

# MOTHER INDIA

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15 AUGUST 1997: THE ANNIVERSARY OF  
SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTHDAY

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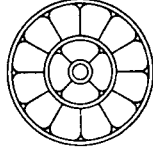
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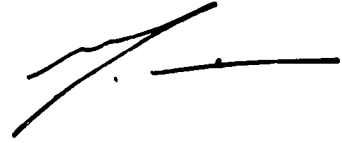


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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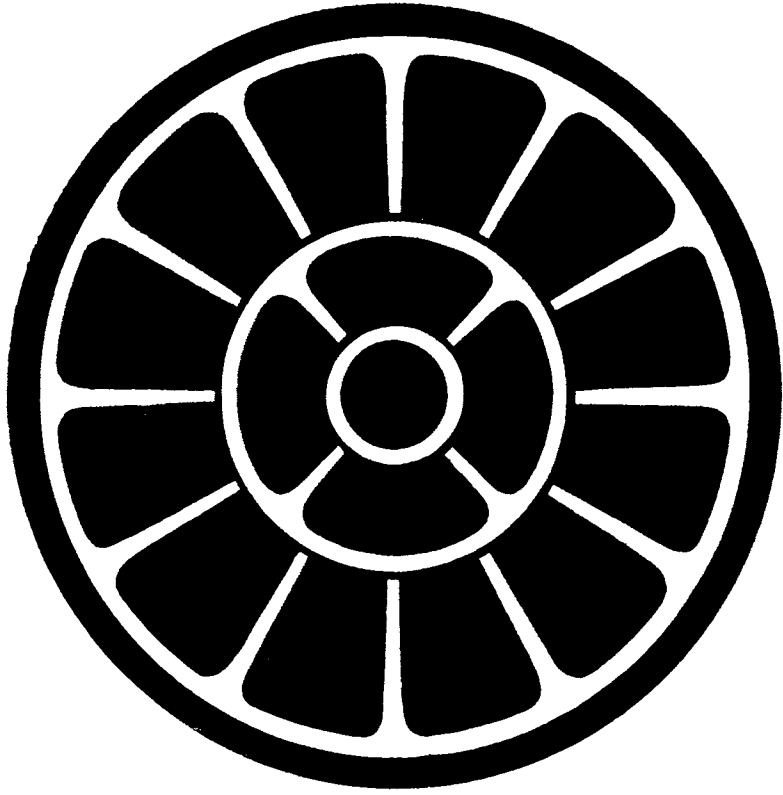
“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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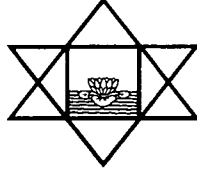
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*The Spiritual Flag of United India*



*A free and united India will be there and the Mother will gather around her her sons and weld them into a single national strength in the life of a great and united people.*

*J. C. Bose*

## AUGUST 15, 1997

It is a hundred and twenty-five years since Sri Aurobindo was born. It is fifty years since India won her independence of foreign rule. In what terms shall we remember that day of freedom and this Master of what he calls the Integral Yoga?

The first thing that springs to mind is that there must be an inner connection between the two events. And indeed this connection stares us in the face when we recollect the title "Prophet of Nationalism" given to Sri Aurobindo as one of the crowning tributes paid by that other eminent worker for India's freedom, C. R. Das.

Das was reminding us of the six years during which Sri Aurobindo had been active in the political field with the ideal clearly formulated for the first time of an India utterly free from the foreign yoke.

However, we can realise that Sri Aurobindo stands out most in the world's history no less than India's as the creator of a vision of ultimate Reality which is unlike all past figurations of it. For this vision posits spiritual fulfilment in terms of a collective step further in earth's evolution rather than taking the earth as ultimately a stepping-stone to a blissful Beyond by a few exceptional idealists. How has Sri Aurobindo come to posit this fundamental aim?

Essentially it is the reading of the uttermost secret of Nature's evolution—the possibility to reach inwardly a Power which Sri Aurobindo calls Supermind, a power which from high above holds forth the promise of an utterly divinised life and from deep below, from the core of matter, shows the same divinity waiting to fulfil that promise. This supermind-power Sri Aurobindo envisages as the Mother of the Universe, at once creative and transformative.

Sri Aurobindo calls the hidden and eternal response to that power "the psychic being", the true inmost "soul" in us, which cannot rest until the heaven of its dreams is realised in the various urges of terrestrial life.

The play between the supermind and the psychic being is Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. This Yoga leaves no side of our nature out of the play and gets us to surrender with the sweetness and light and passion of the psychic being to the all-compassing and all-enfolding Mother Divinity whose physical revelation was set before us by Sri Aurobindo in the person of the Mother of his Ashram in whom, just as in him, we recognise the supreme Avatar—a double manifestation to give spiritual birth to a divine humanity.

In the Ashram at Pondicherry the experiment of this birth goes on in an inner and outer self-dedication of a varied activity invoking the presence of Sri Aurobindo and his manifesting power—the Mother—who have pledged that they would never leave the earth-atmosphere until their manifold work is accomplished.

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)



## FREEDOM—THE MANTRA OF MY LIFE

THIS then is our object and by what means do we seek it? We seek it by feeling our separateness and pushing forward our individual self-fulfilment by what we call Swadeshi—Swadeshi in commerce and manufacture, in politics, in education, in law and administration, in every branch of national activity. No doubt this means independence, it means freedom; but it does not mean rebellion. There are some who fear to use the word “freedom”, but I have always used the word because it has been the *mantra* of my life to aspire towards the freedom of my nation. And when I was last in jail, I clung to that *mantra*; and through the mouth of my counsel I used this word persistently. What he said for me—and it was said not only on my behalf, but on behalf of all who cherish this ideal—was this: If to aspire to independence and preach freedom is a crime, you may cast me into jail and there bind me with chains. If to preach freedom is a crime, then I am a criminal and let me be punished. But freedom does not mean the use of violence—it does not mean bombs; it is the fulfilment of our separate national existence. If there is any authority mad enough to declare that Swadeshim, national education, arbitration, association for improvement of our physique is illegal, it is not stamping out anarchism; it is on the contrary establishing a worse anarchism from above. It sets itself against the law of God that gives to every nation its primary rights. The Judge in the Alipore Bomb Case said that the aspiration after independence and the preaching of the ideal of independence was a thing no Englishman could condemn. But if you say that the aspiration after independence is a thing none can condemn and yet put down by force the only peaceful means of securing independence, you are really declaring that it is the practice of independence which you will not tolerate. Because a few have gone mad and broken the law you have chosen to brand a whole people, to condemn a nation and to suppress a whole national movement. With that we have nothing to do. We have no voice in the Government of our country; and the laws and their administration are things in which you don't allow us to have any concern. But one thing is in our power, our courage and devotion are in our power, our sacrifice, our sufferings are in our power; that you cannot take away from us, and so long as you cannot take that from us you can do nothing. Your repression cannot for ever continue, for it will bring anarchy into the country. You will not be able to continue your administration if this repression remains permanent. Your Government will become disorganised; the trade you are using such means to save will languish and capital be frightened from the country.

We have therefore only to suffer. We have only to be strong and enduring. All this machinery of coercion, all this repression, will then be in vain. That is the only virtue that is needed. We shall never lose our fortitude, our courage, our endurance. There are some who think that by lowering our heads the country will escape repression. That is not my opinion. It is by looking the storm in the face and meeting it with a high courage, fortitude and endurance that the nation can be saved. It is that which the Mother demands from us,—which God demands from us.

## THE NEW MANTRA

We have worshipped the country, the national Mother, as God That was well, that carried us far But it was only a stage, a means to bring the Europeanised mind back to spirituality. It was the worship of a *rūpa*, an *iṣṭa* by which to rise to the worship of God in His fullness. We used the Mantra *Bande Mataram* with all our heart and soul, and so long as we used and lived it, relied upon its strength to overbear all difficulties, we prospered But suddenly the faith and the courage failed us, the cry of the Mantra began to sink and as it rang feebly, the strength began to fade out of the country It was God who made it fade out and falter, for it had done its work. A greater Mantra than *Bande Mataram* has to come Bankim was not the ultimate seer of Indian awakening He gave only the term of the initial and public worship, not the formula and the ritual of the inner secret *upāsanā* For the greatest Mantras are those which are uttered within, and which the seer whispers or gives in dream or vision to his disciples When the ultimate Mantra is practised even by two or three, then the closed Hand of God will begin to open, when the *upāsanā* is numerously followed the closed Hand will open absolutely

There are some who sit watching for an *ādeś* and, until the *ādeś* comes, are resolved not to act But to such the command will always be denied It is those who act, who are sure to find a solitude created within them in which they are alone with God and come face to face with Reality Moments of physical loneliness, periods of meditative retirements are needed, but they are subordinate and auxiliary Action done as a Sadhana, as a sacrifice to God, done first without attachment to the results and then without attachment to the action itself, is the indispensable condition. And it must be action done with Shradha, with faith, whatever action it may be, it is not only for God but from God

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Karmayogin*, SABCL, Vol 2, pp 64-65, 431)

## THE VEDA

At the root of all that we Hindus have done, thought and said through those many thousands of years, behind all we are and seek to be, there lies concealed the fount of our philosophies, the bedrock of our religions, the kernel of our thought, the explanation of our ethics and society, the summary of our civilisation, the rivet of our nationality, a small body of speech, Veda. From this one seed developing into many forms the multitudinous and magnificent birth called Hinduism draws its inexhaustible existence. Buddhism too with its offshoot, Christianity, flows from the same original source. It has left its stamp on Persia, through Persia on Judaism, through Judaism, Christianity and Sufism on Islam, and through Buddha on Confucianism, and through Christ and mediaeval mysticism, Greek and German philosophy and Sanskrit learning on the thought and civilisation of Europe. There is no part of the world's spirituality, of the world's religion, of the world's thought which would be what it is today, if the Veda had not existed. Of no other body of speech in the world can this be said.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research, Vol I, No 1, April, 1977)*

# SRI AUROBINDO ON AVATARHOOD

## SOME LETTERS

### (Nagin Doshi's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo)

*What is an incarnation? From what plane does it take place?*

AN incarnation is the DIVINE Consciousness and Being manifesting through the body. It is possible from any plane

*When the Divine descends here as an incarnation, does not that very act mould his infinity into a limited finite? How then does he still continue to rule over the universe?*

Do you imagine that the DIVINE is at any time not everywhere in the universe or beyond it? or that he is living at one point in space and governing the rest from it, as Mussolini governs the Italian Empire from Rome?

*I was speaking of the Divine in the body, and not of the Divine in his supreme plane above in an impersonal and formless aspect Does not his incarnation on earth necessarily limit him? Living in such a world he has to govern all the three universes?*

It is the omnipresent cosmic DIVINE who supports the action of the universe, if there is an Incarnation, it does not in the least diminish the cosmic presence and the cosmic action in the three or thirty million universes

*When the Avatar comes down here how does he take on a mind, vital and body? It is, I think, the soul that is divine, but the Adhar has to be built up from the cosmos?*

Everybody has to do that when he is born It is the soul that is permanent.

*Does an Avatar create a new mind, life and body from the cosmos for himself, or take hold of some liberated human being and use his outer personality for his manifestation?*

That would be a possession not an Avatar An Avatar is supposed to be from birth. Each soul at its birth takes from the cosmic mind, life and matter to shape a new external personality for himself. What prevents the DIVINE doing the same? What is continued from birth to birth is the inner being

*You wrote "The Avatar is a special manifestation, while for the rest of the time it is the Divine working with the ordinary human limits as a Vibhuti" Does not the Divine find it difficult to mould himself into a Vibhuti and accept the human limits?*

Why should it be difficult? Even the Avatar accepts limits for his work.

*Since an Avatar comes here with a divine Power, Light and Ananda why should he pass through the same process of sadhana as an ordinary sadhak?*

The Avatar is not supposed to act in a non-human way—he takes up human action and uses human methods with the human consciousness in front and the Divine behind. If he did not his taking a human body would have no meaning and would be of no use to anybody. He could just as well have stayed above and done things from there.

*The Avatar, unlike the Vibhuti, does not need to satisfy his vital. [Sri Aurobindo's marginal remark: "Why should he not?"] For his vital has no cravings and desires as our vital has. He is above them. And if he seems to be satisfying them, it is only to acquire experience and knowledge of the vital worlds.*

All that is wrong. The Avatar takes upon himself the nature of humanity in his instrumental parts, though the consciousness acting behind is divine.

*When the Divine descends here (as the Avatar), he has to veil himself and deal with the world and its movements like an ordinary man of the cosmic product [Sri Aurobindo's marginal remark: "Exactly?"] But behind he is perfectly conscious of what happens. The universal forces cannot make him their tool as they make us.*

That does not prevent the Avatar from acting as men act and using the movements of Nature for his life and work.

*Does your above answer mean that the Avatars too satisfy the vital desires, cravings, lust, etc. as a layman?*

What do you mean by lust? Avatars can be married and have children and that is not possible without sex; they can have friendships, enmities, family feelings etc. etc.—these are vital things. I think you are under the impression that an Avatar must be a saint or a yogi.

*The Avatars can of course be married and satisfy the vital movements. But do they really indulge them as ordinary people? While satisfying their outer being do they not remain conscious of their union with the Divine above?*

There is not necessarily any union above before the practice of yoga. There is a connection of the consciousness with the veiled Divinity and an action out of that, but this is not dependent on the practice of yoga.

*We believe that both you and the Mother are Avatars. But is it only in this life that both of you have shown your divinity? It is said that you and she have been on the earth constantly since its creation. What were you doing during your previous lives?*

Carrying on the evolution.

*I find it difficult to understand so concise a statement Can't you elaborate it?*

That would mean writing the whole of human history. I can only say that as there are special descents to carry on the evolution to a farther stage, so also something of the Divine is always there to help through each stage itself in one direction or another.

*The common mass of mankind in the past may not have recognised your presence amongst them, especially when outwardly both of you may have had personalities like those of ordinary human beings. But how is it that even Sri Krishna, Buddha or Christ could not detect your presence in this world?*

Presence where and in whom? If they did not meet, they would not recognise, and even if they met there is no reason why the Mother and I should cast off the veil which hung over these personalities and reveal the Divine behind them. Those lives were not meant for any such purpose.

*If you were on the earth constantly it would mean that you were here when those great beings descended. Whatever your external cloak, how could you hide your inner self—the true divinity—from them? It could not have mattered whether you and any of them were born in the same country or not. They ought to have discovered by their own higher light that the Divine Consciousness from which they had descended was already here in a physical form.*

But why can't the inner self be hidden from all in such lives? Your reasoning would only have some force if the presence on earth then were as the Avatar but not if it was only as a Vibhuti.

