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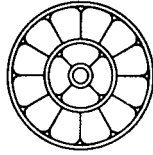
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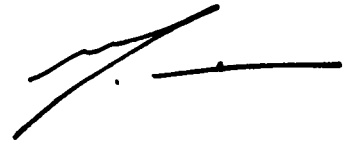


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

### HOSTILE FORCES TRY TO DELAY TRANSFORMATION

[DUE to the opposition of the hostile forces, the transformation may be] delayed perhaps by several centuries. This is precisely what the adverse forces are trying to bring about, and so far they have always succeeded—in putting off the thing. Always they have succeeded. “This will be for another time”, and the other time...perhaps after hundreds or thousands of years. And this is what they want to try to do once again. Perhaps all this is decreed somewhere. It is possible. But it is also possible that though it is decided, in order that the thing may take place as it ought to it is not good to reveal what is decided. There are many things like that, because people are neither conscious enough nor pure enough to do what they should do, exactly as they should do it, with full knowledge of the result; for the result, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, is not what they desire—or if it is what they desire, it is modified, it is mixed, diluted, there are differences, differences enough not to be fully satisfactory. So if one knew ahead exactly what was going to happen, one would remain seated, quietly, and would do nothing any longer. One would say, “Good, if this must happen, it is good, I have nothing more to do.” That is why one doesn’t know. But he who can act in all circumstances in full knowledge of the cause, knowing what the result of his action will be, and at the same time can do a certain thing which is sometimes even in contradiction with this result, that person indeed can know. But I don’t think there are many like that. In ordinary life people say that for someone to realise something, he ought always to aim much farther than the goal he has to attain; that all who have realised something in life, all the great men who have created, realised something, their aim, their ambition, their plan was always much greater, vaster, more complete, more total than what they did. They always fell short of their expectation and hope. It is a weakness, but it comes from what I said, that unless one has a very great ideal before him and the hope of realising it, one doesn’t put out all the energies of the being and therefore doesn’t do what is necessary to attain even the nearest goal, except, as I said, when one can act with the clear vision that “this is what ought to be done” and without the slightest worry about the consequences and the result of what one does; but this is difficult.

*(Collected Works of the Mother, Centenary Edition, Volume 7, pages 2-3)*

# WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

## THE TRIPLE TRANSFORMATION

THE physical is of course the basis—that of the overmind is in-between the two hemispheres. The lower hemisphere must contain all the mind including its higher planes, the vital, the physical. The upper hemisphere contains the divine existence-consciousness-bliss, with the supermind as its means of self-formulation. The overmind is at the head of the lower hemisphere and is the intermediate or transitional plane between the two.

The psychic being stands behind the heart supporting the mind, life and body. In the psychic transformation there are three main elements: (1) the opening of the occult inner mind, inner vital, inner physical, so that one becomes aware of all that lies behind the surface mind, life and body—(2) the opening of the psychic being or soul by which it comes forward and governs the mind, life and body turning all to the Divine—(3) the opening of the whole lower being to the spiritual truth—this last may be called the psycho-spiritual part of the change. It is quite possible for the psychic transformation to take one beyond the individual into the cosmic. Even the occult opening establishes a connection with the cosmic mind, cosmic vital, cosmic physical. The psychic realises the contact with all-existence, the oneness of the Self, the universal love and other realisations which lead to the cosmic consciousness.

But all that is a result of the opening to the spiritual above and it comes by an infiltration or reflection of the spiritual light and truth in mind, life and body. The spiritual transformation proper begins or becomes possible when one rises above the mind and lives there governing all from above. Even in the psychic transformation one can rise above by a sort of going above of the mental, vital, physical being and a return, but one does not yet live above in the summit consciousness where overmind has its seat with the other planes that are above the human Mind.

The supramental transformation can only come when the lid between the lower and higher hemispheres or halves of existence is removed and the supermind instead of the overmind becomes the governing power of the existence—but of that nothing can be spoken now.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol 24, pp. 1092-93)*

# LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

## SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

I HAVE two letters of yours to answer—one called “dull” by you and the other not categorised and hence to be understood as being “Florentine” from your own first name—an adjective not unworthy to have been used by a poet like D’Annunzio. When Eleonora Duse was introduced to D’Annunzio, the latter stood back a little, waved his hand in the air and cried: “Splendid—gorgeous—magnificent—D’Annunzian!”—and then said: “How do you do, madam?” I am sure that if he had known you he would have added your adjectival avatar to his string of superlatives. I really believe you are a grand spirit. The more I come into touch with you—although only through the epistolary word—the more I recognize you as a human projection of some deep secret whispering its own wonder within my heart. Perhaps it was a similar sense and not mere egomania that made the Italian poet apostrophise Duse as “D’Annunzian”—catching in the curve and resplendent line of her soul-expressive form his own profoundest dream coming to meet him. Every time I read a letter of yours, the finest part of me stirs and sparkles, the starry centre which is quintessentially Amalian springs into awareness and

Tingles with rumours of the Infinite.

Even the letter you reject as “dull” brought to me an inner fragrance, for it contains a declaration of extraordinary generosity: “It is too bad that I am not at the Ashram as I get \$371.00 a month, which could be used by ‘Mother India’—that was my goal but everything seemed to intervene.” No fanfare at all—just a small sweet voice from an utter simplicity and spontaneity of heart, almost a soliloquy but with a golden ring that can fill even the dome of St. Peter’s as if with an intense air of inward beauty from a César Franck. Do you think I am ever likely to forget these words of the noblest intention? There is not the slightest dullness about them. Rather, dull would be the soul that failed to be lit up by their pure flame.

You have referred to Madhav Pandit’s statement that new persons are no longer admitted in the Ashram. But surely this cannot leave your “future hanging up somewhere in oblivion”. What Pandit stated was merely a practical policy dictated by financial considerations. It does not touch on one’s spiritual destiny. To hold the Mother in one’s heart is to be an Ashramite, and for a child of the Mother, wherever he or she may be, the future is a clear-cut diamond. Nothing vague about it. If there is any oblivion involved, it is oblivion of the petty self, a submergence of the fret and fever that we normally are. The only oblivion to be feared is our forgetting the Mother and the Mother forgetting us.



As the latter is impossible, as we are always in Her consciousness, it is impossible also that She would let us forget Her. Once She has accepted us, She will see to it that we keep remembering Her and receiving the everlasting Grace that is Her smile.

Your second letter speaks of listening to *Savitri*. I wish I could hear your reading of the poem. I always read *Savitri* aloud. The mantra to be fully effective has to be heard: the revelatory rhythm is essential, for it is the sound-vibrations, at once intense and immense, of “overhead” poetry that convey the experience-thrill of those domains where the one illimitable Self of selves is automatically felt and “calm faces of the Gods on backgrounds vast” are seen at all moments. Now that I know that you have recorded parts of Sri Aurobindo’s epic, including that favourite passage of mine, Book One, Canto 2, in which Savitri’s being is described, my own reading will always be infused with a voice from afar in exquisite tune at the same time with Amal and with Amal’s mighty Master. You too must not feel alone any more. You will draw me towards you whenever you people your solitude with

Words that live not save upon Nature’s summits,  
Ecstasy’s chariots.

I’ll check myself now—remembering with gratitude the cheque you have sent us. (6.9.1977)

\*

I am glad that my letter to you has been a great help—especially in restoring your faith in your “inner voice”. If, as you say, it now speaks more often and more distinctly and if it told you to send to me your poem *A Dialogue of Seeker and Soul*, why have you followed up your first letter with “a quick note” of regret for having mailed to me the piece? The fact that “the inspiration came from” Yeats’s *A Dialogue of Self and Soul* makes no odds to the value of your verses. You have yourself hit upon the source of its value with the word “inspiration”. Your poem rings both true and new. It is the real You speaking and not a mere mouthpiece of Yeats. Except that you repeat his phrase “steep ascent” I see no reason for anybody to charge you with plagiarism unconscious or deliberate. The recurrence of the word “star” cannot at all be blamed. Stars have haunted poets from the beginning of history. Perhaps the reason is best hit off in those deeply suggestive lines of Wordsworth:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life’s Star  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,

And cometh from afar:  
 Not in entire forgetfulness,  
 And not in utter nakedness,  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
 From God, who is our home:...

Your stellar imagery is different from that of Yeats. The adjective “steep” in what may be considered, though not with any serious frowning, as an actual echo can easily be replaced by “sheer”. Not that we want to conceal how your poem was originally sparked off. Indeed I should like to put an asterisk after your title and give a footnote saying: “After reading *A Dialogue of Self and Soul* by W. B. Yeats.” This will not only be honest but also impart a special interest to the way in which, in response to different personalities and circumstances, the idea is at once, as you have yourself observed, “similar and dissimilar”, and prove how, for all the similarity of the titles, both the psychological unveiling and the literary unfolding could be poles apart. Your voice has not at all deceived or misguided you. I shall be happy to publish this poem in one of the coming issues of *Mother India*.

There is nothing schizophrenic about your inner guidance. You tell me that your psychiatrist would say: “Look to thy subconscious mind, O Fool!” Whenever you “flounder” with your poetic urge, I would say nothing more than those last words in Sidney’s great sonnet:

“Fool,” said my Muse to me, “look in thy heart and write!”

(25.9 1977)

AMAL KIRAN  
 (K. D. SETHNA)

## MUSINGS ON PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

(Continued from the issue of January 1996)

### *The Eternal Refrain*

WHEN the first shadows fall from the east, when dusk begins to spread its veil over things, when the glorious sun begins to abdicate in favour of the Queen of Night, then a holy yearning fills the heart of all Nature and its creatures. There is a homeward turning of wings and hooves and of human feet. The world of trees sighs and raises its million boughs in a salutation or rather a farewell to the sun which is the symbol and the source of life.

A hush falls as the business of life is done. This hour of rest from the toils of the day is a favourite of yogis because by its very nature its silence quietens the clamour of vital impulses and uplifts the consciousness. There is a natural tendency to go within, to plunge in the soul-spaces. We wander on the tracts which have been hidden by the business of the day. In the *prayer* of August 15, 1913 the Mother writes,

In the even-fall, Thy Peace deepens and grows more sweet and Thy Voice more clear and distinct in the silence that fills my being.

Such is the magic of evening that if we can find some secluded corner away from the busy mart of life, preferably in a garden or a river bank or near the sea, then more often than not we become aware of a sweet, marvellous and pregnant silence. In that calm ambience, freed from the overpowering million preoccupations of life, we awaken to the Reality awaiting inside us to be discovered. Then we might become conscious of and hear the Call of our eternal Lover. Then if by the magic of an inner movement we come out of our torpor our eternal Radha-soul hidden within cries out for its Divine Spouse. In the *Prayers and Meditations* of the Mother, again and again, we come across this call, this eternal refrain of the Soul invoking the Lord. Something in her being cries out eternally to the Lord. This cry and testament of a total surrender, which would be later immortalised in her *Radha's Prayer* is heard here also,

O Divine Master, Thine is all our life, our thought, our love, all our being. Take unto Thyself once more what is Thine; For Thou art ourselves in our Reality.

Thus the Soul calls to the Self, Radha to her Krishna. In the inner Vrindavan, this sweet *līlā* of hide and seek, of veiling and unveiling goes on till the moment when the Soul realises its truth and can say *Thou art ourselves in our Reality*.

Till the moment when this happens, not only must we take full advantage of the eyes that end our days but also we must create our own inner eyes by breaking out of the overpowering business of life, even if for short spells. Let us, from time to time, draw the curtain of our eyelashes to bar the brilliance of the sun and search for our lost pathway to Krishna.

There is another mystery of Love involved in this *prayer*. It was written on 15 August, 1913. Across the distance of a continent the Divine Mother was calling Sri Aurobindo and paying her tribute to the Lord, whom she did not yet know outwardly, but whom she often met in her dreams and called Krishna.

\*

### *The Sun*

Love is the most abused term in the human lexicon. Today, a physical hunger, a vital affinity and a mental compatibility are called Love, a sexual need is called Love, a chance attraction or arbitrary aberration is called Love. People commit suicide, kill their rivals, starve or stupefy their senses with wine—all in the name of Love. What has Love got to do with the heinous act of a jilted lover who throws acid on the face of a girl or when a man molests a girl whom he covets? Yet there are thousands of such acts, and many worse, done and justified in the name of Love. In reality these are different forms the desire for the sex-act takes when it manifests in human beings. It certainly is not Love—that noblest of emotions.

This Creation is sustained by the power of Divine Love which permeates it—the Love which bears the continuous pain of life and its millions of sharp and jagged edges that tear its breast, which burns in the molten lava and is riven by the earthquake, which is slain by the savage and brutalised by the civilized, which bore the natal pains of Life coming out of Matter and Mind taking birth and growing out of Life and which will bear to the end the pain of the divinization of Matter.

The Mother always refers reverently to this Divine Love. On 16 August 1913, she wrote,

O Love, Divine Love, Thou fillest my whole being and overflowest on every side. I am Thyself even as Thou art I, and I see Thee in each being, each thing, from the soft breath of the passing breeze to the glorious sun which gives us light and is a symbol of Thee.

This makes it clear that the Divine Mother herself is *Love* and that this status she has achieved through her total identification with the Lord.

There is another significant pointer in this *prayer*. In Sri Aurobindo's yoga

the sun is the symbol of the Supermind. The Mother always loved the sun. Many a time she said that the sun was the most marvellous gift of the Lord, that we should make friends with the sun, that an hour of work in the sunlight was the best medicine for curing weakness and that we Indians did not realise how lucky we were to have so much of the sun. She also said that before coming to India she had never felt truly warm.

In many ways it is absolutely clear that as far back as 1913, even before she met Sri Aurobindo, the Mother had realised the symbolism and the importance of the sun. She has made it abundantly clear in the phrase: *sun which gives us light and is a symbol of Thee*.

The Divine is Love and the sun is a symbol of the Lord, yet the Divine is much more. What He is, is beyond the reach of our imagination. The Mother closes this short *prayer* with the words,

O Thou whom I cannot understand, in the silence of the purest devotion I adore Thee.

In front of the Great Mystery, the soul bows down in adoration to the Unknown and the Unknowable.

\*

### *The Bondage of the Body*

The creation and especially its highest outcome, the human being, are a harried lot today. Due to the numerous complications of life, living has lost its naturalness and the body its plasticity and natural resistance. We have become victims of a bewildering number of ailments. Consequently, we are always preoccupied with preserving our life, trying to keep body and soul together. Thoughts of health and nutrition, medicine and doctors are with us, as never before. Life is no more lived simply to a more or less natural span of years. Each moment we harried human beings feel ambushed by the forces of death and disintegration. The doctor is visited or summoned too often and a plethora of medicines are consumed without proper precautions, sometimes making the patient worse. Cancer, TB, Malaria, and AIDS are lurking around. One is bewildered by the recommended number of dos and don'ts. Obviously, this is not a very desirable state of affairs.

On August 17, 1913, the Mother wrote in her diary,

O Lord, Master of our life, let us soar very high above all care for our material preservation. Nothing is more humiliating and depressing than these thoughts so constantly turned towards the preservation of the body,

these preoccupations with health, the means of subsistence, the framework of life.... How very insignificant is all this, a thin smoke that a simple breath can disperse or a single thought turned towards Thee dispel like a vain mirage!

Here in a few words the Mother has summed up our situation, its degradation and its futility. But at the same time, she has given us the remedy, the means of liberation. All enlightened men want to escape this slavery but how to do it? The identification with the body is so near total that like the bullock yoked to a Persian wheel we go round and round in the grooves of anxiety. The Mother says this anxiety and gloom can be dispersed *like a vain mirage* by a *single thought turned towards Thee*.

This, then, is the simple and most effective remedy for getting rid of our consuming worries. We have to turn our thoughts towards the Lord and this debilitating preoccupation with ourselves is sure to vanish in the vastnesses into which the thoughts of the Lord will carry us. We have but to shift the needle of our consciousness from our petty self to the selflessness of the one Self of all. Only thus can we get free from the petrifying effects of worrying about our body. It is not impossible. Our wise Mother invoked the Lord on our behalf:

Deliver those who are in this bondage, O Lord, even as those who are the slaves of passion. On the path that leads to Thee these obstacles are at once terrible and puerile—terrible for those who are yet under their sway, puerile for one who has passed beyond.

It is a relief to know that these *terrible* obstacles, which constantly pull us down, are in truth *puerile*. Of course only after becoming free from them do we realise this fact. If we could but offer all our cares to the Divine it would save us a lifetime of worry and drudgery. The Mother has given a beautiful description of this state of freedom from worry:

How shall I describe that utter relief, that delightful lightness which comes when one is free from all anxiety for oneself, for one's life and health and satisfaction, and even one's progress?

This relief, this deliverance Thou hast granted to me, O Thou, Divine Master, Life of my life and Light of my light, O Thou who unceasingly teachest me love and makest me know the purpose of my existence.

This is the beatific state the Lord would grant us if we could turn our thoughts towards Him, if we could break out of the bad habit of battling from a low ground of worry. A long-suffering person may cry out in protest, "How am I not to worry when I suffer so much, when I seem to make no progress at all? Is it

not but natural for me to worry?" The Mother shows us why we should not. She writes:

It is Thou who livest in me, Thou alone; and why should I be preoccupied with myself and what might happen to me? Without Thee the dust constituting this body that strives to manifest Thee, would disperse amorphous and inconscient; without Thee this sensibility which makes possible a relation with all other centres of manifestation, would vanish into a dark inertia; without Thee this thought that animates and illumines the whole being, would be vague, vacant, unrealised; without Thee the sublime love which vivifies, coordinates, animates and gives warmth to all things would be a yet unawakened possibility. Without Thee all is inert, brute or inconscient. Thou art all that illumines and enraptures us, the whole reason of our existence and all our goal.

