel anybody. The Divine gives and one thing given us is freedom, you may come, you may not come, everything must be done freely... That is why the Mother says, if you can open up your psychic then everything will come.

N: Right—I think, sir, that will do.

Franz: Thank you for coming, Nirodbaran.

Mauna: Here is a little present, with our very, very best thanks to you for doing what you promised to do!

N: Thanks to all of you. Please remember that I am not a speaker. We are friends and among friends there are no formalities. It is the heart that speaks and with that heart I pray that all of us may be the Mother's true children.

*(Concluded)*

# LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

## SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

DID I misquote Hopkins when I recalled his line on Oxford as

Towery city and branchy between towers?

You have written “leafy between towers”. I thought of “leafy” but somehow could not feel it to be as apt, visually no less than rhythmically, as “branchy”. The largeness, the grandeur evoked by “towery” fails to get support enough from the former. Something soft and sweet and huddled together comes in, where the requirement is of something strong that springs out at the same time that it makes a crowd. I wish you or I could check the phrase.

Your picture of the new skyline of Oxford horrifies me. Not that I am wedded to the past in all its forms, but when our Mother sees the Lord as going always ahead she does not reject everything of the past. On the contrary, all that is fine in times gone is quintessenced by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and carried over into a new revelation. I might aver poetically that their work answers to that superb phrase of St. Augustine about God: “O Pulchritudo antiqua et semper nova!”—“O Beauty of ancient days yet ever new!”(21.8.1982)

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I have looked up Hopkins. The line we were concerned with occurs in the poem, “Duns Scotus’s Oxford” and the first two lines don’t bring in boughs, as you thought, but branches as I did. They run in typical Hopkinsian:

Towery city and branchy between towers;  
Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmèd, lark-charmèd, rook-racked,  
river-rounded...

You are right about the Shakespeare-reference, except that it doesn’t have the word “branches” but its synonym which is not in the Hopkins-phrase:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold  
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.

Perhaps these lines have strongly associated a “branchy” tree with bareness, a late-autumnal near-leaflessness, in your mind, but poetically there is no reason



for the association in general. Take Keats in his *Hyperion*:

As when, upon a trancèd summer-night  
 Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,  
 Tall oaks, branch-charmèd by the earnest stars,  
 Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,  
 Save from one gradual solitary gust  
 Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,  
 As if the ebbing air had but one wave;  
 So came these words and went...

Here greenness, summer and branchiness are all figured together.

Your story of chancing upon *The Synthesis of Yoga* in a public library moves me very much. It has the unmistakable stamp of Sri Aurobindo finding his child. Whoever is born to collaborate with him in working towards a new humanity he reaches out to in one way or another. I can very well understand how amazed you must have felt on discovering—as some phrase of Sri Aurobindo puts it—the ultimate Face that is our own. When a Voice Supreme comes to us as if out of a depth in ourselves, we may be sure that we have met our destiny. (31.8.1982)

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My replying on March 8 this year (1984) to your letter of November 18, 1983 carries on—with greater gusto than your answering on July 14, 1982 my letter of June 12 in the same year and your subsequent “inordinate delay”—the habit we have established of being “a little laggard” in correspondence.

I have read with great interest the xeroxed matter you have enclosed. Isaac Asimov has always gripped me. His account of how the year 0 got neglected in the current dating system is quite credible—in fact, it is the only one that offers an explanation of the widely accepted silliness of Dionysus Exiguus—Dionysus the Shorty—in the Dark Ages. The zero of Hindu mathematics had not come as yet to the West. Hence the Shorty’s anomaly of 1 A.D. being preceded by 1 B.C. But why was the natural mistake accepted later on? The torch of the Hindu mathematical enlightenment with its inclusion of the zero, carried by the Arabs, should have made modern chronologists sit up and cry, “O what an O-versight!”

Yes, the attraction Asimov has for “coincidences” may prove for him an opening into the dimension of ultra-scientific reality, for they seem to be relatives to what Jung has dubbed a-causal synchronicity—two similar events occurring at the same time without any related antecedents. For example, I may mention so-and-so and at once the phone bell rings, with so-and-so on the line. Or I may be discussing a problem and, on opening a book, see the key-word of it leap to the eye.

I wonder whether in any valid sense your getting your copy of *The Life Divine* on November 25, 1950, one of my birthdays, is another of Asimovian coincidences. Of course, if I have been lucky enough to be your “favourite” among those disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother whom you “knew about”, we have a psycho-spiritual basis already for it. But possibly a numerical association between the event and me may be traced.  $25+11+1950=1986$  which can be dealt with in two ways.  $1+9=10=1$  and, with 8 added, yields 9 which, along with 6, makes 25. The other way is just to sum up the digits of 1986 and reach 24 which reduces to 6. Now the number given me by the Mother among those present in the Store-room for a special purpose was 15 which also equals 6. (6, by the way, signifies, according to the Mother, “New Creation”, something I must be particularly in need of!)

Apart from all this, *The Life Divine* happens to be my favourite among the books of Sri Aurobindo, side by side with *Savitri* which is a poetic analogue to it in sheer spiritual knowledge. I have even declared that on finishing *The Life Divine* one can't help thinking that the author of this book must be the author of the universe! And it is my conviction that the first chapter of *The Life Divine*, the shortest in the book, is the finest and profoundest and most comprehensive piece of condensed philosophical writing in the world

The Rossetti literature you have sent me has made very good reading. The translation of Villon's *Ballad of Dead Ladies* has been one of my favourites too. The original French of that haunting line you have quoted is—

Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?—

Where are the snows of yesteryear?

Knowing me to be a Parsi, you have inquired about the Zoroastrian religion. The original sense of it is still a matter of controversy. The ancient Greeks who were nearest to it among foreigners took it as a dualism, the God of Light and Goodness, Ormuzd, pitted against Ahriman, the Devil of Darkness and Evil. Actually the Avestan Anramanyu, the Bad Spirit, is set over against Spentamanyu, the Good Spirit, but it seems as if Ahura Mazda, the Avestan for Ormuzd, who is separately mentioned in the earliest scripture, the Gathas or Songs of Zarathustra, is also shown in them to be identical with Spentamanyu. But, of course, the exhortation is always to accept one single deity, Ahura Mazda; in that sense we have a monotheism like the original Judaic monotheism which, while taking Yahweh as one of the many tribal gods of the Near East, insists on the worship of none save him. The Zoroastrians have been devoted solely to Ahura Mazda, but ontologically Ahura Mazda and Anramanyu appear to be co-eval, though the former has an edge on the latter in that at the end of the world he will be victorious over the other and imprison him in an everlasting hell.

As to the origin of the duality, there arose the “heresy” of Zarvanism. Zarvan-akarna is the Avestan for “Endless Time”. This mysterious entity is taken to be the progenitor of the ever-opposed twins, Ahura Mazda and Anramanyu (or Ahriman). The modern understanding, after the scholar Martin Haug, among the Zoroastrians is that Ahura Mazda, the one and only deity, an aspect of whom may be considered “Endless Time”, gave birth to the Good Spirit and the Bad Spirit. But such a view creates the problem of God being the cause of both Good and Evil, as appears also to have been Yahweh in the time of Isaiah. How and why the Bad Spirit, the Devil, was engendered has not been made clear. In the Christian world-view the being who is Satan was originally a divine being, an archangel, who misused the “freewill” granted to all the creations of God and became the Prince of Darkness from having earlier been Lucifer, Son of the Morning. In Zoroastrianism, as in Christianity, human beings are endowed with freewill and always called upon to choose the good and reject the bad. By extension the superhumans may or must be visioned as enjoying freedom of will. Then Ahriman becomes a fallen angel. But his fallenness from angelhood is nowhere made explicit in Zoroastrian metaphysics. (8.3.1984)

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What a pleasure it will be if you can drop in at my new place as you did at my old one. I very clearly remember you appearing out of the blue. I think the last four words are most appropriate because in spite of your small sweet charming solidity you had something ethereal about you, and this something has kept wafting to me throughout the years across all your correspondence. The ancient physicists spoke of five elements—earth, water, air, fire and ether. Most people have two or three of the first four, very few have even a touch of the fifth. In my view you have all the first four—a rare enough thing—but they are all wrapped in the transfiguring last, which makes for quite a rarity and a great delight.

However, I have been expecting something more from you than the ethereal wrapping the intensely imaginative, the light-heartedly floating, the many-motivated and the common-sensically balanced. This something more is the permeation of the four elements by the fifth. It is when one element or another—out of fire, air, water and earth—is permeated by ether that suddenly a person turns towards the spiritual life with a direct cry. The cry puts the person in contact with what Bergson’s teacher called the “Within-Beyond” but since only one element has been etherealised there is either a shooting off into that intimate unknown to the neglect of this element’s companions or a kind of see-saw and zigzag because of pulls in several directions. When the permeation follows what I have termed the wrapping of the fiery, the airy, the watery, the earthy by the ethereal the natural result would be

The golden smile of the one Self everywhere

and a happy harmonious holiness would run through the blood and light up the flesh—with no spectacular effect but with a constant simple suggestion of being blessed and able to bless.

I think a beginning of fruitful total permeation is taking place in your life. Your letter from Singapore leaves me in no doubt. And I am glad that the urge in you not only to read, not merely to know with the mind but to be what Sri Aurobindo revealed as Reality by his life no less than his writing, is a quiet spontaneity rather than a fretful uncontrollable force. I can see you growing like your own English garden—a greenery speckled yellow with daffodils, primroses and celandine, the fruit trees ready to be covered with blossom. Though your return to Singapore prevented you from viewing the fullness of the English spring, you will not miss what will come to flower and fruit in your new inner life, for this garden will be your own true self discovering naturally its own super-nature. Whatever help I am capable of giving will surely be given most happily.

(10.5.1984)

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It is interesting that when you remember me you always see me smiling. I have used the word “remember” as if you had met me and were carrying a memory of me. It is certain that your inner being has established a concrete contact with me—no wonder it has the impression of a smile playing perpetually on my mouth, for indeed there is a quiet happiness in me all the time—yes, all the time precisely because it comes from something that does not begin with one life or finish with it but runs like a golden thread on which life after life is hung—some lives bright, others dark and most of them grey. This thread is not a straight line—it is a curve that is lit to a smile, and one end of it is suspended from a point in eternity whose name is Sri Aurobindo and the other from a similar point namable as the Mother. Their light and their bliss flow through it, however faintly. By their grace alone I have been able to discover this inner thread. I cannot say that every moment of mine is identified with it. A few moments are, but at least a shining shadow of it is caught by many.

I am sure you also feel within yourself the smile of the Immortal in the mortal, which the seers call the Soul. All of us who have been touched by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have wakened to it but the whole travail of Yoga lies in keeping alive the sense of that touch of theirs by which the inner is brought close to the outer.

The soul’s smile is also the best weapon against difficulties which the hostile forces raise in our path. To smile at their doings instead of raging at them or feeling depressed is to make them realise how little importance we give them. Failing in their attempt to upset us, they themselves are disappointed and get exhausted. The smile is, in addition, a secret message from us to what stands

behind the apparent hostile forces. For behind them and under the mask of the Devil is the Divine, paradoxically helping us through the trials and troubles which bring up our weaknesses and challenge us to be strong. Of course this does not mean that we should look for difficulties. But when they come we must feel Sri Aurobindo manipulating what the hostile forces believe to be their own working. The Lord takes advantage of every crisis to create for us some short-cut towards our own fulfilment. And when we have the vision of the Supreme hidden within His seeming opposite we at once lose the sense of infirmity and hopelessness at being hard hit. Nothing in Yoga happens without the Mother's mysterious hand somewhere in it. And our smile speaks of our recognition of it and immediately draws the Grace towards us across the darkness. The moment we feel its presence at the back of everything, our hearts begin to sing in answer to trumpets of victory sounding from afar. The assurance comes to us that there is no abyss so deep that the Grace cannot lift us out of it sky-high.

So, dear friend, keep a smile playing on your lips in all circumstances. It will also help you, among other things, not to be upset if you don't hear from me for long. I have a lot of work—reading, writing, editing—and I may not be able to answer your sweet letters very frequently. But please have the smiling certainty that I have not forgotten you.

(7.10.1987)

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of 15 August 1995)

IN the previous article I have mentioned that the British Government was puzzled and in a quandary as to how to deal with Sri Aurobindo. It thought of appealing to the High Court against the judgement of Beachcroft. The bureaucrats were in favour of deportation of Sri Aurobindo. But the appeal was not likely to succeed and the Viceroy was against this extreme move lest it should trigger off a violent reaction from the Indian public.

During this period Nivedita was undoubtedly the most influential and resourceful person who could venture to help Sri Aurobindo in his militant nationalism. She had an equal access to the officers of the British bureaucracy and the leading aristocratic houses of Calcutta. She came to Sri Aurobindo and warned him that the Government might deport him. He told her that he would take steps to forestall their action. He has stated: "It was in these circumstances that I wrote the signed article '*My last Will and Testament*'." In this article Sri Aurobindo exposed the Government's intention and guided his countrymen how to act in politics in his enforced absence. It was a masterly move.

The article, signed by Sri Aurobindo, appeared in the *Karmayogin* in July 1909, under the title: "An Open Letter to my Countrymen." The letter runs:

"... I have recently come out of a year's seclusion from work for my country on a charge which there was not a scrap of reliable evidence to support, but my acquittal is no security either against the trumping up of a fresh accusation or the arbitrary law of deportation which dispenses with the inconvenient formality of a charge and the still more inconvenient necessity of producing evidence. Especially with the hounds of the Anglo-Indian Press barking at our heels and continually clamouring for Government to remove every man who dares to raise his voice to speak of patriotism and its duties, the liberty of the person is held on a tenure which is worse than precarious. Rumour is strong that a case for my deportation has been submitted to the Government by the Calcutta Police and neither the tranquillity of the country nor the scrupulous legality of our procedure is a guarantee against the contingency of the all-powerful fiat of the Government watch-dogs silencing scruples on the part of those who advise at Simla. Under such circumstances I have thought it well to address this letter to my countrymen, and especially to those who profess the principles of the Nationalist party, on the needs of the present and the policy of the future. In case of my deportation it may help to guide some who would be uncertain of their course of action, and, if I do not return from it, it may stand as my last political will and testament to my countrymen.

"... All great movements wait for their God-sent leader, the willing channel of His force, and only when he comes, move forward triumphantly to their

fulfilment. The men who have led hitherto have been strong men of high gifts and commanding genius, great enough to be protagonists of any other movement, but even they were not sufficient to fulfil one which is the chief current of a world-wide revolution. Therefore the Nationalist party, custodians of the future, must wait for the man who is to come, calm in the midst of calamity, hopeful under defeat, sure of eventual emergence and triumph and always mindful of the responsibility which they owe not only to their Indian posterity but to the world.

“... Our ideal is an ideal which no law can condemn; our chosen methods are such that no modern Government can expressly declare them illegal without forfeiting its claim to be considered a civilised administration. To that ideal and to those methods we must firmly adhere and rely on them alone for our eventual success.... To deportation and proclamation, the favourite instruments of men incapable of a wise and strong rule, we can only oppose a steady and fearless adherence to the propagandism and practice of a lawful policy and a noble ideal.