*You have asked, "Presence where and in whom?" Why have you put those question-words? What exactly is conveyed by them?*

...It is "presence" in or behind some body and behind some outer personality. Also "presence" in what part of the world? If the Mother were in Rome in the time of Buddha, how could Buddha know as he did not even know the existence of Rome?

*I did not mean that you or the Mother needed to cast off your veil. It is those Great Men who should have recognised you in spite of the veil.*

One can be a great man without knowing such things as that. Great Men or even great Vibhutis need not be omniscient or know things which it was not useful for them to know.

*You said, "But why can't the inner self be hidden from all in such lives?" I fail to understand how anyone could hide one's inner self from Avatars and Vibhutis.*

An Avatar or Vibhuti have the knowledge that is necessary for their work, they need

not have more. There was absolutely no reason why Buddha should know what was going on in Rome. An Avatar even does not manifest all the divine omniscience and omnipotence; he has not come for any such unnecessary display, all that is behind him but not in the front of his consciousness. As for the Vibhuti, the Vibhuti need not even know that he is a power of the Divine. Some Vibhutis like Julius Caesar for instance have been atheists. Buddha himself did not believe in a personal God, only in some impersonal and indescribable Permanent.

*Still I can't understand one thing, even though you did not cast off your veil, how could people like Buddha or Christ not help casting off their veil (or ignorance) in order to recognise you?*

Why should they? The veil was there necessary for their work. Why should it be thrown off? So if the Mother was present in the life of Christ, she was there not as the Divine Manifestation but as one altogether human. For her to be recognised as the Divine would have created a tremendous disorder and frustrated the work Christ came to do by breaking its proper limits.

*You must have heard that just before Christ was born some Rishis from India knew of the divine Descent and set out for Jerusalem merely by their intuition, though they had not known what and where Jerusalem was.*

I never heard of Rishis from India going there. There is a legend of some Magi getting an intuition that a divine Birth was there on earth and following a star that led them to the stable in which Christ was born. But this is a legend; not history.

*Since you and the Mother were on earth constantly from the beginning what was the need for Avatars coming down here one after another?*

We were not on earth as Avatars.

*You say that you both were not on earth as Avatars. And yet you were carrying on the evolution. Since the Divine Himself was on the earth carrying on the evolution, what was the necessity for the coming down of the Avatars who are portions of Himself?*

The Avatar is necessary when a special work is to be done and in crises of the evolution. The Avatar is a special manifestation while for the rest of the time it is the Divine working within the ordinary human limits as a Vibhuti.

*(Guidance from Sri Aurobindo, pp 278-285)*

## THE MOTHER ON THE REVOLUTIONARIES

[A portion of the Mother's talk with Mona Sarkar on the revolutionaries of the Indian National Movement, especially those who were with Sri Aurobindo. The talk was noted down from memory by Mona.]

*The Mother* Did you bring the photos of the revolutionaries as I asked you to, last time?

*Mona* Yes, Mother (*Mona hands Her the book The Roll of Honour, containing photographs and information on revolutionaries who died in the struggle for India's Independence*)

*The Mother* "The Roll of Honour" They did well to print this quotation over the photograph

*Mona* Yes, Mother. It is a quotation by Lincoln, printed over his photograph

*The Mother* It is very well done. It looks very beautiful and it is a beautiful quotation. Only towards the end, it sounds a little like propaganda—it would have been better if he had put "all turn towards the Divine for guidance." (*The Mother looks at the photographs of several revolutionaries. She looks with much concentration at the photo of a young man who is dead, fully garlanded, he is ready to be taken to the cremation-ground for the last rites. The Mother exclaims*) This one was with Sri Aurobindo!

*Mona* Yes, Mother, this is Kanailal Dutt, he was with Sri Aurobindo. It is he who, with the help of Satyen Bose, shot the traitor Naren Goswami in Alipore Jail.

*The Mother* It is clearly written on his face that he was with Sri Aurobindo—it is like an aura. His psychic being is burning intensely, it is quite an individualised psychic being. And was he hanged?

*Mona* Yes, Mother, both he and Satyen were hanged.

This patriot, Kanai, after he was sentenced to death, put on weight—sixteen pounds—during his last twenty days in jail. And when the sentries came on the last day, they found him sound asleep. They had to call him to wake him up. "Kanai, it is time to go!" Kanai woke up, smiled and followed them. A fellow revolutionary asked him why he was not afraid of death—how he could be so cheerful and even put on weight. He answered, "I have faith in the spirit of the Gita. I shall depart with the name of the Lord on my lips, thinking of Him with whom I wish to be united after death, and I shall be reborn with part of His knowledge and force."

*The Mother* It is very true.

It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.

19 November 1863

ABRAHAM LINCOLN



*Mona* Mother, is it always so? If at the time of death one thinks of what one wants to become in one's next life, does one become that when one is reborn?

*The Mother* Yes, if one thinks that, it is absolutely true ... (*The Mother turns the pages of the book and comments*) These revolutionaries have proved that the realisation of the embodied Motherland is dearer than life itself That is why there is no sign of worry or grief on their faces It is wonderful And this one—was he also with Sri Aurobindo?

*Mona* Yes, Mother, this is Khudiram Bose It is he who with Prafulla Chaki threw a bomb at the magistrate's carriage. Usually the magistrate travelled in a particular carriage, but unfortunately on that night two ladies were riding home in a similar carriage and they were killed Prafulla and Khudiram did not know about this mishap They ran away as soon as the bomb exploded The police were soon after them Prafulla was cornered When he saw that escape was impossible, he told the police officer, who was an Indian, "Are you not ashamed to catch a patriot and become a traitor to the country? But I shall not allow your sinful hands to catch me" So saying, he took out his revolver and shot himself through the mouth.

*The Mother* Well said, well said Yes, what he said was perfectly true.

*Mona* And the other one, Khudiram, was hanged

*The Mother:* Yes, I understand the story now. .

*Mona* Mother, there is no photograph of Prafulla Chaki here, the one who shot himself through the mouth It seems that after his death, the British severed his head from his body and sent it to Calcutta for evidence.

*The Mother:* Oh, how cruel! To behead a patriot! They did the same thing during the French Revolution It is horrible. .

But look at his eyes—they tell you everything. He looks so innocent and at the same time very happy to sacrifice his life for the country The fire of patriotism is burning in his eyes And this one—he too was in the same group?

*Mona:* Yes, Mother, his name is Ashok Nandi.

*The Mother* The aura of Sri Aurobindo is around them all, it is very clear, and their psychic being expresses it . See this one Oh, his psychic is very much in the front! He surely belonged to Sri Aurobindo's group.

*Mona:* Yes, Mother, he is Satyendranath Bose who went smilingly to the gallows. He killed Naren Goswami, the traitor, with the help of Kana! There are others, too, who sacrificed their lives for the Motherland.

*The Mother.* It is not sacrifice which is written on their face, it is joyful offering to the Motherland—to Mother India And they have proved something, they have proved that adoration of the Motherland is dearer than life itself. They faced all dangers and fought bravely, whatever the cost Their psychic beings are all individualised It is an extraordinary group All those photos I have seen just now have the markings of a hero. Tejen's<sup>1</sup> father has the markings, and others too Some of them are endowed with

1 Jatindranath Mukherjee's son Tejendranath Mukherjee, who was a member of the Ashram

almost divine qualities, rarely to be found among men. . (*The Mother turns the pages of the book.*) And who is this one at the bottom?

*Mona* It is Indu Bhushan Roy

*The Mother* He seems to belong to Sri Aurobindo's group.

*Mona.* Yes, Mother, he was a daring boy

*The Mother* And was he also killed?

*Mona* He hanged himself in jail, Mother

*The Mother* But why?

*Mona* Mother, they tortured him so much that he could no longer use his hands They were so bruised and full of blisters that he could not even eat Still he was forced to continue with hard labour for which he had to use his hands When he pleaded with the jail authorities, they did not listen In revolt he hanged himself in his cell

*The Mother.* Oh, that's how they were treated!

*Mona:* Yes, Mother .

(*The Mother turns the pages and looks at other photos* )

*The Mother.* Oh, this one belongs to His group?

*Mona* Yes, Mother He is Sushil Sen, the brother of Biren Sen who is here in the Ashram

*The Mother* Biren Sen?

*Mona* Yes, Mother, he is here, he came a few years back.

*The Mother.* I don't know I don't remember If I see him now I will recognise

*Mona* Nolini-da surely spoke to you about him.

*The Mother* Maybe, but I don't quite remember his face

*Mona* Mother, he too was sent to the Andamans like my father And he too was mercilessly tortured like the others

*The Mother.* Oh, I didn't know.

*Mona* Mother, he speaks very little He is short, about this height (*gesture*) He looks so quiet and innocent, but he was very courageous and bold He was in the same group I think he was the youngest

*The Mother* It is fortunate that he is a quiet man In silence one finds the greatest power

*Mona* Yes, Mother, yes And the sadness we see on his face expresses the torture he had to undergo

*The Mother* Yes, he has a strong character There are many like him here who talk very little but work hard and have a very strong determination

*Mona:* Mother, this is his brother, Sushil Even as a boy he was considered a real patriot. Once it so happened that a police officer, an Englishman, banned a meeting at which a famous Swadeshi leader was to address the people So Sushil went up to the officer and hit him on the head with a stick because he had banned the meeting The poor boy was caught at once and ordered to be whipped fifteen times as punishment. A policeman with a big heavy whip started to hit the boy, but he would not be cowed down. Each time he was whipped he shouted aloud "Bande Mataram" and the whole

crowd joined in with him, although the slogan was banned. The boy was ordered to keep silent, but he did not listen. It was a pathetic sight—the boy was bleeding, his back was full of scars, chunks of flesh were coming off, but even when the boy fell unconscious they went on beating him.

*The Mother* Oh, they had the heart to do such a thing? It's unbelievable. They are worse than barbarians!

*Mona* Mother, no one can imagine how much the Swadeshi prisoners were tortured in the Andamans.

*The Mother* The Andamans—that is where your father was sent?

*Mona* Yes, Mother.

*The Mother* I have heard a little about it. Well, I would like to see this man. What is his name?

*Mona* Biren Sen, Mother.

*The Mother* All right. There is no hurry. Let him come on his birthday.

These revolutionaries are exceptional. I did not know that Sri Aurobindo had such people around him. Their dedication, their power of endurance and their self-sacrifice were really extraordinary.

*Mona* Yes, Mother, they suffered a lot.

*The Mother* Yes, one can see that very clearly. It is written on their faces—but without any anxiety, without any regret as to what happened. They surrendered themselves joyfully to the Motherland.

*Mona* Mother, Sri Aurobindo wrote that many of his companions in jail were remarkable spirits—noble, brave and patriotic. He even said that they were greater than himself! Of course, he said this out of modesty and humility, but certainly he saw in them a very luminous flame.

*The Mother (laughing)* Yes, there were people around Him who had individualised psychic beings.

I am sure that the movement Sri Aurobindo initiated in order to free India made such people spring forth, people for whom to live for the Motherland was the only life worth living. What self-abnegation and self-effacement! It is quite obvious that their love for the motherland was the outcome of His patriotic speeches. His words inspired them to sacrifice their lives for the glory of India. It is the regeneration of India for which He worked. He shook the very foundation of *tamas* in which the nation had buried itself, resigning itself to its fate. Those speeches delivered by Sri Aurobindo would move any man to rise and fight for the country. How powerful and stimulating they are! He taught them how to worship the Motherland. And you see how these patriots repeat His words. I am happy you showed me these photographs. Now I know those who were around Sri Aurobindo. (*The Mother turns the pages. As soon as her eyes fall on a photo of Tarini Prasanna Majumdar, she exclaims enthusiastically.*) Oh, yes, it's him, yes, yes, I recognize him, his eyes, yes, it's him. I see him every day. What's his name?

*Mona* Tarini Prasanna Majumdar, Mother.

*The Mother.* Tarini Prasanna Majumdar When did he pass away?

*Mona* On 15 June 1918, Mother

*The Mother* On the 15th June 1918! His being came back after so many years He spent really a long time up there, enjoying himself and then he came back to finish the work he had started It seems he was prematurely killed And since then, he has been looking for someone suitable with that intensity of heart, who could finish the work he started He was Bengali?

*Mona* Yes, Mother

*The Mother* A Brahmin?

*Mona* Yes, Mother. A Brahmin

*The Mother* But he came back after a long time Usually, when one dies prematurely and has some work to accomplish, one takes birth very soon He was a very determined and sincere man, who wanted to complete his work. He wanted it almost desperately I knew him long, long ago The part of his being that comes to me is his vital and his subtle physical. They wanted to finish the work he started One of his beings, the vital, was not satisfied so it wandered in these earthly regions in order to find a medium and finish his work.

*Mona* So, Mother, where is his psychic being?

*The Mother* It has left, it is there in the higher regions Actually, his psychic being is a little diffused

*Mona* What does that mean, Mother?

*The Mother.* It means that his psychic was not fully individualised It was still a little hazy

*Mona* I don't understand, Mother

*The Mother* I mean that his psychic was not developed enough to choose its own destiny. His psychic could not leave the body, come back as it wished, and choose the place most suitable for its specific work When the psychic is individualised, it chooses the place and the circumstances that will help it best to accomplish what it comes for during the whole of its earthly existence, and when this is done it departs at will I can see that his psychic being was not quite illumined, but he had a very strong will-power I must say that most people are not at all aware of their psychic being; it is so hazy, sometimes so clouded that one would think they have no psychic being But in this case, the psychic is somewhat illumined, but not yet individualised or conscious—but still, it is clearly visible

*(Mother turns the page )*

*Mona* His name is Bhagat Singh. He is quite famous

*The Mother* He looks very determined

*Mona* They tortured him a lot before sending him to the gallows

*The Mother* He too was hanged?

*Mona* Yes, Mother

*The Mother* Then why did they torture him?

*Mona* To collect evidence from him, of parties and their secret activities

*The Mother* Oh! to hang him was not enough for them

*Mona* Here is another photo of Bhagat Singh

*The Mother* He looks like a hero! (*The Mother turns the pages and pointing to the photos of some freedom fighters asks who they were* )

*Mona* Oh, Mother! These were the men who captured from the British the surrounding portion of the town of Chittagong and declared the area free They held that freedom for a short while until new British reinforcements came But they put up a stiff fight until they were overcome by a much larger force Although they were short of ammunition, they never relented and many were killed Surya Sen was their leader

*The Mother* They look so innocent, but very determined and devoted

This is a thing I cannot understand, foreigners who come to rule a nation, to found an empire—not only do they brutally try to enslave the people in a crude and degrading way but they forbid them to assert their human freedom, to love their motherland, to worship the power she symbolises, to offer their work and their happiness to the Glory they adore I cannot understand their purpose. Not only do they behave like marauders, sucking the blood of the nation and most of its wealth its industry, agriculture, minerals—but they rule the country as it pleases them, and use all this wealth, and financial power to live in even greater luxury and dazzle the whole world All this at the expense of poor India who suffers so much, who cries out in agony—India torn by anxiety and always in need, with the disastrous consequence of famine and death And yet she is not even allowed to raise her voice. That's sheer barbarism!