This is probably the most marvellous description of the Presence of the Omnipresent in us and of what this Presence means. Firstly, the Mother points out that when it is the Divine who lives in her there is no reason for her to worry. Here we must take note of the words *Thou alone*. In contrast to this state where the Divine is the sole occupant of the Mother's being, we, human beings, lodge within us a God as well as an Asura, a saint as well as a demon. Within us animality jostles with divinity, brutality with refinement. The task before us is to achieve the state when the Divine alone will be seated in our heart and mind. Essentially, there is the necessity of a thorough purification of our being. A ruthless discarding of all that is not divine is expected from us. This necessary purge has to be done, this Tapasya we cannot escape.

Secondly, we have to realise that if we have gained an identity and individuality, it is the Divine who has achieved this in us. Without His presence the cells would not aggregate and organise in an individual body, there would be no communication or interchange with others, no possibility of having intelligent, coherent and illumined thoughts or aspirations. We would remain a part of inconscient amorphous matter. It is the Divine who has organised our personality and has infused consciousness in each individual human ego-aggregate for his own mysterious *play* and he will surely liberate and uplift us in his own *way* and in his own *time*. The Mother writes:

Is this not enough to cure us of every personal thought, to make us spread our wings and soar above the contingencies of material life, so as to fly away into Thy divine atmosphere and be able to return as Thy messengers to the earth to announce the glorious tidings of Thy approaching Advent?

Only thus, by this *catharsis* and this understanding, can we change our night into an effulgent day and liberate and uplift our enmeshed consciousness into the higher hemisphere. Nothing is impossible with his help and nothing is possible unless he *wills* it. Let us then offer all our problems to him and supplicate for succour. On our knees, with a heart full of adoration, let us say in the words of the Mother,

O Divine Master, sublime Friend, marvellous Teacher, in a fecund silence I bow to Thee.

*(To be continued)*

SHYAM KUMARI

---

## TO FELICITY

WOULD that I could like the calm wide sea  
In cadenced devotion sing my hymns to Thee;

Would that I could like to the blue-green hills  
In patience wait for Thy deep Touch that thrills;

Would that I could with these my tear-filled eyes  
Adore thy Form in clear supernal skies;

Would that I could like to the dewy night  
Fade and be merged into thy sun-tinged Light;

Would that this heart forever now could be  
Thy home—O flame-born gold Felicity!

KRIPA ANURU



## THE CULTURAL TEMPERAMENT OF INDIA

WE have said that in the Indian view each nation is a living organic being with a body, life-force, mind and soul. The mind of the nation—of which culture is the outer expression in the collective life—has a distinct intellectual, moral, psychological and aesthetic temperament. Understanding of the national temperament is important for evolving appropriate development strategies of the nation.

There are some unique traits which distinguish the Indian Mind from that of any other nation. The first is the inward subjective outlook, the urge to create from within outwards. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“The whole basis of the Indian Mind is its spiritual and inward turn, its propensity to seek the things of the spirit and inner being first and foremost and to look at all else as secondary, dependent, to be handled and determined in the light of the higher knowledge and as an expression, a preliminary or field or aid or at least a pendent to the deeper spiritual aim,—a tendency therefore to create whatever it had to create first on the inner plane and afterwards in its outer aspects.”<sup>1</sup>

A natural outcome of this inward turn is a greater emphasis on thought and inner aspiration than on outer action. “The genius of the Hindu,” says Sri Aurobindo, “is not for pure action, but for thought and aspiration realised in action, the spirit premeditating before the body obeys the inward command.”<sup>2</sup> This means the special genius of the Indian intellect is not for the innovative thought of the technician which improves and imitates but the intuitive thought of the thinker and the sage that originates higher ideals and values and that of the prophet that inspires.

The second trait of the Indian psyche is what is normally called “renunciation”. But this word is normally understood to mean an outer abandonment of life, an escape to the mountain-top, the forest or an ashram, some form of ascetic flight from life. But the deeper sense of this uniquely Indian temperament is explained with a luminous clarity in the Bhagavad Gita. According to the Gita renunciation is not an outer abandonment of life and action but an inner renunciation of desire, attachment and the sense of possession and a relinquishment of not action itself, but the fruits of action. As the modern Vedantic teachers in India are fond of repeating, not renunciation *of* action but renunciation *in* action.

The third quality of the Indian mind is a certain emotional proclivity to religious and spiritual values. The moral temperament of India is characterised by a certain flexibility which is the result of a clear perception of the relativity of moral values. For in the perspective of Indian culture morality or moral perfection is only a stage and not the aim of human development. And also, the

moral discipline cannot be the same for all; it must take into consideration the complexity of the Dharma of the individual and collectivity like his or its natural temperament, stage of evolution, social occupation, etc. The religious temperament of India tends towards a spontaneous faith in the indwelling divinity in Man, a rich diversity of paths towards the one Truth, a non-dogmatic, experimental and psychological approach to the spiritual discovery and a progressive movement towards a higher and richer synthesis in religious thought and practice. The aesthetic temperament of India is inclined towards the creative expression of the inner Beauty of things with the outer form only as a symbol of the inner truth. This is in essence the cultural temperament of India. We have to see what are the implications of this analysis of the national temperament for development.

The most important application is in motivation. Any motivation system based purely on economic, social and political ideals or rewards is not likely to have lasting impact on the Indian psyche. The work-culture of India must be based on the idea of work as a means for realising a great moral and spiritual ideal which transcends the economic, social and political self-interest of the individual and collective ego.

The second lesson we have to learn from the study of our national temperament is that whatever we want to create or whatever changes we want to initiate in society must first be established in the consciousness of the people as a conscious, well-understood and acceptable idea, and then from there allowed to organise itself spontaneously in outer forms. We should not also, like the modern Western temperament, rush into action with a shortsighted pragmatic motive. First we have to evolve an enduring national vision; ideals and values and all new changes we want to introduce in society have to be examined from all possible angles in both the short-term and the long-term perspectives in the light of this overall vision. For this, first priority has to be given to cultural development. For, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, the Indian genius is not for action-oriented pragmatic thinking or in other words thought subordinated to action but action governed by thought, work inspired by the Ideal and the "spirit pre-meditating before the body obeys the inward command". And culture, which is the mind of the nation, is the source of its thought and ideals. So the mind of the nation has to be kept alive and creative through a free, lofty and dynamic culture governed by the ideals of truth and beauty and goodness. The best way to do this in our modern age is through an educational and academic culture which promotes original and creative thinking and the development of character and a free press and massmedia serving as the instrument for diffusing the higher culture to the masses.

Finally the developmental potentialities of the Indian ideal of renunciation have to be rightly understood in the context of modern conditions and fully

actualised in the Indian society. In the Indian society the renunciate “sannyasi” is held in great respect by the masses. Someone who has renounced the joys and values of the ordinary life to pursue a higher moral and spiritual ideal evokes a spontaneous respect in the Indian psyche. The policy-makers in the field of education, training and development of future leaders of India must take note of the motivational potential of this Indian ideal

The most interesting aspect of this ideal of renunciation is that in the ancient spiritual culture of the Upanishads it is considered as the spiritual way for the highest enjoyment of the world. “Renounce all that thou mayst enjoy all,” declares the sage of the Isha Upanishad. What is exactly the meaning of this strange statement of the Indian sage? It means when the individual is able to renounce inwardly all attachment to the transient and mortal enjoyment of his lower self in outer objects, he begins to experience the immortal and eternal delight, “Ananda,” inherent in his highest universal Self which is the source of all life and dwells secretly in every object, being and force in the universe.

In a similar way when the individual is able to shear off by the sword of knowledge the desire for the outward possession of objects—or, in a much deeper understanding, the sense of possession itself—then he begins to have the experience of possessing all things in the conscious oneness of his higher Self. Such an individual is in no need of outer renunciation, he can possess and enjoy all the luxuries and comforts of life but will not be bound by any of them. This is the Indian synthesis of Renunciation and Enjoyment—to have the capacity for the highest enjoyment of life and also for the uttermost renunciation but bound by none. As Sri Aurobindo explains this Indian synthesis,

“To take the utmost joy of life, to be capable of the utmost renunciation of life, at one and the same time, in the same mind and body, to be master of both capacities and bound by neither—this was the secret of India, the mighty discipline of which Janaka was the traditional exemplar. ‘Renounce all that thou mayst enjoy all,’—this is India’s characteristic message,—not Buddha’s absolute renunciation, not the European’s enslavement to his bodily, vital and intellectual desires and appetites. Tyaga within, Bhoga without,—Ananda, the divine delight of the purified soul, embracing both ”<sup>3</sup>

Though the full realisation of this synthesis of Bhoga and Tyaga is possible only in the highest spiritual consciousness, a preliminary glimpse or experience of this truth is possible for any seeker who is willing to make the inner experiment with sincerity and persistence. One of the constantly repeated and verifiable experiences of spiritual seekers all over the world is that the conquest of a desire through a deep and sincere inner renunciation of the vital attachment to the object of desire brings a much deeper, purer and more lasting joy than the satisfaction of desire. As the Mother observes:

“The Buddha has said that there is a greater joy in overcoming a desire than

in satisfying it. It is an experience everybody can have and one that is truly very interesting, very interesting . . . There is a kind of inner communion with the psychic being which takes place when one willingly gives up a desire, and because of this one feels a much greater joy than if he had satisfied his desire.”<sup>4</sup>

The other important aspect of this Indian ideal which has a living relevance for the modern age is the Gita's concept of the renunciation of the fruits of action. The essence of the Gita's counsel is to renounce the craving and anxiety for the rewards of action. This anxious craving for the rewards of action is one of the major sources of stress and dissipation of energy in the modern work-life. It not only creates useless stress but also scatters and diffuses the inner energy of human beings in a wasteful brooding over the future and prevents the concentration of the energy on the present task. Thus the Gita's concept of renunciation of rewards, if it is fully understood and lived sincerely in the work-life, can considerably enhance the quality of the work-life of the nation.

So this deeper understanding of the meaning and application of the Indian ideal of renunciation, especially the Gita's concept of Tyaga, must become an integral part of the education, training and work-culture of India. Students, workers and executives at different levels have to be carefully guided towards a conceptual, experimental and experiential understanding of this Indian ideal.

And finally renunciation is a means of inner progress. The Western idea of progress is an outer expansion by an increasing possession of a growing outer empire—material, economic, social and political. But the Indian concept of progress is an inner evolution of consciousness through the renunciation of the aims, values, ideals and vision of a lower order of life in favour of higher aims, values, ideals and vision of life. For only when the human consciousness is able to renounce its attachment to the aims and values of a lower order of life, will it get the freedom and power to soar into a higher level of consciousness and life.

In the language of the Indian terminology of the four-fold Purushartha, the evolutionary progress of the individual or the collectivity can be described as a movement from the Artha-Kama values of the physical, vital, economic, social and political life of man to the mental, moral and cultural values of the Dharmic order of life and from the Dharmic to the Adhyatmic or the spiritual order of life, ascending towards the realisation of the supreme or the spiritual aim of life: “Moksha.” But at the end of each stage of this evolutionary journey, the attachment to or the priority interest of the human ego in the values and aims of the lower order of life has to be renounced and reoriented towards the aims and values of the higher order of life in order to move on to the next stage of evolution. This can be done either by an inner Tyaga which comes from a clear discernment of knowledge, “Viveka”, or by a self-controlled exhaustion of lower propensities through Bhoga. In the developmental perspectives of the ancient Indian culture, the first method is reserved for the evolved spiritual aspirant and

the second method is given for the collectivity in general and for the common man who is not yet ready for the spiritual life.

M. S. SRINIVASAN

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## INDIA AND SRI AUROBINDO

A seer, he has entered the forbidden realms;  
A magician with the omnipotent wand of thought,  
He builds the secret uncreated worlds.  
Armed with the golden speech, the diamond eye,  
His is the vision and the prophecy:  
Imagist casting the formless into shape,  
Traveller and hewer of the unseen paths,  
He is the carrier of the hidden fire,  
He is the voice of the Ineffable,  
He is the invisible hunter of the light,  
The Angel of mysterious ecstasies,  
The conqueror of the kingdoms of the soul.<sup>1</sup>

THESE are the words of none other than the 'conqueror of the kingdoms of the soul' himself who 'entered the forbidden realm' hewing 'the unseen paths' no mortal could penetrate. This alien consciousness embodying the Infinite descended on the political soil of great India to prepare her for a divine mission—the task left unfinished by the Vedic Rishis to be accomplished by this harbourer of Infinite Consciousness, Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo, a Yogi of the highest order, entering into a transcendent world which is still unmanifest to mundane eyes, is the embodiment of the Supramental Consciousness marking a turning-point in the evolutionary history of Earth.

Though Sri Aurobindo had a very brief span of time in the political arena of the country, it is of an everlasting importance which time has yet to realise. It is he alone who has seen India as a Godhead, not as a piece of land. He is the Scientist who sees Matter becoming a condensed form of Spiritual Energy, not as an independent isolated entity. He sees the Divine becoming 'Many' in the form of the phenomenal universe. In his Yogic consciousness Sri Aurobindo sees a divine sanction in India's slavery to the British as also in her Independence. He discloses that greater mission Nature has to accomplish:

"India cannot perish, our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind it is to India that is reserved the highest and the most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of the human race. It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the Eternal Religion which is to harmonise all religions, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul."<sup>2</sup>

Sri Aurobindo speaks of a greater evolutionary goal towards which India has to take the lead. This is the Divine Will which makes her conscious of 'the internal and inexhaustible reservoirs of the spirit',<sup>3</sup> of the rebirth which is the revival of 'the Brahman within us, and that is a spiritual process—no effort of the

body or the intellect can compass it' '4 India's independence, to him, is her rebirth to make a new birth of the entire World into a higher order of existence. His Yogic consciousness could see it as a demand of the future of the world That is why whatever steps Sri Aurobindo took or proposed during the Independence movement of the country were an essential and natural corollary of an unrealised Destiny of the world which the other leaders of the country failed to perceive The prevailing chaos in the passing phase of our country is prefigured when he was labelled as an extremist by the dominating group of the Indian National Congress Nothing can be more ironical than this that the people of a country like India which is abundantly rich in spiritual heritage should have such a perverted eye which could not see the incarnation of the Divine in him. History witnesses that it is he alone who could see body, life and mind in man's being as the instruments of Soul which is a spark of the Divine to express the Divine through these instruments. His writings in the *Bande Mataram* give ample indications of this to which the other leaders of the Indian National Congress having a grip over the party opted to be blind. The most celebrated leader of India Mr. M K Gandhi also failed to hear the 'Voice of the Ineffable' in him though he had his own ethics, a set of moral values of a mental kind. Sri Aurobindo had come to lay the foundation of a new consciousness, a new light This prompts him to write

"All great awakenings in India, all her periods of mightiest and most varied vigour have drawn their vitality from the fountain-heads of some deep religious awakening. Wherever the religious awakening has been complete and grand, the national energy it has created has been gigantic and puissant; wherever the religious movement has been narrow or incomplete, the national movement has been broken, imperfect or temporary" '5

This religious awakening is the realisation of a deeper eternal Self within man which Sri Aurobindo visualizes in his Yogic consciousness. This eternal Self is a portion of the Divine, what we call 'Soul' It is this Soul which gives man the vision of the Divine and its play through its instruments—body, life, mind—in this many-dimensional world Sri Aurobindo writes of our mother country:

"It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty Shakti, composed of the Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation, just as Bhawani Mahisha Mardini sprang into being from the Shakti of all the millions of gods assembled in one mass of force and wielded them into unity. The Shakti we call India, Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of the Shaktis of three hundred million people." '6

In his soul-vision he sees Bhawani, the Mother, as 'the Infinite Energy': "I am the Infinite Energy which streams forth from the Eternal in the world and the Eternal in yourselves I am the Mother of the Universe, the Mother of the Worlds, and for you who are children of the Sacred Land, Aryabhumi, made of her clay and reared by her sun and winds, I am Bhawani Bharati, Mother of

India<sup>77</sup> It is in this soul-vision that Sri Aurobindo seeks India to tread the path which the Vedic and the Upanishadic Rishis have shown for fulfilling the mission which the Almighty has entrusted to her. India has to rise and she has to rise for a greater Oneness. She has to get rid of Tamas, the self-indulgent inertia, in order to achieve this oneness. The rise of Japan is on account of the Vedantic teachings of Oyomei and the recovery of Shintoism with its worship of the national Shakti of Japan. What Sri Aurobindo contributes to India outweighs the gifts of others and is of a transcendent nature since his is the supramental perspective. His 'nationalism' is not a collective ego but a higher step towards Oneness which the political leaders of India have failed to visualize. The vision of Oneness which Sri Aurobindo has, works to release the world from the bondage of inert Matter. An eclipsed and thus a false or misleading vision of life has to be replaced by the light of Oneness. In the absence of this light a self-indulgent Tamasic consciousness has erupted resulting in man's refusal to exceed his narrow self and threatening the existence of mankind. The happiness which this Tamasic consciousness seeks is of a perverted nature and fails to know of the eternal happiness which lies in having the soul-vision and treading the path which Sri Aurobindo, whose works have rightly been called 'the fifth Veda', goes to show. The world has to know a greater Truth, the Divine Truth which dwells on the Supramental plane. The cells of our body have to realise that death is no death; it is a mere phase, a portal to Immortality dispelling the darkness in which a sad state of affairs is prevailing. The European description of matter and mind has to go away from man's consciousness and he has to discern the soul through a Yogic insight leading to the Supramental\*. We have to realise world-existence on different levels, rising from Matter to Life, Mind and beyond. We cannot perceive the truth of his political views unless we realize the Divine Consciousness at work in him.