“Our ideal is that of Swaraj or absolute autonomy free from foreign control. We claim the right of every nation to live its own life by its own energies according to its own nature and ideals. We reject the claim of aliens to force upon us a civilisation inferior to our own or to keep us out of our inheritance on the untenable ground of a superior fitness. While admitting the stains and defects which long subjection has induced upon our native capacity and energy, we are conscious of that capacity and energy, reviving in us. We point to the unexampled national vigour which has preserved the people of this country through centuries of calamity and defeat, to the great actions of our forefathers continued even to the other day, to the many men of intellect and character such as no other nation in a subject condition has been able to produce, and we say that a people capable of such unheard-of vitality is not one which can be put down as a nation of children and incapables. We are in no way inferior to our forefathers. We have brains, we have courage, we have an infinite and various national capacity. All we need is a field and opportunity. That field and opportunity can only be provided by a national government, a free society and a great Indian culture. So long as these are not conceded to us, we can have no other use for our brains, courage and capacity than to struggle unceasingly to achieve them.

“Our ideal of Swaraj involves no hatred of any other nation nor of the administration which is now established by law in this country.

“We find a bureaucratic administration, we wish to make it democratic. We find an alien government, we wish to make it indigenous; we find a foreign control, we wish to render it Indian. They lie who say that this aspiration necessitates hatred and violence. Our ideal of patriotism proceeds on the basis of love and brotherhood and it looks beyond the unity of the nation and envisages the ultimate unity of mankind. But it is a unity of brothers, equals and free men that we seek, not the unity of master and serf, devourer and devoured. We demand the realisation of our corporate existence as a distinct race and nation

because that is the only way in which the ultimate brotherhood of humanity can be achieved, not by blotting out individual peoples and effacing outward distinctions, but by removing the internal obstacles to unity, the causes of hatred, malice and misunderstanding. A struggle for our rights does not involve hatred of those who mistakenly deny them. It only involves a determination to suffer and strive, to speak the truth boldly and without respect of persons, to use every lawful means of pressure and every source of moral strength in order to establish ourselves and disestablish that which denies the law of progress.

“Our methods are those of self-help and passive resistance. To unite and organise ourselves in order to show our efficiency by the way in which we can develop our industries, settle our individual disputes, keep order and peace on public occasions, attend to questions of sanitation, help the sick and suffering, relieve the famine-stricken, work out our intellectual, technical and physical education, evolve a Government of our own for our own internal affairs so far as that could be done without disobeying the law or questioning the legal authority of the bureaucratic administration, this was the policy publicly and frankly adopted by the Nationalist party.

“Boycott of foreign goods is a necessary condition for the encouragement of Swadeshi industries, boycott of Government schools is a necessary condition for the growth of national education, boycott of British courts is a necessary condition for the spread of arbitration. The only question is the extent and conditions of the boycott and that must be determined by the circumstances of the particular problem in each case. The general spirit of passive resistance has first to be raised, afterwards it can be organised, regulated and, where necessary, limited.”<sup>2</sup>

This open letter is a very important document as it contains almost all the essentials of Sri Aurobindo’s political thought and action and we give below long extracts from it. Sri Aurobindo has said about it:

“He (Sri Aurobindo) relied not upon this but upon an intuitive perception that the Government would not think it politic or useful to deport him if he left a programme which others could carry out in his absence.”<sup>3</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has further said:

“Nivedita afterwards told me that it had served its purpose, the Government had abandoned the idea of deportation.”<sup>4</sup>

The frustrated Government continued to keep a close watch on these writings in the *Karmayogin* so as not to miss any opportunity of convicting Sri Aurobindo on a charge of sedition.

We have seen from Sri Aurobindo’s open letter in the *Karmayogin* how he had stressed the importance of a united Congress as a strengthening factor in the country’s fight for freedom; naturally, therefore, he took every opportunity to bring about a rapprochement between the Nationalists and the Moderates wherever and whenever possible. One such attempt was made at the Bengal



Provincial Conference which met at Hoogly in September 1909. Sri Aurobindo took a leading part in the proceedings of the conference. The Moderates had welcomed the Morley-Minto Reforms whereas the Nationalists including Sri Aurobindo condemned it as utterly inadequate and unreal. This Hoogly conference took place on the 6th and 7th September under the presidentship of Sri Baikunthanath Sen, a Moderate leader. Sri Aurobindo writes:

“He (Sri Aurobindo) led the party again at the session of the Provincial Conference at Hoogly. There it became evident for the first time that Nationalism was gaining the ascendant, for it commanded a majority among the delegates and in the Subjects Committee Sri Aurobindo was able to defeat the Moderates’ resolution welcoming the Reforms and pass his own resolution stigmatising them as utterly inadequate and unreal and rejecting them. But the Moderate leaders threatened to secede if this was maintained and to avoid a scission he consented to allow the Moderate resolution to pass, but spoke at the public session explaining his decision and asking the Nationalists to acquiesce in it in spite of their victory so as to keep some unity in the political forces of Bengal. The Nationalist delegates, at first triumphant and clamorous, accepted the decision and left the hall quietly at Sri Aurobindo’s order so that they might not have to vote either for or against the Moderate resolution. This caused much amazement and discomfiture in the minds of the Moderate leaders who complained that the people had refused to listen to their old and tried leaders and clamoured against them, but at the bidding of a young man new to politics they had obeyed in disciplined silence as if a single body.”<sup>5</sup>

In the *Karmayogin* of 14th September, there appeared an assessment of the Conference in which, in the course of a review, it was stated:

“... if the Nationalists pressed their points the Conference would be broken up by the secession of the Moderate leaders. In all these disputed matters, therefore, the Nationalists gave way and adhered only to their main point of securing some definite step in relation to the holding of an united Congress.

“It is necessary to explain this action on the part of our party, for in his speech on the boycott resolution S. J. Aurobindo Ghose purposely refrained from stating more than the bare fact in order that nothing he might say should lead to excitement or anything which could be an excuse for friction. It is not that the Nationalist party is not willing or able to stand by itself if that proves inevitable and seems the best course in the interest of Nationalism and the future of the country. But it has always been the ideal of the Nationalists to make of the Congress a great and living body deliberative in the manner of free assemblies which consider from various points of view what is best for the country and decide by majority or, whenever possible, unanimously, the parties holding together not by identity of views but by one common aim and interest and the combined freedom and restraint of a constitution which provides for the free expression of opinion under fair and impartial rules. They seek also a centre for

the country's strength which can give authority to a network of organisations systematising the work of the nation...."<sup>6</sup>

Simultaneously Sri Aurobindo was engrossed with Yoga, politics, poetry, drama, philosophical essays and dissertations on art.

At that time rumour was spread again of arrest and deportation of Sri Aurobindo. His writings caused a great deal of alarm to the British Government. They were perplexed because there were no plausible grounds for framing a charge. The Government did not know how to take action against him.

Observing the political situation and the watching eye of the British Government he wrote another article and published it under the title "Letter to My Countrymen" on 25th December. The article runs:

"The period of waiting is over. We have two things made clear to us, first that the future of the nation is in our hands, and, secondly, that from the Moderate Party we can expect no cordial co-operation in building it. Whatever we do, we must do ourselves, in our own strength and courage. Let us then take up the work God has given us, like courageous, steadfast and patriotic men willing to sacrifice greatly and venture greatly because the mission also is great. If there are any unnerved by the fear of repression, let them stand aside. If there are any who think that by flattering Anglo-India or coquetting with English Liberalism they can dispense with the need of effort and the inevitability of peril, let them stand aside. If there are any who are ready to be satisfied with mean gains or unsubstantial concessions, let them stand aside. But all who deserve the name of Nationalists must now come forward and take up their burden."<sup>7</sup>

We may note a prediction made by Sri Aurobindo regarding India's independence. This was in January 1910 when he gave an interview to a correspondent of the Tamil Nationalist Weekly *India*. Sri Aurobindo said: "Since 1907, we are living in a new era which is full of hope for India. Not only India, but the whole world will see sudden upheavals and revolutionary changes. The high will become low and the low high. The oppressed and depressed shall be elevated. The nations and humanity will be animated by a new consciousness, new thought and new efforts will be made to reach new ends. Amidst these revolutionary changes India will become free."<sup>8</sup> These words were published with Sri Aurobindo's authorisation.

On the 24th January, 1910 Shamsul-Alam, Deputy Superintendent of the Police Intelligence Department, was shot dead on the steps of the Calcutta High Court publicly and in daylight. Sri Aurobindo wrote in his book *Kara Kahini* about this detective with great humour. We have quoted him in a previous chapter. Under "Facts and Opinions", we have the following in the *Karmayogin* of the 29th January, 1910:

"The startling assassination of Deputy Superintendent Shamsul-Alam on Monday in the precincts of the High Court, publicly in daylight, under the eyes of many and in a crowded building, breaks the silence which had settled in the

country, in a fashion which all will deplore... All we can do is to sit with folded hands and listen to the senseless objugation of the Anglo-Indian Press waiting for a time when the peaceful expression and organisation of our national aspiration will no longer be penalised. It is then that terrorism will vanish from the country and the nightmare be as if it never had been.”<sup>9</sup>

This daring assassination of the arch-detective drove the Government crazy.

*(To be continued)*

NILIMA DAS

*References*

- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 26, p 57
- 2 *Ibid* , Vol 2, pp 124-128
- 3 *Ibid* , Vol 26, pp 53-54
- 4 *Ibid* , p 57
5. *Ibid* , pp 32, 34
6. *Ibid* , Vol 2, pp. 197, 198
7. *Ibid* , pp 325-327
- 8 *Sri Aurobindo for All Ages*, by Nirodbaran, p 110
- 9 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 2, pp 375-376

## MUSINGS ON PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

(Continued from the issue of August 1995)

### Thanksgiving

EVEN if we ignore all the wonders of this world—the mystic beauty of myriad flowers, the enchantment of coloured wings and tuneful voices, the majesty of snow-clad peaks, the emerald of the lush meadows, the soothing surge of rivers and oceans, the joy of the company of fellow human beings and the reassurance of our dwellings, the warmth of fire, the life-giving quality of air, the purifying water and our loving Mother Earth who nestles us on her breast and the bliss of faery nights with its star-lamps and the elation of the days calling us to great deeds—even then there is so much for which we should be grateful to the Lord.

Suppose the Divine had left us to exist as stones or fishes or animals? Suppose he did not constantly uphold and upraise us to ever new heights or always lead us to broader plateaus of consciousness? What then would have been our lot? A perpetual hell of ordinariness with no release in soul-vistas and the elevations that make life worth living. If we were left to live like gophers, or centipedes or else like vile criminals, without any hope of ascent into purer consciousness? The possibilities are too numerous and dark even to be contemplated. When we consider all our present material and inner riches and in addition the glorious future awaiting us our gratitude knows no bounds.

And for those who live in oneness with the Divine, life becomes a constant hymn of heart-felt gratitude and if possible one would forever lie at the feet of the Lord.

On November 26, 1912 the Mother wrote in her diary,

What a hymn of thanksgiving should I not be raising at each moment unto Thee! Everywhere and in everything around me Thou revealest Thyself and in me Thy Will and Consciousness express themselves always more and more clearly even to the point of my having almost entirely lost the gross illusion of “me” and “mine”. If a few shadows, a few flaws can be seen in the great Light which manifests Thee, how shall they bear for long the marvellous brightness of Thy resplendent Love?

This is the state towards which we are being led and for which Mother Nature has undertaken this labour stretching over unimaginable time-spans. And this is why the Divine has planted the seed of a divine discontent in our heart, so that *nothing short of a perfect perfection* can satisfy one who has crossed a certain threshold of consciousness. And to the *One* who has granted us this urge for rising ever higher in the scales of consciousness, who has given us hope

of living in *Oneness* with him, to him we owe eternal and constant gratitude.  
The Mother says about this state of oneness,

This morning, the consciousness that I had of the way Thou art fashioning this being which was "I" can be roughly represented by a great diamond cut with regular geometrical facets, a diamond in its cohesion, firmness, pure limpidity, transparency, but a brilliant and radiant flame in its intense ever-progressive life. But it was something more, something better than all that, for nearly all sensation inner and outer was exceeded and that image only presented itself to my mind as I returned to conscious contact with the outer world.

A diamond with a brilliant flaming centre is the image that comes to the Mother to describe the consciousness achieved by this union. This is the simile many of India's saint poets have used. Saint Kabir has said in one song, "O Lord, my love for you is indestructible like a diamond which can never be broken." If one wants to avoid the language of hyperbole and avoid speaking of a consciousness bright like a thousand suns, then the diamond is the most perfect symbol to represent a consciousness living in the sense of unity with the Divine, because, as the Mother says, her experience far exceeded the image. She further expresses her gratitude,

It is Thou that makest the experience fertile, Thou who renderest life progressive, Thou who compellest the darkness to vanish in an instant before the Light, Thou who givest to Love all its power, Thou who everywhere raisest up matter in this ardent and wonderful aspiration, in this sublime thirst for Eternity.

This is the secret of the upward momentum of civilization, the *One* who is hidden in Matter and always strives upwards, who has made a man out of a mole and who would yet transform men into Gods or even greater entities. To him the Mother bows,

*Thou* everywhere and always; nothing but *Thou* in the essence and in the manifestation.

O Shadow and Illusion, dissolve! O Suffering, fade and disappear!  
Lord Supreme, art Thou not there?

This is the way we should walk on the paths of life with an integral gratitude permeating our thoughts and feelings and body and soul.

### *O Great Mother*

If one wants to come out of the narrow prison of self, if one wants to broaden oneself into Eternity and walk into Infinity, then there is a sure and sweet way—to read the *Prayers and Meditations* of the Mother. Never before has anyone given such a sublime and divine record of Communion with the Divine. The poems of the numerous saint-poets of India which, even today, plunge the readers in seas of light and love, are only an outpouring of the soul's yearning for the Lord. As soon as the saint-poets were liberated from the bondage of Ego and Ignorance and achieved union—*sayujya*—with the Lord, they hardly wrote anything more.

But in the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* the Divine speaks to us not only as the Divine (as Sri Krishna does in the Gita) but also as the aspiring soul, the devotee and the sadhak. There is the enchantment and *rasa* of the yearning and sweet surrender, and the intense call of Vidyapati, Kabir, Meera and Andal, as well as the sublime notes of Divinity.

Apart from these two distinct modes, there is also the record and the description of the ascent from the individual Divine Consciousness to the Supreme Consciousness as well as of the descent from the Highest to the Individual Consciousness. The resultant rainbow joining and bridging the terrestrial plane with the Planes of Aditi dazzles our senses, enamours our hearts and illumines our whole being. The *Prayers* are like a supreme manifestation of the soul's love for the Lord and the purest and most detailed self-giving ever recorded anywhere. Each of these *Prayers* has the quality of the Philosopher's Stone and if we choose to seek support in them, the path will be illumined and an integral progress assured and all our dross transmuted into unalloyed gold.

The Divine Mother came to us with arms full of the gifts and boons of all the heavens—the term “all the heavens” is used here not as a poetic hyperbole but as a Truth, because the Supramental Consciousness is the greatest gift ever bestowed on us earthly creatures and by its power one day earth will equal the heavens—and all these priceless gifts of Divine Verities are condensed in these *Prayers*. Indeed, with the help of these *Prayers* no spiritual ascent is impossible.