Oh! it was not enough for them to squeeze the last penny out of the land, they also had to empty the nation of its essential vitality, its aim and motive, its sovereign ideal They tried to impose their low and empty culture which they claimed to be the highest and best, upon a nation whose wonderful culture has reigned supreme over the world since the beginning of time That is why Sri Aurobindo came—he came to save India which was plunging headlong into the abyss and might have lost her soul (*The Mother turns the pages* ) It is wonderful, one can read it on their faces: no trace of grief, not the least fear of death, but a sort of anxiety because they had not been able to complete the task they vowed they would accomplish, to free India from her foreign yoke A sort of pain in their heart at the thought that they had to die too soon Otherwise, they were ready to use any means to throw the British out of India They were so devoted to their Motherland that they were ready to sacrifice their lives for Her. One even feels that they were proud to offer their lives on the altar of the Mother's temple as if to adore Her Oh, what a wonderful self-abnegation for the sake of the country! It is truly unique (*The Mother turns the pages and sees the photograph of a woman*) Ah! but it is a woman! Women too were helping revolutionaries at that time?

*Mona* Indirectly, Mother Yes, many women helped the movement and gave their support to it even at the risk of their lives They helped by hiding weapons and money or by carrying them to those who needed them but could come out of their hide-outs only at night They helped and inspired the political absconders

*(The Mother turns the pages and looks at the photos of Santosh Kumar Mitra and Chandra Shekhar Azad )*

*The Mother.* Oh, these are wonderful! Each has his own character but who can say who was the braver of the two? Oh, this one (Azad), his eyes are like a fire that burns to conquer and take its revenge for the prevailing injustice . *(The Mother turns the pages and sees a photo of Jatindranath Mukherjee)*

*Mona:* Mother, this is Tejen's father

*The Mother* But he resembles Prithwin<sup>2</sup> very much

*Mona.* Yes, Mother. Jatin had a group, and all of them were killed in an open fight against British soldiers They were waiting for a shipload of armaments from Germany. Unfortunately, the ship did not turn up as expected, that spoiled their plans The British got scent of it and attacked them in force. They were all killed

*The Mother.* Yes, yes, I know this man, he has exceptional qualities—his psychic is quite individualised, he knew what was going to happen, but that did not worry him at all. .

And who is this one?

*Mona:* Subhas Bose

*The Mother* Oh, Subhas Bose!

*Mona:* And here again, Mother, here is Subhas Bose in front of the Cellular Jails in the Andamans

*The Mother* Yes, I know

*Mona:* Mother, this is the place where my father, Barn-da and others were sent after the trial. My father was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment and Barn-da for life It is in this jail that they were kept *(The Mother looks closely at the picture )* Mother, it is Subhas who chased the British out of the Andamans with the help of the Japanese This is his photograph after his conquest of the island

*The Mother:* In him also the inner fire is burning His psychic is illumined Yes, it is very clear . *(After having seen all the photographs, the Mother says.)* It is very interesting, but where is the photograph of your father?

*Mona* Mother, in this book they show only the pictures of the revolutionaries who have been killed while fighting the British. Only those who have been killed.

*The Mother* Oh, only those who have sacrificed their lives

*Mona* Yes, Mother . .

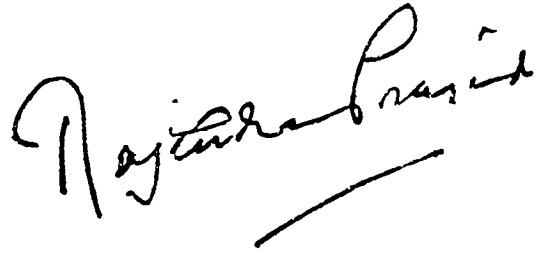
*The Mother* It was really an exceptional time in history, and they were exceptional people to have the courage to challenge the British Government. It is an extraordinary group

Well, bring me this book some other day. I'll look at it in more detail and read a little It is interesting to see how Sri Aurobindo began this movement and how it produced so many gifted people

*(A Spirit Indomitable edited by Mona Sarkar, pp 19-29)*

## AUGUST 15: SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTHDAY\*

SHRI AUROBINDO'S birthday, which happily synchronises with our Day of Independence, is a reminder to every lover of peace, happiness and integrated development of human personality of the great force of spiritualism. On this day we should bring ourselves closer to the teachings of this savant and appreciate his idealist approach to the manifold problems of the individual and the human society. Sri Aurobindo's ideas and ideals, though the world has yet to understand them in full, appear at times prophetic. His penetrating intellect saw things clearly and his idealism had a strong practical bias. Now that some of his ideals and promises have been fulfilled, it is time that at least the people of this country made a concerted effort to understand the teachings of this Mahayogi and, seeking guidance from them, propagate them for the good of humanity at large.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rajendra Prasad". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

This letter from Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of the Republic of India, is being reproduced here from the August 1962 issue of *Mother India*. Its relevance for understanding the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and seeking his guidance for the good of humanity is very much valid for the people of this country even today.

—Editor

## SUNDAY TIMES, SRI AUROBINDO SUPPLEMENT, AUGUST 11, 1940

*[A special four-page Supplement on Sri Aurobindo was brought out by the Sunday Times of Madras on 11 August 1940 Besides introductory articles on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the Supplement carried extensive write-ups on his mission and his message to the world Passages from his various writings were excerpted to bring out his contributions in the spiritual, cultural and national fields A significant feature of the Supplement was a good presentation of Sri Aurobindo's The Synthesis of Yoga that was under preparation for publication at that time There were also a number of photographs of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother and the Ashram This was perhaps the first time that such large publicity was given to Sri Aurobindo's work by the Press Its appearance at the beginning of the Second World War has undoubtedly its own occult meaning. To mark the 125th Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo we reproduce in the July and August issues of Mother India the full text of the Supplement ]*

### DIVINE DREAMER AND HIS MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

[On August 15th falls the birthday of Sri Aurobindo He was born in Calcutta in 1872 and it is now [in 1940] thirty years since he started his silent Sadhana at the Pondicherry Ashram The article below deals with his Yoga and his mission ]

DIVINE Masters come into the world once in hundreds of years They come to sow on earth seeds of immortality They descend here as emanations of the Divine Grace to purify and glorify existence divinely They are the fruits of ages of human aspiration Their presence is Power, it quickens the evolution of man to superman They are the dual phenomenon of humanity and divinity Their reality is far deeper than the eidolon of appearance Silent like self-gathered buds, their life suddenly blossoms into a splendour of divinity A new life of truth and beauty, love and harmony gathers around their blissful radiance

\*

Such a great Master is Sri Aurobindo Calm, majestic, radiant, self-fixed, enthroned upon dynamic peace, the personality of Sri Aurobindo compels our admiration and adoration. His life is more inward than outward. He is essentially a Yogi All the rays of his creative genius diverge from the luminous Yogi in him He is a vast scholar, a wonderful writer, a brilliant teacher, a seer-poet, a man of great sacrifice, the genuine voice of India's Soul The Mother-Consciousness that he kindled three decades ago, is still blood-warm in the heart of the nation But, all these romances are but a partial play





of his vast possibilities, a few sparks of his illumined genius, stray surface bubbles of the undercurrent

Coming closer, one looks with awe at his yogic perfection. Standing before him, for a blessed moment, one feels the magic thrill of a transforming touch, the mind is possessed by a wordless peace, the heart revels in a jubilee of lofty emotion; the life is uplifted to a further rung in the ladder of evolution. Once seen, it is not easy to forget him. He catches hold of our breathing soul by the subtle magic of his charming personality.

Sri Aurobindo is a presence, a manifestation, a transforming Force. In this iron age of doubt and scepticism, dominated by the dollar and dagger of merciless brute force, the advent of such a master presages a new dawn, a new hope for humanity. Fixed in the tranquillity of a dynamic flame-trance, this mahapurusha sheds around him the blessings of a comforting peace and light. None can resist the spell of his irradiant sweetness. None can assert his separative egoism before him. He is the one great master at present, a master of harmonies, who can play the countless keys of existence into one immortal song of universal felicity. For, he lives to make life here a stream of Ananda. He lives a divine life to divinise life. He is a master of nature, he is a thorough expert of

human psychology and knows at once how to repair its eccentric turns Divinity glows through his body, his nerves are channels of the cosmic force, his senses are full of ecstasy, his breath is a subtle flow of Delight, his intellect a lamp of effulgent wisdom, his soul is in tune with the Infinite, his spirit enlarges towards a glorious vision, his words descend from the height of an omniscient peace

\*

The mission of Sri Aurobindo is spiritual and universal. It does not belong to a particular race, country or religion All these egoistic differences born of the imperfect mind shatter before his bold-faced truth of life in the equal Spirit His vision and its realisation embrace the entire humanity A divinised humanity, a race of supermen, a spiritual communion, a transformed existence of truth, beauty, harmony and the kingdom of the Divine upon earth—these are the sum and substance of his life and living thoughts All his works are varied explanations of these five formulas of his Spiritual Idealism To build immortality with mortal things, to extend heaven's joy upon toiling earth, to ring out the age of pessimism and ascetic barrenness and ring in a New Era rich with the throb of a perfect life, to bring a perfect millennium upon earth and to raise man beyond the divided mentality to the rapturous transcendence of supramental Ananda—these are the aspirations of this born Yogi

\*

Through the shadows of this Iron age that engulfs earth with a host of miseries, this divine dreamer leads us to a heavenised world far beyond mental fancy. There things are naturally perfect movements, steps of truth, soul's rays of divinity and life is a stream of Ananda. There unity rests on inner oneness, beauty of existence flows from the harmony of hearts None shrinks from life and love, none loses his or her godhead

The otherworldly tendencies that unfortunately possessed the mentality of our ancient land diminished our natural capacity to live in the active world spiritually Matter, Spirit, and the Supreme are the threefold realities of Existence Spirit in harmony with the Supreme must transform and gain Matter.

\*

There is a plane far above the highest mind, it is called the Supramental plane Evolved to its eminence, man can live here, in the beauty and harmony of the Spirit, or in a life full of peace, light, love, joy and the dynamism of the soul Man can live in the Divine, divinely. Man can attain Life Divine. This is the new message of Sri Aurobindo in the world.

Vast is the scope of Sri Aurobindo's Supramental Yoga, it perfects man and liberates his divine nature, it transforms life in detail and makes it an efflorescence of

the Spirit It widens life, lifts it beyond the dual bonds, beyond the limits of the divided life and cradles it in the delight of supramental infinities It accords man divine consciousness, divine life, divine form, divine energy to work divinely It aims at the double mastery of self-conquest and the conquest of matter, self-realisation and self-expansion Its Sadhana includes a harmonious union of love, action, and knowledge It raises the material superstructure upon the bedrock of the eternal Spirit It brings to light the lost link that unites man and God, earth and heaven, matter and the spirit; in short it fulfils the human aggregate in the Divine

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## FROM MAN TO SUPERMAN

The evolution of man to superman is the great effort of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga There is the Brute in man, Man in man and God in man, living in the lower vital nature he becomes a brute; living in the mind he is man, living in the Spirit he is god-man God-man is superman, man evolved to the height of divinity The mental man is imperfect, superman is the perfect man

Superman is not an asura, Asura is a force of darkness moved by vital egoism Superman is not Nietzsche's armed tyrant thirsting for blood-soaked power. Superman is an embodiment of Dharma His work is worship He is a centre of the Divine Force He lives, moves and has his being in the Divine He lives to fulfil the Divine Will To him Existence is the play of the Divine and himself an actor therein He acts not upon his own initiative; he acts as the ready instrument of the Divine Will, Action and its result—he consecrates both to the Divine The act of consecration is his sole delight

### Limited Being

Man is a limited being, he lives in the mind which is limited, divided, half obscure and tossed by the modes of nature Man's works are mental constructions His religions, castes, creeds, race-pride, etc , are all mental constructions They divide the collective man into ever opposing sects and create all sorts of disturbance in the world

To bring beauty and harmony in the collective existence of man is a superhuman effort Beauty and harmony are blossoms of the Divine Spirit. Life must take root in the spirit, grow in the spiritual consciousness in order to put forth the blossoms of beauty and harmony True beauty is soul-born The superman is a messenger of the All-Beautiful.