NANHESHWAR PRASAD

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\* This is an expression of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother while indicating a plane in the hierarchy of consciousness



# MAN—SLAVE OR FREE?

## A TALK TO AN AMERICAN AUDIENCE IN THE U.S.A.

WE live in a very complex world where the ideas of subjection and freedom seem to be reaching their climax. We demand utter freedom to live, to think and to act: we do not care for conventions—social, moral, religious, political or national. As if cramped, suffocated and even oppressed by all these conventions and their laws, we wish to break out of such bounds and chalk out our own way of life in freedom.

It is a revolutionary world, where all is pressing for change and reconstitution. Modern society and especially the youth have this courage to take up the challenge of living without conventions, which has unfortunately its vicious consequences, because they have not yet found the true inner law of living to replace the external law.

Let us see how far Man is free or can be free. For, Man is a complex being, standing in the battlefield of life like Arjuna with an unresolved dilemma at the hour of crisis, inner and outer. Only, unlike Arjuna, he is ready to abandon all dharmas—all laws—but has not yet found the law of Truth to follow, nor so surrendered to the Lord, the World-Teacher, as to seek the guidance of a higher consciousness.

Hence what we find today is that in the name of democracy and freedom, there is a free expression of Man's unregenerate human nature. Freedom is certainly essential for human growth. But we have not understood what is true freedom and when it can be exercised. We have not asked ourselves: "What is the constitution, psychology and true nature of Man? What is the purpose of life? What is the aim of existence? Is there God? What is the nature of God? What is our right relationship with God, with the universe around us, with Nature and other beings?" These are very potent and relevant questions.

Sri Aurobindo clearly saw the forces of degeneration in the unregenerate human nature and warned us that the crisis mankind is undergoing at present is not just a social, religious, economic, political or national crisis. It is an evolutionary crisis compelling Man to transcend himself in the light of the Truth of Existence.

In order to understand and resolve the question before us—whether Man is free or slave—we must know what Man is in the wholeness of his being and what is the force in operation behind his life in the context of the aim and the principle of evolution. We must go deeper in our search to determine what is the aim of evolution and the destiny of Man proposed to us by Sri Aurobindo. It is in this context that we shall try to find out whether Man is slave or free and what is the scope of the freedom that he so passionately seeks.

Man in his ordinary development and action is a mental being with a heart

or an emotional, vital being, encased in a body. The western psychologists before Jung did not give a distinct place to the soul. For the most part, it was confused with the ethical, moral and religious mind, or with the heart.

Sri Aurobindo reminds us that Man, in the Indian idea, is not just a living body with vital and emotional tendencies, a mind and an ego. This is not the whole of Man. Behind all these instruments of his being is his living soul, a portion of the Divine. Let us not forget this. Man is a divinity, still veiled, but capable of expressing his godhead. There is a Rigvedic hymn, which says:

Become high-uptifted, O Strength! Pierce all veils.  
Manifest in us the things of the Godhead.

It is not the destiny of Man to be shut up for ever in his ego and the superficial personality built by his ego. The ultimate perfection of Man lies in his transcending the ego-centric mental personality and being the real individual Self, the godhead seated within, one with the Supreme, one with the universe, one with Nature, one with all beings and all that exists. For, all that exists is verily the Supreme Being, Brahman, the Absolute.

Ignorance of the truth of one's being is a limitation and a bondage. Inefficiency arising from the lack of this knowledge makes one powerless, and consequently a slave. Besides, the man who has not achieved harmony within himself among all the parts of his being—physical, emotional and vital, mental, psychic and spiritual—is a fragmented being, each part leading him in a different direction. He is at war with himself and consequently at war with all around him. A divided being cannot be a master of himself. An ignorant and a divided being cannot be permitted to have a wide freedom.

Generally, our ideas of freedom and freewill are associated with subjectivism or the individualism of the personal ego and its claim to complete liberty of choice, independent of others and their views. However, the will of the ego is bound by the limited nature of the mental being and shaped by its ignorance. At every moment, it is vulnerable to the external influence and modified by wills, powers and forces other than his own.

An individual human personality, ignorant of the truth of its being, is often the result of past self-formation, heredity, mental education, environmental background and their limitations.

We forget that an individual is a part of the universal existence with the supreme transcendental Being, immanent in all that exists, governing and holding everything together in a perfect balance, however chaotic it may seem to our superficial view. There is no isolated and unrelated movement in the universe, nor can any individual act in an isolated independence.'

Now, there are two natures of Man: the lower and the higher. The lower nature is governed by the inconscient Matter which constitutes his physical being

with its own laws of inertia, laziness, fixed habits, unwillingness to change; by his unregenerate vital being with its desires, attachments, jealousy, passion, anger, hatred, by the narrow, opinionated, dogmatic mental being with its fixed ideas, biases, prejudices and preferences. This lower nature has its own rights and does not readily agree to be radically transformed into a wider, luminous, higher nature. It prefers its own unenlightened nature and clings to its reactions. Under these circumstances, Man is not the master of his own house but a slave

It is the soul behind our individual outer personality of the ego, an aspect of God, which is free, because it is not a result of our heredity and external circumstances, but modifies our heredity and circumstances. It is only when the concentration of our being turns inward from the outer, external consciousness and there is a full emergence of the inner Self—*purusa purāṇah sanātanah*—that the whole nature can be refined, transformed and remoulded under the light of the Truth. The individual is governed until then by his lower nature over which he has little control

Arising from inconscient Matter through the forms of Life and Mind Man has evolved to the present stage of development of the Mental Consciousness. However, with all the most magnificent achievements in the field of Science and Technology, he is aware of only a very small part of his being—his surface physical, vital and mental being. He is ignorant of all that is below and all that is above his surface consciousness: the inconscient and the subconscious as well as the subliminal and the superconscient. We can have power over only that part of our existence of which we are conscious. We are not fully conscious of all that we are and what we can be.

Man, compelled by animal propensities, tossed among unsatisfied vital desires, attachments and passions and directed by mind, ignorant and incapable of controlling the force of his lower nature or solving the problems arising from it, is sure to be afflicted by the chaos within and without. Such a man is not strong enough to be free or to enjoy his freedom

Man, ignorant of himself and the possibilities of his future evolution, is not a complete being, and the evolution cannot halt at so imperfect a being as Man, who cannot solve the problems created by him in spite of his highest mental development. Man, being not just a body, life and mind, but an unmanifest god, must become conscious of his divinity within, which is the truth of his being, if he wishes to be free.

Unlike the theory of Evolution proposed by Darwin, the evolution that Sri Aurobindo speaks about is a spiritual evolution of Consciousness which determines its forms of manifestation. Man must transcend his ego-centric mental consciousness and ascend to the higher planes of Consciousness and become capable of manifesting the Supramental Consciousness or the Truth-Consciousness, which alone can transform his entire being and nature, including the inconscient basis of Matter.

It is the divine Self, the godhead, which is the true master, because it is one

with the Supreme and the universal existence not only in the essence of its consciousness, but in its expression too. It is not only conscious of the divine presence in everything everywhere, but united with that presence, it carries out the intention and the will of God in the world

Freedom is not a license to behave and do as one wills according to the will of the ego without respect for the principles of spiritual evolution of Consciousness, which aim at perfection of the individual and perfection of the collectivity for a divine manifestation here, on this very earth.

Freedom is therefore best fulfilled when it includes the principles of mutuality and harmony for the integral development of the individual and the social aggregate to their highest possibility in the light of the truth of Existence. By freedom, we mean the freedom to obey the spiritual law of the truth of our being in order to grow towards the highest self-fulfilment.

After all, all life is one in its essential principles and plan. But life admits and encourages an infinite variety of action. Our freedom is therefore a spiritual necessity, but it must be based on harmony. As Sri Aurobindo says, the perfect society will be that which entirely favours the perfection of the individual; the perfection of the individual will be incomplete if it does not help towards the perfection of the society to which he belongs and finally towards the perfection of the whole of humanity

If we can understand this, each moment of our freedom can be significant and important in discovering the soul to guide our will and action, to root out ignorance, division and the obstacles of the lower nature, to widen the scope of our existence and to heighten our consciousness so as to purify the instruments of our being—body, life and mind—and to develop them to their highest capacity for the divine manifestation.

It is this transformation of our being in the truth and the strength of the godhead seated within, with its effective power of the Truth, splendour of Beauty and Love and ineffable Bliss of existence, that is the destiny of Man proposed to us by Sri Aurobindo. Needless to say, it requires a long, persistent effort, but the knowledge of the Path and the Grace of the Divine are there to help us, and the reward is glorious

When one lives in the consciousness of the Truth, its will and its knowledge, when one lives in God, filled with the power and bliss of God, one is also admitted to the creative liberty of God and participation in God's work upon earth. The will of Man then becomes the agent of the Eternal for the unveiling of His secret meaning in the material creation.

To fulfil God in life is the true dignity of Man, the greatness and fulfilment of his birth in Time and his return to earth again and again till the work of the Eternal in him is perfected and he manifests the living god in his life and action in complete freedom.

## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of January 1996)

At Shankara Chetty's house in Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo himself had cut all connection with politics and plunged entirely in Yoga.

This house was a large one and Sri Aurobindo occupied a room on the top floor. Moni and Bejoy stayed in the same house. It was the very house where Swami Vivekananda had stayed when he had visited Pondicherry sometime earlier. The host would serve food for the new guests and Sri Aurobindo mostly stayed confined to his room. He came down only for his bath. He did not wish to be disturbed by visitors and it was all quiet. The party stayed in this house till October 1910.

Later some selected persons were allowed to meet him. Among them was M. Mouttayan, Secretary of the local Theosophical Lodge (and also a Government official). He was one of the few who had assembled in the compound of Shankara Chetty's house and watched Sri Aurobindo walk.

In 1910 "Paul Richard came to Pondicherry on behalf of M. Paul Bluyson for election to the French Chamber. Bluyson was elected. Richard came to know that Sri Aurobindo had come to Pondicherry and was doing Yoga. An interview was arranged, most probably by Zir Naidu, a friend of Richard's, between Sri Aurobindo and Richard. It was in Shankara Chetty's house that they met two days for two or three hours each day. Richard asked Sri Aurobindo many questions, one of which related to the symbolic character of the lotus. Sri Aurobindo explained that the lotus stands for the opening of the consciousness to the Divine. It can be seen on any of the subtle planes of consciousness."<sup>1</sup> These meetings had obviously left a deep impression on the visitor. For, some years later, he declared before an audience in Japan in a speech which has been published later in his book, *The Dawn over Asia*, that Sri Aurobindo was the future leader of Asia. The passage runs:

"The hour is coming of great things, of great events, and also of great men, the divine men of Asia. All my life I have sought for them across the world, for all my life I have felt they must exist somewhere in the world, that this world would die if they did not live. For they are its light, its heat, its life. It is in Asia that I found the greatest among them—the leader, the hero of tomorrow. He is a Hindu. His name is Aurobindo Ghose."<sup>2</sup>

At Chetty's house there were sessions of automatic writing in the evenings of the first few months. Sri Aurobindo used to see before him the image of Ram Mohan Roy both before and after the writing. On the last day he saw the figure disappearing from a corner of the ceiling of the room. Sri Aurobindo disclaimed responsibility for this writing. He wrote only the Editor's epilogue and the Editor's name was given as Uttar Yogi.

The book was published in a number of editions as authored by Sri Aurobindo and it was only in 1927 that it was withdrawn from circulation. Sri Aurobindo writes of it: "*Yogic Sadhan* is not my composition, nor its contents the essence of my Yoga, whatever the publishers may persist in saying in their lying blurb, in spite of protests."<sup>3</sup>

V. Ramaswamy Iyengar, a friend of C. R. Das and a famous Tamil patriotic writer later known as Va Ra, went to Sri Aurobindo with Subramania Bharati. There is a more than usual interest attached to this meeting.

In a subtle vision Sri Aurobindo had seen him earlier in a different personality. He explains: "... a certain Y whom I had had to meet, but I saw him not as he was when he actually came, but as he became after a year's residence in my house. He became the very image of that vision, a face close-cropped, rough, rude, energetic, the very opposite of the dreamy smooth-faced enthusiastic Vaishnava who came to me. So that was the vision of a man I had never seen, but as he was to be in the future—a prophetic vision."<sup>4</sup>

"It is known that K. V. R. Iyengar gave Sri Aurobindo a promise of future economic help and besides this actually gave some money. Those were days of great danger to anyone who dared to render any kind of help to a revolutionary political leader. That is why nothing was spoken about the details of the interview or about the exact extent of the help rendered. K. V. R. Iyengar came twice again to Pondicherry to see Sri Aurobindo."<sup>5</sup>

"Life at Pondicherry was very hard. Sri Aurobindo and his young companions lived in Comity Chetty Street. Moni and Bijoy, or both, used to make tea for Sri Aurobindo in the morning. The food for the afternoon meal was cooked in the house: usually there was rice, vegetables, rasam and sambar. At night Sri Aurobindo took a cup of *payas* (rice boiled in sweetened milk). They all used to sleep on the ground. For Sri Aurobindo there was a thin mattress. Moni and Bijoy used to lie on straw mats."<sup>6</sup>

Subramania Bharati was profoundly influenced by Sri Aurobindo. He used to visit with Srinivasachari. Later he would see him every day in the evening. Writing about the year 1913 in the book of reminiscences, *Old Long Since*, Amrita says:

"Every evening a little after dark Bharati would go to Sri Aurobindo's house. He chose that time not with the purpose of avoiding people who would want to make a note of his visit. It was because Sri Aurobindo used to come out of his room and receive his friends only after seven in the evening. An exception, however, was made for close friends like Bharati and Srinivasachari, who, at a very urgent need, could see him at any time of the day. Their visits to Sri Aurobindo's home after seven had become a regular affair. Bharati would visit without fail. It was not so with Srinivasachari, however.

"There was hardly any subject which they did not talk about in their meetings at night. They discussed literature, society, politics, the various arts...

Long afterwards Bharati learnt the Rig Veda from Sri Aurobindo.”<sup>77</sup>

“In October there was a change of lodgings. From Shankar Chetty’s house Sri Aurobindo moved to a house on Rue Suffren, in the southern part of the town. This house belonged to one Sunder Chetty. He remained here until April 1911. In late September, just before the removal, Saurin Bose, a cousin of Mrinalini Devi, came to Pondicherry. In November Nolini Kanta Gupta came. There were now four young men in all: Moni, Bijoy, Saurin and Nolini

On 7 November 1910 Sri Aurobindo wrote to *The Hindu*, a Madras paper, about his retirement from politics:

I shall be obliged if you will allow me to inform every one interested in my whereabouts through your journal that I am and will remain in Pondicherry. I left British India over a month before proceedings were taken against me and, as I had purposely retired here in order to pursue my Yogic sadhana undisturbed by political action or pursuit and had already severed connection with my political work, I did not feel called upon to surrender on the warrant for sedition, as might have been incumbent on me if I had remained in the political field. I have since lived here as a religious recluse, visited only by a few friends, French and Indian, but my whereabouts have been an open secret, long known to the agents of the Government and widely rumoured in Madras as well as perfectly well-known to every one in Pondicherry. I find myself now compelled somewhat against my will, to give my presence here a wider publicity. It has suited certain people for an ulterior object to construct a theory that I am not in Pondicherry, but in British India, and I wish to state emphatically that I have not been in British India since March last and shall not set foot on British territory even for a single moment in the future until I can return publicly. Any statement by any person to the contrary made now or in the future, will be false. I wish, at the same time, to make it perfectly clear that I have retired for the time from political activity of any kind and that I will see and correspond with no one in connection with political subjects. I defer all explanation or justification of my action in leaving British India until the High Court in Calcutta shall have pronounced on the culpability or innocence of the writing in the *Karmayogin* on which I am indicted

On 7 November judgment was delivered at the Calcutta High Court on the *Karmayogin* and Manmohan Ghose, the printer of the journal, was acquitted (He had been convicted by the Chief Presidency Magistrate.) The article in question, ‘To My Countrymen’ was considered not seditious.”<sup>78</sup>

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

### References

- 1 *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, by A B Purani, p 142
- 2 *The Dawn over Asia*, by Paul Richard, Ganesh & Co , Madras
- 3 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 26, pp 372, 373
- 4 *Ibid* , p 360
- 5 *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, by A B Purani, pp 144, 145
- 6 *Ibid* , pp 145, 146
- 7 *Old Long Since*, by K Amrita, pp 143, 144
- 8 *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, by A B Purani, pp 146-47

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## MY FANS

THEY are veritably my fans  
 though they never proclaimed themselves so.  
 From cover to cover  
 They have gone through a pile of books  
 all authored by me,  
 And they were glad enough  
 to leave their impressions  
 on every page.  
 “O” is the grade  
 they have generously marked  
 systematically and without a break  
 on all pages.

“O” in academic circles  
 represents “Outstanding”.

Oh! What a great writer I am!  
 Don't my fans, the worms,  
 tell me that my books  
 are worthy enough  
 to be chewed and digested?  
 What is fame if not this?

P. RAJA



## BLUE BIRD

THE sky is dark, the sea is deep,  
The howling winds are roused from sleep,  
The waves froth up with fearsome roar  
And thunder rumbles on distant shore.

Flap on wings, in stormy air,  
Flap on wings, nor ever despair,  
Flap on wings, high and still higher—  
The hour has come, ordeal of fire!