Till the advent of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother the world assumed that to do yoga required a total renunciation of life. It meant a withdrawal from action, a total withdrawal being impossible—because one has to breathe and eat etc. to preserve life—therefore those who aspired for a union with the Divine allowed only two kinds of activities; those that were required to preserve life, and by extreme ascetic regimentation these were limited to the bare minimum, and those which helped the soul turn towards the Lord i.e. chanting of the Divine Name, making of garlands, cleaning the temple-premises etc. The Gita's Karmayoga never could fully undo the harm done by the millennial denial of life which followed Buddhism.

The Mother's Yoga is indeed revolutionary in this respect. She wrote on November 28, 1912,

The outer life, the activity of each day and each instant, is it not the indispensable complement of our hours of meditation and contemplation? And is not the proportion of time given to each the exact image of the proportion which exists between the amount of effort to be made for the preparation and realisation? For meditation, contemplation, Union is the result obtained—the flower that blooms; the daily activity is the anvil on which all the elements must pass and repass in order to be purified, refined, made supple and ripe for the illumination which contemplation gives to them. All these elements must be thus passed one after the other through the crucible before the outer activity becomes needless for the integral development.

This is the most non-conformist view of yoga in yogic history. Instead of denigrating action it gives action a supreme importance, in as much as actions are the acid test through which our personality must pass and through this process will be exposed all our pretensions and shams and shortcomings. The supposed yogi who berates others for breaking the peace of his meditations, who shuns to share his wisdom and experience with the less fortunate, who overlooks the woes of humanity, fails the Test. If his meditation has not made a real change in his character and has not refined his outer being then his realisation has been on the surface only. He might have passed hours in some supposed inner heaven but his progress could not have been genuine or real if it did not act on his outer being and activities. If one is capable of cheating and telling lies, then the hours one has passed in contemplation and meditation have failed. The outer being also must change in the light of the inner realisation. Here fails or triumphs the Divine in us. The Mother says when an equilibrium is attained between the inner and the outer, when our meditations change our actions so much that they reflect the very face of the Lord,

Then is this activity turned into the means to manifest Thee so as to awaken the other centres of consciousness to the same dual work of the forge and illumination. Therefore are pride and satisfaction with oneself the worst of all obstacles. Very modestly we must take advantage of all the minute opportunities offered to knead and purify some of the innumerable elements, to make them supple, to make them impersonal, to teach them forgetfulness of self and abnegation and devotion and kindness and gentleness; and when all these modes of being have become habitual to them, then are they ready to participate in the Contemplation, and to identify themselves with Thee in the supreme Concentration.

This then is the next step and the next stage. When the outer being reflects perfectly the inner realisation then one is ready to be an instrument of the Divine and can sow the seed of aspiration for divinity in others and help them grow into the likeness of the Lord till their gross urges are purified, till they become more plastic to the Divine Touch, become forgetful of self and learn *abnegation and devotion and kindness and gentleness*. When all this is achieved then only our meditations have been fruitful and this is not possible till we are tested by innumerable shocks of daily living, through an interaction with the crude stuff of life. It is easy to be nice to the nice but to be a true saint we have to be nice even to the vulgar and provocative, to be equal and loving to all, to accept with equanimity whatsoever the Supreme sends to us. The Mother says,

That is why it seems to me that the work must be long and slow even for the best and that striking conversions cannot be integral. They change the orientation of the being, they put it definitively on the straight path; but truly to attain the goal none can escape the need of innumerable experiences of every kind and every instant.

... O Supreme Master who shinest in my being and each thing, let Thy Light be manifest and the reign of Thy Peace come for all.

O faint Heart! Take courage. Here is explained the necessity of all those bitter experiences, those long drawn-out struggles in the lists of destiny.

O Lord! Accept our gratitude for our misfortunes.

### *The Sword's Edge*

A total self-giving to the Divine is a most arduous, almost impossible task. One's least feeling, most insignificant act and casual thought—all, all without exception, have to be attuned to the Divine Wavelength. If we even unwittingly get attuned to any foreign or anti-divine state, at once like an infinitesimal hole in a dyke which the waters enlarge gradually and progressively to ultimately breach the dyke, a whole world of subtly contrary influences creeps into our heart. At first this invasion is small and seems insignificant and we blithely ignore it to our cost because a time comes when slowly and imperceptibly this insignificant-seeming thought, feeling or act can undermine and annul the whole effort of our yoga. Sri Aurobindo has warned,

A small pebble of imperfection can bring the whole edifice of yoga down.

Yoga has to be a total undertaking. It cannot be taken up like a part-time



job. It cannot be treated with a touch of levity. One has to be one hundred per cent ready for an integral effort, one has to know and realise that all desires have to be renounced and that there is no toe-hold left if one slides down the ladder of consciousness. It is better to hang on to the precipice than to let go. There has to be an unceasing vigil in the heart because the enemy is lodged there. The desires masquerading as innocents, the thoughts disguised as benevolence, the camouflaged feelings disguised as altruism are the arms of the Enemy ready to pluck us from our ideal's perch. On December 2, 1912, the Mother wrote in her diary,

So long as one element of the being, one movement of the thought is still subjected to outside influences, not solely under Thine, it cannot be said that the true Union is realised; there is still the horrible mixture without order and light,—for that element, that movement is a world, a world of disorder and darkness, as is the entire earth in the material world, as is the material world in the entire universe.

This we have to guard against, to beware of. There is a darkness in things which is ready to engulf us at the least weakening of our will, at the faintest disbelief or trace of irreverence. Such betrayals will plunge us into a chaos equal to the chaos on the earth. How difficult is the harmonisation and purification of all the disparate elements of our being and how impossible it seems to control the different parts of being and to attune them to our aspiration. Sometimes the forest and the cave seem the only guarantee of success.

But there is another way; the way of surrender, of call, of remembrance. The sadhak can dexterously shift the burden of his sadhana and of his failure or success on to the broad shoulders of the Divine and then there would be nothing to fear. What can happen to a child-soul nestled in the arms of the Omnipotent Mother?

*(To be continued)*

SHYAM KUMARI

## RELIGION AND POLITICS: THE INDIAN SYNTHESIS

ONE of the controversial problems troubling the modern Indian society is the problem of Religion vs Politics. It will be useful to examine this problem in the light of ancient Indian insights and the synthesis arrived at by the architects of ancient Indian civilisation between these two human activities in thought and life.

Religion in the ancient Indian perception is not something apart from life; it is the Art and Science of living in harmony with the highest and eternal Laws of Life, Sanatana Dharma. In our Indian view every human activity, whether it is economics, politics, science, technology or commerce, has its own swabhava and swadharma, its own unique, inherent, deeper and natural truth and law, a system of higher ideals and values on the moral and spiritual levels transcending its mundane interest in the physical and vital plane, and a higher purpose to fulfil in the evolution of humanity. Any human activity lived in the spirit of its swadharma and as a sacrifice to the divine power becomes religious and sacred and leads to the spiritual evolution of the soul. When this spirit of true religion is brought into politics, it will elevate politics to a much higher level of consciousness from its present condition of degradation.

I think not many will disagree with this Indian perception. But the real problem troubling the modern Indian society is the intrusion of sectarian religionism into politics and the exploitation of this lower form of religion by politicians. There can be no doubt that this mixture can be very harmful to both religion and politics. But there are some special factors peculiar to Indian society which have to be considered before passing any hasty judgment on this sensitive issue. First of all, as the patriot sages of modern India like Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo have repeatedly emphasised, religion or spirituality is the unique genius of the Indian race. Religion has an intense emotional appeal for the Indian masses. Its potential for motivating and arousing them is immense. The other factor which has to be taken into account is the law of progressive evolution. In this world everything is in a process of evolution. In our Indian view, this evolution progresses through three stages which correspond to three fundamental qualitative modes of Nature. Tamas is a state of dark uncreative passivity, inertia, and immobility of the physical being; Rajas is the dynamism of the self-assertive ego, desire and passion of the vital being; and Sattwa is the enlightened knowledge, harmony, purity and tranquillity of the intellectual, moral and aesthetic being of the higher mind. Universal Nature, in her evolutionary progress, uses the quality of rajas to awaken and dynamise those human activities or systems which have fallen into or have still not risen from the state of tamas. This movement from tamasic to rajasic state is normally accompanied with a lot of passion and violence, fanaticism and self-assertive aggression and rude shaking and disturbance of the earlier tamasic order of

things. In this stage there is likely to be a fierce competitive struggle between opposing groups, ideologies and forces and each group, idea or force has to defend itself against its opponents. Under such conditions a weak tamasic passivity especially against a strong and aggressive assailant cannot be a virtue, but a weakness and an invitation to be slaughtered in a sacrifice without merit. This is a stage which every human activity has to pass through before it can attain to the higher state of sattwa. But on the positive side this rajasic phase of evolution gives birth to a lot of creative activity, self-searching and brainstorming in thought and life preparing the consciousness and the activity of the community for a higher evolution.

One of the major psychological problems of modern Indian society is the lack of rajasic vitality and vigour and as a result frequent relapse into tamasic indolence and inactivity. The other negative consequence of this defect is that all the creative sattwic ideal and impulse given by our cultural and spiritual leaders cannot be carried to its logical fulfilment in life. This is possibly the reason why we need frequent and violent doses of rajasic stimulus to shock us out of *tamas*. Modern India, in her present condition, is in such a state of rajasic turmoil especially in its economic, religious and political life. We hope that this phase is the necessary preparation for the emergence of the light, peace and harmony of *sattwa*. For this to happen, the cultural leaders of India have to provide the needed *sattwic* ideals and illumination which will give the right guidance and direction to the nation in harmony with her unique cultural temperament and genius.

So instead of passing hasty and condemnatory judgments based on "secular" thinking let us try to understand the problem in the light of a deeper insight and in the background of the unique genius of our culture. The problem of Religion and Politics cannot be solved by divorcing one from the other. We must remember here that both life and human nature are an indivisible and interdependent whole. No problem can be solved by trenchant solutions which cut and divide things of life and human nature into distinct compartments. The true solution lies in a synthesis which discovers the right relation between the various human activities in a harmonised whole. Religion and Politics are the outward expression in the collective life of certain inner evolutionary needs, aspirations and faculties of human consciousness. Religion in its innermost and deepest truth is the seeking of the Soul of man for its own higher self and union with the Universal Self, Spirit or God of which it is an individualised spark. In its normal outer activity, Religion is the expression of the seeking of the higher mind of man or in a more specific sense the feeling and intuitive heart in man for a supra-rational Truth beyond Mind. Politics in its innermost and deepest truth is the seeking for mastery, mastery of the inner self and the outer environment, which are called in Indian terminology *Swarajya* and *Samrajya*; in its outer collective self-expression, Politics is the seeking of that part of the vital being in man for

power, order, organisation, unity and self-government. From the point of view of human development, Religion is the field for the development of the intuitive, spiritual, moral and emotional faculties in man and Politics is the field for the development of the dynamic will-in-life and vital-force in man. So the present degenerate condition of Religion and Politics should not be allowed to cloud our perception of the deeper truth of these human activities.

The highest truth of Religion is spirituality, which means the seeking, discovery and realisation of the Spirit which is the deepest and the innermost self of the individual—beyond or behind his body, life and mind—and the universe and the source of all life and energies in Man and Nature. To live in intimate communion or identity with this Spirit and Self in us and remould and transform our inner nature and outer life in the light, power and values of this spiritual self is the aim of the spirituality of the ancient Vedic culture of India.

But this Spirit in the ancient Indian conception is not only a static poise of infinite Being but also an infinite power of Being: Shakti. This power of the Spirit manifests itself in the universe in its four fundamental aspects: Wisdom that conceives the order and principle of things, Strength or Force that sanctions, upholds and enforces it, Harmony that creates the arrangement of its parts and Work that carries out what the rest directs. In humanity and in human nature, these four cosmic aspects of the divine power express themselves as four distinct and fundamental human types: Brahmana, man of knowledge, Kshatriya, man of will, power and strength, Vaisya, man of mutuality and productive interchange and Shudra, man of work and service. In the conception of the ancient Vedic Rishis the ideal society is the one in which the collective life becomes a perfect and conscious self-expression of the fourfold powers of the creative divinity in man. In this ideal condition all works of Knowledge—of which Religion has to reveal the highest knowledge of man, God and universe—becomes the expression of the divine power of Wisdom through its human instruments of the corresponding type, that is Brahmana; all works of Power,—of which Politics and Government are the major field of collective self-expression—become the expression of the divine power of Strength through its human instruments of the corresponding type, that is Kshatriya.

The Brahmana has to manifest both secular and spiritual wisdom but pre-eminently the latter, that is, the highest wisdom of Religion, or the knowledge of the Universal Goddess of Wisdom, Maheshwari, who conceives and ordains the highest truth, law and order of the universe, the knowledge of Sanatana Dharma that preserves the world-order. In ancient India there was no rigid division between Science, Philosophy and Religion. All the sixty-four Arts and Sciences listed in the ancient Indian tradition are pursued with the same aims: Dharma and Moksha. The aim of all mundane sciences is to discover the deeper truth, law and purpose of each human activity in the totality of the human and cosmic evolutionary order and find the right path to realise this purpose in the life of the

individual and the collectivity. And the highest aim of all works of knowledge is the knowledge of the highest Self and Spirit which leads to Moksha, spiritual liberation. The highest ideal of self-development for the Brahmana type is not to become a brilliant intellectual and rational thinker but to realise the status of the Rishi, the spiritually illumined Seer who not merely thinks and conceives but has the inner vision to see the truth he conceives, not only sees but also can become one in consciousness with the truth of the object he wants to know. So the knowledge of the Rishi is not something exclusively confined to Religion. He is in secure and realised possession of the highest spiritual wisdom but can also see and know the deeper truth of all mundane life and knowledge in the light of his highest spiritual knowledge, and therefore has the skill to relate, interpret and apply his spiritual knowledge to every field of mundane life and knowledge. So in this Indian view the Rishi, thinker and seer of spiritual truth “is the natural director of Society”<sup>1</sup> and “the best guide not only of the religious and moral but the practical life”<sup>2</sup> because “he has the complete inner knowledge and the higher surpassing knowledge”<sup>3</sup> and therefore “he can guide the world humanly as God guides it divinely”.<sup>4</sup> So only Religion—the word used in the highest sense as the wisdom of the Rishi possessing a comprehensive insight into the deepest truth and law, ‘Dharma’, of Man, Life and Nature—can provide the right guiding light and the right system of values, ideals and vision to society and politics. The ancient Indian political manuals repeatedly insist that the king has to consult and seek the advice of enlightened and selfless spiritual personalities before taking important decisions. And this had become one of the living traditions of ancient Indian political culture.

In a similar way all secular power enjoyed by human beings is a delegated power, entrusted to them by the power and will of the Spirit which governs the world. The aim of all activities of the works of power is to become a dynamic channel of the divine will and power of the Spirit. This is the highest aim of the karma-yoga of the Gita. And the ideal of self-development of the kshatriya-type is to become such a karma-yogi, a dynamic instrument of the power of the Spirit. Thus the Indian ideal of the political leader goes beyond the Platonic ideal of the philosopher-king: it is the ideal of the king-sage and the karma-yogi.