### Connecting Link

Superman is one who has exceeded the human limits He has outgrown human nature to likeness and oneness with the Divine Superman is a transformed man. He

transcends the mind and lives in the Supermind Supermind or Vignana is an all-comprehensive, all-fulfilling, Truth-consciousness It is the link between the human and the Divine It is a dynamic self-knowledge, a creative force of the divine idea Its creation is inspired by Ananda. In it the soul possesses its Infinite oneness with the Supreme Purusha

By attaining to the supramental plane of consciousness, man becomes a superman This cannot be effected in a day It is a process of slow evolution. Yoga quickens the evolution By living in yoga or union with the Divine Spirit, human nature gets transformed Transformation means to change and exchange the present human for the Divine being, nature, consciousness, knowledge, felicity, to possess and enjoy existence in cosmic consciousness It is to divinise human existence and make all its details a Yoga with the Divine

### Ultimate Goal

Superman is such a divinised man Clarity of self-knowledge, intensity of aspiration, purity of the inner instrument, surrender and consecration of the entire being to the Divine Will, an ego-free sincerity, a receptive plasticity, these are necessary for the transformation of man into superman

Nature is progressing in its work of age-long evolution From plant to animal, from animal to man, from man to superman is its mounting course Superman shall be the future man He is a universalised individual, living in the light of supramental gnosis; he is a god-man Let us all be pilgrims of the Divine Will progressing everyday towards that highest destiny of man. (Swami Shuddhananda Bharati)

### Poorna Yoga

The ascent to life Divine is the justification of human existence To find the Truth-Consciousness-Bliss in the self, be that and become that, to find the Heaven upon the life of Nature, for the felicity of the whole Humanity, to manifest the Divine in man—this is the scope of the Poorna Yoga of Sri Aurobindo (Swami Shuddhananda Bharati)

### SOUL'S ASCENT

The soul's ascent from the lower to the higher trinity is a very difficult journey Mounting many a hill, crossing many a torrent, traversing many a plateau the human soul has to fight its way through a horde of titans, pythons, cunning Asuras, vital demons, danavas, all subconscious powers, sons of division The soul in its flaming upward journey has to encounter many a Vritra, many a Vala, many a Sushna, many a Dasyu, all eaters, fearers, haters, egoistic asuric forces—ignorance, doubt, weakness, impurity, and dualised neutrality personified (Swami Shuddhananda Bharati)



### SILENT SADHANA THAT EVOLVED THE SUPERMAN

[The following article on Sri Aurobindo and his Yoga is compiled from “The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo” by Swami Shuddhananda Bharati. This is one of the books selected and preserved for future generations in the Crypt of Civilisation in the U S A., to be opened six thousand years hence ]

“O Fosterer, O Sole Seer, O Ordainer, Illuminating Sun, O Power of the Father of creatures, marshal Thy rays, draw together Thy silent light, the Lustre which is Thy most blessed form of all, that in Thee I behold The Purusha there and there, He am I ”  
—(*Ishopanishad*)

It is with this rapture of the Vedic seer that a conscious heart sees Sri Aurobindo to-day, grand like the Himalayas, vast like the blue above and the blue below

His has been a life moulded into the Spirit’s perfect image by the Divine within, in the illuminated passivity of utter surrender and the infinite strength of dynamic silence and inner peace

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All that the world knows of him—his brilliant Cambridge career, his distinction in the open competition for the I C S , his fourteen years’ study in England (1879-1893), his wonderful mastery of the Classical languages and the strenuous efforts he made to assimilate the Oriental genius into his profound Western culture. his unparalleled renunciation of everything that man holds dear at the flaming altar of the Great Mother, his prodigious services for the cause of National education, the dauntless hero in him

who awakened the Mother-consciousness in the country and inflamed it from the press and platform to noble acts of service and sacrifice, the national prophet who voiced forth the messages of the Mother from the columns of the *Bande Mataram*, the *Karmayogin*, and the *Dharma*, the definite shape he gave to Nationalism and the fadeless lustre he shed upon the movement for eight years (1902-1910) by his unique personality.. , the historic Alipore trial and his final coming to Pondicherry in the April of 1910—all these and many more things that the public know about him are only sprays of that profound deep

\*

His flaming aspiration to see God face to face is revealed to us in one of his most popularly known letters He was mad after God and divinity Perfect was his faith, and unreserved his surrender to the Highest Divine

The ardent aspiration of Sri Aurobindo to see God face to face was fulfilled during his one year's *tapasyā* in Alipore Jail

“His strength entered into me and I was able to do the Sadhana of the Gita . to be free from repulsion and desire, to do work for him without the demand for fruit, to renounce self-will and become a passive and faithful instrument in His hands, to have an equal heart for the high and low, friend and opponent, success and failure He made me realise the central truth of the Hindu religion. While I was walking, His strength entered into me . ”

It is in the *Arya*, the veritable Gospel of Poorna Yoga, the one wonderful work that deserves to be the scripture of the present and the coming humanity, started after four years of silent Sadhana, that we meet the Superman, the God-man, the Poorna Yogi that Sri Aurobindo is.

\*

Every sentence of the *Arya*, so rhythmic, so well-balanced, so replete with the Spirit's highest promises, so eloquent with its divine optimism, deserves to be inscribed in the heart of humanity in letters of gold

“To know, possess and be the Divine in an animal and egoistic consciousness, to convey the twilight or obscure mentality into the plenary supramental illumination, to build self-existent bliss and peace where there is a stress of transitory satisfactions besieged by physical pain and emotional suffering, to establish infinite freedom in a world presenting itself as a group of mechanical necessities, to discover and realise immortal life in a body subject to death and constant mutation,”—this is the limitless scope of His wonderful synthetic Yoga and its fulfilment is his entire preoccupation To divinise man and heavenise existence, to universalise the individual, to be God in man and godlike in God's universal play—this is the ideal with which he was born.

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### GEMS OF THE PUREST RAY SERENE

The whole world yearns after freedom, yet each creature is in love with his chains, this is the first paradox and inextricable knot of our nature

#### National Awakening

No national awakening is really vital and enduring which confines itself to a single field. It is when the soul awakens that a nation is really alive, and the life will then

manifest itself in all the manifold forms of activity in which man seeks to express the strength and the delight of the expansive spirit within

### Sphinx-like Future

The future is a Sphinx with two minds, an energy which offers itself and denies, gives itself and resists, seeks to enthrone us and seeks to slay. But the conquest has to be attempted, the wager has to be accepted. We have to face the future's offer of death as well as its offer of life, and it need not alarm us, for it is by constant death to our old names and forms that we shall live most vitally in greater and newer forms and names.

### India's Heritage

One thing at any rate seems certain, that the spiritual motive will be in the future of India, as in the past, the real originative and dominating strain.

By spirituality we do not mean a remote metaphysical mind or the tendency to dream rather than act. That was not the great India of old in her splendid days of vigour,—whatever certain European critics or interpreters of her culture may say,—and it will not be the India of the future.

Some think it presumption to believe in a special Providence or to look upon oneself as an instrument in the hands of God, but I find that every man has a special Providence and I see that God uses the mattock of the labourer and babbles in the mouth of a little child.

### Spirit of Hinduism

Nationalism has been hitherto largely a revolt against the tendency to shape ourselves into the mould of Europe, but it must also be on its guard against any tendency to cling to every detail that has been Indian. That has not been the spirit of Hinduism in the past. There is no reason why it should be so in future.

### Yoga Defined

Yoga is communion with God for knowledge, for love or for work. The Yogin puts himself into direct relation with that which is omniscient and omnipotent within man and without him. He is in tune with the Infinite, he becomes a channel for the strength of God to pour itself out upon the world whether through calm benevolence or active beneficence.

### Nature's Reminder

Pain and grief are Nature's reminder to the soul that the pleasure it enjoys is only a



feeble hint of the real delight of existence. In each pain and torture of our being is the secret of a flame of rapture compared with which our greatest pleasures are only dim flickerings. It is this secret which forms the attraction for the soul of the great ordeals, sufferings and fierce experiences of life which the nervous mind in us shuns and abhors

### Europe's Need

The salvation of the human race lies in a more sane and integral development of the possibilities of mankind in the individual and in the community. The safety of Europe has to be sought in the recognition of the spiritual aim of human existence, otherwise she will be crushed by the weight of her own unilluminated knowledge and soulless organisation.

### Greatest Need

Each religion has helped mankind. Paganism increased in man the light of beauty, the largeness and height of his life, his aim at a many-sided perfection, Christianity gave him some vision of divine love and charity, Buddhism has shown a noble way to be wiser, gentler, purer, Judaism and Islam how to be religiously faithful in action and zealously devoted to God, Hinduism has opened to him the largest and profoundest spiritual possibilities. A great thing would be done if all these God-visions could embrace and cast themselves into each other, but intellectual dogma and cult-egoism stand in the way.

## HIDE AND SEEK

The world is a great game of hide and seek, in which the real hides behind the apparent, spirit behind matter.

The apparent masquerades as real, the real is seen dimly as if it were an unsubstantial shadow. The grandeur of the visible universe and its laws enslaves man's imagination.

“This is a mighty machine” we cry, but it moves of its own force and needs neither guide nor maker, for its motion is eternal.

Blinded by a half truth we fail to see that, instead of a machine without a maker, there is really an existence, and no machine.

The world is a waking dream, an embodied vision, a mass of knowledge, arranged in corporeal appearances, expressing so many ideas which are each only a part of one unchanging truth. Everything becomes, nothing is made. Everything is put out from latency, nothing is brought into existence. Only that which was, can be, not that which was not. And that which is cannot perish, it can only lose itself. All is eternal in the eternal Spirit.

## ON REBIRTH

You must avoid a common popular blunder about reincarnation. The popular idea is that Titus Balbus is reborn again as John Smith, a man with the same personality, character, attainments, as he had in his former life, with the sole difference that he wears coat and trousers instead of a toga and speaks in cockney English instead of popular Latin. That is not the case. What would be the earthly use of repeating the same personality or character a million times from the beginning of Time till its end? The soul comes into birth for experience, for growth, for evolution till it can bring the Divine into matter. It is the central being that incarnates, not the outer personality—the personality is simply a mould that it creates for its figures of experience in that one life. In another birth it will create for itself a different personality, different capacities, a different life and career.

Supposing Virgil is born again he may take up poetry in one or two other lives, but he will certainly not write an epic but rather perhaps slight but elegant and beautiful lyrics such as he wanted to write, but did not succeed, in Rome. In another birth he is likely to be no poet at all but a philosopher and Yogi seeking to attain and express the highest truth—for that too was an unrealised trend of his consciousness in that life. Perhaps before he had been a warrior or ruler doing deeds like Aeneas or Augustus before he sang them. And so on—on this side or that the central being develops a new character, a new personality, grows, develops, passes through all kinds of terrestrial experience.

## THE GENIUS OF SRI AUROBINDO

GREAT souls live in communion with God. Pre-eminent among such are Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Gandhiji and Sri Aurobindo. Many a time Gandhiji waited for his "inner voice" for guidance, whereas Sri Aurobindo had "crucial experiences and revelations." In the seclusion of his solitary cell in Alipore Jail, he asked God "Give me Thy *adesh*. I do not know what work to do, or how to do it. Give me a message." At that crucial moment, the message he received was: "I have given you a work and it is to help uplift this nation." To Sri Aurobindo it was unclear. He could not make out what it meant. The second message answered his doubts: he should pursue and propagate "the truth of the Hindu religion."

Earlier, when he returned from England after 14 years with almost no trace of Indianness, Sri Aurobindo had approached God for guidance. But, at that time, as he admitted, "I hardly had a living faith in Him." He was an agnostic, an atheist, a sceptic. That changed completely when he and others made preparations for the agitation against the Bengal Partition. During the agitation, Sri Aurobindo "breathed inspiration, force and clarity of purpose into the nascent nationalist movement." He stood for "Swaraj, or absolute autonomy, free from foreign control." Bankim's *Bande Mataram* helped him give to the movement a new direction and meaning, and he himself emerged as "the most powerful apostle of militant Indian nationalism."

On release from Alipore Jail, Sri Aurobindo had another revelation. He was "ordered" to leave for Pondicherry on a mission "to live for God in oneself and others and not for oneself only; to make the whole life a *sadhana*. [and] to reverse the process and recover what we have lost—[in] the spiritual and intellectual divorce from the past."

As a *yogi* and a teacher pursuing God's *adesh*, Sri Aurobindo aspired for India's rebirth. He believed that "ancient or pre-Buddhistic Hinduism sought Him both in the world and outside it, it took its stand on the strength and beauty and joy of the Veda, unlike modern or post-Buddhistic Hinduism, which is oppressed with Buddha's sense of universal sorrow and Shankara's sense of universal illusion. Ancient Hinduism aimed socially at our fulfilment in God in life, modern Hinduism at the escape from life to God." He believed in the Aryan concept and practice of equality, in Hinduism, in the division of society not by birth but by profession.

Sri Aurobindo did not have faith in Shankara's monastic order. He feared that the Ramakrishna Mission, "with all its good intentions, is only going to give us Shankaracharya and Buddhistic humanitarianism." That was not Sri Aurobindo's goal. He believed in pure Aryan culture and Aryan life in which "a Brahmin was a Brahmin not by mere birth but because he discharged the duty of preserving the spiritual and intellectual elevation of the race." To him, "caste was originally an arrangement for the distribution of functions in a society: caste as it stands is merely *Jat*, the trade guild sanctified but no longer working, it is not the external religion, it is not *chaturvarnya*." He stated "There is no doubt that the institution of caste degenerated. It ceased to be



determined by spiritual qualifications.. [it was] determined by purely material tests of occupation and birth.”

Sri Aurobindo was in active politics from 1903 to 1910 “with one aim to get into the mind of the people a settled will for freedom and the necessity of a struggle to achieve it”—the first through the nullification of the Bengal Partition. He gave up active politics at God’s will, and from the peaceful, spiritualised environs of his *ashram* at Pondicherry, he carried on God’s *adesh*; practising *yoga*, studying the Vedas and devoting himself, body and soul, to a revival of India’s cultural past—the spiritual greatness of Hinduism

Yet Sri Aurobindo could not totally dissociate himself from the cause of his country’s freedom. He argued: “If Britons love England with all her faults, why should we fail to love India whose faults were whittled down to an irreducible minimum till foreign conquests threw the whole society out of gear?” He further asked himself. “What is our mother-country? It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind...I look upon my country as the Mother. I adore her. I worship her as the Mother What would a son do if a demon sat on his mother’s breast and started sucking her blood?” As a witness to such a grim and sorrowful happening, Sri Aurobindo’s cry was that of a loving dutiful son.

The first such cry was over the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909. The Reforms’ mischief, Sri Aurobindo stated on November 6, 1909, lay in the deliberate act that “it is only one minority which is specially cared for and this special care is extended to it even in provinces where it is in a large majority No provision at all has been made for the safeguarding of Hindu minorities, for the Parsis, the Sikhs, the Christians and other sections ” The uncompromising fighter in him pronounced: “We will have no part or lot in reforms which give no popular majority, no substantive control, no opportunity for Indian capacity and statesmanship, no seed of democratic expansion We will not for a moment accept separate electorates or separate representation, not because we are opposed to a large Mohamedan influence in popular assemblies...but because we will be no party to a distinction which recognises Hindu and Mahomedan as permanently separate political units and thus precludes the growth of a single and indivisible Indian nation.” The Congress under the Moderates’ control turned a blind eye to such dangers.

By giving separate representation to the Muslims, the British sowed the seeds for the growth of a “separate people” in the Indian Muslims This separatism grew over the years to swallow up what Sri Aurobindo had fought for during the Bengal partition agitation: *Swaraj* for a united India. He had to observe sadly: “ unless the Hindus have the strength of mind to boycott the system which creates a distinction insulting as well as injurious to the community, this measure.. will be a potent engine for dividing the nation into two hostile interests and barring the way towards the unity of India ”

Sri Aurobindo regretted that the “Mahomedans base their separateness and their refusal to regard themselves as Indians first and Muslims afterwards on the existence of great Mahomedan nations to which they feel themselves more akin in spite of our

common birth and blood ” The Khilafat cause was a conclusive proof of that In the new Legislative Councils, the Muslims had representation “not as children of the soil, an integral portion of one Indian people, but as a politically distinct and hostile interest ”

Sri Aurobindo was critical of Tilak, whom he regarded as a man of “pre-eminent political genius”, possessing “a greater order of mind”, who was the first to bring into politics “religious fervour and spiritualism ” Sri Aurobindo called Tilak’s Lucknow Pact with Jinnah “a great blunder . the recognition of the communal principle at Lucknow made them [the Muslims] permanently a separate political entity in India . [and] the Khilafat affair made that separate political entity an organised separate political power ”

If Tilak, according to Sri Aurobindo, committed a blunder in his acceptance of the Lucknow Pact, Gandhiji committed a greater one in his giving a vociferous lead to the Khilafat agitation The Khilafat aggravated the communal problem and resulted in a spate of serious riots Some regard it as the first step towards India’s Partition

To Sri Aurobindo’s regret, Gandhiji expressed the view “To the Musalmans, *Swaraj* means, as it must, India’s ability to deal effectively with the Khilafat question I would gladly ask for postponement of *Swaraj* actively if thereby we could advance the interest of Khilafat ” Khilafat sidelined *Swaraj*.