Darkness all round, darkness below,  
Dark clouds above hang down so low,  
The burdened wings shudder in flight,  
No flicker of light, no friend in sight.

Flap on wings, in sombre air,  
Flap on wings, nor ever despair,  
Flap on wings, with all your might,  
The hour has come, ordeal of night!

Breaking through the clouds of gloom,  
Ever higher, the blue wings loom  
Till at last the Golden Sun  
Shines forth, the eternal Day begun.

Up here there's never a pall of gloom,  
Up here there's never a shadow of doom,  
Here, where blue wings of Light  
Effortless, soar up in flight.

D. L.



## ADORING ASSUMPTIONS AND IMAGINATIONS

SRI AUROBINDO is the strong love within matter's components.

\*

Sri Aurobindo is the longing of quietness in cellular life.

\*

Sri Aurobindo is the bliss in matter's achievements.

\*

Sri Aurobindo's presence represents total rejection of Falsehood.

\*

SRI Aurobindo is the beauty in mind, on mind and around mind.

\*

SRI Aurobindo's powers achieve pure delight, quietness and sweetness.

\*

SRI Aurobindo is the Supreme Climax of Harmony in His very substance whose components are the Mother's love in its infinite potency.

\*

SRI Aurobindo is the sovereign beneficent Sea. A plunge into it purifies oneself of all ignorance.

\*

SRI Aurobindo's light is not the monopoly of the Truth-splendours. Even in the huge and deep wells of the abyss, Sri Aurobindo's light is there shining without intermission and directing with stability

\*

SRI Aurobindo, in response to our sincerity, fortifies our devotion, increases our surrender. He constantly enlightens us on the path. He is committed to our sincerity.

\*

SRI Aurobindo renders invalid the dictum that night is necessary to manifest a greater dawn. Sri Aurobindo surrounds us; He is the supreme dawn that never ceases.

\*

Sri Aurobindo manifested in human life with His eternity because human life was the only bridge available for Him in the trillions of worlds of endless space. On the other hand while the whole endless space lives in Sri Aurobindo's heart with its innumerable life forms and life entities, He also lives, with His immensity compressed, within each atom existing in space.

\*

Sri Aurobindo can dispel all darkneses however great they may be; darkneses shrink and become a dwarf in the manifested self of Sri Aurobindo.

\*

At any moment in all times to come, at any point of time, if the question is posed, "How much from Sri Aurobindo's unmanifest State has been manifested?", there will be always one eternal answer, "One drop of the shoreless, bottomless Ocean of consciousness that Sri Aurobindo is." Even after infinitudes of creations in infinities of time, the proportion of one drop and His infinite ocean will remain unendingly constant.

\*

Sri Aurobindo's love allays all sufferings. True power emerges from the unshakable peace established by this love.

\*

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are lighting stars after stars in the most intense darkness of the infinite Inconscient.

\*

From earth, from His embodiment, Sri Aurobindo is increasing more and more the number of cosmic systems that are sustained *in* and *by* His love. Earth is not only an epitome of all the worlds that exist but it is also the epitome of all the new ones that will be created. All the Cosmic Systems in the process of creation have their representation in earth. Earth received in its every atom Sri Aurobindo's love when He put into it His material envelope. Since earth became fully love-based by this great sacrifice of His, all the new Cosmic Systems that are being worked out will also be love-based because their essence is there in earth. The Mother's Grace will be present throughout such Cosmic Systems as it cannot be separated from Sri Aurobindo's Love.

\*

Sri Aurobindo shines in every grain of sand of earth after He put His material envelope into earth. So it would be optimism in the right direction to assume that every statue that represents His aspect and Her aspect in traditional forms will

eventually become adorable because He and She will respond through these statues. All places of worship will be dealt with by Him and Her, making them ready for the common man to reach Sri Aurobindo and the Mother through these statues.

\*

The Mother's hand is not only a living tissue. It is an energy—love-energy. Her hand can stop all creations as it can start new ones. The Mother's hand is light materialising as love. Wherever and whatever She touches, She transmits love. Irrespective of the fact that the Mother is now not in a physical body, our intense devotion can feel a materialisation of Her hand on our heads. This is so because when She left her body She did not leave us. Her embodied aspect is subtly accessible everywhere, depending on our faith, trust and devotion.

\*

The central core of the Mother's work was to establish the integral consciousness of supreme Sri Aurobindo infinitely. She did it.

\*

Sri Aurobindo's children become His sons and daughters when they realise integrally the highest truth of their being.

\*

Sri Aurobindo's heart is the Mother's abode. Sri Aurobindo's heart is the reality of the Mother's being. The Mother who is eternally settled in His heart is the truth of Sri Aurobindo's existence.

\*

Sri Aurobindo's smile can simplify by its charm all complications that stir up in the process of practising the integral yoga.

\*

Sri Aurobindo's smile is in the depth of all that the Mother creates.

Sri Aurobindo's smile is in the depth of all the new creations in the offspring.

Sri Aurobindo's smile is in the depth of all creations lying latent.

Sri Aurobindo's smile is even in the depth of all that will never be manifested in time

\*

Sri Aurobindo eternally radiates His majestic splendours. Our devotion is the door to them.

\*

Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's is the energetic, nonstop, eternal march of manifestations and unfoldments paving the way for our more and more complete realisations.

\*

Earthly life became human because the Mother is ingrained in all that earth is. Earthly life became human so that Sri Aurobindo might become perfect in earth's matter Sri Aurobindo becomes perfect in earth's matter because the Mother is ingrained in every atom of the earth. The Mother is the core of the earth

\*

Sri Aurobindo, together with the Mother, pierces every cloud and obscurity present in things. This is so because He and She in their indivisibility are present in all things as a vivifying breath, as a sweet peace, as a sun of luminous love.

\*

The name "Sri Aurobindo" is the word that radiates new action—new action that bears the name "Savitri".

\*

In the terms of "assumption" and "imagination" in the light of "adorations" Sri Aurobindo's name can be interpreted as.

'S' }  
 'R' } stands for 'Shakti Reality Inseparable'  
 'I' }  
 'A' stands for 'Almighty'  
 'U' }  
 'R' } stands for 'Ultimate Reality'  
 'O' stands for 'Omniscient'  
 'B' stands for 'Blissful'  
 'I' stands for 'Infinite'  
 'N' stands for 'Nameless (Indefinable)'  
 'D' stands for 'Divine'  
 'O' stands for 'Omnipresent'.

JAGAT KAPADIA

## THE MORNING SUN

SHE stood near the Samadhi. Her face shone with an inner joy, a serenity surrounded her whole being. The splendour that she had witnessed in the early morning had also touched her inner self.

For a few days the sky was overcast and there was intermittent rain. At dawn, the eastern sky was at first pink then turned golden. It was all quiet and peaceful as if the earth awaited the auspicious moment. And then a golden sun burst forth in the sky and a hymn arose in her heart: “*Tat savitur varenyam*”. A long strip of the sea sparkled in joy and she felt an inner happiness. She turned back to go to the Ashram. It became dark. Looking up she saw a floating cloud blocking the sun. She smiled, even the mighty sun had to face obstacles and barriers like human beings. But the all-pervading sun is also omniscient. It rose higher and the cloud passed by nonchalantly.

Standing in perfect concentration with open eyes she witnessed the splendour once again. A streak of the sun’s rays fell on the vase kept at the foot of the Samadhi, as if doing pranam before starting to light up the world.

The sun-flower turned towards it. The lilies brightened up. The lotuses opened a little more to drink the rays. The roses took on a deeper shade and the leaves turned more greenish. The butterflies and the bees flew around touching a flower here and humming to a flower there. Joy and Beauty pervaded the Samadhi.

Slowly the rays touched a portion of the big vase kept in the middle. The golden light spread on the Symbols of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo as if groping to grasp their Messages. A fresh southern breeze swayed the jasmine garland hanging loosely from the vase and the rays danced with its rhythm. Stealthily the sun crept up and caressed the Grace flower hiding behind a bouquet. The flower seemed to blush and a pinkish hue spread all along its petals.

Oh! the beauty and the joy!

The brass incense-stick-stand shone bright reflecting a golden light. The fragrance from the flowers, and the incense sticks, their lit heads and the smoke—all gave a dreamy fairyland look to the Samadhi. The School bell rang and a hush descended. Did the sun stop for a moment to absorb the charged atmosphere and then jump to the vase kept at the head of the Samadhi?

With a shade here and the sunlight there, the flowers playing hide and seek in its rays, the sun was delighted. It kissed them “*Aurevoir*”, and sped up in the sky to go for its routine work. The canopy over the Samadhi blocked its rays from reaching it any more.

She read the message, given by the Mother, inscribed on the Samadhi:

“To Thee who hast been the material envelope of our Master, to Thee our

infinite gratitude Before Thee who hast done so much for us, who hast worked, struggled, suffered, hoped, endured so much, before Thee who hast willed all, attempted all, prepared, achieved all for us, before Thee we bow down and implore that we may never forget, even for a moment, all we owe to Thee.”

The sun rose higher to spread the message the world over: To be grateful to them and “never forget, even for a moment, all we owe” to them.

KRISHNA CHAKRAVARTI

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## SURFACING

WHEN the hour's benumbed with the stab of the snow,  
 When the mind is drugged, and the heart falls low,  
 When each single star seems a lonely isle,  
 When a sprightly child forgets to smile,  
 When life seems but a mirror of death,  
 When deep within we have lost all faith,  
 Faith in ourselves, in others, in God,  
 When the sun and the moon seem dull as the clod,  
 When the strength and the will have been sucked to the drop,  
 When the limbs paralyzed brake to a stop—

Lost and alone like a wasp in the storm,  
 Thrust on the rocks and crushed and torn:  
 Drudging we are thrown twixt the throes of Fate,  
 Slaves of our choice of the Darkness we hate!

Oh, tear this night,—stand up and fight—  
 Bathe in the torrential downpour of Light!

S. M.



## THE MOTHER'S SHIP

THE MOTHER has spoken about some experiences in a ship heading for new lands, with disciples of the Ashram taking part. But I have never heard anyone speak about a ship in which I often travelled

It was the Mother's ship of dreams. It sailed at night, with Pavitra as its captain. I had to wait for it in a subtle body on the roof terrace of the Library, and jump in quickly, because it stopped for only a moment. It went all around the earth, and very early the next morning we were back at the Ashram. The ship was large, and very ethereal. At first I thought that many Ashramites took part in this voyage, but no one has ever mentioned it

The Mother was always very present, although not physically visible. Sometimes the ship would float for a moment just above her staircase. That was the most wonderful moment of the whole journey.

Being in this ship made it possible to see the psychological Earth, as the Mother saw it. The ship gracefully reminded the people living on Earth of the presence of Supermind, and made it more accessible to them, even attempting to transmit it here and there. This experience was specially connected with Pavitra, who fulfilled his role with dedication and joy. After his death my travels in this ship came to an end.

I cannot say whether this voyage took place often, or every night. I have no memory of it in time. In a way it was very Egyptian: the pharaoh regularly used to go visiting his kingdom up and down the course of the Nile—the equivalent of going around the Earth.

There is no contradiction between something that takes place eternally and the experience one has of it in time. The Mother's ship of dreams, captained by Pavitra, is still there, sailing by.

\*

If the universe is so vast,  
it is for all our wishes  
to have the space-time necessary  
to realise themselves.

MEDHANANDA

# GRATITUDE

(A VILLANELLE)

THE Truth shines in the spirit's solitude.  
This the machinelike mind fails to conceive.  
The source of pure delight is gratitude.

Not system but the inner rectitude  
Down to the smallest detail you achieve.  
The Truth shines in the spirit's solitude

The turbulent engine affects your quietude  
With its agent reason ever ready to deceive  
The source of pure delight is gratitude.

Truth shall prevail in the imminent certitude  
You cannot choose but gratefully receive  
The Truth shines in the spirit's solitude.

With the dawning of this faultless attitude  
Keep to the sun-tracks—and you will perceive  
The source of pure delight is gratitude.

To have fed no flame so long is lassitude.  
Spilt hours drain down as water in a sieve  
The Truth shines in the spirit's solitude  
The source of pure delight is gratitude

C. SUBBIAN

## A LETTER FROM A WESTERNER WHO VISITED INDIA FOR THE FIRST TIME

YOU asked me if I had some experience during my stay here. The most extraordinary experience I had was the Presence of Sri Aurobindo at Sri Aurobindo Bhavan before the *Relics* there. The place is so still, full of peace and concentration. One day a friend of ours wanted to take us to Kalighat. I felt some force in me was against it. I hesitated for a while, but finally I simply felt I should not go. I was forced to stay at the Bhavan. After a while the meditation near Sri Aurobindo's Relics began. Soon after I sat down, the great force came into me. It was absolutely new. It was rushing in like a mighty stream through the entire front of my body from the side of the Relics and filling me as if I were an empty vessel (It was not like other times when the force was descending from above on my head like a pressure.) My thoughts were still and I felt all the outlines of my body and only the fast beatings of my heart. The only thing I could do was to watch like an impartial person what was going on and try also not to burst out! After the meditation I felt there was nothing separating me from the surroundings as if some wall had fallen down. It was a real, strong physical sense which my sceptical mind accepted with wonder. Sometime ago I had read Sri Aurobindo's words describing the Supermind: "You can say that the Supermind is harder than diamond and yet more fluid than gas" (*Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, by A. B. Purani, page 478) I was overjoyed. I have found it is the exact characterisation of the Force and the way I had felt it! But of course I did not know what it was. That night I could not sleep.

There was another experience. One night I had a dream at the Guest House. I entered into a beautiful place. I saw trees, the sky, a wonderful landscape. The colours were so bright that it was even painful for my eyes and the unspeakable bliss penetrated everything. It was hard to withstand it. It continued a few seconds and then vanished because I suppose I couldn't bear it. Usually I do not remember my dreams but this one has been imprinted on my consciousness for ever. It was concrete enough for me to understand that inner vision is much more real than our sensuous seeing.

I did have many different experiences. There is no single day (after I came back from America) without an experience. An acquaintance of mine could not recognise me when we met at the Academy of Music or somewhere else. After a while the acquaintances said in confusion, "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't recognise you! You have changed. You look much younger!" or "Oh! You're beaming with joy and beauty. What are you doing with yourself?" Strangely enough, I'm doing nothing with myself and usually don't know what to say! I feel even guilty about it. The funniest thing of all was the incident with my mother-in-law. One day she returned home. I was chatting with a friend. My mother-in-law greeted

us, but she didn't pay any attention to me. After about ten minutes, she looked at me and exclaimed, "O my God, you're —? Is that you? I thought it was someone else!" We all burst into laughter.

It is hard to keep the level of consciousness once reached in our day-to-day life, to get rid of the *samskaras*. Sometimes I think if I could only have a small thing which once touched Sri Aurobindo—of course this is the want which lies deep in my heart only.... In spite of everything I know I will have a great protection, a help in my sadhana. Please don't say that this need to be as near to Him as possible is too much! Many disciples have letters from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Aren't they happy? But we never will.

ANON

## NATA

TEN years ago, Nata, the Mother's first Italian Ashramite, and the first translator of Sri Aurobindo's major works into Italian, left his body

He was nearly sixty when he arrived, but in the next twenty-two years he was to pour his powerful energy into accomplishing the Mother's inner and outer work.

Now, a decade after his leaving, *Domani*, the Italian language magazine which he founded, is running into its thirtieth year of publication. The incense factory which he promised the Mother is becoming known worldwide and other projects of his flourish. In Italy some of those inspired by his translations and letters have begun, since last year, to have annual national Sri Aurobindo and Mother gatherings.

The seeds of his aspiration bear invisible and visible fruit.

The following article appeared in Vol. IV of *How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother* by Shyam Kumari.

### FROM FLORENCE

Nata easily stands out as the archetype of a successful dynamic Westerner. He was born on February 14, 1904 February 14 is Saint Valentine's day. Saint Valentine spent a large part of his life writing beautiful and spiritual letters to make people happy. Their essence was love. And that was Nata's essence. He was centred in his heart And later he himself was through his Ashram years to spend much time replying with great tenderness to the letters that came to the Ashram from Spanish and Italian-speaking countries.

He was born in a noble family, in a house situated on the second oldest street of Florence, the most beautiful amongst the Italian cities, from where the purest Italian stock came. Proud to be a Florentine, Nata loved singing Florentine songs and kept a print of the old Florence even when he lived in the Ashram. He grew up amidst beauty and always had a natural appreciation and discrimination for art and beauty

As a child during his holidays he used to go to his grandmother's villa which was situated on one of the hills around Florence. He had a psychic link with his grandmother. When only six or seven he had an experience in this villa. He found himself floating in a subtle body over the staircase without touching it while an unearthly music played in the background. Even after he came to the Ashram many of his psychic dreams had this villa as a backdrop

Nata had everything that marks a successful life—health, excellence in sports, spectacular achievements, ties with nobility (he was a count though he never used this title in India)—things that a man of the world strives for but

which usually bar his entry into a spiritual life. It would be rewarding to follow him on his life's trail to find out how the Divine Fisherman netted, this man who roamed the continents as one would roam the lanes of one's native town.

Even as a child Nata had a taste for noble gestures. In 1914 he and his friend sold a pet bird for a coin or two and took a train to the next stop. He left letters for his family, "I bid you adieu. I am going to give my life for the fatherland." By nightfall they were very happy when somebody questioned them as to what they were doing on the train and brought them back home.

Once young Nata was sitting in a church. A boy from behind said, "Move your big head out of the way." Nata turned round and said, "After church meet me outside and you will get a big punch on your outsized chin." So after church they met and Gigi, the boy with the big chin, said that he could not fight as his sister was waiting. But because of this incident they became lifelong friends.