So the power which the Kshatriya, the Man of Power, has to manifest is at once secular, moral and spiritual—the secular or political power which comes from authority, position, tradition or status and professional skill, the moral power which proceeds from the right temperament, qualities and strength of character and the spiritual power which comes from communion with the divine power and will of the Spirit. The ancient Indian political manuals imposed a vigorous inner and outer discipline on the ruling king. He has to acquire the professional skill and capacity not only to discharge his secular responsibilities but also, more important than this, to develop the moral qualities, capacities and the strength of character of the Kshatriya to perform his duties with a high sense

of idealism, values, dignity and honour. But the highest ideal of self-development for the Kshatriya is to achieve the yogic ideal of spiritual self-mastery and to manifest the spiritual Strength of the divine Power that sanctions, upholds and enforces the vision of the divine Wisdom.

In the collective life of human society the relation between the Kshatriya and Brahmana classes, or "Religion and Politics", has to reflect the relation between their corresponding divine archetypes. This is the principle or rationale behind the function assigned to Brahmana and Kshatriya in ancient Indian society—the former the interpreter of Dharma and the latter the upholder of Dharma. So the real sovereign of the society is neither the thinking elite nor the ruling aristocracy nor the masses but the impersonal moral authority of Dharma, the cosmic order that governs the world. The function of the Brahmana, the thinking and religious class and the leader of culture and religion, is to discover, reveal and interpret the truth and application of Dharma to the Society; the function of the Kshatriya, the ruling class and the leaders of polity and government, is to uphold, protect and administer Dharma. Or in other words the function of the Brahmana and his domain of Culture and Religion is to provide the secular, moral and spiritual knowledge for the progressive revelation and illumination of Dharma in Society and the function of the Kshatriya and his domain of politics and government is to provide the secular, moral and spiritual power and authority for the progressive growth and enforcement of Dharma in Society and ultimately for a total and victorious conquest of the Spirit and its highest Dharma over Life. This is the ancient Vedic spiritual ideal. This is probably the deeper spiritual truth of Islam, to "conquer the world for God".

The ancient Vedic sages of India were well aware that this ideal cannot be realised in life by any secular, human or moral power or even by the power of ordinary popular religion, but only by bringing down into human life a spiritual power transcending the human mind and capable of effecting a total transformation of the individual and collective life of man. The main principle of the spiritual discipline or yoga followed by the Vedic sages is a mutual Sacrifice or self-giving between Man and Gods. Man gives or offers all the energies and activities of his body, life and mind to the Gods who are different aspects and cosmic powers of that unknowable and indefinable Oneness which Vedic sages described in those famous words—"Existence is one but sages call it variously"; the Gods in turn descend into Man and into all his activities, faculties and energies, bringing their higher spiritual light and force—symbolised by the Vedic mystics in the imagery of Cows and Horses—illuminating, energising and heightening all the human powers with their greater divine knowledge and force, and uplifting them to their own supramental heights. The Yoga of the Vedic sages is not a life-shunning asceticism but a joyous life-accepting sacrificial journey and pilgrimage to the Spirit. None of the activities and enjoyments of life are rejected but all are offered as a conscious sacrifice into the inner flame of

Aspiration "Agni" carrying the offering to the Gods, so that the entire human nature and life and its energies and activities are made into fit vehicles or chariots of the Gods for manifesting their powers in human life.

Thus, as we have said elsewhere, the Vedic ideal is to make the entire human life of the individual and the collectivity a direct and conscious self-expression of the creative Godhead in Man. This idea is expressed in a strikingly revealing image in the Purusha Sukta of the Vedas which describes the manifest self-expression of the divine Being in Man and his life as a Godhead with Brahmana as his Mouth, symbolising the creative Word of Wisdom, Kshatriya as his Arms, Vaisya as his Thighs and Shudra as his Feet. Here, as we have indicated earlier, the fourfold order represents at once the human types and their corresponding self-expression in Society: Brahmana represents the typical Man of knowledge and the self-expression of this type in religion, creative thought, science, education, learning and culture; Kshatriya represents the typical Man of power and the self-expression of this type in politics, defence, government and administration; Vaisya represents the typical Man of mutuality and harmony and his self-expression in the family, economics, commerce, trade, and professions; Shudra represents the Man of work and service and the self-expression of this type in the labour-force, crafts, and "human service" institutions.

This ideal and vision of the Vedic sages, who tried to build society on the foundations of a deeper psycho-spiritual knowledge of human and cosmic nature, got gradually diluted and veiled in the course of time and finally disappeared from the cultural consciousness of the Nation. Sri Aurobindo traces this devolution of the ideal of the Vedic people:

"... Human society was for them an attempt to express in life the cosmic Purusha who has expressed himself otherwise in the material and the supra-physical universe. Man and the cosmos are both of them symbols and expressions of the same hidden Reality.

From this symbolic attitude came the tendency to make everything in society a sacrament, religious and sacrosanct, but as yet with a large and vigorous freedom in all its forms,—a freedom which we do not find in the rigidity of 'savage' communities because these have already passed out of the symbolic into the conventional stage though on a curve of degeneration instead of a curve of growth. The spiritual idea governs all; the symbolic religious forms which support it are fixed in principle; the social forms are lax, free and capable of infinite development. One thing, however, begins to progress towards a firm fixity and this is the psychological type. Thus we have first the symbolic idea of the four orders, expressing—to employ an abstractly figurative language which the Vedic thinkers would not have used nor perhaps understood, but which helps best our modern understanding—the Divine as knowledge in man, the Divine as power, the Divine as production, enjoyment and mutuality, the Divine as service, obedience and work. These divisions answer to four cosmic principles,

the Wisdom that conceives the order and principle of things, the Power that sanctions, upholds and enforces it, the Harmony that creates the arrangement of its parts, the Work that carries out what the rest direct. Next, out of this idea there developed a firm but not yet rigid social order based primarily upon temperament and psychic type with a corresponding ethical discipline and secondarily upon the social and economic function. But the function was determined by its suitability to the type and its helpfulness to the discipline; it was not the primary or sole factor. The first, the symbolic stage of this evolution is predominantly religious and spiritual; the other elements, psychological, ethical, economic, physical are there but subordinated to the spiritual and religious ideas. The second stage, which we may call the typical, is predominantly psychological and ethical; all else, even the spiritual and religious, is subordinate to the psychological idea and to the ethical ideal which expresses it. Religion becomes then a mystic sanction for the ethical motive and discipline, Dharma; that becomes its chief social utility, and for the rest it takes a more and more other-worldly turn. The idea of the direct expression of the divine Being or cosmic Principle in man ceases to dominate or to be the leader and in the forefront; it recedes, stands in the background and finally disappears from the practice and in the end even from the theory of life.”<sup>5</sup>

The mission and future work of Indian Culture is to rediscover this ancient vision and these ideals of the Vedic sages in theory and practice or, in other words, in spiritual experience, thought and life and reapply them under the changed conditions of the modern age.

M. S. SRINIVASAN

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- 1 & 2. *SABCL*, Vol 14, p 57.
3. *Ibid* , Vol 15, p 169
4. *Ibid*.
- 5 *Ibid* , pp. 5-7



## PASSING THOUGHTS

GANDHIJI came to serve his times. He served well. That he could have served better who can say? Who impelled him to action? Rama, Rahim, or Jesus? Perhaps all of them and others too in their own way. But changing times ask for more and yet what is this “more”?

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Sri Aurobindo came to change his times, nay, the Time—in rustic language, to twist the tail of time and make it turn to the Right. Did he succeed? He was not an Avatar of ‘success’.

He is the Avatar of a “vast surrender”. He came to sow the seeds of Light, prepare a seed-bed, try to protect it, till the seeds can germinate and are ready to be transplanted. Did he succeed? What he was trying was a laboratory process to be conducted under special conditions, as if in secrecy, away from the evil-eye. In this he succeeded to the required minimum. To see and witness the new rhythm of time and move in its swing, we have yet to wait. If we have glimpsed the truth of his labour, we cannot ask for more. This glimpse itself will fill our hours with Light, hope and an elevated state of joy and satisfaction.

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It is often asked why Sri Aurobindo did not consent to see Gandhiji. If I have to answer this question truthfully in one sentence, I would say—“out of a deep spiritual consideration for him and the work he had come to accomplish”. I know this will not satisfy very many of Gandhiji’s admirers who also carried a high regard for Sri Aurobindo. This is because we have no idea as to what spiritual consciousness is and how it moves and acts.

Sri Aurobindo’s gesture of refusal to meet him was for Gandhiji’s good. Social etiquette has no room in spiritual culture. Sri Aurobindo’s seeing Gandhiji would have introduced a disturbing wave in a set field in which Gandhiji worked. It would have disturbed the work Gandhiji was doing and in which he was being led by a moral force. Sri Aurobindo represented a different Light, a different Force perhaps, if not quite a different and contrary nature. Gandhiji could not have understood this Light and its nature. It was better to have left Gandhiji alone to run through his own time and course of events and actions.

The Lights that Gandhiji and Sri Aurobindo represented were so different in their character and substance that any outer attempt to reconcile them and bring them to a common public platform would have produced a worse confusion than what came about from Sri Aurobindo’s refusal. The economy of spiritual

consciousness can only be, even partially, understood by the humble of the spiritual path. Meetings between men of Light and action are not a matter of courtesy. They are historical events, turning points, favourable or unfavourable.

The message that Sri Aurobindo gave on the passing away of Gandhiji should give us not only solace but also the necessary hope and lead on our path:

“I would have preferred silence in the face of these circumstances that surround us. For any words that we can find fall flat amid such circumstances. This much, however, I will say that the Light that led us to Freedom though not yet to unity, still burns and will burn on till it conquers. I believe firmly that a great and united future is the destiny of this nation and its people. The Power that brought us through so much struggle and suffering to freedom, will achieve also, through whatever strife or trouble, the aim which so poignantly occupied the thoughts of the fallen leader at the time of his tragic ending; as it brought us freedom it will bring us unity. A free and united India will be there and the Mother will gather around her her sons and weld them into a single national strength in the life of a great and united India.”<sup>31</sup>

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You came down putting forward your right foot from behind iridescent clouds of glory, the golden gate of the sun, and then on to the kingdoms of gods and goddesses, brilliant children of the Sun. From there you entered the lands of beauty and charm and captivating beings of life and its joys. The journey then on was rather dull and repetitive in movements, a monotone of habit. But below this was the evening and advancing night with movements and stirrings of unrecognisable entities. Then on there was no path but a slippery mire dragging one to wherefrom no one can be pulled out. How did you manage to stand up in this nether pull? What is your next step or move? What power holds you erect and steady in step?

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One may say without going very wrong that Sri Aurobindo's own path was the path of *Will*—the Will of the Purusha—the enlightened Will of the Purusha. His will was an enlightened power of his being and so, when he perceived a truth or accepted it, he put forth his will, steady, unswerving and firm, at the disposal of this truth. That is how when he accepted Lele's instructions, he stopped all thoughts coming from outside and silenced his mind and achieved the Brahmik status, which was never to leave him. Later he experimented with many things to test the strength and efficacy of this Will. He could stop the spreading of poison through his body, be it the venom of the scorpion or an overdose of opium. He

could turn the physical pain of ant-bite into Ananda. But we must know that he never lost discrimination and never went beyond a certain point in his experiments. He had to do things in the given conditions of the physical reality and the perceived truth. The unwavering will, steady and undoubting, as if it is the Will of God Himself, should be the Will of the Purusha. In the beginning it may be the will of the mental Purusha, because that is the most active and prominent power in front of man, but it should be consummated in the Will of the supreme and paramount Purusha.

The ultimate question is: to what purpose is this Will used as a power of manifestation of God's manifold being or a power working for the withdrawal from the world and the cosmic existence? In Sri Aurobindo's case it was for God's own work in the world.

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There are two opposite terms with which Sri Aurobindo remained constantly engaged and preoccupied—Consciousness and the Inconscient, like Light and Darkness. Both these terms have a manifold reality and range of existence—the one with an increasing vibrancy till it becomes inaudible, and the other with decreasing vibrancy till it becomes imperceptible, as if a dead mass.

In the middle stands the Purusha, the master of both the hemispheres, one face reflecting the glory and the resplendent Light and the other an increasing blankness and bareness of fertility awaiting a miracle of sunflowers from the womb-caves of seeming death.

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Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Will of the Transcendent as against the Cosmic Will. We do not hear of such a concept in philosophies, spiritual literature and experience. Some do speak of the Grace, a transcendental principle, but when Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Will of the Transcendent, he means something else. It is not an act of Grace solitary for a purpose and in given circumstances, but an intervention in a more deliberate manner, the introduction of a new power of the Highest, made active with other existing and active forces of the cosmos. It is an endeavour to change the course of established forces and their balance. It is to bring the influence and power of a Transcendent power into the play of things. It is a Transcendent force, not a Cosmic force from the repertoire of the cosmic armoury. I wonder how far these distinctions will carry any meaning for most, even among the seekers of spiritual Truth and its working.

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We may or may not accept many a thing that Sri Aurobindo says, or only partially accept them in the run of life. This however is not likely to make much difference to the course of our life. But there is one truth which, if we turn a deaf ear or a blind eye to it, will certainly make a great difference to the quality and worth of our life. There is a creative power active in and around us and is raining its grace of beauty and enchantment constantly and to gather this Light in, we must become aware of its descending power. It is a creative power of the future and to be ignorant or unaware of it is to miss the miracle before us.

JAYANTILAL PAREKH

# CHRISTALIS

by

GEORGETTE COTY

*(Continued from the issue of August 1995)*

## Teach Me, My Master

How to remember all that Christalis had taught me about the pitfalls and traps set by those beings who would obstruct one's way towards the true light, how to recognise them in good time, was a constant concern to me ever since that event. True, it was a valuable fall, the hurt it caused will not easily be forgotten, yet would I remember should it occur again? I must engrave the lesson in my mind for the sake of my own safety!

"No, that is a wrong thought," said my soul. "Nothing is for your own person alone, everything is encompassed by the highest aim which is for all! When you serve that, you will always be safe."

"Yes, thank you, you are right, but how wonderful it is that now I am able to hear your advice from within myself."

"I was always there for you, O person, but you didn't listen to me. Don't let your mind mislead you. I am your consciousness and the source of all your good thoughts and actions. It is through me that Christalis comes to you and can observe your thoughts. He is a fully conscious being, a son of the Light. Trust him entirely and he will lead you further. The God-work calls for many helpers. One day you will also be one."

"Thank you very much for your support, but will I always be able to consult you in future, when I need advice?"

"Of course you can and you must make it a regular habit"... My inner voice ceased.

Now I needed to be alone right away to reflect on this new experience but my hands were full of work, this was my day to help prepare our meal, and already little faces began to peep in to sniff the air for smoke signals, as we called them.

But I needed to get away just for a spell. It was essential right then to be alone with my thoughts. So I asked my friends to excuse me for some minutes; I needed to go out into the open for a little while.