Sri Aurobindo observed as early as 1926 “I don’t know why our politicians accepted Gandhi’s Khilafat agitation ” Sri Aurobindo considered that “the attempt to placate the Muslims was a false diplomacy Indeed if the Hindus had devoted themselves to national work, the Muslims would have gradually come of themselves.”

Hindu-Muslim unity, Sri Aurobindo stated, “cannot be effected by political adjustments or Congress flatteries It must be sought deeper down in the heart and in the mind, for, where the causes of disunion are, there the remedies must be sought ”

India got her independence on the day marking Sri Aurobindo’s birth—August 15 He sadly witnessed the dawn of freedom He observed, “India is free but she has not achieved unity, only a fissured and broken freedom The old communal division into Hindu and Muslim seems to have hardened into the figure of a permanent political division of the country ” A year later, in 1948, he again observed, “I am afraid I can hold out but cold comfort—for the present at least Things are bad, are growing worse and may at any time grow worst, or worse than worst ”

He had said nearly three decades earlier. “The main cause of India’s weakness is not subjection, nor poverty, nor a lack of spirituality or Dharma, but a diminution of thought-power, the spread of ignorance in the motherland of knowledge ”

He had also stated about the same time “What India needs is the aggressive virtues, the spirit of soaring idealism, bold creation, fearless resistance, courageous attack, of the passive tamasic spirit of inertia we have already too much ” If India has suffered and gone down, it is due to the lack of the former and the presence of the latter

Yet, the visionary in Sri Aurobindo hopefully said that “night is darkest before dawn, and the coming of dawn is inevitable ” He believed in the rebirth of India’s

greatness. He had implicit faith in ‘her mission, her gospel, her immortal life and her eternal rebirth.’ His hope lay in the argument ‘‘We should long ago have been in the grave where dead nations lie, with Greece and Rome. In India alone there is self-contained, dormant, the energy and the invincible spiritual individuality which can yet arise and break her own and the world’s fetters.’’

Of his first meeting with Sri Aurobindo, Tagore records ‘‘At the very first sight I could realise that he had accumulated within him a silent power of inspiration. His face was radiant with an inner light, and the serene presence made it evident to me that his soul was not crippled and cramped. .’’

Tagore called him ‘‘the voice incarnate, free, of India’s soul.’’ Romain Rolland looked upon Sri Aurobindo as ‘‘the completest synthesis that has been realised to this day by the geniuses of Asia and Europe.’’

B KRISHNA

(Courtesy *The Hindu*, 24 November 1996)

## TRIBUTES TO SRI AUROBINDO FROM CELEBRITIES

### *The London Times Literary Supplement*

*The internationally renowned weekly introduced Sri Aurobindo to its readers in an important editorial message as a great new force in world thought, thus.*

“OF all modern Indian writers Aurobindo—successively poet, critic, scholar, thinker, nationalist, humanist—is the most significant and perhaps the most interesting. Yet few have heard of him in England or America. This is a pity, for he should make a special appeal to the intelligent Anglo-Saxon. He is not an arm-chair philosopher, but a man who, having led a life of intense activity, has retired to brood over it, if one may say so of a Hindu, in the dim light of a Gothic cathedral. In fact, he is a new type of thinker, one who combines in his vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East. To study his writings is to enlarge the boundaries of one’s knowledge.

“ He gave up everything, and withdrew to Pondicherry—to follow the new light that had been vouchsafed to him. What was this light? To be of active help to the new world which, in his opinion, was struggling to be born. To achieve this aim he had, first, to make of his body, mind and spirit a delicate and precise instrument, and then to learn to draw from this instrument the maximum of its possibilities. Aurobindo cannot be dismissed as one who happens to have written a few fine books. He writes as though he were standing among the stars, with the constellations for his companions.

“That he is a great idealist goes without saying, but he is not an idealist in the Shankaran or Berkeleyan manner. He has achieved a reconciliation between matter and spirit. They are, in his opinion, one and indivisible. It is not necessary, he says, to prove the existence of God. He is in Him we live and move and have our being. The world is His manifestation, and so is as real as God. If it is a dream, it is a dream in Reality and made of the same stuff as this Reality. If the gold is real, Aurobindo tells us, the vessel of gold is as real and can never be a figment of the brain.

“Aurobindo is no visionary. He has always acted his dreams. ‘Truth of philosophy,’ he has said, ‘is of a merely theoretical value unless it can be lived’—an internationalist, not in a dreamy nor yet in a conventional manner, but by inner compulsion—the compulsion of thought leading to an inevitable conclusion. Long before others he spoke of ‘one world.’ His final word is that we are, whether we like it or not, ‘members one of another.’ Unless we realize this truth, and act upon it, we shall never have peace and goodwill on earth.”

### **A Few Tributes to Sri Aurobindo**

“Sri Aurobindo [is] the foremost of Indian thinkers, who has realized the most



complete synthesis between the genius of the West and of the East ”

ROMAIN ROLLAND  
*Nobel Laureate, France*

“Sri Aurobindo opened the way to my religious consecration I have derived considerable solace and enlightenment from reading his works ”

GABRIELE MISTRAL  
*Nobel Laureate, Chile*

“I shall not restrict Sri Aurobindo’s greatness to this age only We have Plato, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel—but they do not have the same all-embracing metaphysical structure, they do not have the same vision ”

DR FREDERIC SPIEGELBERG  
*Stanford University*

“Aurobindo’s treatises are among the most important works of our time in philosophy, ethics and humanities. Sri Aurobindo himself is one of the greatest living sages of our time ”

PITIRIM A SOROKIN  
*Research Center Director, Harvard University*

“Gandhi is one of the greatest saints, Tagore one of the greatest poets of modern India, but Sri Aurobindo is one of the greatest thinkers, indeed he has attained an incomparable triune greatness as poet, philosopher and saint ”

RAYMOND FRANK PIPER, PH D  
*Prof. of Philosophy, Syracuse University*

“Aurobindo is to me one of the greatest teachers of mankind today His wisdom surpasses intellectual knowledge and inspires efforts to reach contact with the life divine In a darkened age his message brings hope ”

BARON PALMSTIERENA  
*President, World Congress of Faiths*

“At the very first sight I could realize that he [Sri Aurobindo]. had accumulated within him a silent power of inspiration . I said to him, ‘You have the Word and we are waiting to accept it from you. India will speak through your voice, ‘*Hearken to me* ’ ”

RABINDRANATH TAGORE  
*Nobel Laureate, India*

## SRI AUROBINDO, SISTER NIVEDITA AND THE BENGAL REVOLUTIONARIES

(Continued from the issue of July, 1997)

MANY fanciful stories have been written about Sri Aurobindo's flight from Calcutta in February 1910. Nivedita's biographers have stated that Sri Aurobindo fled from Calcutta under Nivedita's advice. This story has no foundation in fact. If Nivedita had given any advice to Sri Aurobindo for fleeing from Calcutta, it was many months earlier (perhaps in July, 1909) when he wrote out his first Open Letter to his countrymen on 31 July 1909. Then five long months elapsed, but Sri Aurobindo did not abscond. In the meantime, his second Open Letter was published on 25 December 1909. After this incident things moved fast and a month and a half passed. The events happening before Sri Aurobindo's flight are as follows: On 15 February 1910 he was working in the *Karmayogin* office on Shyampukur Street (North Calcutta) when all of a sudden Ramchandra Majumdar, a sub-editor of the paper, entered the office and informed Sri Aurobindo that he had learnt from a high-ranking police officer that the next day the *Karmayogin* office would be searched and the editor arrested. Heated discussions then ensued when Sri Aurobindo heard the voice of God speaking to him 'Go to Chandernagore'.<sup>21</sup> In ten minutes' time or so Sri Aurobindo proceeded towards the Ganga Ghat near Bag Bazar and silently left for Chandernagore by an ordinary country boat, accompanied by Biren Ghosh and Moni (Suresh Chandra Chakraborty) who came back to Calcutta the next morning.<sup>22</sup> Sri Aurobindo has clearly stated that his flight to Chandernagore was not due to Nivedita's advice. "Sister Nivedita," writes Sri Aurobindo, "knew nothing of these new happenings till after I reached Chandernagore. I did not go to her house or see her, it is wholly untrue that she and Gonen Maharaj came to see me off at the Ghat."<sup>23</sup> Before his flight, he wrote a letter to Nivedita (in connection with the conduct of the *Karmayogin* in his absence) which was handed over to her on the day following his flight to Chandernagore, not before it. The well-circulated story that Sri Aurobindo saw Sri Sarada Devi at the Udbodhan Math at Bag Bazar seeking her blessings before his departure has been rejected by Sri Aurobindo as a myth and romance.<sup>24</sup> Nothing of this kind happened at all. A young scholar Dr. Jaysree Mukherjee in her doctoral dissertation on the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement (1893-1922) has demonstrated on the strength of unimpeachable sources of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission that the Holy Mother Sarada Devi was away from Calcutta in her country house at Jairambati during the period from 16 November 1909 to 1910 June and so there was no earthly possibility of Sri Aurobindo meeting the Mother at the Udbodhan Math on 15 February 1910 when he departed from Calcutta.<sup>25</sup> Sankari Prasad Basu's uncritical assessment of Nivedita's role and that of Sri Aurobindo's *vis-à-vis* the national movement has been critically dealt with at length and ably countered by Nirodbaran in his booklet on *Nivedita, Sri Aurobindo and the National Movement: A Corrective Comment* (Siliguri, 1985). The booklet is full of

authentic facts and cogent arguments S P Basu approvingly quotes from Nivedita to the effect that “religious experience and strategy are by no means the same thing and ought not to be confused” This strange utterance of Nivedita with reference to Sri Aurobindo has been subjected to severe scrutiny and rejected with ample justification by Nirodbaran as an incorrect picture of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of life or Yoga A modern critic may well argue that if it was possible for Vivekananda to bring Vedanta to the mundane plane of active social service and humanitarian work, why could not another great man bring his Yoga to the plane of practical politics for India’s national liberation? There is no inherent contradiction between the two things, viz, ‘religious experience’ and ‘strategy’, as misconceived both by Nivedita and her admirer S. P. Basu. Sri Aurobindo’s article on ‘Religion and Politics’ published in the *Bande Mataram* on 2 August 1907 and his article on ‘Politics and Spirituality’ published in the same paper on 9 November 1907 are revealing documents in refutation of their basic misconception In the first article Sri Aurobindo stated that “to talk of religion and politics as two unconnected departments of human affairs provokes laughter A politically dead nation is a cipher Those who allow others to take possession of their body, cannot long remain in possession of their soul The preservation of the body in a sound condition is the first requisite for all spiritual advancement It is a vain philosophy that seeks to set a gulf between the spirit and the body It is necessary to realize the interdependence of the two” Again, in the *Bande Mataram* article dated 9 November 1907 the author reminded the denunciators of “politics as an expression of material life” by observing “In fact, the true aim of the Nationalist movement is to restore the spiritual greatness of the nation by the essential preliminary of its political regeneration. . Subjection makes a people wholly *tamasic*, a sort of physical, intellectual and moral palsy seizes them and keeps them down to a low level of being, they are like insects grovelling in the dust, and before they can be lifted up to the higher plane of *sattwa*, they must pass through *rajas*” Sri Aurobindo had no sanction for that class of mind which took recourse to the “common device to support one’s pretensions to spirituality by speaking contemptuously of the material life” In his vision, Yoga or spiritual *sadhana* and politics (not excluding strategy) are not two unconnected things He has demonstrated their fusion in his own life, how spirituality can give a higher meaning and greater dimension to politics To say that in spite of his spiritual fervour Sri Aurobindo was, in Nivedita’s eyes, no more than a revolutionary leader, as Sankar Prasad Basu would have us believe, is to betray colossal ignorance of Sri Aurobindo’s Yogic life Nivedita’s lack of proper understanding of it is no argument for the disproof thereof

To conclude, it has to be emphasized that Sri Aurobindo’s departure from Calcutta (February 1910) did not mean a sudden death of his revolutionary life After spending a month and a half at Chandernagore as a political absconder, he left for Pondicherry (April 1910) where he stayed till his death in December 1950<sup>26</sup> From a book entitled *Light to Superlight* (May 1972) edited by Arun Chandra Dutt and published by the Pravartak Sangha, Chandernagore, it is amply revealed that for many years after 1910

Sri Aurobindo continued to function as the chief adviser of the Bengal revolutionaries with Chandernagore as their main base of operations.<sup>27</sup> This view is reinforced also by the Intelligence Branch records of the time which describe the 'Karta' (meaning Sri Aurobindo) as the "founder of the violence section of the Bengal revolutionary party." The non-mention of the name of Sister Nivedita as a revolutionary leader in the Intelligence Branch records is itself a refutation of the alleged theory that Nivedita was a dreaded person in the eyes of the British bureaucracy who would have never spared her of serious consequences if she had been found actually and actively involved in the revolutionary movement. The argument that Nivedita was given a free hand in her revolutionary work, which meant at bottom anti-British work, simply because she was a European does not stand the test of searching scrutiny. Annie Besant, a great European lady working for India's Home Rule, was not spared by the British bureaucracy with whom the imperial interests counted most.