This story shows two characteristics of Nata—a quick temper and a warm heart. He could be quite angry one moment and embrace the person the next minute. He also used to say, "It is better to punish a man with love than to call the police."

He spent 18 months in military service in a cavalry regiment and enjoyed it, for he loved all animals, specially horses, and later did a lot of riding in America. Though an individualist he liked the discipline of the military training. Physically strong, he loved sports, rowed on the river Arno and later became a passionate underwater fisherman; he also hunted, but stopped fishing and hunting after he took up yoga seriously.

On the completion of his military service he studied to become an engineer. He married early and a little later left for Morocco on a job and stayed there for three years by himself, his wife having stayed behind. He saw his son only when he was three years old. All his life he went from one country to another. Though, as we have seen, he loved his native Florence dearly he never had the feeling of having found his home. Those three years in Spanish Morocco were a struggle for Nata, but he was a completely fearless man and always loved a challenge. He acted as Italian consul. It was the time of Fascism and the Jews were being persecuted. On several occasions he saved the lives of Jews by helping them across the border in his car.

From Morocco he went to Yugoslavia and made a lot of money. When the Second World War broke out he went to Italy. There too he saved many Jews, risking his own life for them. After the war, as an engineer he risked his life again and again by taking up the hazardous job of defusing mines planted by Germans. At this stage a financial crisis enveloped Italy, money was devalued so much that thousands of liras became like one rupee. He did not like the atmosphere in this post-war Italy which was corrupt and disheartening, so he left Italy to go to Venezuela in South America. He spent a lot of time literally hacking at the jungle with a machete to hew the way for a new project. For months he slept in a

hammock with a gun by his side to deal with snakes. But in spite of the dangers and discomforts he liked the jungles, while he immensely disliked the towns. He bought a farm there, for he hated a milieu where the values were money and success.

But he was uncomfortable in this country too for here also money was the sole value, so he moved on to Guatemala. It was there that he built a township which later prompted the Mother to ask him to be in charge of all the construction projects of Auroville. He hired a helicopter and flew it over the region in Guatemala to choose a site for the future township and chose a place by the sea. An enterprising man, he successfully faced the hurdles of alien bank rules, etc. The project became a great success. But right at the outset Nata had to face a grave threat. It came like this—the success of the project depended upon people buying plots to make houses. After the war many former Nazis went to live in Guatemala. Some of them were interested in buying plots in Lekin—the city of the sun—as Nata named the project. A group of these Nazis warned Nata that if he sold plots to Jews his whole project would collapse because then no one else would buy. Nata picked up the gauntlet and sold the first plots to two Jews, one of them a rabbi. The Germans bought land anyway. Here Nata spent hours under water watching and observing the fish which would come to eat out of his hand.

Nata had a deeper side too. In 1955, in the little seamy town Cumana, in Venezuela, he had a spiritual experience. He found himself at the foot of a slope gazing towards the summit when he saw himself, a perfect duplicate of himself, which he understood to be his soul, leave his body, detaching itself and proceeding up the slope. He put his arms out and received from an invisible being an invisible gift which his soul-double held out to him at the foot of the incline. Immediately the two beings fused again and Nata was flooded with a tender and sweet happiness. He had a taste of Peace. It was a sign and a promise.

In the winter of 1957 he first read the name of Sri Aurobindo in an Italian magazine. It was in the bibliography of a book, *Adventure of Man*, by Piero Scanziani. A man of many parts, Nata had been an avid reader and a seeker. Along with his active, nay, hectic outer life he had been seeking after the Truth for a long time.

Even before coming to the Ashram he had led a celibate life for ten years. Every year he used to go to Italy for a holiday. He had a favourite bookshop in his native Florence to which he would go as soon as he came to the city. A great reader, he came to buy all sorts of books on philosophy and spirituality. Once he did not go to the above-mentioned shop of his friend but instead went to another where the owner said, "Here is a book which may interest you. Somebody ordered it but never claimed it." It was Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* in French (Nata later translated the first volume into Italian). Nata recognised the name of Sri Aurobindo and by the time he returned to South America he had

bought several of Sri Aurobindo's books *The Life Divine* absorbed him completely and he started writing to the Ashram. He wrote in French, so Pavitra, the Mother's French secretary, answered him

It was as if the Divine called a halt to his outer life. The inner portals were opened. Several letters were exchanged with Pavitra who would write, "Mother said this or Mother said that..." Nata had no clear idea about the Mother but he had her photograph. People would ask him, "Is she your mother?" He would answer, "Yes." Finally on January 29, 1963, he wrote in his diary:

"I have been reading these words of the Master again and again. Only yesterday I understood and realised the profound sense of these words. Feeling offended and humiliated from the lack of consideration of others or feeling gratified at praise and adulation... is it not discordant and contrary to *samata*? Is it not to work against the light which permits the descent of the Mother?... Do people harm you? What does it matter? Are you working as an ego or a divine instrument?

"Are you not supposed to offer yourself integrally and absolutely?"

"Leap, Alberto [Nata's first name], leap, once and for all. You must make the gesture."

He was obsessed with the idea of surrender. But to make the "gesture", to take the "leap" was not easy. He wavered but at last he decided and in 1964 wrote to the Ashram and asked if he could come, and received permission. On April 30, 1964, he wrote in his diary, "The voyage has begun. Will it be the Great Voyage?"

Nata was already 59 and he came without any set idea of what would happen, with a small suitcase, with some underwear and a couple of shirts, having left behind a very flourishing concern. He had one year's visa but he did not know whether he would leave the Ashram after a short time. In fact he never did return to South America.

In the plane doubts began to arise in his mind. Some mental part of him asked: "Is it not unreasonable for a man of my age and in my position to leave everything on such a quest? Am I not behaving childishly, as indeed so many of the people around me seem to think?" He noted in his diary, "At 8 o'clock in the morning left Bombay for Madras. From Madras to Pondicherry by car. Arrived at 2.30 local time." He reached the Ashram on May 27—the hottest part of the year—and was guided to Goel's Guest House where Pavitra had rented a room for him. He was happy to meet a brother-engineer in Pavitra. Pavitra took him to the swimming competition and later invited him to the Cottage restaurant. Nata at once felt very happy in the Ashram. Goel told him about the Mother. Nata's psychic being came forward. He felt like a child, everything blossomed. He met many people who became dear friends.

Two days after his arrival, on May 29, 1964, he wrote in his diary about his impressions—"I am literally submerged by them!" He was struck by Pavitra's



ascetic image, the goodness and tolerance of his expression and his gaze. It seemed to Nata that they must touch a person of any sensitivity. And what impressed him most was the sweetness of the fraternity of the disciples and their desire to serve, and “the devotion for the Mother, something which escapes the Western mind. It is not fanaticism. It is adoration and love towards one’s Guru—it is the most complete and absolute self-giving.” He admired and envied this capacity of self-giving.

On June 2, 1964, he was to write, “Goel said to me at the mid-day meal, ‘Mother’s Grace is with you. All the disciples who have seen you think so.’ ” Nata added, “Darling Mother! I dare not think this is true. I sincerely think that all these people who have come to see me have taken my natural bonhomie as humility or something else. Darling Mother!!! help me.”

Again he wrote on June 14, 1964, “Is this the self-offering? Here in Pondicherry I understand the giving of oneself as a sort of annihilation, my gaze directed only towards the Mother, while waiting to know from her what I must do or not do.”

Nata had prepared himself so long to take a leap into the void, but one morning when he was unexpectedly asked to see the Mother he had no time to think. While he waited to be called into the Mother’s room he felt, as he says in a book, that he was about to have to pass an examination in some unknown subject and be assessed by an unknown examiner. The possibility of failure opened a great desert before him. Finally Champaklal called him in and he found himself kneeling before the Mother with Maggi who was to become his companion on the way. It seemed to him that he was being scrutinised with great intensity by a severe and searching gaze which delved into the depths of his being, to understand his most secret intentions, the truth of his being, who he was, why he was in Pondicherry, who he had been in the preceding lives and what would be his future. It seemed to him that at a certain moment the Mother’s expression changed and softened, but he was entirely caught in her gaze, immobilised. Suddenly her face was illumined by a smile. Nata was to write later, “*Dio Mio!* what a smile! It was the radiance of a thousand suns, the sweetness and love offered to a human being, to me.” And the Mother gave him a rose. So finally there was no need to leap. There had only ever been one place to leap into and that was the Mother’s arms. But now he found himself there effortlessly. He wrote:

“It was she, I have recognised her, I have found her once again. She had once again emerged from the depths of consciousness, to reveal herself to me, her disciple of all times.

“I went home with that red rose in my hand. My heart was in a tumult and deep echoes like waves moved towards an unknown and unseen shore. I sat on the *divan* and tears flowed freely.

“There were hours of silent tranquil weeping full of peace, with visions of

past, present and future. The weeping melted the last reserves, broke down the last resistances. I knew who I was, the value of my past actions I knew who I had been, the wherefore of so many things which until then I had not understood. I was ready for everything, to undertake anything, to surrender into the total annihilation of what is called 'personality' which in truth is none other than a ferocious, avid and stupid ego. It was at that moment that I discovered the imperious command not to leave the Ashram ever."

The Mother was later to say to him, "I saw at once that you were made to succeed "

Nata had come prepared to do any work, even the most menial. He had read the story of Sri Ramakrishna and thought he might be asked to clean the latrines as part of his spiritual discipline. But once he was here he realised it was not that sort of Ashram and he might be given some work related to his profession. To his astonishment he was told that the Mother had asked him to teach Italian in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. He had never taught Italian but set about it with his usual enthusiasm which he imparted to his pupils. For many years he gave evening classes and enjoyed the work immensely. It became more than a class, it became a communion, and he always said he learnt as much from his students as he taught. He also taught Spanish which he spoke perfectly, and for some time engineering.

Not long after he had started his classes the Mother asked Nata to translate Satprem's *Adventure of Consciousness* into Italian. He did so in record time hammering away at an old portable typewriter until 11 at night. He found an Italian publisher immediately. Then came the translation of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, afterwards *Essays on the Gita*. Most of the major works were translated and published (though not *Savitri*). He had the *Adventure of Consciousness* translated into Spanish and published. Soon letters were pouring in and more and more Italian visitors came to the Ashram. Nata handled all the Italian and Spanish correspondence and tenderly attended to the guests, sometimes going up to Madras to meet them when there was a visiting party who spoke no English, sometimes cooking their favourite Italian dishes, and always flaring up at anyone who ventured to criticize the Ashram or the Yoga.

He founded and edited the Italian language magazine to which the Mother gave the name *Domani* (Tomorrow). At first it was just a cyclostyled sheet. It is still being published after more than a quarter of a century. In the 70s it won an All-India prize for excellence in production.

Then the Mother entrusted him with an onerous task. The Auroville opening ceremony was to take place on February 28, 1968. The Mother asked Nata to construct the amphitheatre. He had only 28 days to do it in. It seemed an impossible task. The Mother assured him, "My Force will be with you."

With faith in the Mother, Nata started the work. He sent word to the surrounding villages that he needed labourers. On the morning of recruitment he

sat waiting in the chilly dawn. Nobody turned up. What to do? Then one person silhouetted on the horizon appeared and then another and a few more and then hundreds. They worked day and night in three shifts

Nata had ordered wood from Kerala which did not arrive. So he made concrete poles. The concrete had barely time to set. Would it take the weight of the 10,000 people expected? It needed two more days of curing to set properly.

On the day of the inauguration not 10,000 but 23,000 came. The local crowd was hanging from and leaning against the concrete parts which had hardly set. Nata asked them, pleaded with them to move away. But they took no notice. Nata realised humanly it was impossible to do anything, any moment might bring catastrophe. And if the beginning of a city were inauspicious what would be its future? He prayed intensely and invoked the Mother. Everything passed safely. He had set up a first-aid station. The only one who needed help was a gardener with a common stomachache.

But the culminating achievement of Nata's life is Udavi. Very few know of the Mother's concern for the poor villagers around Pondicherry. In a quiet way, she adopted an entire village, and later told Nata, "I want to change this whole region."

The Mother asked him to do something for the village of Edayanchavadi, near Auroville. She gave this project the name "Udavi" which in Tamil means "help". She chose the poorest, most desperate village, one mentioned by the famous Ananda Rangapillai in his diaries as a criminal village. In the time of the French occupation, if one wanted to get somebody killed or robbed, one went to Edayanchavadi; and this persisted even after Independence.. it was, one might say, the only industry in the village. There were no wells there and at certain seasons the villagers had to walk miles to get water. In 1967, when the Mother laid her hands of benediction on it, people were deserting the village.

To begin with, Nata started a small dispensary. A well was provided with the help of the Tamil Fund and Nata raised money to start a store which would provide the villagers with essential commodities at rock-bottom prices, so that they would not have to walk miles to buy supplies. After the water supply, dispensary and store, it was time to think of the next step: the pathetic, woe-begone children.

If children between the ages of two and five are deprived of protein they can be affected in their minds and bodies for the rest of their lives. Up to the age of two they can draw sufficient protein from their mother's milk, and after the age of five the worst danger is past. So Nata, always with the Mother's counsel, began a feeding scheme for the children of that age. The little ones were so unkempt and dirty that a 'creche' was started where every day these children were given a bath. Volunteers were requested to help pour out the milk, but no woman would come forward without payment. The villagers were so destitute that they could not conceive of service, which is a luxury. So some of the mothers

were given clean white saris and paid to pour out milk—to their own children. Long before the first children were five years old it became clear to Nata that they could not just be thrown back into the village. The Mother had said, “*Il faut les suivre* [We must follow them up].”

Up to this point friends had donated money to keep the scheme going, but now it became evident that there must be some regular source of income to continue the work. Nata asked the Mother if he should start some activity to bring in money to help the village. The Mother agreed that he should, and added, “As long as it is done with selflessness and for the purpose it is meant for, I shall put my Force behind it.” Nata asked the Mother for suggestions, but she left the choice of activity to him.

Nata meditated on the problem and had a revelatory idea: he should start an incense factory; rolling the incense would provide the villagers with work; machines and electricity would not be needed, and with the help of friends in various countries he would export the incense and with the profits earned be able to bear the expenses of the Udavi project. Nata put the schemes before the Mother who gave her whole-hearted approval.

So Nata put his scheme together. With the help of first one then another young French disciple—one of whom, Guy, is still running the factory with remarkable success. The project was begun in Udavi itself. As 1973 advanced, the Mother started withdrawing. Whenever Nata went to her she would be in trance and uttered only a word or two. He was convinced that she was in a world where incense factories had no place. But one day she surprised him by saying, “You have not yet brought me the incense sticks you promised me.” This spurred Nata to make even greater efforts, though he was doing his best; and happily he was able to send some incense to the Mother before she left her body; his only regret was that he could not present them to her himself, since by then she had stopped seeing people.

Later Nata and his helpers made Auroshikha Agarbathies one of the biggest exporters of incense in India.

Meanwhile the kindergarten was established. At first there were two enthusiastic young teachers who every single day cycled the distance of 14 km uphill from Pondicherry; even during the monsoon they never missed a day. The children flourished, and each year a new class was added, and later on a home for children.

At Udavi the children are given three meals a day, including nourishing things such as sprouted legumes; each day they take their bath at the school and are provided with a freshly washed and ironed uniform... and in fact with everything from toothbrushes to notebooks. By the loving and dedicated service of Maggi and Anuben today the school has reached the 10th standard. It seeks as far as possible to teach through the methods the Mother always advocated; the young children learn through games that are made by the teachers to match their

learning needs. These games have begun to draw attention, and UNICEF proposes to show them to the educational authorities of other Indian States and to facilitate visits of educationists to Udavi school for workshops on the use of educational games. An agricultural demonstration centre may also be established there. Recently an inspector of schools came to Udavi and gazed at the children and buildings in wonder. In all his thirty years as inspector, he said, he had never seen anything like this. The buildings are clustered around a rectangular lotus pool, and only solar energy is used in the new part of the school designed by an Aurovillian architect.

Slowly the Mother's dream is taking shape. Each morning the children hear Sunil's music and sing the Mother's prayer in French:

*Douce Mère, permets que nous soyons dès maintenant et pour toujours simplement tes petits enfants.<sup>1</sup>*

The Mother used to say that when something is accomplished anywhere, it serves for the whole world. To see Udavi is to understand that the Mother's work in this sector is well under way. It is a living monument of the genius and dedication of Nata

MAGGI LIDCHI

1 "Sweet Mother, grant that we may simply be, now and forever, Thy little children "

## A PLUNGE INTO THE UNKNOWN

### ENCOUNTERS WITH THE UNEXPECTED

(11)

THE new year message of 1955 ran:

No human will can finally prevail against the Divine's Will. Let us put ourselves deliberately and exclusively on the side of the Divine, and the Victory is ultimately certain.

This message was read out by the Mother on 31.12.1954 in her evening class at the Playground. After the Mother read the message there followed a question-and-answer session. This was an unique event in the history of the Ashram. Now, let the Mother speak for herself. (I am quoting from *Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 6, p. 453.)

"I am going to read the prayer... it is a message not a prayer—in French and in English. And then I have brought two of Sri Aurobindo's replies to questions which have not been published anywhere, and you will be the first to hear them. And then two... not poems, some lines; a very short little poem and just a stanza from another poem, which are a magnificent illustration of our message for the next year.

"This message was written because it is foreseen that next year will be a difficult year and there will be many inner struggles and even outer ones perhaps. So I tell all of you what attitude you should take in these circumstances. These difficulties may perhaps last not only twelve months... but perhaps fourteen months; and during these fourteen months you must make an effort never to lose the attitude about which I am going to speak to you just now....