The woodshed was just the secluded place to offer the privacy I sought. I sank upon the drying logs, thankful for the support and thought how much service a tree gives to men, even after its death. No wonder Christalis cared for them so thoughtfully—and so did we those days. I leaned back to relax my aches when I sensed his presence.

I saw my own body go limp, sinking onto the logs. I fell asleep and saw another me emerge from it, greeting Christalis eagerly.

“It was I who suggested that you come here,” he said—“so that I could put your mind at ease about the event that gives you so much anxiety, which is not a good thing to have.

“Fear of things to happen brings uncertainty, disturbance. Our way must be cleared from all negative thoughts, they bar the way to advancement. The truth is that they open up an entry into the mind of those influences of darkness, who implant fear there. They intensify it to the point of panic, which in turn creates instability and this of course is an effective way to destruction. This has to be avoided absolutely.

“As I told you before, these forces are extremely subtle in their workings, and fear is their potent weapon. To tell you this, I came immediately. Never fear, Halio my friend, fear must be erased from your mind completely.”

Yes, dear Christalis, I will remember this from now on and should it come upon me again, I’ll drive it out of my mind instantly and remember you. Just before you came, I heard my inner being speak to me and I was so very glad of it. It hadn’t happened much before. Is this a development do you think?”

“But of course it is, hasn’t it told you also that your own self is an intermediary between us? You are sitting here with me in that body just now.”

“I am? But I always thought that when the soul leaves the body, one dies.”

“Yes, but that is true only when the link is severed entirely, but certainly not when it chooses to go on its voyages of discovery. But to do this consciously is not advisable without your trusted guardian.

“Now then, here is one more point I want you to observe; it is DOUBT. Doubt, you see, is another source of obstruction and it has to be removed from the consciousness entirely. Trust and faith form our protective shield, Halio. Now you are concerned about how you will recognise those harm-causing beings when you may encounter them again—on earth or in other planes of existence. Isn’t that so?”

“My thoughts are known to you, Christalis.”

“The first thing I must impress upon you is that on the subtle planes everything is pliable, not fixed as it is on earth, and beings there possess a certain measure of creative ability. Accordingly they can—and indeed often do—take up any form they like; from a small ant to a shining god. They can even take the forms of the ones you know and give you wrong suggestions to carry out, as you have experienced. But have no care, Halio, nor fear, nor doubt. Here is where your sense of observation will be utilized. Without this faculty, the soul is defenceless and therefore this development must be given priority.

“The very first requirement is what I have already spoken of, but as its importance is paramount I repeat it. An unflinching sense of OBSERVATION is necessary, which will lead to the next faculty to be developed—and this is

DISCERNMENT. Without these how is a person to distinguish the true from the false? Deception and pretence take many appearances. They masquerade as good and worthy of trust. Again I say, as on earth, so on other planes of consciousness this is the case.

“Now, out of these two basic abilities, the quality of DISCRIMINATION develops, and this is indispensable. An absolute requirement! You need to cultivate those and we will not neglect to pay due attention to them. Happy now? Let me see...”

“Thank you for this invaluable knowledge, Christalis,” I said to him. But before I could say anything further, he stood up abruptly. “You must return to your body right away. I see the children being sent to look for you. We’ll meet again.” With that he disappeared.

“Lillian, Mummy Lillian, where are you?” Anxious small voices were coming closer, so I shook myself awake and called out; “Here I am! Oh my, I must have fallen asleep. Come, let me embrace you all before you take your naughty aunty back to work.”

The little ones came flying towards my waiting arms open for them and off we went giggling, laughing all the way back.

“Dear Lillian Mummy, lunch is ready and we cannot eat without you. We were all so worried, and wondered where you had gone to and we are all very hungry, aren’t you too?”

“Of course I am, famished in fact—but I must ask our friends to pardon me for my slipping away to rest. Will they forgive me, do you think?”

“Of course they will, they understand, Lillian, they get tired too and so do we sometimes... Especially after dinner, always wanting to go to sleep and dream of nice things.”

“We have found her, we have found her!” they shouted, running into the dining hall, dragging me with them. “Please don’t scold poor Lillian, she was sleeping in the woodshed, so tired she was.”

Understanding smiles greeted me from my companions, they understood only too well. I smiled back apologetically and how I wished to tell them that one day, when they too would open the doors of their souls and call to heaven’s own to come to help them, they would find—as I had done—that their calls were heard and had brought the helpers down in answer to their needs.

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### **Illumination**

Never a word, no thought of mine were lost in the consciousness of Christalis. Nothing could go amiss in his mind of light. How much more advanced was his state of being than our over-crowded, over-tired minds? To

think how many grades apart we are from it! Can we ever develop enough spirit to mount even one scale of it? Yet, he is my teacher and a teacher imparts only that knowledge which he expects his pupil to learn. So then, it must become possible eventually. God only knows how and when, I mused, but what becomes possible for one must be so for others as well...

"I vouch for that,"—came his voice—"good thought, Halio, we strive towards that together! Come, we have much to learn and more to implement. Give me your hand, let us go today to another place I have selected for us, shall we?"

"Yes, Christalis, and very happily." As if on heavenly wings, we floated upward, where colours were signposts of timelessness and keys to the meaning of their own existences. Other than these, nothing was perceptible. 'Is there no life here at all?' I wondered—'Are these vast planes waiting to be peopled at some later time of God?'

"There are existences here, Halio, peopled with beings, but to make contact with them is not our business now. Still your mind, and observe within. We are getting closer now and can settle over there! Come, awake!"

But that was not so easy, my head was heavy. "This, I feel, is another..." I stammered. "Another what?" urged Christalis—"Another consciousness is here... beatific, it overwhelms my mind."

"Right, that is right, wonderful perception, I am very pleased!—This, Halio, is the plane of the Illumined Mind. I brought you here in order to throw light on a question you had put to me before. Yes, truly another mind is here, come nearer to me." He put his velvety finger on the centre of my forehead and pressed it lightly, then touched the top of my head.

I saw him before me very tall and glowing with light, and when I looked at my arms and hands, I noticed that they too had a glow. From my fingertips came forth little sparks of light. As he suggested, here I had no mind, but perceived instead. Intuitive perception replaced the rational mechanical workings. He spoke, but his words were addressed to this other perception in me and their meaning took root there.

"Indeed, my dear Halio, there are many grades of consciousness"—he spoke in musical tones—"but on earth they are not opened up as yet. Each of them has its own vehicle of mind. From the highest downward to the lowest, even below the ones which man knows to be his own. But our aim is to elevate what is latent within him now, even if he is hardly aware of its workings as yet. What his development demands next is, to ascend to those mind-levels that lead closer towards that consciousness of illumination, from where he hailed originally.

"You and I have already visited some of those levels. They were grades of ascents when we had travelled beyond the fixed physical body, past its sensations, past also its mind. Are you aware of that? This in itself is a noteworthy



achievement. And where did we go from there,—if not to other planes, other existences? They seemed natural to you, when you were there, simply because you had gone there in another body natural to them.”

He stopped to observe me. “Hmm, yes, you follow it—and when those existences became even in a small measure familiar to you, you began to wonder, once you were back in your earth-existent mind, how to make such experiences more accessible. How are you to reach them? And, to quote your own thoughts, ‘how can one find one’s soul, how can one reach God?’

“These questions are important marks of the awakening, the soul’s searching for its original state. The infant mind is in quest of its own growth. It has had a glimpse of something beyond its present sphere. It has grasped the existence of a certain knowledge. It has seen a glimmer of light. It wants that, and it also wants illumination. It begins to long to reach it, to leave its dim, half-lit sphere and emerge in what he has seen in a flash.

“So you asked the question which all souls ask when they first awaken from their long slumber of ignorance about anything higher than what they can see, feel, taste or touch.

“‘How does one find one’s soul?’ you asked. This very question carries the seed of light in itself, which alone gives all the answers, because it contains all knowledge within itself. Because its origin is Light.

“That Light is consciousness and the conscious Light is God. Here, unbolted, the door flings open onto the secret cave within, where abides the indweller. The Being, the Self; the heart of Light—God’s Light.

“You are part of that in your true being. Having found it once within the centre of your own self, you will no longer have to grope in the darkness of your own ignorance. With due concentration, with a silenced mind, you can consult it on all matters of importance, concerning you and God and his work given to you.... The way is clear.

“But I must caution you. It takes long practice and perseverance to silence the mind to that extent, in the midst of the many earth-influences and the innumerable wants that make their demands on your concentrated efforts. So you must not be disheartened if you find a few lapses in the practice from time to time.

“When the soul’s call is ardent, Halio, a subtle stairway appears before it to lead it on its way—and, as you have experienced, at that time the helper appears.

“However, without guidance you cannot enter the unknown terrains, as you have learnt. Not without courting danger, that is, and even retardation. This you must know and remember.

“And here we find ourselves, my dear Halio, at this place of Illumined Mind. When the soul seeks illumination, the gates of heaven open before it one after the other to welcome the homebound voyager. Let me embrace you at this glorious moment, at this august place of true Light.”

Silence followed his speech... we sat unspeaking for some time where time itself was timelessness... No mind-constructed barriers were here... knowledge and illumination were self-existent Light...

I leaned down to kiss the ground we sat upon and stretched out my arms to embrace it, but in truth it had embraced me with its infinite heart's love. I sought the feet of my teacher to touch in gratitude, but he raised me into his arms breast to breast—two hearts were beating, yet we were one.

*(To be continued)*

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#### CORRECTIONS

In August issue, in "Christalis", on p. 680, line 3 from below, please read 'learners', not 'leaders' and in the last line of the fifth para the word 'it' should be deleted.

## COMPACT CONCEPTIONS

### SRI AUROBINDO—THE IRRESISTIBLE SUPREME HARMONY

UNCHALLENGEABLE is the harmony that Sri Aurobindo is. This harmony does not know the contents of the word “defeat”. Wherever it focuses, it establishes its own inevitability and commences the beginning of the end of all opposition. Sri Aurobindo’s Supreme Harmony is His world-play and in this play by choice He does not use His omnipotence. He permits fair play by issuing warnings as He has done in “The Hour of God” which actually is “The Hour of Sri Aurobindo”.

Darkness and ignorance have been reasoned with enough to come over and become their opposites by the electrical touch of His Harmony. Either they consent to change or face the destroying decrees of “The Hour of God”. Patronisers of ignorance and darkness must note the seriousness of the situation that may result if these decrees are executed. “The Hour of God” can be more terrible than “Kali’s dance”. Darkness and Ignorance will not be permitted to reach the climax where they get afflicted by the disease which can be termed “Truth-Terminal”. They will not be allowed to become “the case of the malignant falsehood”. If they tried this, as they seem to do, they would face the face of Sri Aurobindo that would be the face of the terrible “Hour of God”. Victory of Sri Aurobindo’s Harmony on earth is inevitable. His global glory is on the way to actualise itself in time.

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### KARMAS

Every man may be seemingly free to accept his soul’s influence or not, but in reality most of humanity is frozen in a karmic clutch where man’s freedom is a fiction and his life is an outcome of karmic frictions. These frictions radiate heat of varying degrees, melting and releasing varieties of formulas of different intensities that constitute human destiny. The soul’s choices are limited in their karmic potentiality.

However, Karmas are not an integral part of the soul’s spiritual status. They are only an extra, they are a spiritually constituted contractual arrangement entered into at will with “Karmic conventions” and liable to be terminated at will on cessation of spiritual necessity.

In the Integral Yoga, surrender to the Mother weakens all holds of karmas. Mere opening to Her may not. Of course if Her Grace works unconditionally, Karmas get corroded.

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## BLACK-OUTS MUST BE BLOWN OUT

Most human beings are living the lives of black-outs almost all their lifetime. The black-outs are successful because humans have no contacts with the truths of their existence; they never live in the individuality of their souls. They become individuals whose mind and vital selves are entered into by beings of mental and vital worlds that actually live the lives which human beings call their own. The object of the Integral Yoga, to start with, is to slowly but surely cure these black-outs in order that the true soul or psychic being may finally live in our mental and vital beings. The process has to continue until the psychic reign is established. Our yoga truly begins when we successfully eradicate all black-outs that block the psychic light.

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## FAIRY TALES, FICTIONS, MYTHOLOGIES

What we call miraculous fairy-tale changes are declared to be fictions of the imagination created to please immature minds and to stimulate their imaginative faculties. In reality fairy-tales or fictions were the potential truths of Sri Aurobindo's unmanifest state which the Divine Mother chose not to materialise in Her creative play but manifested them as lights of literature. These lights have blended in History and turned themselves into beautiful classics that projected distinct cultural traits—literature branded as mythology, of which the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are the outstanding examples.

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## DARKNESS AND LIGHT—ILLUSIONS AND REALITY

Ordinary darkness recedes before light but dense darkness absorbs light and limits its extent.

No sun is yet created with an unextinguishable light which can travel with an infinite speed that would illumine the whole of our universe. Suns created in our universe have limited extents in their space-illuminating capacities.

Darkness is both delusive and illusive. Everywhere there is light because the Mother is light, and endless space has emanated from Her being of light. Space therefore is self-illuminated where darkness is a deception.

We are products of evolution; our eyes' capacity to see is limited in its functioning, in its mechanism and by the laws of seeing which the current stage of evolution has imparted to them. We see only the objects that reflect light. Sunlight and other lights are such lights. In the light of these facts, darkness is an optical illusion.

In the process of the Mother's unfoldment we are slowly evolving to that realm of consciousness where physical sights will not need reflected lights to see. They will see clearly and truthfully all as it is, in relevance to, and in perspective of, the dimension to which our evolution has taken us. Perspective will change when we move forward to the next dimension in evolution but sight will always be independent of reflected lights.

However, all lights contain the Mother's light. If we imagine the Mother's light in all physical lights that we perceive, such an attempt may help our body's participation in our spiritual life.

Unfortunately the darkness that we encounter in the Integral Yoga is not caused by the laws of perception by our eyesight, but is the direct result of "ego". Dissolution of the "ego" will render everything clear, pure, and brilliantly marvellous. Ego-elimination is a great challenge to the Integral Sadhana. Even if the ego on its own chose to withdraw, we would hold it tight because we enjoy the ego! Ego is the darkness that we do not see but is the greatest bar in Integral Yoga; it prevents psychicisation. Ego is the darkness that is illusion, while the psychic is the light that is reality.

JAGAT KAPADIA

## THE HOME-COMING

I JOINED the Ashram in 1944 at the age of six. I grew up in the full glory of the Mother's physical presence. She held the tape at the finishing line when I was sprinting and I played tennis with Her a few times on my birthdays.

In 1963 I responded to an AIR-INDIA advertisement for a purser's job. I was called for a written test in Madras. Some 1000 aspirants from the four southern states appeared for the test. The next day the list of 100 boys selected for the interview was displayed on the notice board. I went for the interview. At the end of the second day, 20 boys were chosen for the final interview. Finally four of us were asked to undergo a medical examination. Four weeks later, I received the appointment letter which asked me to join work on August 16th. Now came the time to seek the Mother's permission. I wrote to her explaining the content of my job. I said I would take the job only if the Mother approved of it. The same day I received her reply in her own handwriting. She wrote in French. I am translating it into English: "It's very good. An excellent occasion to visit countries and enlarge your consciousness. Take it with my blessings."