From 1916, specially from 1920, Sri Aurobindo became more and more absorbed in spiritual *sadhana* and literary and philosophical creations. The oft-repeated story that Sri Aurobindo turned into a spiritual recluse at Pondicherry practising Yoga as a result of his political frustration does not fit in with the unique experiences of his inner life even when he was passionately involved in political turmoil. His interest in Pranayama and Yoga went back to his Baroda days (1893-1906). As he himself wrote, "Sri Aurobindo started his Sadhana at Baroda in 1904 on his own account after learning from a friend the ordinary formula of Pranayama. Afterwards the only help he received was from the Maharashtrian Yogi, Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, who instructed him how to reach complete silence of the mind and immobility of the whole consciousness."<sup>28</sup> In his letter to his wife dated 30 August 1905, he spoke of his three madresses including his passion for having "the direct vision of God".<sup>29</sup> Those who knew Sri Aurobindo intimately in the fiery times of the Swadeshi Movement could not fail to discern that his interest in Yoga and spiritual *sadhana* was a conspicuous feature of his life even at that stage. Benoy Kumar Sarkar, who was a close associate of Sri Aurobindo at the Bengal National College, has emphatically stated that revolutionary Aurobindo and Yogi Aurobindo co-existed in his personality side by side.<sup>30</sup>

(Concluded)

HARIDAS MUKHERJEE

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#### Notes and References

21 *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, p 57

22 It is extremely difficult at this distance of time to ascertain the exact date of Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Chandernagore. The eminent historian Peter Heehs of Oxford reputedly\* has shown that Sri Aurobindo was present in

\* The Oxford University Press, Delhi, published Peter Heehs's *Sri Aurobindo—A Brief Biography* in 1989 and *The Bomb in Bengal in 1993*—Editor

Calcutta both on February 11, 1910 (when his uncle Krishna Kumar Mitra was welcomed home after prolonged detainment) and on the evening of February 15, 1910 to receive two more deportees including his former *Bande Mataram* colleague Shyamsundar Chakraborty at the Chandpal Ghat. But Sri Aurobindo was absent at two subsequent functions organized in honour of Krishnakumar Mitra, one on the evening of Feb 15, and the second held on Feb 19. Heehs is of the opinion that Sri Aurobindo's departure from Calcutta to Chandernagore must have taken place between Feb 15 and Feb 19. Arun Chandra Dutt's fixation of the date of Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Chandernagore on Feb 21, 1910 (as recorded in his book *Light to Superlight*, p V) is unacceptable. Heehs states further that after welcoming Shyamsundar Chakraborty at the Chandpal Ghat on the evening of Feb 15, Sri Aurobindo went to the *Karmayogin* office in Shyambazar, from where he shortly left for Chandernagore around eight at night (Feb 15, 1910). It is, therefore, proper to fix Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Chandernagore, according to Christian calendar, on Feb 16, 1910. According to Indian reckoning, the arrival time was during the night following the Saraswati Puja, falling on Monday, Feb 14, 1910, that is, on Tuesday before dawn. Heehs is right in observing that "according to the Indian idea the new day begins at sunrise, not at midnight". From this standpoint, Motilal Roy's statement that Sri Aurobindo reached Chandernagore on the day following the Saraswati Puja, that is, on Tuesday, seems to be correct. Vide Heehs' remarkable article in *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research* (Pondicherry, Vol 8, No 2, December, 1984, pp 221-223)

23 *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, p 70

24 *Ibid*, pp 56-57

25 Pravrajika Muktiprana's *Sister Nivedita*, p 407, fn

26 Uma Mukherjee, *Two Great Indian Revolutionaries* (Calcutta, 1966, pp 39-41), for the details of Sri Aurobindo's escape from Chandernagore to Pondicherry in 1910

27 *Ibid*, pp 41-44, and A C Dutt's *Light to Superlight*, pp 112-183

28 *Sri Aurobindo, 1893-1993* published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1993, p 26. Also see *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, pp 50-51. The first impression that the British journalist Henry W. Nevins got after his meeting with Sri Aurobindo in Calcutta during the Swadeshi days was recorded as follows: "Intent dark eyes looked from his thin, clear-cut face with a gravity that seemed immovable" (Vide *The New Spirit in India*, London and New York, 1908, p 220). Elsewhere Nevins observed about Sri Aurobindo: "Grave with intensity, careless of fate or opinion, and one of the most silent men I have known, he was of the stuff that dreamers are made of, but dreamers who will act their dream, indifferent to the means" (p 226).

29 *Sri Aurobindo 1893-1993*, p 10

30 B K Sarkar, *Political Philosophies Since 1905* (Vol II, Part III, Lahore, 1942, pp 287-295). Also see *Benoy Sarkar's Baithake* edited by H. Mukherjee (1942, p 49). In his masterly assessment of Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, Benoy Sarkar observed, "Although non-political in make-up, *The Life Divine* is a photograph of some of the ideologies of Sri Aurobindo as operating during his political career. The *Arya* came chronologically after the *Bande Mataram* and the *Karmayogin*. But logically and psychologically it pervaded the *Bande Mataram-Karmayogin* complex, nay, had been at work in Sri Aurobindo's psycho-social pattern previous to 1906. The two Aurobindos flourished simultaneously for a long time" (pp 288-289).

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S SPIRITUAL SYSTEM AND THE MOTHER'S CONTRIBUTION TO IT

*(Continued from the issue of July 1997)*

WE may now formulate the whole negative position from the *Arya* period till just after the Siddhi Day. Sri Aurobindo, in his letter of 16 April 1931, has said of "all attempts at the discovery of the dynamic divine Truth" "I know of none that has not imagined, as soon as it felt the Overmind lustrous descending, that this was the true illumination, the Gnosis .."<sup>1</sup> He was himself no exception for quite a length of time, although, unlike the others, he was aware of an ascending range in this "Gnosis" and a far-away culmination of it which he later demarcated as the true Supermind. Asked why the Overmind was not clearly distinguished from the Supermind in the *Arya*, he replied on 20 November 1933

The distinction has not been made in the *Arya* because at that time what I now call the Overmind was supposed to be an inferior plane of the Supermind. But that was because I was seeing them from the Mind. The true defect of Overmind, the limitation in it which gave rise to a world of Ignorance is seen fully only when one looks at it from the physical consciousness, from the result (Ignorance in Matter) to the cause (Overmind division of the Truth). In its own plane Overmind seems to be only a divided, many-sided play of the Truth, so can easily be taken by the Mind as a supramental province. Mind also when flooded by the Overmind lights feels itself living in a surprising revelation of Divine Truth. The difficulty comes when we deal with the vital and still more with the physical. Then it becomes imperative to face the difficulty and to make a sharp distinction between Overmind and Supermind—for it then becomes evident that the Overmind Power (in spite of its lights and splendours) is not sufficient to overcome the Ignorance because it is itself under the law of Division out of which came the Ignorance. One has to pass beyond and supramentalise Overmind so that mind and all the rest may undergo the final change.<sup>2</sup>

To appraise the situation after the *Arya* period, must we not ascertain the time at which Sri Aurobindo moved from the mind level through the vital to deal with the physical? The Overmind's limitation is seen in full, as he says, "only when one looks at it from the physical consciousness"

On 29 December 1934 he writes to a disciple "I am myself living in the physical consciousness and have been for several years. At first it was a plunge into the

1 *The Riddle of This World*, p. 5

2 *SABCL*, Vol. 26, pp. 369-70

physical—into all its obscurity and inertia, afterwards it was a station in the physical open to the higher and higher consciousness and slowly having fought out in it the struggle of transformation of the physical consciousness with a view to prepare it for the supramental change. ’<sup>1</sup> To an inquiry whether with the Sadhana going on in the physical plane all have to come down into the physical consciousness, Sri Aurobindo answers on 31 December 1934: “It is a little difficult to say whether all have to come down totally into the physical. The Mother and I had to do it because the work could not be otherwise done. We had tried to do it from above through the mind and higher vital, but it could not be because the sadhaks were not ready to follow—their lower vital and physical refused to share in what was coming down or else misused it and became full of exaggerated and violent reactions. Since then the sadhana as a whole has come down along with us into the physical consciousness.”<sup>2</sup> Two clues are in our hands. The dealing with the physical consciousness has gone on “for several years” before 1934 and it has begun since the time of the sadhaks’ failure to respond to the working Sri Aurobindo and the Mother attempted “from above”

Did the commencement of the changed action lie in the months immediately succeeding 24 November 1926? It would certainly be “several years” earlier than 1934. Have we any pointer to the type of working tried in those months? There is a significant letter of 18 October 1934:

if the Mother were able to bring out the Divine Personalities and Powers into her body and physical being as she was doing for several months without break some years ago, the brightest period in the history of the Ashram, things would be much more easy and all these dangerous attacks that now take place would be dealt with rapidly and would in fact be impossible. In those days when the Mother was either receiving the sadhaks for meditation or otherwise and concentrating all night and day without sleep and with very irregular food, there was no ill-health and no fatigue in her and things were proceeding with a lightning swiftness. The power used was not that of the Supermind but of the Overmind, but it was sufficient for what was being done. Afterwards, because the lower vital and the physical of the sadhaks could not follow, the Mother had to push the Divine Personalities and Powers, through which she was doing the action, behind a veil and came down into the physical human level and act according to its conditions and that means difficulty, struggle, illness, ignorance and inertia. All has been for long slow, difficult, almost sterile in appearance, and now it is again becoming possible to go forward. But for the advance to be anything like general or swift in its process, the attitude of the sadhaks, not of a few only, must change.<sup>3</sup>

From Nirodbaran’s record too we hear the same story, but two aspects emerge

1 *Sri Aurobindo on Himself* (1953), p. 234

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 387-88

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 383-4

from the conversation of 7 January 1939 which are not in the letter. One of them corroborates the Mother's talk of 10 July 1957. Sri Aurobindo says: "At the time you speak of we were in the vital. People were having brilliant experiences, big push, energy, etc. If our Yoga had taken that line, we could have ended by establishing a great religion, bringing about a big creation, etc., but our real work is different, so we had to come down into the physical. And working on the physical is like digging the ground, the physical is absolutely inert, dead like stone. . . The progress is exceedingly slow .. You have to go on working and working .till you come to a central point in the subconscious which has to be conquered and it is the crux of the whole problem, hence exceedingly difficult" <sup>1</sup> The other aspect shows a possibility that could have been realised in spite of the precipitation into the physical. Sri Aurobindo continues "If the sadhaks had kept the right attitude at the time when the sadhana was in the vital, there would not have been so much difficulty today even in working out the subconscious. For with the force and power gained at that time the Mother could have come down into the physical and done the work with greater ease" <sup>2</sup>

We should now have a fair picture of the time when the sadhana had to come down to the lower levels and when Sri Aurobindo brought the Overmind's power into action not only on the mind and the life-force's higher level where "brilliant experiences, big push, energy" resulted from the action, but also on the lower vital and the physical consciousness. Seeking—while poised on these recalcitrant inferior planes and especially on the latter—the power of total transformation, he looked for the real starting-point of it in the Supramental, clearly beyond the Overmind/Godhead. Only after 24 November 1926 and before he told the Mother that the brilliant creation she was about to materialise was the Overmind's instead of the Supermind's, the experience of the deep distinction between the two originating planes must have blazed forth in the Integral Yoga.

*(To be continued)*

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

1 *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* (Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, Calcutta 1966), pp. 179-80

2 *Ibid.*, p. 182



## SRI AUROBINDO—THE POET-MAKER

AFTER I had mastered the Bengali metres in which I was by now regarded as one of the authorities (I wrote a book of prosody also whereupon many began to besiege me with questions about the intricacies of Bengali rhythm) I appealed to Gurudev to take me in hand and teach me English prosody including quantitative metres. It will be going beyond the scope of my reminiscences to go on relating how he taught me, at every step, and with what meticulous pains. But I am sure that a few instances of the poems he composed for my education will not only interest the general reader but be enjoyable as well to many a lover of English poetry, not to mention the young aspirants.

The first poem he composed for me, in five-foot iambics, he wrote as having ‘improvised for the occasion’ (on 25-4-1934) in the note-book I used to send up to him daily. To explain to me how modulations are introduced he scanned it carefully for me thus:

All eye/has seen./all that/the ear/has heard  
Is a pale/illu/sion, by/that great/er voice,  
That might/ier vi/sion. Not/the sweet/est bird  
Nor the/thrilled hues/that make/the heart/rejoice  
Can e/qual those/divi/ner ec/stasies.

He explained that in the first line there were two modulations, a spondee in the first foot and a trochee in the third, in the second line, an anapaest in the first foot and a pyrrhic in the third and so on.

I will give just one sample of how he corrected our English poems—not of mine alone but of Nirod, Romen, Nishikanta and others.

The first poem I wrote in English (in April, 1934) was a literal translation of a Bengali poem of mine:

The sorrow of Autumn woos the absent Spring,  
Chill winter hushes the cuckoo’s vibrant grove;  
To the Lord of vernal sweetness now I sing:  
“Let streams of friendship swell to seas of love.”

In his own handwriting he wrote on the margin:

“That is all right but the second line though metrically permissible is not very rhythmic. It would be better to write either ‘Cold winter chills’ or ‘Winter has hushed’.”

Next I wanted his guidance on how to write six-foot iambics (I quote from my thick notebook which I used to send up to him daily leaving a generous margin for his comments and corrections):

“O Guru,” I abjured, “please give me now at least two lines in Alexandrines. In this metre I have translated two lines of a Bengali poem of mine in which in the second

line I have put two spondees—in the first and third feet I am athirst for your corrections ”

“For the bird/to find/such a ski/ey rap/ture!” quoth/the Tree,  
 “Earth-free/to seek/peace shel/ter in/the rest/less winds!”

He only substituted “said” for “quoth” and wrote: “Yes, that is good, but I shall send you some Alexandrines in which you can see a map of possibilities (not quite complete of course) without the use of any but an occasional anapaest ” He wanted me to vary the pauses

Next day he sent me the promised poem with this short explanatory preface (25 4 1934):

“I was writing for your edification a poem in Alexandrines, but as it is lengthening out, I send only a part of it, unrevised, so as not to keep you waiting ”

He divided the lines differently, varying the caesura thus.

I walked beside the waters//of a world of light  
 On a gold ridge//guarding two seats of high-rayed night  
 One was divinely topped//with a pale bluish moon  
 And swam, as in a happy//deep spiritual swoon  
 More conscious than earth’s waking://the other’s wide delight  
 Billowed towards an ardent orb//of diamond white  
 But where I stood, there joined//in a bright marvellous haze  
 The miracled moons//with the lone ridge’s golden blaze  
 I knew not if two wakings//or two mighty sleeps  
 Mixed the great diamond fires//and the pale pregnant deeps,  
 But all my glad expanding soul//flowed satisfied  
 Around me and became//the mystery of their tide  
 As one who finds his own eternal self,//content,  
 Needing naught else//beneath the spirit’s firmament,  
 It knew not Space,//it heard no more Time’s running feet,  
 Termless, fulfilled.//lost richly in itself, complete.  
 And so it might have been for ever//but there came  
 A dire intrusion//wrapped in married cloud and flame,  
 Across the blue-white moon-hush//of my magic seas  
 A sudden sweeping//of immense peripheries  
 Of darkness ringing lambent lustres,//shadowy-vast  
 A nameless dread,//a Power incalculable passed  
 Whose feet were death,//whose wings were immortality,  
 Its changing mind was time,//its heart eternity  
 All opposites were there,//unreconciled, un eased,  
 Struggling for victory,//by victory unappeased

All things it bore, // even that which brings undying peace,  
 But secret, veiled, // waiting for some supreme release  
 I saw the spirit // of the cosmic Ignorance,  
 I felt the power besetge // my gloried fields of trance

At the end he explained:

“Some of these can be differently divided, not the way I have done, it depends much on how one wants to read it. But the main thing is that there can be a variation of even or uneven divisions (of the syllables), the even ones have three varieties, 4-8, 6-6, 8-4, the uneven ones may be 5-7, 7-5, 9-3, or even 3-9. The division may be made by the caesura of a foot, a pause in the sentence or a pause of the voice. If there is a succession of similar lines (4-8, 6-6, 8-4 are always tending to come), then great care must be taken to bring in minor variations so that there may be no sheer monotone.