"Usually, as soon as things become difficult, human beings get agitated, get terribly excited and they make the difficulties ten times more difficult. So I am warning you right away that this is not to be done .. you must repeat to yourself as soon as you feel some anxiety or disquietude within you;... You can repeat it morning and evening profitably... "

So saying (in French, of course), the Mother read out the message first in French and then in English. In English the Mother pronounced the word 'certain' with some force and something shivered within my heart. What is that something? It is the 'human will' which tried to prevail against the 'Divine's Will'. My 'human will' at that time was that the Mother should accept me as an Ashramite immediately. But the Divine's Will was otherwise. And that was the

reason for all my tension at that time.

The Divine's Will is a very important factor in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Many sadhaks stumbled and fell here, after crossing many a hurdle. Now, what is the Divine's Will? Let Sri Aurobindo answer (I am quoting from *On Yoga*, Bk. II, Tome I):

“Not to impose one's mind and vital will on the Divine but to receive the Divine's will and follow it, is the true attitude of sadhana. Not to say, ‘This is my right, want, claim, need, requirement, why do I not get it?’ but to give oneself, to surrender and receive with joy whatever the Divine gives, not grieving or revolting, is the better way.”

And again.

“What one should have at first is the constant idea that what the Divine wills is always for the best even when the mind does not see how it is so, to accept with resignation what one cannot yet accept with gladness and so to arrive at a calm equality which is not shaken even when on the surface there may be passing movements of a momentary reaction to outward happenings. If that is once firmly founded, the rest can be done.”

At that time I was just entering the path of Yoga and did not know all these things and as the Mother was speaking in French I could not follow. Only when she read out Sri Aurobindo's letters and poems in English I listened intently and was benefited. When the Mother read out the poems in rhythmic cadences in a voice where an inviolable power was intermingled with a magical charm, I was all eyes and ears.

Poet Tagore, whom I had heard many times, had an exceptionally sweet and charming voice. But he lacked power like that of the Mother. When the Mother read:

Hill after hill was climbed and now,  
Behold, the last tremendous brow  
And the great rock that none has trod:  
A step, and all is sky and God—

not only her voice, but her gesture too was simply captivating. They spoke of much more than what was on the surface. While pronouncing the last few words she lifted up her face a little, the tubelight burning above fell squarely on her face making it aglow with ‘God’ and ‘sky’ at the same time as if manifesting them both! Similarly, when reciting:

High I triumph when down-trod,  
Long I live when slain—

she pronounced the last word 'slain' with such a modulation of tone that it seemed to me she was not merely a spiritual leader but a supreme actor.

And in fact, what was she not?—a supreme poet (although hidden), a supreme artist, a supreme musician, a supreme teacher, a supreme conversationalist, a supreme humourist like Sri Aurobindo. When with serious people, she could inspire awe and wonder, with children she could be most jolly and playful.

I just remember an incident in this connection. It was in 1952—some time between February and April. A body-builder came from outside. He was to give a demonstration of muscle-control at the Playground in the evening. It was arranged all of a sudden and was quite informal. The man stood on a table showing muscles in various parts of his body. His upper part was bare but he had a trouser on the lower part of his body.

After showing the muscles of the upper part he said that now he wanted to show the muscles of the part of the body that is not normally shown—the muscle of the buttocks. But, naturally, that has to be shown with trousers on. So saying he started. And soon waves of rolling muscles appeared on the surface of his trousers! There was hilarious laughter all around and the children laughed their hearts out! I looked at the Mother. She was standing in the midst of the children and was laughing heartily just like a child. It was a revelation to me!

I have digressed a little. Let me come back to the Mother's talk. The two letters of Sri Aurobindo (which were till then unpublished) read out by the Mother on the occasion, were also very interesting to me. So I would like to quote almost in full both the questions and the answers. This will clear from many minds the wrong notions about Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Let us listen to the Mother herself:

'Now I shall read to you two questions which were asked and Sri Aurobindo's answers. It's not that the questions express a very high state of mind, but I am afraid many people let themselves fall into this kind of mental state. And so I think the answers will be very useful to many people also.

Here's the first question:

*"It seems to me that the number of people in the world accepting the truth of our Yoga of Transformation would not be as large as those who accepted Buddhism, Vedanta or Christianity"*

Here is Sri Aurobindo's answer. Notice his humour. I draw your attention to his humour.

"Nothing depends on the number. The numbers of Buddhism or Christianity were so great because the majority professed it as a creed without its making



the least difference to their external life.

“If the new consciousness were satisfied with that, it could also and much more easily command homage and acceptance by the whole earth. It is because it is a greater consciousness, the Truth Consciousness, that it will insist on a real change.”

The second one:

*“You have said that the aim of our Yoga is to rise beyond the Nirvana, but in the Ashram there are extremely few who have reached or have tried to reach even the Nirvana. To reach the Nirvana one has to give up ego and desire. Could it be said that even a few sadhaks in the Ashram have succeeded in doing so?...”*

The answer:

“I suppose if the Nirvana aim had been put before them, more would have been fit for it, for the Nirvana aim is easier than the one we have put before us—and they would not have found it so difficult to reach the standard. The sadhaks here are of all kinds and in all stages. But the real difficulty even for those who have progressed is with the external man. Even among those who follow the old ideal, the external man of the sadhak remains almost the same even after they have attained to something. The inner being gets free, the outer still follows its fixed nature. Our Yoga can succeed only if the external man *too* changes, but that is the most difficult of all things. It is only by a change of the physical nature that it can be done, by a descent of the highest light into this lowest part of Nature. It is here that the struggle is going on. The internal being of most of the sadhaks here, however imperfect still, is still different from that of the ordinary man, but the external still clings to its old ways, manners, habits. Many do not seem even to have awakened to the necessity of a change. It is when this is realised and done, that the Yoga will produce its full results in the Ashram itself, and not before.”

When I first came here I thought that all the Ashramites here had been doing Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga of transformation with complete self-giving. After I got quite a few knocks and shocks I realised that it was not so. The Ashram was a human laboratory of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for evolving a new type of humanity out of the old one.

From the days of yore the function of the ‘apsaras’ was to come on the path of the sadhaks and deflect them. Here too the same thing happened. Inwardly, although I remained firm, the waves from the vital world were breaking upon me from all sides. In one such moment I wrote the following poem:

## Unremitting

Dark desires and blind passions  
 Are raising their hoods and venom pouring;  
 Smite! Smite! O Mother of might!  
 Flash Thy sword, send thunder roaring.

Burn, burn, O Mother of the Sun!  
 Bring me a brilliant morning's daze.  
 Night's illusion sticks and sneaks,  
 Free my soul from ego's maze

Mother, Mother, O Sweet Mother!  
 Though harsh Thy tone and hard Thy touch;  
 Fly I must or die I must,  
 Leave me not on pity's perch

Amal Kiran's comment on this poem:  
 "Fluent but does not come practically to much."

With due deference to Amal Kiran, I can only humbly submit that when I wrote this poem I was possessed by a most sincere aspiration which came in a flash right from the depth of my heart. Nothing more do I know about it.

That year, on 6 January, the Mother gave a special blessing with this message:

A day shall come when all the wealth of this world, freed at last from the enslavement to the antidivine forces, offers itself spontaneously and fully to the service of the Divine's Work upon earth.

I did not know at that time that money had to play a big role in my sadhana. And it is here that Amrita-da comes into my life. But we have to wait still for things to unfold.

The Mother has said that money and sex go together. To be freed from the taint of one it is necessary to be freed from the influence of the other too. The Mother had also told a story in her class—not a story but her own experience. Once she in her subtle body went to a place where all the wealth of the world was stored. A huge serpent was guarding that wealth. The serpent told the Mother that when man conquers sex this wealth will go to the Divine.

Now, I am going to narrate a most important and interesting subjective experience of mine during the period. Readers may believe it or not. I myself found it so strange that I hesitated for a long time whether to speak about it or not. If I don't, it will leave a very big gap in the story of my inner experiences of the period. So it is here.

As far as I remember, it was in 1956 that Satyajit Ray's world-renowned Bengali film 'Pather Panchali' was shown in the Ashram Playground in the presence of the Mother herself. Almost the whole of the Ashram was present.

After the concentration the film would start—that was the rule at that time. The Mother stood at her appointed place in front of the map of undivided Mother India, lights went off and the concentration started.

During the concentration I heard a voice from within my heart (which I took to be the Mother's voice). The Voice said: You say that you have come here to do sadhana. Now, for doing sadhana all desires are to be renounced. You have a desire to see this film. Now I ask you not to see it and prove that you are sincere in your sadhana.

My mind argued. But who has no desire to see this film including big sadhaks here?

The Voice: That is not your look-out. Either obey me or you will fail in your test. Decide here and now After concentration the gates will be closed. Before that you have to take your decision.

The lights were on and the concentration ended. I was still hesitating. Then I felt a great force push me out of the gate My vital mind was boiling with rage. I came back to my room in Golconde, opened wide all the shutters, lay down on the raised platform and tossed like a fish out of water.

Gradually things got settled down and I was carrying on my sadhana as before. This incident had a sequel towards the end of 1955 which I am going to narrate presently.

I said earlier that I was volunteering for the building work at the Cottage Industries for two hours in the morning. Now, as the tempo of the work increased, I worked with a few others at night also after dinner. Khirod-da, in-charge of the Ashram Building Service, as he was fully engaged in the daytime joined us only at night. A young sadhika who was a teacher in the Ashram School also joined us. Usually we three were working together Khirod-da, even in his old age, was full of enthusiasm. We all worked with gusto as it was the Mother's work.

One night as it was already 10 p m. and at 10.30 the Golconde gate would be closed, I asked leave from Khirod-da. That young sadhika spared no opportunity to have a dig at me. She remarked: "Khirodd-da, as we have no 'Golconde' we will go on working still." But Khirod-da understood my problem and permitted me to go. They too stopped work soon.

I said earlier that my stay in Golconde had been an eyesore to some of the sadhaks and sadhikas. They thought that I was living a luxurious life at Golconde while doing some work in the Ashram and that I was a moneyed man who was afraid of joining the mainstream of the Ashram. Even those who were friendly to me thought like that. They did not know that to be able to stay in Golconde was itself a sadhana and the Mother did not allow everybody to stay in Golconde.

K. M. Munshi, after a few days' stay there remarked—"It was a torturing silence!" To many of the Ashramites too it will seem to be so. At that time there were certain rules to be followed at Golconde which were not there elsewhere.

That year the 2nd December programme could not be held due to unprecedented rains. And the rains continued for a few days postponing the physical demonstration. After a few days when the rains stopped, the demonstration was held at the Sports Ground.

Now, as we were working at the Cottage Industries complex, the said sadhika told Khirod-da that the Mother had said in her class that the cause of the rain was due to the ill-will of the visitors. She knew French which I did not. So I could not follow what the Mother had actually said. And that sadhika singled me out as a representative of the visitors and indirectly taunted, laughed at, and ridiculed me. She was herself light-hearted—always chatting and laughing loudly. The Mother had admitted various persons in the Ashram for various reasons. She herself said that very few people in the Ashram had been chosen by the Divine for doing Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. And my experience too was that those who were inferior in consciousness thought themselves to be superior to others. Let me quote a little from the Mother:

“. . . the foolishness which seems to me the most disastrous is to keep one's tongue going..."

From my childhood, however, I was extra-sensitive and touchy by nature. Perhaps that is why blows after blows were coming upon me. Now, that sadhika's taunting remarks hurt me to the core. I told the Mother silently, "If You think that I was responsible for the rains and I was disturbing the atmosphere of the Ashram, why not ask me to go away? I shall be glad to go away and will be freed from all these unnecessary tensions." I decided to go away.

Next day the postponed physical demonstration was to be held at the Sports Ground. I went for my garden-work as usual but decided not to go to the Sports Ground to see the physical demonstration and to leave the Ashram the very next day. A dark gloom enveloped me and a heavy depression sat upon my heart. At 5 p.m. as I was leaving the garden I saw crowds of Ashramites going to the Sports Ground. I found myself inside those crowds and I do not know how I was automatically led to the Sports Ground. I felt a *Will* stronger than mine leading me.

At that time the galleries were not built. The Mother was seated on her chair on the ground itself and in front of her the demonstration was taking place. I sat at a place directly facing the Mother on the other side of the field. The dark cloud of depression was still surrounding me. I spoke to the Mother silently—"Enough is enough; now I am going away." I noticed that the Mother had been very often going into a trance. I was not in a mood to see the sports and was

passing the time somehow in a sombre, despondent mood. This time I was determined to leave the Ashram the very next day.

After the end of the demonstration suddenly Pranab announced over the mike: "The Mother says that there will be concentration at the Playground and asks everybody to go there." This was the first and the last time that Concentration was held at the Playground after the demonstration at the Sports Ground. Again I found myself inside the current of the crowd rushing to the Playground and was automatically led there.

The Concentration started. Again I heard a Voice within my heart: "Abani, one day I drove you out of the Playground when the whole Ashram except you saw the cinema—'Pather Panchali'. Today is not the scheduled day for Concentration and yet I have brought the whole Ashram here—do you know why? Only for your sake. Will you still distrust me?"

It was a subjective experience. If the readers do not believe me I cannot blame them. For me also it was difficult to believe. However, the gloom was dispelled. And the Divine Will was victorious!

*(To be continued)*

ABANI SINHA

# CHRISTALIS

by

GEORGETTE COTY

*(Continued from the issue of January 1996)*

## Am I ready?

I WAS still aglow with the memory of the happy reunion that gave me so much fulfilment when I met the children in the morning. Here was a happy lot greeting me and Christopher was all delight, full of ideas for a new play. He chattered on all the way to the Hall telling me about it.

“I was awake before you today,” he said, “and went outside to see the sunrise. You should have seen the colours of the dawn, Mummy, I could see rays darting all over the sky, it was wonderful! I am going to make a painting of it.”

He stopped suddenly and turned to look at me. “But look at you, you do look very lovely today, Mummy, I wish I could make a portrait of you, but I am not good enough for that. Still, I might try. Should I, do you think?”

“Of course, darling, you must try, I am sure you will succeed. Without persevering in one’s attempt, how can one become better? Never mind if you don’t get the best result at first, just carry on and try to do better each time. No one is born a master, one needs to be an apprentice first. Your work is very good actually—keep all your drawings and paintings—even those you don’t find to your liking. This way you can observe your own progress. You will be amazed after a year or so, how much you have developed. It’s a good way of learning, you know.”

“Grand idea, you are right. Actually, the other day I saw some of my last year’s paintings and thought that I can do better than that today ”

“There you are, what did I tell you? Hey, I’ve just had a good idea, why not make some portraits of your sisters and brothers? There are lots of lovely faces to be found there to draw or to paint. What a fine collection you would have in a few years’ time? It will give us all fond memories we shall cherish in the future. I do think this would be a worthwhile project, don’t you? Besides, you should have quite a few willing sitters, I should think What do you say?”

“Terrific, Mummy, just the thing I’d love to do. You are so clever!”—then very seriously—“Even if you were not I’d still love you, so there!”

“And that goes for me also, so there to you too! Do you know how much I love the painting you gave me for my birthday? That old story-teller has a remarkably fine expression. You think you could find someone at the workshop to make a frame for it? Then I could look at it every morning and say hello to

him before we set off. And so could you, to receive his smile for the day. And please help me find a place for it where the light is best to show up his face, we could hang it there. I'd really love that."

"Sure thing, I'll bring home a tape-measure tonight to get the size for the frame. I know just who'd be the best kid for this; Peter is very clever with his wood-work. I am sure he will be glad to do it."

"Wonderful, it will give joy to our room, Chris, the same as you are giving me in such plenty. Well, we are almost there, just look at that garden, isn't it doing well, and the trees are back to life, thank God! . and so are we, my darling, so are we!" We walked the rest of the way without further conversation, each of us busy with our own thoughts.

'Oh, happy memories, stay with me awhile, stay by me whilst I care for my children's needs, our treasures that they are.'

Yes, those children; I would observe them time and time again. Are they changing a little, do they respond in some way to the Light that is aiming to rouse them?

... And indeed here were observable developments to indicate that this was happening. For one thing, they were rather receptive to subtle influences. They came up with observations on life and ourselves in a remarkable way. They said wise things and at times they seemed to answer my thoughts or would say: "You need not worry about us, Lillian, God looks after us—and we know how to make things grow, not only plants but ideas too. We talk to the animals and they also know what we say to them "

Time after time they would tell me what they had dreamt and those were nearer to visions than to just dreams, because they did not forget them. I often heard them relating those to one another—exchanging what they had seen. This was quite natural to them—they spoke of wonderful places and people whom they had met and understood, that such would be their world, when they grew up.

Not only this, but they had a remarkable memory. Anything taught to them was not only grasped readily, but often enlarged upon. Clever with their hands, the expression of beauty was the breath of life to them, and they were not aggressive, never violent. They painted or sculpted little things, decorated places with flowers and bits of stones. Each day a new design, any place at all, where they played or attended classes. But most wonderful was their love and tender affection for the younger ones. They gave them their attention and patient care that would put an adult to shame. They taught them whatever they thought they could do or learn, helping them in every way. Clearly, they were a breed of their own. Here was no sorrow, they were mostly cheerful, adaptable and more than often improving on things with remarkable skill and thought.

I spoke about this to Christalis, and he only remarked, "But why does this surprise you when you know that there is a steady descent of Light? Of course

they respond to it, what could be more natural? Their minds are more enlightened and their faculty of intuition is better developed already. Their consciousness is widening as it is desired by our planes. But this is nothing; still more development is being cultivated in their fresh receptivity. All this will be even more pronounced in the ones born in the future."