On my first birthday outside the Ashram, I received a card from the Mother which said, "My blessings and Sri Aurobindo's protection will always be with you." Four years in AIR-INDIA took me to various famous cities of the world: Cairo, Beirut, Singapore, Bangkok, Tokyo, London, New York, Perth, Paris, Frankfurt, Moscow. It brought me in touch with very many people with different cultures, languages and religions. I visited the leading museums of the world, photographed famous landmarks and saw plays in world-renowned theatres in London and New York. I flew with some well-known people: Lord Louis Mountbatten, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Dr. Radhakrishnan, the Maharaja of Mysore, J.R.D. Tata and many others. I visited the Ashram twice a year and was able to see the Mother in her room upstairs. Once I asked her what she wanted me to do. She wrote in French on a slip of paper. The English translation would run: "If you want to know what is the future of man and of the earth and if you want to know the true spiritual life, come to the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry or in case you are not in India, Sri Aurobindo will tell you in his books."

It was time to move to another set of experiences. While I was with AIR-INDIA, I undertook a course in advertising and journalism from London. AIR-INDIA was kind enough to let me travel to London to sit for the two examinations. After I passed both of them, I began to look for a break into advertising. I got a job in the very first agency I called. I joined a British company and had to move to Calcutta. From London to Calcutta was going to be quite a change. The Naxal movement was at its peak. It was a traumatic experience. I stood bravely and continued my work with diligence for over 14 months. Then I wrote to the Mother with a cry from my heart to change the

circumstances for me. Out of the blue, I was posted to Bombay. I worked with the agency for four years. Some internal conflict and problems arose in the company and I found myself becoming part of a group which was quitting. The outgoing chief executive persuaded a few of us to start an agency of our own. It failed within six months. I then got a job with Hindustan Thompson. I have been with this company for almost 25 years. I worked hard and rose up in the organization through all the echelons and the hierarchy to become the manager of the HT Advertising Delhi Office. I stayed in this job for over 9 years. From there to my current job—that of President of Contract Advertising—which is a subsidiary of JWT/HTA.

The agency has done well. It has broken all kinds of records. I was named “THE ADVERTISING PERSON OF THE YEAR” and I was also promoted to vice-president international of JWT. This job takes me to many parts of the world all over again: New York, London, China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur. I have travelled extensively through Europe, through the USA, through Asia Pacific, Australia, Africa.

Now as I get ready to retrace my steps back to where I came from—to return to the Ashram—I am beginning a journey which needs to prepare me for the home-coming. Time is running out. I have only just about 3 years to accomplish this task. While I must retain what I have gained in enlarging my consciousness, I need to shed a lot of unnecessary baggage and burden that I have collected on the way. First and foremost, I need to fight the over-inflated ego. I think of myself as being bigger than I really am. It is really tough to accept that. I am working on it. Now my day begins with a simple prayer: “Mother, I dedicate this day and everything that goes with it to you.” I enjoy power. I like being a leader. I like being pampered and flattered. I like people to obey my orders. I burn with ambition and I want to achieve more and more all the time. I need to fight against all these very forces and movements that had taken me to the heights of pre-eminence in my industry.

In the Ashram, nobody really cares who you are and what you did. Theirs is a spiritual journey, not a materialistic hunting ground. I need to forget who I was and what I did. There is no place for tempers, nor burning desires and ambitions. You need to be cool and calm in the firm belief that the Divine is the doer. When I return, I will work for the Mother. Whatever work is assigned to me, I shall do it with all sincerity at my command. I know I may be given something new. That will be a great opportunity for me to learn something different. Scientists can be made to work as gardeners and physical instructors work in the laundry. That is how one is helped to fight the ego and place it in the service of the Divine.

I know and I am fully conscious that the preparation to return to the Ashram life is going to be much tougher than the preparation I needed to come out. When I came out, I was armed with a few important things: sincerity, simplicity, discipline, dedication, honesty, humility and faith. I need to go back

to all of them. Seeking the Divine and living in the Ashram are very tough. I am only hoping that the journey I undertook with the blessings of the Mother was really preparing me for the spiritual life. As I said, I have just 3 years to go and I will not let anything come in the way of my home-coming

RAMRAJ



## 24TH APRIL, 1995

THIS was the anniversary of a very special day observed in a very special way! Seventy-five years ago this day, the Mother returned to Pondicherry on the 24th of April, 1920. She had first come to Pondicherry on the 29th of March, 1914 and met Sri Aurobindo the very same day at 3-30 in the afternoon in the “Old Guest House” at 41, Rue François Martin. This meeting ended her search for “Krishna” and she started her life as a collaborator of Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual mission on Earth. With the outbreak of the First World War, she had to go back to France and after a gap of nearly five years she returned to Pondicherry via Japan. Years later, on April 24, 1937, she remarked that her return to Pondicherry was “the tangible sign of the sure Victory over the adverse forces.”

This year even up to the February Darshan we did not know that something special was going to happen to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Mother’s final arrival. In March we saw a notice on the Ashram Notice Board followed by Captain Mona’s detailed explanation in the Playground on 20th March (*i.e.* compulsory Monday for our group-‘H’) and we had a thorough and repeated rehearsal of the same on the 27th, *i.e.* the next compulsory Monday.

Then started our athletic competitions on the 1st of April and some of us got busy with our practice and participation in some of the items. So, we had no more rehearsals of the programme of 24th April, but we saw the notice asking us, *i.e.* all the groups, to assemble in the Balcony Road for the group-formations in front of the balcony at 4-50 p.m. for saluting the occult Presence of the Mother, then March Past before the Samadhi and then in files of two saluting the occult Presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the Darshan room, pass through Sri Aurobindo’s Room and come down for exit through Nolini-da’s Gate. Group members were requested not to go for the usual Darshan in the morning. All the gates of the Main Ashram Building were closed from 4-30 to 6-30 save the Garage Gate and later Nolini-da’s Gate for entry and exit of the group members only.

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An ocean of silence frozen to the core  
With all the joy and happiness rich, galore,  
Moving with an awareness of the dual Presence  
Felt the thrust of the Peace in timeless existence.

This is the expression, if one can say so, of the feelings one had on that day, the 24th April, 1995, as all of us—the group-members—saluted the occult Presence of the Mother at the balcony in group-formation; then silently in files of two we entered the courtyard through the Garage Gate and marched past the Samadhi to get into our respective group-positions; then saluted the Master and the

Mother at the Samadhi... waited... and then in files of two marched past before the occult Presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the Darshan-room, had the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo's room and came out through Nolini-da's Gate and went to the Playground for the usual March Past, followed by the Ashram Band Music and meditation.

What happened on that day? We relived a past vibrant with the Presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in their physical bodies. One may feel, and many feel, that Presence even now but with a difference. Now the Presence is occult—not the Presence of the Divine incarnated in the physical body. One cannot equate these two—a difference will always be and is there.

\*

The April-Darshan started in 1939. The November-Darshan in 1938 did not take place because of the accident in which the left thigh-bone of Sri Aurobindo got fractured—the Asuras in their desperation took the extreme step of attacking the Incarnate Supreme. By the time the fracture healed, February '39 was over. The next Darshan was on 15th of August '39. But the then inmates as well as the visitors were very eager to have a Darshan and August was a bit too far away. So the final arrival day of the Mother at Pondicherry, 24th April, became a Darshan Day from then on.

The April-Darshan on 24th April 1949 was very special and memorable because before this very Darshan, the Mother listened to the prayer of each group, blessed them with her answer and for the first time gave to each group their respective coloured uniforms. I felt an urge to find out more details about that very special day and during my search came across some facts with discrepancies—which a future researcher probably will try to resolve. In the August-issue of the *Bulletin*, 1949, the report of this event read like this:

“There was one other event in this quarter to which we had all looked forward the whole year. It was the March Past in formation of all the groups in their drill uniform past Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the 24th April, the Darshan Day.

“This day therefore is a memorable one for the J.S.A.S.A., for on that day as a group, it makes its obeisance and pays homage to our dear Lord and our Sweet Mother.

“The groups were arranged as follows. First were the two standard-bearers followed by the girls. Behind them came the three men groups, then the boys group followed by the 10-14 years group with the very little ones bringing up the rear.

“It was indeed an impressive sight with each group in its own coloured uniform marching past in quiet disciplined formation yet expressing all the joy, happiness and devotion that are usually manifested at a Darshan.

“In the illustrated section of this number will be found photographs of all

the events mentioned above. But in addition there is also a series of poses by two of our members illustrating the theme 'Spirit and Matter'. This set of poses has been sent for exhibition to the Lingiad World Sports Exhibition at Stockholm, Sweden, together with copies of our *Bulletin* and a large sized flag of the J.S.A.S.A. We hope the display will arouse interest in the visitors to the exhibition."

In the illustrations we see Group-A (Green group), Group-B (Red group), Group-C (Grey group led by Captain Mona S.), Group-D (Men's Blue group), Group-E (Women's White group led by Captain Chitra S.), Group D.G. (Men's Khaki group) and Group D.W. (Men's White group).

Spirit was represented by Debou B. and Matter by Mona S. in the series illustrating the theme "Spirit and Matter".

The *Bartika* (August 1949) gave the translation in Bengali of the prayers of the groups and the Mother's answer to the prayer of each group. This translation seems to be of the same text as included in the *Collected Works of the Mother* (Vol. 12, pp. 271-73), under the heading "Replies to Prayers of the Physical Education groups", because both have the same mistake of putting Group DG and Group DK as two separate groups which are one and the same group D-Gymnast or Khaki as confirmed by Gangaram-da and Pranab-da. The *Bulletin*, as discussed before, showed DG and DW—and no DK—which helps us to conclude that out of these two prayers one must necessarily be of Group-DW, and very likely DK is a misprint of DW.

Next I wanted to find out who were the persons who marched past in group uniforms before Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on that day *i.e.* 24.4.49. It became a very tough job because systematic records of such details of that day were available neither in the P.E.D. nor in the School (SAICE). Besides, on that day a good many of the visitors who were permitted by Sri Aurobindo to come for Darshan also got a chance to join the groups' Darshan in March Past wearing group uniforms. At that time visitors were allowed to join the groups and do physical education activities and March Past during their stay here. So there is no possibility of getting the names of these floating groups save from Albert-da who supplied them with group uniforms. But there also no clear cut record was available making the distinction between the Ashram-groups and the visitors. But in course of this search Albert-da showed me a note written and signed by the Mother which read as follows:

Albert

You can do

2 shirts

2 shorts

for all the girls who come to you for them.

4.3.49

THE MOTHER

93 girls were given group dress on 21.3.49.

As Albert-da says:

“I made the group uniform for the groups’ Darshan on 24.4.49. 24th April was nearing and uniforms for so many were to be done. I told the Mother about our difficulty, to which She replied something like this: ‘Is it not nice that they can go to Sri Aurobindo?’ And we worked day and night to get the group dresses ready before 24th.”

We get a glimpse of the Mother’s way of working. She did not ask Albert-da to anyhow complete all the uniforms by the 24th, but her will expressed through that sweet little question was enough to inspire Albert-da and his group to do what needed to be done to fulfil her will.

During the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Ashram School in 1993, Siddhartha (teacher and captain) made a list of all the students between 1943 and 1993 in alphabetical order and gave a bound volume of that list to Pranab-da. From that list, with a painstaking search, I made a rough list of students who were supposed to be here on 24.4.49. Most of them are now grey-haired ashramites and in their mid-fifties and above. Some have already left for the other world. Some others are scattered in different parts of India and abroad. I met all those I could and wanted to know their recollections about that very special day. While most of them said that they did not have any special impression save that they marched past Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, others remembered how they ran to change their dress and join the general queue for Darshan a second time; some remembered entry and exit through the same gate. *i.e.* main gate while others remembered entry through the main and exit through the garage gate; some remembered a short cut across the courtyard, up the staircase in the Meditation Hall for Darshan and down the same to disperse while others remembered coming down the staircase beside Nirod-da’s room after Darshan. Though at times contradicting one another, some of the recollections are quite interesting and give a vague overall pictorial view of that day, each one a particular recollection contributing in some way to the integration of the incomplete whole. Here are a few which I hope will be of general interest.

On one side Chandubhai says: “... There was nothing special about it—a routine Darshan. Besides, why this going back to the past? What is the utility of writing an article on it? We are here to live for the future...”. Udar Pinto, who as the captain led the blue group, while expressing similar views went on to recollect the birth of the P.E.D. saying: “You know how the Physical Education Department came into being? Pranab and myself used to take lunch together with the Mother. One day She said: ‘We are to bring down our yoga into the physical plane. So we must have a Physical Education Department. So, Pranab, you will be the director, Udar the secretary and myself the chairman.’ Pranab said: ‘But, Mother, I know only body-building exercises, athletics, gymnastics

etc. I have no idea about organisation.’ The Mother said: ‘Udar is experienced enough and will help in organising the department as the secretary.’ Inspired and guided by the Mother, we worked together and tried giving shape to her wishes as her instruments.” On the other side Bela-di (Embroidery) says: “... You have come,... and I am so happy to remember those golden days full of Peace and Ananda as if I were reliving them.”

Ira (Boarding) remembers Pranab-da opening the window of Sri Aurobindo’s bathroom and commanding with his thunderous voice: “Sections, garde à vous... Un, deux, un, deux, un, deux...” to the groups waiting in files of two on the footpath below for the command.

This year the standard bearers left their flags in somebody’s custody before entering the meditation hall. But what happened that year? Mantu (Capt. Debdas C.) suggested that Abhaysingh Nahar being one of the standard bearers (the other one was Light Ganguli) might be approached. Abhaysingh-da said: “I stood at the top of the staircase with the flag and was waiting for the command to march in. The door was open and I could see Sri Aurobindo—and for several minutes I saw him from the staircase; Light was four or five steps behind me. We marched past Sri Aurobindo and the Mother saluting them with the flag and came down, probably over the same staircase, and dispersed.”

Bakul-di (Sarkar) recollects: “I was told to join Group-B, but I wanted to join Group-E and I was allowed to join it...”

Gıtıka-di (Sarkar) said. “I was not willing to join the group and do all those physical education activities even with salwar-kameez. Before that April-Darshan one day I was caught by Sahana-mashima (Sahanadevi) and dragged before the Mother in the meditation hall, and Sahana-mashima said: ‘Mother, she wants to join the group.’ I was baffled. But the Mother was very happy and I joined the group with shorts and shirt.”

So nice to hear from Subodh Vashishtha (Captain) that his young mind was deeply enchanted on that day “as if by a condensed Peace... everywhere”.

Naturally, the captains, in whom the Mother has securely implanted the ideal of obeying all the disciplines strictly, feel bad if there is any lack of discipline in the group-members. That’s why Chitra-di (Sen), while recollecting, says:

“... We were the first group to enter for Darshan in files of two and actually we went up the staircase and waited for the door to open. I being the captain felt sad about some elderly members of my group talking amongst themselves...”