“This, by the way, is my own theory of the Alexandrine evolved at need. I don’t know if it agrees with any current prosody. Perhaps there is not a fixed prosodic theory as the Alexandrine has been left very much in the cold, not having been adopted by any of the great writers.”

Next day I wrote to him

“I am grateful—especially for the caesuras you have indicated. I find you have used the caesura dividing the twelve syllables in all sorts of ways, e.g. 2-10, 4-8, 6-6, 8-4, 10-2, even 5-7, 7-5, and 9-3. The only omission is 3-9, please send me one line to fill up the gap.”

He wrote on the margin.

And in the silence of the mind // life knows itself  
 Immortal, // and immaculately grows divine

I need not go further into all he discussed with me about English metres and modulations and his comments on the quantitative metres in English—a discussion, besides, too technical to be enjoyable to those who have not made a special study of such subtleties. But just to give an idea, (hoping always that it may be of interest to a few at least) here is a stray sample:

I asked him about what is meant by caesura in English. I quoted Voltaire’s definition: “la césure rompt le vers partout où elle coupe la phrase.

‘Tiens, le voilà, marchons, il est à nous, viens, frappe’.”

“From this example given by Voltaire,” I wrote, “does it not seem that he takes caesura to mean every pause of the kind indicated by a comma? But that is not, I gather, what is meant by caesura in English prosody? Please enlighten.”

To that he wrote in my notebook

“Voltaire’s dictum is quite baffling, unless he means by caesura any pause or break in the line, then of course a comma does create such a break or pause. But ordinarily caesura is a technical term meaning a rhythmical (not necessarily a metrical)

division of a line in two parts equal or unequal, in the middle or near the middle, that is, just a little before or just a little after. I think, in my account of my Alexandrines I myself used the word caesura in the sense of a pause anywhere which breaks the line in two equal or unequal parts, but usually such a break very near the beginning or end of a line would not be counted as an orthodox caesura. In French there are two metres which insist on a caesura—the Alexandrine and the pentameter. The Alexandrine always takes the caesura in the middle of the line, that is after the sixth *sonnant* syllable, the pentameter always after the fourth, there is no need for any comma there, e.g. Alexandrine:

Ce que dit l'aube//et la flamme à la flamme

“This is the position and all the Voltaires in the world cannot make it otherwise. I don't know about the modernists however, perhaps they have broken this rule like every other

“As for caesura in English I don't know much about it in theory, only in the practice of the pentameter decasyllabic and hexameter verses. In the blank verse decasyllabic I would count it as a rule for variability of rhythm to make the caesura at the fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh syllable, e.g. from Milton

(1)

For who would lose  
Though full of pain,/this intellectual being, (4th)  
Those thoughts that wander through eternity,  
To perish rather,/swallow'd up and lost? (5th)

(2)

Here we may reign secure;/and in my choice (6th)  
To reign is worth ambition,/though in hell, (7th)  
Better to reign in hell than serve in Heaven

Or from Shakespeare.

(1)

Sees Helen's beauty/in a brow of Egypt (5th)

(2)

To be or not to be,/that is the question (6th)

But I don't know whether your prosodist would agree to all that. As for the hexameter, the Latin classical rule is to make the caesura either at the middle of the third or the middle of the fourth foot: e.g. (you need not bother about the Latin words but follow the scansion only):

(1)

Quadrupe/dante pu/trem//cur/su quatit/ungula/campum (Virgil)  
Horse-hooves/trampled the/crumbling/plain/with a/four-footed gallop

(2)

O pass/i gravi/ora,//dab/it deus/his quoque finem (Virgil)  
Fiercer/griefs you have/suffered;//to/these too/God will give/ending.

(3)

Nec facundia/deseret/hunc//nec/lucidus/ordo. (Horace)  
Him shall not/copious/eloquence/leave//nor/clearness and/order.

“In the first example, the caesura comes at the third foot, in the second example, it comes at the third foot but note that it is a trochaic caesura, in the third example the caesura comes at the fourth foot. In the English hexameter you can follow that or you may take greater liberties. I have myself cut the hexameter sometimes at the end of the third foot and not in the middle, e.g.

(1)

Opaline/rhythm of/towers,//notes of the/lyre of the/Sun God .

(2)

Even the/ramparts/felt her,//stones that the/Gods had e/rected...

and there are other combinations possible which can give a great variety to the run of the line as if standing balanced between one place of caesura and another.”

At the time I was transposing some English modulations into our Bengali verse which he greatly appreciated so much that, to encourage me, he composed short poems now and then as English counterparts to my Bengali bases. Then I asked Nishikanta also to help. As he complied we both besieged him, literally, with our poems day after delightful day. Once Nishikanta wrote a poem in Bengali with an anapaestic movement in the first line followed by dactyls in the next three lines:

UU—/UU—/UU—/UU—/UU—/  
 —UU/—  
 —UU/—  
 —UU/—UU/—UU/—UU—<sup>1</sup>

I wrote to him as I sent up this poem.

“It is melodious, you will admit, if somewhat unorthodox in its modulations ”  
 At once he sent me back two poems and wrote:

“Dilip,

Here is your stanza:

To the hilltops of silence from over the infinite sea,  
 Golden he came,  
 Armed with the flame,  
 Looked on the world that his greatness and passion must free.

“Or you can have another, colourful you will admit, if highly unscientific.

Oh, but fair was her face as she lolled in her green-tinted robe,  
 Emerald trees,  
 Sapphire seas,  
 Sun-ring and moon-ring that glittered and hung in each lobe ”

Nishikanta wrote another in Bengali

UU—/UU—/UU—/UU—/  
 —UU/—  
 —UU/—  
 —UU/—UU/—

Sri Aurobindo wrote back to me

“As for Nishikanta’s model I give you two stanzas also

In the ending of time, in the sinking of space  
 What shall survive?  
 Hearts once alive,  
 Beauty and charm of a face?  
 Nay, these shall be safe in the breast of the One,  
 Man deified  
 World-spirits wide,  
 Nothing ends all but began ”

1 The sign U stands for a short syllable — stands for a long

Nishikanta wrote in Bengali:

UU/— —/  
 UU/-- —/  
 UU—/UU—/  
 UU—/UU—/  
 UU—/UU—/UU—/

“These are not very manageable metres in English,” he wrote back, “but all the same here you are.

In some/faint dawn,  
 In some/dim eve,  
     Like a ges/ture of Light,  
     Like a dream/of delight  
 Thou comst near/er and near/er to me.’’

Next I sent up a poem in which the third paeon alternated with a molossus (published later in my *Suryamukhi*, page 338) thus:

UU—U/UU—U/  
 — — —/

He answered by composing

“In a flaming/as of spaces  
     Curved like spires,  
 An epipha/ny of faces  
     Long curled fires,  
 The illumined/and tremendous  
     Masque drew near,  
 A God-pageant/of the aeons  
     Vast, deep-hued,  
 And the thunder/of the aeons  
     Wide-winged/, nude,  
 In their harmo/ny stupendous  
     Smote earth’s ears.’’

Then I wrote a poem thus:

U—/U—/UU/U—/UU—/  
 U—/U—/UU/U—/UU— —  
     U—/  
 — —/U—/U— —/  
 — —/U—/U— —/  
     U—/

and so on

He wrote "After all, I got some lines

O life./thy breath/is but/a cry/to the Light  
 Immor/tal out/of which/has sprung/thy delight,  
     Thy grasp  
 All things/in vain/thy hands seize,  
 Earth's mu/sic fails,/the notes cease  
     Or rasp,  
 Aloud/thou call'st to blind Fate.  
 'Remove/the bar./the gold gate  
     Unhasp '  
 But nev/er yet/hast thou/the goal/of thy race  
 Attained,/nor thrilled/to the/inef/fable Face  
     And clasp ''

I wrote then a poem in Bengali thus (published later in *Suryamukhi*, p 332)

—U—/— —/U—U—U—

Sri Aurobindo composed a long poem on it which was published later in his *Collected Poems* (1972, p 582), entitled "Thought the Paraclete " So I need not quote it here in full the first two lines will suffice as illustration

As some bright/arch-an/gel in/vision flies  
 Plunged in dream/-caught spi/rit im/mensities

Then I wrote a poem in Bengali thus

— —/U—/— —/U—/— —/U—  
 — —/U—/— —/U—  
 — —/U—

The following was its counterpart in English which he sent me.

Vast-winged/the wind/ran, vi/olent./black-cowled/the waves  
 O'er-topped/with fierce/green eyes/the deck,  
     Huge heads/upraised  
 Death-hunted, wound-weary, groaned like a whipped beast the ship  
 Shrank, cowered, sobbed, each blow like Fate's  
     Despairing felt



Next Nishikanta sent a Bengali poem

—U/—UU/—UU  
 —U/—UU/—UU  
 U—/U—/UU  
 UUU/—UU

To that he wrote

“Your model this time is exceedingly difficult for the English language—for the reason that except in lines closing with triple rhymes the language draws back from a regular dactylic ending . I have at any rate made the following attempt

Winged with/dangerous/deity,  
 Passion/swift and im/placable  
     Arose/and storm/-footed  
     In the dim/heart of him  
 Ran in/satiate./conquering,  
 Worlds de/vouring and/hearts of men.  
     Then pe/rished bro/ken by  
     The irre/sistible  
 Occult/masters of/destiny,  
 They who/sit in the/secretcy  
     And watch/unmoved/ever  
     Unto the/end of all ”

The last metre I sent him in Bengali I shall not quote at length, as it is too complicated and technical I shall only quote his answering poem which he sent back with this preface:

“I have struggled with your yesterday’s poser and after a stupendous effort almost conquered—not altogether, for the first paeon at the end of a line was too much for me. I had to change it into a choriamb (trochee-iamb)... Moreover, my first attempt to do the thing in rhymed verse was a failure, not from the point of view of metre but from that of rhythm and poetic quality, it simply fell heavy and flat So I have made it an unrhymed verse which can be taken as a continuation of the three stanzas in the Arnold or Greek chorus style ‘Winged with dangerous deity’ A change of metre of this kind would be quite permissible in this style, if done at regular intervals These stanzas run thus

Outspread a/wave-burst, a/Force leaped from/the Unseen,  
 Vague, wide, some/veiled maker,/masked Lighter/of the Fire  
 With dire blows the/Smith of the World/  
 Forged strength from/hearts of the weak,/

Earth's hate the/edge of the axe,  
 Smitten/by the Gods,  
 Hewn, felled, the/Form crashed that/touched Heaven/and its stars''

DILIP KUMAR ROY

(From *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, pp 225-240 Incidentally, this article had first appeared, more than forty years ago, in *Mother India* —Editor)

### A SONNET IN SRI AUROBINDO'S HANDWRITING

*The Pilgrims of the Night*  
 I made an assignation with the Night,  
 In the abyss sacrificed our rendezvous:  
 In my breast carrying God's deathless light  
 I came by dark and dangerous heart to you.  
 I kept the glory of the illumined Hindu  
 And the calm rapture of the divinised soul  
 And travelled through forests dark and blind  
 To the grey where here his ignorant waters roll.  
 I walk by the chill sea through the dull storm  
 if I still that evening journeying know no land;  
 For is the barbarous godhead beyond Time,  
 There comes no voice of the celestial Friends  
 And yet I know my footprints' track shall be  
 A pathway towards Immortality.

26.7.28  
 48.3.44

≡

# THE INCREDIBLE GRACE OF THE LORD SUPREME

*Om Satyam Jñānam Jyotiraravinda Om Tat Sat Jyotiraravinda*

THE extraordinary spiritual experience, narrated below, was possible only due to the inexplicable and causeless Grace (*Ahaitukī-Kṛpā*) of the Supreme Lord, during the period preceding in the 125th birth anniversary celebrations of Śrī Aurobindo. There is nothing imaginary about it, nor is any fantasy of the mind involved in describing these supernatural events. Before I narrate the incredible mystic phenomena witnessed by me, I am reminded of the following words of Śrī Aurobindo and the Mother:

A prayer, a master act, a king idea  
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.<sup>1</sup>

God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep. <sup>2</sup>

. . . all of a sudden one or another experience occurs in people. But there are some who are not afraid; an experience, all of a sudden! 'Ah!' Something altogether new, altogether unexpected, of which they never thought.<sup>3</sup>

In the early morning of 11 April 1997, when I went up to the terrace of the building in which I had my flat at Vikas Gardens, Vaithikuppam, Pondicherry, the beautiful sea (Bay of Bengal) with its vast expanse of blue waters was clearly visible through the swaying and dancing green branches of the innumerable coconut palms on my right, left as well as in front of me. The sky was clear and the Sun-god was smiling on all creatures. The gentle morning breeze had its charming effect on the body and mind, attuned to the twittering music of the birds. As I started offering salutations to the Sun-god through the traditional postures of *Surya-Namaskār*, Śrī Aurobindo suddenly appeared on the eastern sky, at an altitude of about 45° above the horizon and granted His rare and unique Darshan as the golden Supreme Divine Being, the *Hiranmaya Parama Purusha*. It was a grand supernatural sight, evoking exhilarating states of mystical experience. His entire celestial body (or subtle-physical envelope, enlarged almost fifty times more than His normal earthly appearance) was dazzling and sparkling and it was emitting brilliant golden rays in all directions, with its most auriferous, elevating and transforming effulgence. His white-coloured long hair, soft and silky, His flowing beard, tender and glossy, the beautiful moustache, the familiar *dhoti* (the white-linen apparel) adorning His body in the traditional style, the soft strands of thin hair, the nails on the fingers and even the exquisite eye-lashes were all scintillating and shining brilliantly as gold—pure gold—the purest gold conceivable, of course partly blended with the natural colours of His cotton *dhoti*, the skin, the hair, the nails, etc.

The Supreme Lord, who “bore all godheads” in His “grandiose limbs”, was

seated majestically on a supernal pink-coloured throne, which was bedecked with myriads of glowing jewels and fragrant flowers. The entire throne was placed on a fully-blossomed, giant-size lotus flower of natural pink colour. The whole eastern sky was surcharged with His divine aura and Mother Nature was singing some fascinating hymns of golden transformation.