How happy was I to hear this! Nothing could give me more heart than this knowledge and I never stopped to pray inside me: "Please, God, help me give them the best of myself, help me tend to the growth of their bodies and their souls."

"I am here to help you in that, a joint labour brings the best result." He did not appear, but often replied like this to my wondering thoughts. We were so closely linked now that I was quite used to this way of exchanging communications. And whenever my mind ran away with me, I hardly needed to express it later, he had already answered.

He seldom came during the day, quite understandably, since each activity had its time and place, he would say, lest we do them imperfectly, and leave a fault in the structure of the work which may topple it down later on.

"Do only one thing at a time just where you are," he warned, "but do it well and that will be best. Only God is omnipotent, effective in innumerable ways and places at one and the same time."

Whatever the occasion, he never missed a chance to teach me things from his inexhaustible store of knowledge. My head was a little heavy today. Haven't I drunk my fill of heaven's brew to warrant it? Was there a happier, dizzier, tipsier head than mine?

"Early to bed tonight!" I heard his voice again inside me, "I will arrange that Christopher will want to do the same. I shall come as soon as I can. Do be ready for me."

"Yes, I will be," said my heavy head, wishing it could do that already.

It was late afternoon, but the sky was overcast with what seemed to be fast gathering storm clouds. It was already dark inside the Hall. Distant thunder and lightning promised us some rain.

"Lillian, I do think you should go home with Christopher," my companion suggested. "If you leave now, you may still make it. It looks as if we are in for quite a storm. Just look at that sky."

"All right, Suzie, thank you, I think you are right. I'd be very grateful if you could manage without me. I'll go and get the boy. We'd better be off right away, the wind is getting stronger "

"Chris, come here quick!" I called to him at the workshop. "Leave your work for now. We have to leave straight away before we get caught in this. Look up there! Come, let's be off fast!"

'Well, that was God-sent,' I said to myself 'and, for all I know, it may have been just that.'



“There will be mushrooms after this. Don’t you think, Mummy, we could go out picking some? I hope it will be a good rain.”

“What a splendid idea! We will organize a mushroom-gathering party, the kids will love that and, you know what, so will our stomachs. It has been ages since we had some, you’d better tell the garden fairies to sing them to growth.”

“Right, right, so I will, I can already smell the rain.” We made the last few metres running to our house. The first fat drops started to tell us that there was more to come from up there.

“Thank God, we made it!” I was quite breathless and grappled with the door, the wind was pretty strong by this time.

“Quick, Christopher, go shut the windows and the back door with the bolt, we don’t want things to get thrown off the shelves.”

“Wow, that was close, weren’t we lucky to get here in time? Mummy, I am not all that hungry, could we just have some hot tea with bread and cheese, if there is any—I am rather sleepy actually.”

“This is just how I feel. Go have a look at what we have in the box and I’ll put the water to boil. We have some fruit over there—no, not there—to your right, in that bowl ”

“Six ripe plums and two tomatoes!” came a cry of victory. “Great,” I said, “on with the feast! Just listen to that wind, the rain should be coming down any minute now.”

“The minute is over,” he called, “look out there, I hope that the little garden people will be all right. Such a heavy downpour!”

“Tea is ready, thanks to our herbs,” I said. “I love their aroma. Bring the things over, dear. Enough cheese for both of us?—Of course they will be all right. They sit under the leaf umbrellas and play, make songs and rhymes. You can ask them in the morning, then tell me. Ah, nothing more refreshing than a good hot tea of herbs. I must collect some more soon, and thank our cows for giving us this delicious cheese!”

“Milk you mean, Mummy, don’t you? They don’t just give us the cheese,” he chuckled.

“Cheeky fellow, I’ll tell them of your joke tomorrow. They’ll love it too, I should think. Good to be inside, isn’t it? Thank the Lord that we have a roof over our heads and a home of our own.”

“That is true, Mummy, I think of that often too.”

“Early to bed! says Mother Commander,” I declared—“after washing the dishes of course.”

“Your wish is my command,” he said yawning and soon stood in his pyjamas, ready to dive into bed.

“Good night, Mother, go to sleep too, won’t you?—can you smell the rain?” He waited for no reply, his lovely curly head dug into his pillow, he was already fast asleep. I too followed before long to be ready for Christalis; he said

he would be early, I'd better rest before he came.

"All as arranged. Very satisfying, don't you think? I did keep my word. Here I am early!" he jingled before me.

"How nice, you are here already! You mean to say that you brought on the rain too? But, Christalis, if you can do this, then won't you please do it more often? We are in need of it quite a lot "

"That I cannot do, Halio, or any other thing at all without a prior sanction. Not even coming to you You must remember this. As it happens, today and due to your own progress I received permission to take you to a certain place for your learning. It also happens that the Earth Mother had prayed for rain for her green world's need—so I asked the Being who presides over the rains when the boon would be given It coincided with my own plans and the rest you know. So then, shall we go? Any further questions?"

"None whatsoever. I am ready." So was my good friend, because we travelled like a comet going upward rapidly.

"We shall sit over there for a while before going further." He pointed to a river-side.

"Gladly, I love rivers very much."

Now that I was back into this consciousness, remembering what had taken place the day before, I quickly reached for my pendant; it was there, resting over my chest. I lifted it to my lips to kiss it and did the same with my ring.

"Thank you, my dear friends, I love you both .. and you, Christalis, with the most tender affection. And I thank you for the meeting you arranged with Sunray and Lumina. What a fulfilment that was to me! But tell me, am I linked with them as I am with you from now on?"

"Of course you are. A meeting of that nature has profound significance, but their works are given to another field of action. However, each motion of energy supports another, and when they meet, their forces activate one another This is why every action must receive the approval of the consciousness of the Light that directs the patterns of its own designs. Am I clear to you, Halio?"

"Clear. Thank you for this knowledge, but what I am still unclear about is, how did I come to meet them in the first place? Who took me there?"

"My dear, I have already answered this question, and my parents have also touched upon it Still, let me make it more lucid to you. The soul is free to travel at its own choosing whilst its body rests in sleep. Some wander into quite undesirable zones unwittingly, upsetting them a lot. Men call it a bad dream, a nightmare, but it is real, they were there all right!—You understand this?"

"I do, now that you explain it," I said.

"Others may have high aspirations, deep and sincere desires for something uplifting and also beneficial to others. Those souls travel literally by the force of their own aspirations. It was that force which gave you direction on that occasion.

“My own spirit had a similar aim and I prayed for a body in which I could aid that call, which rose from earth incessantly . and it also came from you. Our linkage was the result.”

“You asked for a body, Christalis? But where were you before? Am I too bold to ask this question? It is really too fantastic for my comprehension.”

“You have every right to ask whatever you wish to comprehend. I am here to illuminate and very glad to do so. Now listen carefully: each of us has a spirit being that is never born, that is entirely pure It does not come to earth, but it sends of itself the soul being, which can manifest in an earth body Or, if it so wishes, it remains in another body in any one of Heaven’s worlds and does its work here, as and when it is directed. This, of course, is in accordance with its own achieved state of being within the cosmic scheme. Can you understand this, Haho? Do I make it clear? Tell me if it is not ”

He paused to await my response “This is truly divine knowledge,” I replied. “Very illuminating indeed, but may I ask another thing, which is not all that clear to me? How is it that the soul-person can have his own choice of birth on earth or elsewhere, when this is directed as you implied—which may not be his own choosing after all? How is this decided, who directs this movement? This is a profound mystery, I never knew this before.”

“Excellent questions! It shows that you have received with clarity what I have told you I am very pleased. I truly am!

“Well, here are a variety of motivating factors. To the first question the answer is: the pull of desire This is what rules the soul’s choosing, seeking fulfilment Desire is a powerful force, it can pull the being from earth to heaven and from heaven to earth.

“Let us take the latter instance. The soul-being, that hasn’t finished some work it wanted to do in its previous life and longs to achieve it, can be one factor. Or take another. It may have done injury to someone and wishes to amend it. Any one of these elements of desire can affect its choice, to mention but a few. The range of these are multitudinous

“Others may have strong attachments which again pull them down for fulfilment. These are misplaced and misleading energies, but very powerful all the same. It is not advisable to have strong attachments, Haho, or to have forceful dislikes, either. These are great hindrances for development.

“Hatred, for instance, or desire for revenge, is another dominant motivation. This too can pull the yet undeveloped soul to seek embodiment Compelled by its own unsavoury desire, it may enter a similarly unsavoury parentage and environment. Here the soul suffers more than it bargained for. Yet, as we know, no experience is wasted It learns that love and harmony are better advisors than hatred is. Hatred is a self-generating evil force, no good can ever come of it.

“This then answers those thoughts you had on this theme yesterday, does it? It is the Pure Light, Haho, which alone leads to progress but nothing beneficial

grows under the cover of darkness.”

He sighed a little. Did he know more about this than he cared to reflect upon, I wondered.

“Yet, you must know,” he continued—“that this condition is also only temporary—an episode in the play—for nothing can remain ill-directed, when eventually the God-Light penetrates its core.”

He remained quiet for a while, before continuing his teaching. I waited listlessly.

“Who is it, you ask me, who directs the souls’ field of action. Who sends them to an earth-life or to some other existence? Who decides this, is your query. A well justified one, too.

“Well, there must be a superior All-knowing Being, don’t you think, who has access to the records of each soul’s history and in his wisdom knows which experience is needed for its further progression, for the development of its own evolution. Indeed, this is a wondrous mystery and I would prefer to throw more light on it at a later time. Let it suffice for now that there are great Lords of the Records and also those who receive the returning beings after each experience and direct them to wherever they are fit to be in order to assimilate their past experiences.

“The soul returning after each life, you see, presents its own record of its deeds, both good and bad—written down faithfully by its own inner witness-being, the observing entity within its own self.”

He seemed to go inside himself, engrossed in his own thoughts. His face was serene, inward-looking. He said finally—half to himself, half to me: “From the source of light we come. To that source we must return. This is the process of perfecting God’s work on earth, Halio.

“A good thing that you have come to ask these questions today, because it is just such an Archive of Records which I wish you to visit with me now. Not where the individual soul’s records are kept, that is not for us to observe. No, not that, but to an Archive of Supreme Light, where some of the Lord’s recorded moves are held of each phase of His Plans. The phase which concerns us at this stage of things are His most imminent designs.”

He paused once again to await my response, but as I was silent he went on.

“Halio, look at me. Now it is I who must ask you a question. Go deep inside yourself before answering me, and tell me this—are you ready for more higher learning? Do not hesitate to say if you would rather wait until everything you have received till now is sufficiently lodged in your comprehension and fed well into your consciousness. Now tell me if you are ready to accept more.”

I did as he advised, remaining still, observing myself as closely as I was able to, and found that I was so profoundly occupied with all these teachings that I knew I must have more time to contemplate carefully each word, to file them into my store of perceptions in order to translate them into an enlightened

knowledge I could call my own. Before I could give this contemplation a voice, Christalis had already replied to it

“A very good response, Halio, I could not be more pleased. You have passed the test. Had you jumped eagerly at the suggestion, I would have known that you were not ready for further learning just yet. You were able to observe your own condition with careful scrutiny. Now I am satisfied that you are fit to weigh correctly the measure of your own perceptiveness. This is excellent!

“Come, give me your hand This day is the day of your best achievement! Now we can safely move further. I shall fulfil my promise soon—but now, let us return to your faithful temple waiting for you, Flower Halio!”

My hand already in his, my eyes looking into his starlit eyes—I spoke after a long time of silence.

“The light that lives in my own heart I offer to you, Christalis. Please accept its gift to you as a token of my gratitude.”

“I accept it, Halio, with the reverence it deserves, and take mine to guide you. Both of these are His We are back at your home. Till later then, receive my love for now.”

“And take mine too,” I whispered as I entered where lived Flower Lillian.

*(To be continued)*

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

*An Extraordinary Girl* by Nirodbaran, 1995. Publication by Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry. Pages 184, Price Rs. 75.00.

THIS is an unusual book, full of descriptions of what happens when there is the consistent guidance and protection by the Lord throughout the life of an individual, how the recalcitrant parts of a human being are slowly and steadily persuaded, cajoled and guided to turn to the Divine and integrated around an awakened soul, how the Divine is always supremely optimistic and sure of His task in spite of the ingenious guiles and wiles of the forces of doubt and attachment

The title is taken from Sri Aurobindo's comments on an incident in Calcutta when the 13-year-old Esha on hearing unsavoury remarks about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother from a friend of her parents suddenly burst out saying, "If you speak one more word against my Gurus, I will give you such a slap that you will roll on the floor." Sri Aurobindo, as quoted on page 46 of this book, said, "What she has done is remarkable for her age. She is an extraordinary girl. Along with strength of character she has developed an extraordinary intelligence. When she used to write to us, she would make reflections about people and the world in general which were beyond even a woman of fifty."

The woman of this story, Esha, came into contact with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother very early in her life and while still very young stayed in the Ashram with her uncle, Dilip Kumar Roy. She had regular correspondence with her "Gurus" to which Sri Aurobindo refers in the above-quoted comment. He further said, when asked why she had to leave the Ashram, "There was a part in her vital being which wanted to have experience of the world." Something at once familiar and unwelcome, I am sure, to many of the readers.

When we read her story we are staggered and do not understand why she had to suffer so much and required such a long time for her vital being to finally turn fully to the Divine in spite of the extraordinary concern, solicitude and constant presence of her Gurus. We find a parallel in our own lives and are struck with wonder at the Divine's persistence and patience in slowly moulding and integrating different parts of our being. The book gives us the certitude that, but for the Divine, life would indeed be, at the least, a pure nuisance if not a downright stupid tragedy, and that indeed the compassion of the Divine is unimaginable in our human terms.

The book is a translation from the Bengali of a series of narrations by Esha to Nirodbaran of the story of interesting incidents in her life, copiously interspersed with her spiritual experiences, her "talks" with Sri Aurobindo off and on since her early childhood. Even a few of the latter are enough to make this book not only memorable but an invaluable guidance to every Sadhak. These

narrations were serialized in *Mother India*, a monthly published from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

The author, Nirodbaran, tells in his foreword the two main reasons for bringing out this book in spite of Esha's reluctance. He felt that he had Sri Aurobindo's sanction; then as the series started appearing many readers told him that they realised anew through it that Sri Aurobindo was very much with us. There can be no doubt in any reader's mind when he reads this book that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother indeed help all who ask for their help through the difficult moments in their lives and that Sadhana without their constant presence, felt or unfelt, would otherwise be beyond our little strengths and capacities

There are so many illuminating experiences revealed in this book that it is difficult to choose when and where to stop once one starts quoting from the various reported conversations and correspondences. To give the reader a taste and to whet his appetite, let me give an example.

Once when the authorities had to decide whether the 14-year-old should or should not stay in the Ashram, Nolini came to her family's house in Pondy to enquire on behalf of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as to why she wanted to stay in the Ashram. The questions and answers between Esha's uncle and herself that followed were:

"Do you know anything about Yoga? Can you practise Sri Aurobindo's Yoga?"

"No" was the answer.

"Then why do you want to stay?"

And the unexpected answer, the quintessence of this Yoga, was: "Because I love Sri Aurobindo."

The uncle, Dilip Kumar Roy, was taken aback. Nolini said "It is enough; I will tell the Mother about it." The Mother finally said, "Let her stay." (Page 42)

What follows as this story unfolds is the power of this love and its expressions. In our mythology there have been innumerable instances of the power of love for the Divine and its response which overrides all obstacles and delivers oneself in those wonderful hands for ever. This is a real instance of the same in this twentieth century.

I had read the story in *Mother India*. But the impact on reading the book was beyond all expectations. Of course it makes a tremendous difference between reading a couple of pages from this book once a month as a serial in a magazine and dipping into it at leisure taking in as much as one wants, finding again and again what one specifically needs at a particular time. That is the value of this book.

I cannot resist the temptation to give a quotation from page 75 of this book, something poignant, which expresses my own experience and I dare say of many God-lovers, not only today but down the centuries:

“In this way, I know Sri Aurobindo is protecting me all the while, but I do not know why, and He has never told me. He only asked, ‘If I am helping you, as you say, will you give me something in return?’”

‘Yes’, I answered without hesitation.

‘Then give me your আমি (your I),’ He replied, even though he fully knew well that this was impossible for me, and I had no answer for Him but silence.”

Yes, even knowing that surrender is the means to union with the Divine Beloved, the various heart-strings and knots take a long time to loosen. Self-giving is the key to free oneself from ‘the heart-string’s clutch’ and the way to surrender becomes easy when the heart leads, a heart full of longing and love and trust in the Divine. Sri Aurobindo in one of his letters points out that there indeed can be Love, Ananda and Beauty even on the way when the leader is the heart, “—the heart that opens its inner door and through it the radiance of the soul looks out in a blaze of trust and self-giving. Before that inner fire the debates of the mind and its difficulties wither away and the path, however long or arduous, becomes a sunlit road not only towards but through love and Ananda” (Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 24, page 1631).

I cannot thank Nirodbaran enough for getting this book published. The beautiful photograph on the cover, the production values together with the careful editing add to the merit of this multifaceted gem, not to be missed at any cost.

DINKAR D. PALANDE



## A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

### 77. ONE GOD... ONE RELIGION... ONE PEOPLE

“He is really great at this young age.”

“He is blessed by Goddess Parvati Herself, you know. No wonder he is a miracle-worker.”

“Have you heard him sing his verses? It is a real feast for our ears.”

“The dead come back to life at his magic touch ”

“He brought a sex-change in the trees and the males of the palmyra tree have yielded fruit. Unbelievable but true.”