“I remember, during at least two Darshans sometime in 1945-46... we gave tokens for shoes and carried them in wooden trays to the garage gate and arranged them on racks. As the visitors (as well as the ashramites) came out, we checked the tokens and gave them their respective shoes. We did this work as directed by the Mother. After the work we went straight for Sri Aurobindo’s Darshan, wet with sweat and hands dirty from the shoes—without any uneasy

feeling. After sometime this work was taken over by the boys.”

Gauri Pinto specially remembers that before 24th April '49, each group made a prayer to the Mother and the Mother answered the prayers with Her blessings and gave each group its respective uniforms. She says: "... I was specially proud to learn that Sri Aurobindo himself had translated the answer of the Mother to our Group-B's prayer.\* We were little children and eagerly waited for the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo and whenever I passed before Him, I used to see the glimmer of a loving smile full of compassion.”

Vishwanath-da (Drawing Office) recollects with a child-like enthusiasm: "I came here in 1948. So every Darshan of Sri Aurobindo had a special impact on me. I was in blue group and on 24th April, 1949 we marched past Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Then we had the thrilling experience of hurriedly going to change our dress and join the general queue for Darshan a second time.”

How sweetly Jayantibhai (Teacher) says: "... That we marched past Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for the first time in group uniform is itself a special experience. We were like so many babies carried by the Mother in her consciousness. We were full of joy and happiness. We never thought, never believed that such a day would ever come to pass when the Master and the Mother would no more be in their physical bodies!”

Usha-di (Togo's mother) recollects how the divine grace helped all of them to join that group-Darshan on 24th April, 1949: "Togo had a very bad attack of tonsilitis a few days before that Darshan. His throat swelled up. Nripen-da (the then in-charge of the Dispensary and Nursing Home) took it to be an attack of mumps and all of us were quarantined. I told him to re-examine Togo because I knew it to be the infection of tonsils. But, as you know, Nripen-da was stubborn in his views and refused to allow us normal movement. All of us then had no other way but to pray inwardly to the Mother so that we might join the group-Darshan on the 24th. The Darshan was nearing and our prayers also became more intense. And miraculously a day earlier the quarantine was lifted by Nripen-da and all of us happily went for that special group-Darshan, for the first time in respective group-uniforms.”

When Arvindbabu of our group says: "... I was a small boy expecting something special and very big with the feeling that some great event was going on.” Namita S. (Captain) recollects: "... We were very excited with our group-

\* The prayer of Group-B and the Mother's reply translated by Sri Aurobindo were as follows  
Group B

*Sweet Mother, we want to be Thy faithful soldiers to fight for Thy final victory  
Victory to Sweet Mother!*

Call to Victory

I salute you, my brave little soldiers, I give you my call to the rendezvous with Victory

3 April, 1949

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol 12, p 271)

uniform and as a child we wanted to show our best to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. As we marched past in groups on that day, I felt something very special was happening and we were full of joy and while passing before Sri Aurobindo nothing else existed for us”, then does not one feel that such children only can live for the future... and there is no cause to despair?

Physiotherapist Kalu’s utterances befit the son of ‘a spirit indomitable’—our beloved Sudhir-da: “... I had this peculiar feeling that we would become ready after that Darshan of Sri Aurobindo and would march into Pakistan and get it back for Mother India like a group of spiritual militants.”

When Kalaben says: “... We were lost in His look and were full of joy,” or, Lila-di (Treasor Nursing Home): “I only remember the beautiful eyes of Sri Aurobindo...” Then we remember Nishikanta’s—

দুটি চোখে তার নিলিঙ্গিত্ব উদার চাহনি মাখা,  
আকাশপারের কোন আকাশের দিগন্তরেখা রাখা,  
যত দেখি তাবে, মুগ্ধ-চেতনা  
চলে তাবি উদ্দেশে,  
আমি সে অটলমুখের সম্মুখে  
দাঁড়ায়েছি আজ এসে।

(His eyes’ wide look of detachment embellishes  
The wide horizon of a heaven beyond heavens,  
Charms the consciousness to surge towards Him  
As we gaze at Him more and more;  
I have come to stand at last  
Before that face of majestic calm.)

When Kanak-da (Ganguli) specially recollects that Sri Aurobindo praised the Grey-group (Group-C of that time) led by Mona S., saying: “They were very smart. That is the best group!” then does it not inflate the hearts of those grey-group members, who are now grey-haired, with joyous pride even now?

The recollections of Debou-da (Bhattacharya) are very vivid: “I was in Khaki group led by Biren-da (Chandra). One Ashoke G. of our group, while marching past Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, suddenly turned and folded his hands in a gesture of pranam to Sri Aurobindo—and thus broke the discipline of the group...” As regards my query about the “Spirit and Matter” series of illustrations: “A Bengali photographer from Bangalore, whom the Mother used to call ‘Master-mind’, took those photographs on the roof of Chimambhai’s outhouse bordering the sea-road, with the help of Robi G. Later, the Mother saw and arranged the photographs and gave those significances in a conversational form.”

Jagdish Khanna was one of the visitors who went for group-Darshan. He

recollects: "I first came to Pondicherry in April 1949 as a visitor. I went for Darshan on 24th April and was in the Khaki group. Biren-da was our captain. He said to me, 'Bonne Fête à Jagadish Khanna' in the Playground on 30.4.49, my birthday."

Batti-da (Prabhakar R.) made a plain and simple confession: "... We, the grey-group boys, were carefree, enjoying infinite freedom and did whatever the Mother wanted us to do. We were full of joy and happiness and the Playground was the place where we spent most of our time. We had no idea of yoga or spirituality in us—we were happy to be Her children and leave all these things to Her. Even now, that is our attitude. We went for Darshan... that was all for us—we least bothered about which way we entered, where we assembled, how we marched past, how we came down to disperse... nothing, no memory actually of those things."

From Captain Parul's recollection we come to know something new: "... There was a raised platform, exactly at the same spot as the Mahasamadhi, of about the same size and the height above the ground level, decorated only with fern-pots. We used to play there hide and seek, climbing on the platform and moving in between the pots and coming down—having a lot of fun."

Let us end our series of recollections with Millie-di (Bratati Bhattacharya) who made history by wearing the group-uniform first among the women:

"Vasudha, Mini, Gauri, Priti, Violette and myself—we were six\* and orally we were known as Mother's group. Some of us were not in the regular activities though we were always in group uniform.

"As the Mother, after discussing with Pranab, decided to change the dress for the physical education activities, She asked me whether I could put on shorts and the top and come to the Playground to Her according to the fixed time and place. I came with the dress put on and waited for Her. Then She brought me out in front of the women's gathering and showing me as an example explained to them the utility of this dress; and everybody *i.e.* all the women eagerly joined the group and, as directed by the Mother, went to Albert for their measurements..."

It is interesting to note that while most of the group-members from grey-group onwards remember with fervour that after group-Darshan they hurriedly went home to change their dress and came back to join the general queue for Darshan a second time, none of the then younger ones remembers doing that at all (save Vijayendra Patil) probably having been more excited about their new uniforms and March Past before Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

SATADAL

\* Pranab-da, while reading this article, recollected "They were seven actually, and not six. Khurima (Binapani, his aunt) was one of them and amongst ourselves we used to call them, including the Mother, *āṣṭasakhī* (eight intimates) with a tinge of humour"



**ON THE MOTHER**  
**BY DR. K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR**

**A REVIEW-ARTICLE**

THIS is the third revised edition of Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's book, *On the Mother*, which was first published in 1952. The second enlarged and revised edition appeared during the Mother's birth centenary in 1978. As the author explains in the preface to this third edition, "a new chronology of the Mother's physical life has been added besides certain necessary corrections and additions in the light of new knowledge that became available during the last fifteen years."

It is a challenge to write a biography of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo whose lives were not lived "on the surface for men to see." A biography of a spiritual person is always a story of the inner life. The Mother says categorically: "Do not ask questions about the details of the material existence of this body; they are in themselves of no interest and must not attract attention."

The qualifying phrase—*in themselves*—is important. Dr. Iyengar takes due note of this and remembering Sri Aurobindo's remark that "the Mother was inwardly above the human even in childhood," gives us many details of her life and work to show how they reflect the inner light of the Spirit and reveal the secret guidance from within.

We have here a revealing account of her spiritual journey from childhood onwards. The inner life of the Mother is portrayed through passages from her *Prayers and Meditations*, *Notes on the Way*, and other writings and talks, and the letters of Sri Aurobindo. The mystic cast of the Mother's Meditations is pierced through by the penetrating insight of Dr. Iyengar and we get a beautiful picture of the unique role the Mother was destined to play as a guide and a leader of humanity, as the Mother of Creation, and above all, as an emanation of the Divine Mother come down upon earth to collaborate with Sri Aurobindo in laying the firm basis for a divine life on earth.

The spiritual experiences of the Mother noted here are expounded with the help of relevant passages from *The Life Divine*, *Savitri*, and other writings of Sri Aurobindo or directly by letters of Sri Aurobindo to the Mother, wherever possible. To this Dr. Iyengar adds at times co-related experiences of other mystics, gathered from his treasure-house of vast reading. This may seem to be a diversion to some, while others may feel amply rewarded with a richer understanding and *rasa* of spiritual life. While elaborating on the writings of the Mother, the author's vigilant eye catches every detail and nuance of significant importance.

There are explanations of excerpts from Sri Aurobindo, inserted throughout the book; there are comments on certain situations and events of the world in the

light of the Integral Yoga, conveying the relevance of the work of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo; there are balanced views on questions generally asked about the Ashram, the disciples, their sadhana and progress towards the goal. At times, there are diversions and repetitions of the same theme; there are impressions of the disciples, recounting their meeting with or their *darshan* of the Mother, lengthening the biography. But all this seems, in the end, to be pleasant meanderings, highlighting the many-sided personality of the Mother, like countryside flowers which add to the beauty of the landscape. In all this, one is struck by the author's enlightened understanding.

The life of Sri Aurobindo and his writings cover a noticeable part of this book, leaving one wondering whether it is a book on the Mother or on Sri Aurobindo. But then, the life and the work of the Mother is so interwoven with that of Sri Aurobindo that one is at a loss to separate the two who are one.

There are also scattered glimpses of the life of some disciples and their sadhana which may be considered irrelevant to the subject. And yet the Ashram community was a spontaneous creation that grew around the Mother under her direct guidance. Consequently, in this comprehensive biography of the Mother, we get to know some episodes of the life of the disciples, giving us a beautiful insight into the Mother's vast understanding of human nature, her deep compassion, inexhaustible patience, loving care and concern and, above all, tireless self-giving beyond the scope of any human being.

Dr. Iyengar gives us an account of how the Mother identified herself with the difficulties of the disciples and even received into herself all the poison of their nature, their revolts and outbursts of anger against her: "The adverse forces invariably made entry through the chinks in the psychological armour of the disciples and added to her difficulties."

The exhausting work of managing this community of disciples with their "endless complaints and grouses, their laissez-faire attitude", the ignorant and hostile lower nature at work in them and their material and spiritual needs: this was a veritable God's labour. As Dr. Iyengar points out, the Mother was doing the *sadhana* for the disciples, pouring out her limitless love and consciousness-force, while receiving from them "things good, bad and mixed." It was the Mother's battle with the universal adverse forces to win God's victory for a divine life on earth.

The Mother worked with each disciple individually and was always available, ever ready with her unflinching help so as to instil a ray of light to transform weaknesses and shortcomings into opportunities for a truer life. Here is a letter from Barin, the youngest brother of Sri Aurobindo, "who felt he could not remain caged under the Ashram's rigorous discipline" and left the Ashram:

Today is the Mother's birthday. On this blessed day, this is a tribute at her Feet from her erring child. Whatever my deviations into wrong paths,

however grave my errors, my labyrinthine movements will at length lead me into the Temple of the Mother's Consciousness, for where else except in the Mother's lap can her son find the end of his journey?

Such was her indelible imprint of love.

Needless to say, the author also mentions disciples who were sincere and consecrated to their appointed work. But the Ashram as a whole, even in its early stages, was a laboratory with all possible samples. One may observe that there are some collaborators and disciples of the Mother's inner circle who are not given their due place in the biography though their contribution in the Mother's work is of significant importance. Yet, one wonders, with what patience and meticulous selection Dr. Iyengar must have culled all these little gems set in the memory of the disciples to make this biography so rich and rewarding. How one would wish to have lived at that blissful moment of the birth of the New Year, which is described by Sahana Devi:

... like a flash of light tearing asunder the veil of darkness, peeled out a resonant chord from the organ and with it flooded out her voice in song. Her voice had a quality of magical power rising from the profundities as if endeavouring to awaken our consciousness to meet the light from above.

It is a moving and heart-rending account of the Mother's ministry and her painstaking struggle to create a Divine Life in spite of the stubborn resistance to change and the apparent slow progress. Sri Aurobindo himself acknowledged the Mother's contribution in the work of the effective manifestation of the Supramental Consciousness:

All my realisations—Nirvana and others—would have remained theoretical, as it were, so far as the outer world was concerned. It is the Mother who showed the way to a practical form. Without her, no organised manifestation would have been possible.

The history of the Ashram as well as that of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education is packed with the stories of the Mother's enlightened guidance on many subjects of interest, covering a wide spectrum of life's activities. However, her main concern was for the Truth with the constant refrain: Cling to Truth. Recording the attack on the Ashram on 11 February 1965, Dr. Iyengar cites the Mother's Declaration indicative of her constant battle against the forces of Falsehood as follows:

Our position is clear.

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, truth; and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

The author points out through some examples how the Mother tried to develop in all a consciousness free from all conventions, social, moral and religious, so that we might freely discover the Truth, obey it and live according to the Truth. What was most important for her was the plane of Consciousness and the attitude rather than the rules. Here is an example of a question, representative of a sincere seeker, to which the Mother's answer is so direct, precise and just that nothing more needs to be said:

Q. What does the Divine want of me?

A: 1. Find your true self or psychic being.

2. Master and govern your lower nature.

3. And with this preparation, take your proper place in the Divine's work.

There is also an oft-repeated advice of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on the need to silence the mind in order to arrive at true knowledge. This is often misinterpreted as the uselessness of mental development. Dr. Iyengar rightly reminds us that there is no such stigma against the development of the mental faculties in Yoga. On the contrary, the intellect has to be trained, but it has to be kept in its proper place as an organiser of knowledge and action.

Dr. Iyengar shows us how the solid foundation of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education was built up gradually for preparing a future humanity under the Mother's incisive and enlightening direction. One is filled with gratitude for the Mother's luminous insight and tireless work, pouring the light of the New Consciousness on various aspects of education, such as its system and method, the ideal relationship of students and teachers, and their attitude towards the goal of education, which is remarkably different from what is usually conceived even by the most developed and modern institutions. India and the world at large have much to learn from the Mother's guidance on education.

Dr. Iyengar brings out quite comprehensively the details of the Mother's organisation in the management of the Ashram and the Centre of Education.

In the chronology of events which is not rigidly followed—in the sense that

the author often goes back in retrospect or forward in anticipation with some repetitions—we have references of the Mother's commentary on the *Dhammapada*, *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, many passages from Sri Aurobindo's writings, covering so many subjects of considerable importance in our life and spiritual discipline that this book becomes a valuable guide.

Another important contribution of the Mother mentioned in this book is the spiritual significance of flowers through which the Mother used to transmit a certain force of consciousness. The manifestation of the Divine through Beauty on the physical plane was given a prominent place. This is so unique a gift of joy to us all and has played such an important part in the life of the disciples that one would have liked to know more about it. But then, what subject is not important once the Mother has illuminated it with her vision of the Truth? And it would have been difficult for the author to choose and dwell at length on such a wide variety of subjects covered by the Mother.

The inauguration of Auroville as the first international township based on the vision of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo is vividly portrayed and the importance of its concept highlighted. There is also a soul-stirring description of the concept of Matrimandir—the sanctuary of Truth—and its spiritual significance in the history of the world.

In the section entitled "Sadhana of the Body" what one finds is also some other material not relevant to the subject. Often, the titles are misleading. But here particularly, the subject being of exceptional importance, one would have wished to have more information on the Mother's unique experiment of the transformation of the body.

In America today, there is an interesting research and experiment by Dr. Deepak Chopra who advocated a re-education of the cells of the body by happy and positive thinking, which is receiving a good deal of attention. However, it has not yet tapped the depth of the Mother's own experiences and falls far short of the knowledge given by her.

This review does not mention all the wide variety of subjects covered in this book which is one of the most authentic and exhaustive biographies of the Mother. Undoubtedly, none can write the complete story of the Mother, who, like Sri Aurobindo, "is the Future advancing towards its realisation." Besides, the Mother's life was an integral and harmonious whole excluding nothing that was important for the Divine's manifestation. And how can one compress all that happened in the Mother's magnificent life, where every moment was consciously lived, or how can one record the effect of her presence on millions of lives all over the world and more in the earth-consciousness itself where Matter was being prepared to change? What she brought down on earth was of such tremendous significance in the history of the universe that it would be beyond the scope of one volume to capture.

One may feel that all that could be truly said about the Mother is there in Sri

Aurobindo's own vision of the Mother's life and work and is already revealed in his books, especially *The Mother* and *Savitri*. And what more could be said? However, Dr. Iyengar has successfully revealed in this book *On the Mother* the mystique of her divine manifestation and the splendour of her divine ministry, in a living way. It is impossible to believe that such a personality carrying the gift of limitless love, a deep sense of beauty and harmony in feelings, thoughts and actions, unerring knowledge, invincible will and power of effective action, pouring endless bliss could have ever existed in this hostile, sorrowful world of ignorance and falsehood. One cannot but experience here the Mother in her individual, universal and transcendent status, manifest in all her glory and splendour, as described by Sri Aurobindo in his book *The Mother* and the epic *Savitri*.

Those who have not had the gracious experience of being in the living presence of the Mother as well as those who have no conception of how the Ashram spontaneously grew around the Mother, step by step, under her loving care and meticulous organisation, providing an atmosphere of cleanliness, beauty, order and harmony, with a sense of perfection, which even now radiates the peace, light and joy of her presence, will cherish this book *On the Mother*.

Naturally, in regard to a biography of such immense dimensions, there are bound to be some differences of opinions about the selection of the material to be included, or in the interpretation or explanation of some writings or of certain events. There might be differences of approach too since the consciousness at work is ever-progressive in its vision, comprehension, experience and expression. But none can doubt the sincerity, scholarship, and labour of love of the author who approaches his divine subject with great reverence and humility.

This revised third edition will be, I am sure, an everlasting source of inspiration and guidance, encouraging the reader to study the birth-centenary volumes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in order to receive their infallible light on the path of life's journey.

We must be deeply thankful to the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education for assigning this work to Dr. Iyengar, who has successfully carried it out with his erudite research and profound understanding in a style of writing at once learned and lively.

KAILAS JHAVERY

## A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

### 68. TO THOSE WHO GIVE, ALL IS GIVEN

PARIYUR, a little village in Kongu Nadu, became gloomy all of a sudden. Women and children hesitated to go out of their houses. Men moved out but only in the company of other men. And whenever they did so they invariably carried a crowbar in one hand and a sickle in the other. It was all because of a tiger rumoured to be on the prowl.

It was a week or so ago that a cowherd who had herded his cows into the nearby jungle didn't return. Neither did his cows.

"Mysterious! Unbelievable!", said many a villager. "Perhaps the young cowherd has found him a wife in the jungle," remarked a few with winks.

But the mystery got solved when a cow returned limping from the jungle. It was bleeding all over. And what looked like bruises from a distance proved at close quarters to be the claw-marks of a tiger.

Pariyur began to panic at the very word "tiger". "The time is not far when all of us one after another will be crunched, munched and eaten by the tiger," someone cried in fright.

"Once a tiger tastes human blood and flesh, it will never opt for an animal again," said yet another, intimidated.

"Nothing on earth can avert our fate. If we are fated to find our grave in the cavernous dark belly of the hungry tiger... Oh! The very thought drives me mad," philosophised an old man.

But no-one came forward to go into the jungle and kill the killer. To cap it all, everyone blamed his neighbour for not being bold and thereby saving the village from impending disaster.

"I will," declared Chetty Pillai Appan and took everyone by surprise.

"No," vetoed the villagers in unison. "We can't afford to lose a philanthropist like you. Your very presence brings into our village many poets and musicians from different places. And if we lost you to the growling tiger, we would miss mellifluous music and pleasing poetry."

Chetty Pillai Appan thankfully smiled and said: "Please don't stop me. I've my own plans of killing the tiger. If I come back alive, rejoice. And if I don't, don't worry, for the tiger will have died along with me. I am sure our village will return to normal. And that is what I want."

The villagers were all in tears when Chetty Pillai Appan took his leave. He had no intention of coming back to the village alive. He wanted to kill the tiger not with any weapon but by allowing the tiger to feast on him, for he had applied a deadly poisonous liquid all over his body. The animal at the mere touch of its tongue on his body would jump up as if it had received a deadly kick in its groin, only to fall down and die.

Why did Chetty Pillai Appan decide to get killed?

Out of shame... Now to go into details... It was a month earlier that Pariyur had feasted on the melodious songs of a songwriter-cum-singer who was also an adept in the use of stringed musical instruments. He was the honoured guest of Chetty Pillai Appan for more than a week. And when he wanted to leave, Chetty Pillai Appan had nothing to give him, for he had invested all his money in his trade.

"I would like you to stay with me for one more month, till I get back the money I have invested," suggested Chetty Pillai Appan.

"But I have to go to several other places," replied the songster.

"If that's the case, come back after a month and I'll give you a hundred pieces of gold for your songs and music."

"I will. I hope you will keep your promise."

"By all means," said Chetty Pillai Appan, least aware that he was in for the unexpected.

Heavy rains that gave rise to floods played havoc with his trade and he lost all his money. A month had passed. The songster was expected at any moment. And Chettiar Pillai Appan wouldn't be able to keep his promise. It would be shameful if he gave nothing to the needy songster.

"Let me die rather than live in shame," Chetty Pillai Appan decided.

Once inside the jungle he cocked his ears for the growls of the tiger. Only birds chirped and the wind sang through the leaves. And there was no sign of a tiger. Further search brought him to a hill.

"Ah! At last," he said. "The tiger must be resting somewhere on this hill. My end is near."

As he climbed up the hill, he could hear human voices. His legs took him in that direction and from a distance he could see four sturdy men squatting and facing one another and arguing over something.

Curiosity drove Chetty Pillai Appan to know who they were and undauntedly he moved towards them.

All of a sudden their argument came to an abrupt end, for they had heard the dead leaves getting crushed under the intruder's feet. They stood up, looked around, found the intruder with not a single weapon on him. Losing no time they took to their heels leaving a sackload of golden ornaments all studded with invaluable stones.

All his doubts got cleared. Here were thieves and the sack contained only stolen goods. There was no wild animal in the jungle. The thieves had killed the cowherd and cows, and allowed a blood-stained cow to go back to the village only to create the impression that a tiger was on the prowl in the jungle. This they did because then no one would dare to go into the jungle any more and they could use the place as their den.

But why did the thieves run away at the sight of Chetty Pillai Appan?



That was because he had come alone into their den and there was no weapon on him. So the thieves jumped to the conclusion that Chetty Pillai Appan was stronger than all of them in both his body and mind. And they were not ready to risk their lives.

Chetty Pillai Appan returned from the jungle richer than ever. He was happy that he could keep his promise and help many more needy poets and musicians.

*(More legends on the way)*

P. RAJA

## *Students' Section*

### THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Seventy-eighth Seminar

19 February 1995

SOME GLIMPSES OF THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF THE MOTHER

#### *THE ART OF PAINTING*

Speech by Arvind Akki

THE scope of the subject of this seminar is indeed vast, but I want to confine my speech to a very limited aspect of it. This I wish to do for a purely personal reason. Ever since my childhood, I have had a great fascination for painting. As I come from a family of artists, my father encouraged me very much in the pursuit of drawing and painting and supplied all the necessary materials for it. The writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on painting have also inspired me to a very large extent to give it a meaningful expression and to explore creativity in my endeavour.

I intend to present the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's views on Art, especially in reference to the art of painting, and also to explain the fundamental difference between the basic principles and methods of Indian and European art.

Sri Aurobindo suddenly developed a deep insight into the art of painting while he was in Alipore jail. I read here his experience as he himself has described it: "Suddenly one day in the Alipore jail while meditating I saw some pictures on the walls of the cell and lo and behold! the artistic eye in me opened and I knew all about painting except of course the more material side of technique."<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo's book, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, is also a classic for the lovers of art for a comparative study of the basic differences between Indian and European art. The Mother too was an artist *par excellence*. She gave her wonderful guidance to some earlier sadhaks of the Ashram. I am sure these artist-sadhaks will have a lot to say about her teaching methods and her instructions. In 1992 the Ashram brought out a beautiful book of the collected drawings and paintings of the Mother. This book is a treasure for all art-lovers. The art-works of the Mother are a source of guidance and inspiration for all students of art.

Painting like all art, truly speaking, is a function of the soul rather than of the mind or imagination. All true artistic creation is something beautiful that springs from the inmost soul. It is an experience that helps the soul in its aesthetic

realisation and progress. It is when the artist reveals the hidden spiritual beauty of the creations of life and Nature that art attains its highest peak. For the delight of creation has no end. As Keats says, "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." Or as Wordsworth tells us eloquently, "My heart leaps up when I behold/A rainbow in the sky." Sri Aurobindo says: "Painting is naturally the most sensuous of the arts, and the highest greatness open to the painter is to spiritualise this sensuous appeal by making the most vivid outward beauty a revelation of subtle spiritual emotion so that the soul and the sense are at harmony in the deepest and finest richness of both and united in their satisfied consonant expression of the inner significances of things and life."<sup>2</sup>

Let us now try to understand the fundamental differences between the European and the Indian artists in their approach to art. The Western artist says, "Shall I reproduce what the eye sees or shall I reproduce what the soul sees?" Whereas the Indian artist says, "Shall I reproduce what the soul sees or shall I reproduce what the senses see?" Well, the former creates what the eye sees and the latter what the soul sees. The Western artist holds the mirror to Nature and reproduces exactly what the eyes perceive. As Aristotle said, "Imitation is the key-word of creation." This is the motto of the European artist. Even imagination, according to the Western conception, is not interpretation but creation. But imagination is nothing except an idea that has occurred to the artist and he transfers it into his subject. It may be his fanciful idea or a projection of his own personality which he interprets, and he may miss completely the hidden suggestive idea of the subject. The result is often a lifeless sketch or a dead automaton. But, according to Sri Aurobindo, imitation of Nature is not true art. As he trenchantly remarks, "If Art's service is but to imitate Nature, then burn all the picture galleries and let us have instead photographic studios. It is because Art reveals what Nature hides that a small picture is worth more than all the jewels of the millionaires and the treasures of the princes."<sup>3</sup>

In ancient times painting, like all other arts, was under religious influence and mostly depicted Gods, Goddesses and other religious subjects. This religious influence was very prominent in nations like India, Japan, Egypt, China and Tibet. In India as early as the third century B.C. the Shilpa Sutras have elaborately dealt with the art of painting. And it has continued with some interruptions over a very long period. "The history of the self-expression of the Indian mind in painting," opines Sri Aurobindo, "covers a period of as much as two millenniums of more or less intense artistic creation..."<sup>4</sup>

The Indian artist, cradled in the tradition of Indian culture, knows well that there is a greater Power than the intellect, called inspiration, and it is with this that he tries to bring out the hidden significance of the external form. The external form is only a means of expressing the inner form or the soul-form. In doing so the artist may intentionally suppress or modify the details of the outer form, in order to bring out the inner beauty. But this does not mean that he is

lacking in the knowledge of external proportion and technique.

The art which accepts the external form as the only truth may well produce a great, a beautiful and powerful work in its so-called technically perfect creation. But its success is only superficial and transitory. To paint and catch the inner reality and its divine beauty and truth is the task of art in its highest sense.

In order to pursue the hidden beauty the artist should become a yogi. Otherwise how will he pursue it? It may be asked: how to be an artist-yogi? Should he undergo yogic discipline? Here the Mother elucidates, "Painters have to follow a discipline for the growth of the consciousness of their eyes, which is itself almost a Yoga. If they are true artists and try to see beyond and use their art for the expression of the inner world, they grow in consciousness by this concentration, which is not other than the consciousness given by Yoga. Why then should not Yogic consciousness be a help to artistic creation?"<sup>5</sup>

The Mother called Leonardo da Vinci a yogi. He was indeed one of the greatest painters of all times. Commenting on the expression of the face of Saint Anne from his painting entitled, "St. Anne, Virgin and Child", the Mother says, "... is it not a beautiful image of Divine Love and Compassion?—the compassion that effaces all errors and wipes off all mistakes..."<sup>6</sup> Poets like Lawrence Binyon, Blake and some others have also made a bold attempt to transcribe their spiritual visions or their poetic inspirations into paintings.

It is said that portrait-painting is one of the most difficult things to do. I am doing painting right from my childhood, and it has always fascinated me. I like to do portraits of great men because in doing so I find a sense of identification with the subjects. We all know that the Mother has done a number of sketches of the earlier sadhaks of the Ashram. She draws just the necessary physical features in order to catch the inner personality. If we study the sketch of Nolini Kanta Gupta done by the Mother in 1931, we notice a peaceful atmosphere that is created. The deep withdrawn eyes suggest a feeling of a poet or a mystic. In other words, it reveals the inner personality of Nolini-da. The ancient Indian painter in doing portraits tried to follow a similar method. Sri Aurobindo says, "... the Indian artist tones down the outward-going dynamic indices and gives only so much of them as will serve to bring out or to modulate something that is more of the grain of the subtle soul, something more static and impersonal of which our personality is at once the mask and the index. A moment of the spirit expressing with purity the permanence of a very subtle soul quality is the highest type of the Indian portrait."<sup>7</sup>

Whatever we may like to paint, be it an animal, a human being, a tree, a river or any other thing, we should observe certain points given by the Mother so that we may create something truly beautiful. One most essential point she mentions is, "When a painter paints a picture, if he observes himself painting the picture, the picture will never be good, it will always be a kind of projection of the painter's personality; it will be without life, without force, without beauty.