“A steadfast Saivite, he is the right person to drive away the Jains from our land.”

Thus praised the citizens of Madurai the miraculous powers of Sambandar.

Mangayarkarasi, the queen of Madurai, who happened to overhear the words of her citizens, immediately despatched a special invitation to Sambandar to be her guest

In and around the city of Madurai, the Jains had established their monasteries and schools, and were bent on luring people to their faith.

The queen and her minister, Kulatchirayar, were staunch Saivites. Yet they had had to watch the conversions helplessly because the king was under the influence of the Jains.

That was the time when people of different religious faiths sat in argument over their tenets. The loser in the battle of wits accepted defeat and surrendered himself to the victor's faith and became a convert. Arguments apart, the competitors made use of their skills in mantras and tantras in order to gain an upper hand over the others

Sambandar who had already heard of the domination of the Jains in Madurai prepared himself to face all dangers that were in store for him.

Mangayarkarasi and Kulatchirayar gave a grand welcome to the saint-poet and placed him in the royal guest house. But Sambandar preferred to stay in a Saivite mutt

Jealous of the divine glow on Sambandar's face and the respects shown to him by royalty, the Jain monks brewed a wicked plot.

The premonition that they were in for a defeat drove them to seek the help of King Nedumaran.

“That little boy is an impostor. He must be driven out of Madurai, lest he should spoil the religious atmosphere here,” they said in unison

“Do as you please,” said the king.

The Jain tantrics produced a ball of fire and commanded it to burn Sambandar to ashes. But the fire-ball couldn't even go near Sambandar for he was heavily guarded by divine forces

Then a monk set the mutt on fire. An adept in the *ashta siddhi*, Sambandar said "Go back slowly, O Fire! and allow your tongues to lick the Pandya king Nedumaran."

The fire obeyed and entered into the body of King Nedumaran. He began to yell in pain as the unseen tongues of fire began to lick his body

While everyone knew that it was Sambandar who had saved the mutt from destruction, no one knew that it was he who had directed the fire to torture the king.

As the king wriggled in pain due to the burning disease, the Jain monks did their best to cure him with their mantras. But the disease didn't subside.

"Lord Siva is wreaking vengeance on you for trying to kill his favourite poet. The Jains are to be blamed for this," said the queen.

"I am sure Sambandar would cure you of the burning disease. If only you permit me to bring him here, your majesty!" suggested the minister.

"Fetch him, Kulatchirayar, fetch him," said the king. "If only I am cured, then I'll declare Saivism the best of religions and I myself will sincerely follow the cult."

Sambandar entered the bedchamber of the king at the request of the queen and the minister.

The Jains feared that they would lose their hold on the king if Sambandar cured him. Hence they surrounded Sambandar and shot at him a hail of questions on God and religion. Undeterred the saint-poet answered without losing his patience.

"Stop that!" howled the king

The Jains stopped asking further questions

"Save me from the burning disease and thereby prove the authenticity of your religion," said the king to the Jains and to Sambandar.

"Well then!" said the chief of the Jain monks "Let me cure the right side of the king. And let Sambandar take care of the left side and try to cure it if he can."

The monk then sprinkled some holy water on the right side of the king's body and went on stroking it with peacock feathers, all the time reciting mantras. But when it was of no avail, the king raved at the Jains: "Get lost, you useless fellows! Let the young Saivite try his powers on me "

Sambandar brought out some holy ash from his pouch and smeared it on the left side of the king's body.

A feeling of coolness pervaded his left side at the magic touch of Sambandar. But the burning sensation in his right got aggravated.

"Oh, Jains! You are doomed," said the king and requested Sambandar to restore coolness to his right side too.

Sambandar smeared some holy ash on the king's right side and then all over his body, singing: "The holy ash is a mantra in itself "

Completely cured of the burning disease, King Nedumaran heaved a sigh of relief and prostrated himself at the feet of the Saiva saint. Queen Mangayarkarasi and minister Kulatchirayar followed suit.

Disappointed, the monks challenged Sambandar to further arguments.

“What use?” sneered the king. “Sambandar has already proved the superiority of his religion over yours by curing my ailment that had remained a challenge to you.”

“It’s true that we’ve failed in the first test. But we are sure of our victory in the second. Give us a chance,” pleaded the chief monk.

“Go ahead,” said Sambandar.

“Write the principles of your religion on a Cadjan leaf; I too will write those of mine. And we’ll throw them into the fire. Let’s take it for granted that the leaf that remains untouched by the greedy tongues of fire certainly speaks for the authenticity of true religion,” suggested the chief monk.

“Agreed,” said Sambandar and pulled out a leaf from the bundle that contained his hymns and flung it into the fire

The leaf remained unscathed.

The chief monk too threw his into the fire, but it turned to ashes.

King Nedumaran chuckled and then said, “Would you like to have one more chance?”

“Yes, your majesty!” said the chief monk, shamelessly.

“What if you fail in this attempt too? Are you prepared to take a punishment for your failure?” asked Kulatchirayar.

“If we fail once again,” said the chief monk gnashing his teeth, “then all of us Jains in Madurai will impale ourselves on pointed stakes and meet our end.”

“I hope you’ll keep your word,” said the king.

“What is it this time?” asked Sambandar.

“Let us write the dogmas of our respective religions in separate Cadjan leaves and let them float on the river. Genuine is that religion whose leaf is not washed away by the flood,” said the chief monk.

A crowd had collected on the banks of the River Vaigai to see the judgment of the river. Both the parties reached the place to put an end to their dispute.

“Let the competition begin,” said the king jubilantly

The Jains placed their Cadjan leaf on the river.

The river was in spate and in a trice the leaf was swept away by the current. The Jains ran after it along the bank. But they returned with downcast eyes and shame-filled faces.

It was Sambandar’s turn now. He left his leaf on the river. For a moment it braved the flow of water and then... to everybody’s surprise .. it began to move against the current.

Driven by curiosity, the hunchbacked King Nedumaran watched the fast-moving leaf as long as his eyes could stretch and his body could crane. At an

unexpected moment his hunchback got straightened on its own.

Sambandar prayed to Lord Siva to stop the leaf somewhere.

It was done. The leaf got swept ashore.

Kulatchirayar on horseback went in search of the leaf and found it near Thiruvetagam, a village. And when he returned with the leaf, the Jains accepted their defeat.

On an appointed day all the Jains in Madurai impaled themselves on the pointed stakes kept ready for the purpose by the king and brought an end to their useless lives.

Mangayarkarasi and Kulatchirayar jumped for joy when King Nedumaran smeared holy ash all over his body and declared in public.

“There is only one God.. He is Lord Siva There is only one religion... That is Saivism. And without exception, the citizens of Madurai will all be Saivites.”

## 78. THE RUN-AWAY COUPLE

A young couple decided to marry against the wishes of the girl's parents. Since no moral support came from friends and relatives, they ran away from their village Vaipur and reached Thirumangalam.

Thirumangalam, twenty miles away from Vaipur, housed a temple for Lord Siva. A mutt close by provided travellers with free food and shelter.

The run-away couple took refuge in the mutt.

Just before supper time, they sat under a tree outside the mutt and engaged themselves in planning their future.

The sky was cloud-free and the moon shone brightly. The tree swayed in a cool breeze and there was joy in the hearts of the couple.

But their joy was short-lived. The lad screamed in pain and the startled girl saw a snake withdrawing its fangs from his leg after striking.

She raised an alarm. People nearby rushed to her help. The snake disappeared leaving no trace.

The Tantrics recited mantras to rescue the lad from the hands of Death. The village-physicians forced down the best of medicines they had into his foaming mouth. But his pulse-beat was deteriorating

The chief of the mutt clicked his tongue and said, “It must be a king cobra. We are helpless. Only God can save him.”

The girl dashed into the temple, prostrated herself before the image of Lord Siva and with tears streaming down her face prayed:

“Oh, Lord of the Universe! Destroyer and Creator! An angry flame from your third eye consumed Kamadeva, reducing him to a handful of dust. But when his wife, Rati, mad with grief at the loss of her husband, entreated you, you brought him back to life. I am a poor girl begging a favour from you. The world will never forget the great help you gave to Markandeya by kicking away

Yama... Now Yama is here to snatch away a life dear to me. Kick him away with your dancing feet. O Lord! Serpents galore adorn your neck, wrists, waist, arms, legs, fingers and ears. Why did you allow one of your constant companions to be away from you? Look at the havoc it has wreaked Help me, O Lord! You gulped down the venom that Vasuki, the serpent, spat when the sea of milk was churned for *amridham*\*. You did so to save several of your people. I beg you to save one more by sucking out the venom injected by your companion... If you can't save the life dear to me I have no alternative but to accompany the dying to the other world Have mercy, O Lord, Disperser of the tears of mortals!"

Sambandar, seated in a corner of the temple, overheard the girl's prayer. He asked, "Who are you? What do you want?"

The girl looked up at the young saint. The divine glow in his face gave her a lot of confidence. She collected herself and began her story:

"I hail from Vaipur. Its chieftain named Thaman is my father. I am the last of his seven daughters. The dying man here is my cousin. My father promised to marry off his first daughter to my cousin. But when he found a better offer he cheated my cousin by saying that he could marry the second one. But again he didn't keep his word He had married off all his six daughters assuring him every time that the next would be made his wife.

"My cousin waited for years nurturing great hopes of marrying one of us. But when I heard that my father was planning to disappoint him for the seventh time, I decided to run away with my cousin and get married to him, lest his heart should break. Away from friends and relatives, we reached this place to start a new life. But the unexpected happened. A snake has dissolved all our plans. Who'll pull out my cousin from the jaws of death?"

Sambandar gave a meaningful smile. "Don't you know that death is inevitable?" he asked.

"Yes, I know But look at my cousin. Don't you think that he is too young to die? Moreover, I can't go back home. My father will refuse to take me into his family as I have run away against his wish And so my future depends very much on my cousin. If he dies, then I am lost. I have to choose my own end," moaned the girl.

Convinced, Sambandar meditated upon the Lord, and sang a song requesting Lord Siva to help the girl in distress.

The dying lad woke up as if he had come out of a trance.

By daybreak, the couple got married in the presence of Sambandar. With the saint's blessings they began to lead a life of joy and peace.

*(More legends on the way)*

P. RAJA

\* *Amrita*, ambrosia, the beverage conferring immortality

## *Students' Section*

### THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Thirty-second Annual Conference

13 August 1995

THE NEED OF THE HOUR

Speech by Samrat Das

TODAY man, with the help of reason and science, has developed innumerable political, social and technological mechanisms that aim at securing a mastery of the social and physical world around him, providing comfort, convenience, order and efficiency in life. This is a perfectly legitimate effort as long as he regards all this as only his primary and elementary need, and not his chief preoccupation. But unfortunately, these systems and mechanisms, instead of remaining merely his instruments, have so overwhelmed and enslaved him that he has become a mere pawn in their hands, a mere cog in their giant wheels. He lives under the menace of deadly weapons that advanced technology has developed. He is brain-washed by science, by its positivistic conventions. He had revolted against the theological doctrines and religious dogmas of the earlier period so as to think freely and originally, but this very individual free-thought of the rational and scientific mind led him to discover a certain universal mechanical law or process that blinded his eye and limited his enquiry. For science has only discovered a certain set of superficial laws and processes, but failed to find that behind them there are much subtler, vaster and more powerful laws that govern our existence.

Another unfortunate trend in the modern era is that economic well-being, physico-vital pleasures and comforts have become for man an end in themselves. All the advances in multi-media and communications are used above all for entertainment that corrupts all cultural values and lowers his consciousness by spreading such stuff as sex, violence and excitement. The market has become his presiding deity on whose altar he offers all his energies and attention. And in return it enslaves him further by generating in him an increasing desire and demand through such means as advertisements. Society too conditions him by narrowing his priorities and perspectives, and forcing him to worry about his career and bank-balance, so that all his education becomes job-oriented and often he doesn't pursue his genuine line of interest. In this situation modern man has to ask himself this crucial question: is it his aim to become merely a glorified animal satisfying his physical and vital desires and needs alone, or does his being demand a greater fulfilment? Doesn't he have in him a thirst for knowledge that

is deeper than mere technology, an attraction towards beauty which is not stained by the lewd and obscene, a need of love more substantial than carnal pleasure, an urge towards a good which cannot be reduced to mere comfort and utility? And still more fundamentally, isn't he seeking an absolute, an infinite, an eternal where all these different urges will find at last their fulfilment, freed from their relativity? To these questions Sri Aurobindo gives a decisive answer: "This alone is man's real business in the world and the justification of his existence, without which he would be only an insect crawling among other ephemeral insects on a speck of surface mud and water which has managed to form itself amid the appalling immensities of the physical universe."<sup>1</sup>

It is dawning slowly to modern man that all this luxury and efficiency cannot rid him of the besetting problems of the world around him. Disharmony and discord rule everywhere, be they in the terrorist-ridden state of Kashmir and the war-torn Bosnia, in the economic competitions between nations such as the trade-clashes between Japan and the U.S., or even in the individual lives and minds of people living under the stresses and tensions of modern society, made especially evident by the swiftly rising number of people suffering from psychological illnesses. Man tries hard to minimise all error, pain and suffering but never succeeds in wiping them out completely. Sri Aurobindo explains, "And we are thus limited because we strive towards secondary perceptions and not towards root-knowledge, because we know processes of things, but not their essence. We thus arrive at a more powerful manipulation of circumstances, but not at essential control. But if we could grasp the essential nature and the essential cause of error, suffering and death, we might hope to arrive at a mastery over them which should be not relative but entire."<sup>2</sup>

And in order to arrive at this essential solution of the problems of existence, at this root-knowledge that our being secretly divines and aspires for, a great reversal of our standpoint, a shifting of our attentions and efforts is needed. Man has to break free from the absorption in the external and the apparent; he has to turn his gaze inward, look deeper within. Slowly, all over the world, an increasing number of people are realising that the root-cause of disharmony and dissatisfaction lies in the hiatus between the inner and outer progress. In the modern era, humanity has developed rapidly in the external fields, but it has not made corresponding psychological growth within. But the external world exists only by the sustaining inner reality, and can find its true meaning and fulfilment by consciously expressing it.

Thus mankind is now at a turning-point in history, it is at the beginning of what Sri Aurobindo has called a subjective age. As he states "... today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of wisdom promises to be its last,—God, Light, Freedom, Immortality."<sup>3</sup>

But the subjective realm is a vast domain, with various planes of conscious-

ness having innumerable beings and forces. Man has to be clear about the best means or method to achieve his aim. He must stride firmly forward towards his final goal, not deviating or lingering in intermediary realms, because there are dangerous pitfalls on the way, luring beings and forces, that can seriously impede his spiritual progress. For instance, there is a deplorable trend nowadays to be attracted by pseudo-spiritual gurus and disciplines because they demonstrate certain supernatural, occult powers and miracles. Then, at present, the first attempts at subjective enquiry has led modern psychology to discover a sub-conscious part of man. This discovery has so overwhelmed and blinded man that he has painted a dark and dismal picture of existence, ignoring completely the deeper truth of his luminous, divine origin which alone could vindicate his age-long higher aspirations. As Sri Aurobindo remarks: "They look from down up and explain the higher lights by the lower obscurities, but the foundation of these things is above and not below.... The superconscious, not the subconscious, is the true foundation of things. The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analysing the secrets of the mud from which it grows here; its secret is to be found in the heavenly archetype of the lotus that blooms for ever in the Light above. The self-chosen field of these psychologists is besides poor, dark and limited; you must know the whole before you can know the part and the highest before you can truly understand the lowest. That is the promise of the greater psychology awaiting its hour before which these poor gropings will disappear and come to nothing."<sup>4</sup>

Another germinating tendency amongst modern men is to revert back to some traditional creed or religion which the age of individualistic reason had so strongly put aside. For they feel that religion at least aims directly to approach God. But history has given ample proof how the original spiritual aspiration and meaning of religion gets lost with time, and religionism creeps in with its obscure dogmas and fanatical sectarianism. Then religion becomes a great force of retardation to human progress, the cause of innumerable holy wars and conflicts, a tyrannical instrument of oppressions and tortures such as the Spanish Inquisition. Even if it is a trend towards a reformed, enlightened and tolerant new religion, it might bring about the spiritual liberation of a few individuals, but when applied to the general mass the same false tendencies of religionism will reassert themselves. There is an inherent incapacity in religion to deal with human life because it has to compromise with the lower parts of life; it cannot withstand the invasion of the dark, inconscient forces. That is why the Mother categorically asserts that in the new age and creation there will be no more religions.

But what then is the best means for modern man to approach his Supreme Goal? What could this greater psychology be that Sri Aurobindo mentions, which would fathom the superconscience? It is the age-old elaborate and profound psychological system and internal discipline of yoga. For it had an



intimate knowledge of the various planes of existence, and devised powerful means to move infallibly and rapidly through the vast subjective domain and reach the superconscience. But the yoga would have to be of a very special character, if it is at all to bring about a supreme fulfilment for humanity. It is an extremely difficult task; Sri Aurobindo describes it by saying, "A total spiritual direction given to the whole life and the whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself."<sup>5</sup> This could only be accomplished by a dynamic and all-inclusive yoga, such as Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga, which aims at bringing down and manifesting the Supermind in the world; that alone could transform even the last strongholds of the Inconscient and create the divine life upon earth.

### *References*

- 1 *The Life Divine* (Cent Ed , Vol 18), pp 42-43
- 2 *Ibid* , p 57
- 3 *Ibid* , p 1
- 4 *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 24), pp 1608-9
- 5 *The Life Divine* (Cent Ed , Vol 19), p 1059