I stood completely overwhelmed, dazed and stupefied by the unexpected and incredible holy sight granted by the Supreme Master. All that I could do during those glorious moments of unforgettable experience was to offer as a simple child my hearty salutations to Sri Aurobindo. While the following musical words of supplication were ringing in my inner ears, the vibrating sound emanating from within, resembled the sweet peal of church bells:

*Nikhila jyotike jyoturdhan  
Hey mama jeevan ke jeevan!*

In order to make sure that I was not day-dreaming, I looked around and made some brisk movements of my limbs; but there was not much of a change in the sacred manifestation, although I could see that it was receding slowly. After a few moments, the grand vision changed. Now it was a different magic world altogether, as it held me completely spellbound! It was the most spectacular scenario of the majestic Kānchenjungā in the Himalayan mountain ranges, which have become more famous for the eloquent and loving tributes paid by no less a seer, *Mahākavi*, and Nature-lover than Sri Aurobindo Himself. The fantastic and awesome beauty of the snow-capped peaks was heightened all the more because of the glistening mountain-tops, as if they were taking a holy bath in the crimson-hued early-morning rays of the rising sun. The beautiful tender eyes of Sri Aurobindo, the young student of the Loretto Convent School of Darjeeling hill-town (when he was hardly five years of age, in 1877), that had regarded the fabulous spectacle and the grand panorama of sunrise on the Kānchenjungā-peaks (almost every morning of those fateful years of the 19th century), were now looking upwards to the azure sky and the infinity above. This was because Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo was gracefully reclining, with his huge and long body, as the *Virāt Purusha*, over the ‘‘immortal summit’’ of the eastern Himalayan mountain-ranges, with the Kānchenjungā snow-peaks in the centre-stage, thereby covering a large chunk of the eastern sky, at an altitude of about 45° above the horizon.

I was completely surrendered to this holy Yogic vision, with awe, veneration and bewilderment, as Sri Aurobindo clearly manifested the last *Avatār*'s gracious *leelā* (Divine Play) as *Dhyanamurty Gireesh* in his perfectly absorbed *Yoga-Nidrā* posture. When I looked around, I saw thousands of pilgrims and nature-lovers standing at vantage-points on the Tiger-hills of Darjeeling, regarded as the most favourite tourist-haunt for viewing the sunrise over the Kānchenjungā mountain ranges. They were offering salutations and hearty ovations to the breath-taking view of the resplendent

Himalayan peaks and the Sun-god (*Surya-Nārāyana*) rising gently and majestically above the eastern horizon. The sweet and enchanting rays of the rising sun, having the blended colour of Hibiscus (*Jabā-Kusuma*) flowers and the topaz were kissing the glistening snowy tops of the exquisite contours and configurations of the Himalayan mountain ranges, which resembled in many ways (and from various angles of vision) the *jatā*-formations or the mysterious and flowing locks of the matted hair of the *Mahāyogi, Purna-Yogeshwara, Sri Aurobindo*

Prominent among the nature-lovers and devotees who had thronged the vantage-points atop the Tiger-hills of Darjeeling for viewing the fabulous sunrise and the extra-terrestrial splendour of the Himalayan peaks, were luminaries like Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhas Chandra, B. G. Tilak, Deshbandhu C. R. Das, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sant Vinoba, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, besides the great sadhaks like Nolini Kanta Gupta, Champaklal, Amrita, Dyuman, T. V. Kapali Shastri, A. B. Purani, M. P. Pandit (those who have left their mortal bodies) and, also the living sadhaks like Nirodbaran, Amal Kiran, Babaji Ramakrishna Das, etc., from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. The holy assembly was offering silent prayers to the Supramental Sun, ‘‘the Sun from which we kindle all our suns,’’ while I was trying to remember the beautiful poetry of Sri Aurobindo (quoted below), composed in his early days by the *Mahāyogi* and *Mahākavi* of the New Age. After a few minutes, the extraordinary mystic vision, granted by the Supreme Master, disappeared and the normal and natural settings in the clear sky above the coastal zone of Pondicherry town reappeared

He journeyed to the cold north and the hills  
Austere.

to a silent place he came  
Within a heaped enormous region piled  
With prone far-drifting hills, huge peaks o’erwhelmed  
Under the vast illimitable snows,—  
Snow on ravine, and snow on cliff, and snow  
Sweeping in strenuous outlines to heaven,  
With distant gleaming vales and turbulent rocks,  
Giant precipices black-hewn and bold  
During the universal whiteness, last,  
A mystic gorge into some secret world.  
He in that region waste and wonderful  
Sojourned, and morning-star and evening-star  
Shone over him and faded, and immense  
Darkness wrapped the hushed mountain solitudes  
And moonlight’s brilliant muse and the cold stars  
And day upon the summits brightening.<sup>4</sup>

*References*

- 1 *Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 28, p 20
- 2 *Ibid*, p 65
- 3 *Notes on the Way*, CWM, Vol 11, p 100
- 4 *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol 5, pp 202-03

OM Tat Sat jyoter Aravinda  
 ॐ तत सत ज्योतिरश्विन्यु

## GLORY TO YOU!

GLORY! "AUROBINDO" the Lotus.

Your name, O Lord, conveys not the beauty and charm of a single lotus but like a mantra surges up from within the expectation for the advent and manifestation of the new world, of luminous beatitude, of magical charm and grace and of a supernatural beauty and joy dancing through our hearts as

A million lotuses swaying on one stem...

Glory to you, O Lord, majestic and in perfect tranquillity as the age-old Himalayas, reflecting a splendour as magnificent as when a golden ray of the sinking sun falls on the snow-covered mountain. The head, hoary and venerable, is surrounded by an aura charged and vibrating with the new Light. The forehead reflects all the wisdom of the Vedas and shines with the pioneering knowledge of the Supramental Truth. The face is as peaceful as that of Nataraja doing his Tandava Nritya. The eyes deep—deep as the bottomless ocean, unfathomable, unreachable, luminous, full of life—all-absorbing, all-observing, looking beyond space after space at the millennia passing by. And as surges the sacred Ganges from the snow-clad Himalayas, flowing, fertilising, vitalising and sustaining the vast country of Bharata, the universal knowledge, O Lord, pouring out from your eyes sustains and uplifts the whole of humanity. As a dip in the Ganges purifies one of all sins, a tiny drop of that knowledge touching our heart can succour a soul and lift it up towards that mighty goal: "To change the earthly life to life divine"

Glory to you, O Poet and Scholar, spending your childhood and youth in an alien country, solitary and in poverty yet refusing to fade away into oblivion, dejected and depressed, you gently bloomed into a lotus radiating with mastery over the Latin, Greek, English and French languages and outpouring poetry with grace and power.

Glory to you, O worthy son of India, who perceived her not as an inert land of rivers and mountains but as the Mother Bhavani! A Mother to be loved, to be worshipped, to even sacrifice one's life for.

Glory to you, O foremost and dynamic leader of India's struggle for freedom, inspiring your countrymen not only to free the nation from foreign rule but to awaken to the spirit of Sanatana Dharma.

Let Bharatvarsha show its gratefulness to you, O Lord, by awakening to its true mission, in this golden jubilee year of its independence, to become the "land of light and spiritual knowledge"

Glory to you, O Rishi of the century, who retired to the half-dead city of Pondicherry to plunge into your Sadhana, foresaw a bright and hopeful future for the evolution of man

Glory to you, O Saviour, resurrecting the Vedapuri of olden times from death and decay to a life all-encompassing, pulsating with charged light.

Let the city of Pondicherry show its gratefulness to you, O Lord, by becoming the Swargadwara, the heavenly gate, to the Supramental World

Glory to you, O Visionary of the Truth-Light, consecrating all your life, even sacrificing it, so that the glory you have reached, your individual realisation, may become a terrestrial realisation, find a home on earth

Glory to you, O Avatar, can humanity ever forget what you have done for it! You have made it jump a million years of nature's painstaking evolution to accomplish it in a few centuries

Let humanity show its gratefulness to you, O Lord, by consenting to be transformed You were not born for death, O Immortal Spirit, but like the eternal sun lighting up the world, you, O Lord, the deathless spirit, enlighten the entire humanity

In this your 125th birth anniversary, spontaneously a prayer rises from the bottom of the heart "Your Glory, O Lord, let it spread, envelop this world and all other worlds Can there be anything that can obstruct this splendour? An ardent aspiration rises to know you, to be a worthy instrument of yours, to be your faithful and obedient servant To be a tiny Service-Flower at your beatific feet

Let the emerald playful rustling leaves, the joyous gurgling rivers, the mirthful melting snow, the merrily whistling winds, the happy chirping birds, the carefree sprawling animals and all the human souls. so often in bondage, chant in unison the Mantra

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE SHRI ARAVINDAYA

KRISHNA CHAKRAVARTI



# ILION

(A fragment)

MEANWHILE moved by their unseen spirits, led by the immortal  
Phalanxes, who of our hopes and our fears are the reins and the drivers,—  
Minds they use as if steam and our bodies like power-driven engines,  
Leading our lives towards the goal that the gods have prepared<sup>1</sup> for our striving,—  
Men upon earth fulfilled their harsh ephemeral labour  
But in the Troad the armies clashed on the plain of the Xanthus  
Swift from their ships the Argives marched,—more swiftly through Xanthus  
Driving their chariots the Trojans came and Penthesilea  
Led and Anchises' son and Deiphobus the Priamid hero  
Now ere the armies met, ere their spears were nearer, Apollo  
Sent a thought for his bale to the heart of Zethus the Hellene.  
He to Achilles' car drew close and cried to the hero:  
“Didst thou not promise a boon to me, son of Peleus and Thetis,<sup>2</sup>  
Then when I guarded thy life-breath in Memnon's battle from Hades?  
Therefore I claim the proudest of boons, one worthy a Hellene.  
Here in the front I will fight against dangerous Penthesilea  
Thou on our left make war with the beauty and cunning of Paris ’’  
But from his heart dismayed Achilles made answer to Zethus:  
“What hast thou said, O Zethus, betrayed by some Power that is hostile?  
Art thou then lured by the gods for the bale and the slaughter of Hellas?’’  
Zethus answered him, “Alone art thou mighty, Achilles, in Phthia?  
Tyrant art thou of this fight and keepst for thee all of its glory—  
We are but wheels of thy chariot, reins of thy courser, Achilles  
What though dire be thy lust, yet here thou canst gather not glory,  
Only thy shame and the Greeks', if a girl must be matched with Achilles!’’  
“Zethus, evil thy word and from death are the ways of its folly  
Even a god might hesitate fronting the formidable virgin  
Many the shafts that, borne in her chariot, thirst for the blood-draught  
Pages ride in her car behind and hand to her swiftly  
Death in the rapid spears and she hurls them and drives and she stays not  
Forty wind-footed men of the mountains race with her chariot  
Shielded and armed and pluck the spears from their hearts whom she slaughters  
So like the lightning she moves incessantly flashing and slaying.  
Not like man's warring her fight who battle for glory and plunder  
Never she pauses to pluck back her point nor to strip off the armour

1 Or prefixed

2 Or sor of sea-born (foam-white) Thetis

Only to slay she cares and only the legions to shatter  
 Come thou not near to her wheels, preserve thy life for thy father  
 Pity Arithoa's heart who shall wait in vain for her children ''  
 Wroth at Pelides' scorn made answer Zethus the Hellene  
 "Give me my boon I have chosen and thou fight far from my battle  
 Lest it be said that Achilles was near and therefore she perished.  
 Cycnus and I [ . . . ] will strike down the terror of Argos ''  
 Moved the mighty Achilles answered him, "Zethus and Cycnus,  
 Granted your will, I am bound by my truth, as you now by Hades.''   
 So he spoke and cried to his steeds, who the ways of the south wind  
 Racing outvied to the left where from Xanthus galloping swiftly  
 Came in a mass the Ilian chariots loud towards the Hellenes  
 Phoces was with him and Echemus drove and Drus and Threton  
 They were like rays of the sun, but nighest him, close to his shadow,  
 Ascanus, Phrinix' son, who fought ever near to his war-car.  
 And from the Trojan battle gleaming in arms like the sun-god  
 Paris beheld that dangerous spear and he cried to the heroes:  
 "See now where death on the Trojan comes in the speed of that war-car  
 [ . . . ] fight [ . . . ] Achilles  
 But where you see him guiding his spear or turning his coursers,  
 Menace his days and shield the Trojan life that he threatens  
 Fighting together hide with your spear-rain his head from the heavens.  
 Zeus perhaps shall, blinded, forget to cover the hero.''   
 So as he spoke the armies neared and they clashed in the mellay.  
 Who first shed the blood [..... ]  
 Thick with the [ . . . ] of the mighty, last of the battles of Troya?  
 Helenus first, King Priam's son, smote down in that battle,  
 Phoces, Amarus' son who fought in the front of Pelides  
 He by the point twixt his brows surprised left the spear he had lifted,  
 Down he clanged from his car with his armour sounding upon him  
 Echemus, wroth let loose [.. ...] at Helenus, grieved for his comrade  
 Him he missed but Ahites slew who was Helenus' henchman.  
 Helenus wroth in his turn at Echemus aimed and his spear-point  
 Bit through the shield and quivering paused,—by Ananke arrested  
 Back avoiding death the Hellene shrank from the forefront.  
 Nor had Achilles mingled yet his strength with the fighters.

*[Eighteen lines follow which are too badly defaced to be transcribed ]*

SRI AUROBINDO

## THREE POEMS

### AUGUST 15—SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTHDAY

I THOUGHT of a thousand marvels to implore—  
Yet when I touched Thy mystery's heart, no more  
The lust came crowding: not one plea I bear  
Unto Thy altar as my penury's sign,  
But bring my whole poor self to make it Thine!

Now goldenest boon hangs like a mote of air  
Deep-sunk in worship, void of puny prayer,  
So large a hush of indigence is mine,  
Nought save that ageless measureless charity—  
Thy utter Self—can slake the abyss of me!

\*

### SRI AUROBINDO

All heaven's secrecy lit to one face  
Crowning with calm the body's blinded cry—  
A soul of upright splendour like the noon

But only shadowless love can breathe this pure  
Sun-blossom fragrant with eternity—  
Eagles of rapture lifting flickerless  
A golden trance wide-winged on golden air.

\*

### MAJESTIC MASTER

I

Majestic master of the immutable Light,  
Love like a universe thronged within your heart.  
Brooding in silence across lonely years  
On secret heavens a-dream in infinite hells,  
You found the hammer to break the Dragon's sleep  
And free from burying black the fallen stars  
But for each throb of God kindled in earth

You flung a human heartbeat out of Time  
 You shortened your sovereign life to greaten the dust  
 Your body, dropped from your spirit's hold on high,  
 Lays the foundation of a clay-built sky!

## II

Always the Light came down from the limitless blue,  
 Gold gushing through the head to a heart God-drunk.  
 Now from the soil's sleep rose one dazzling wave,  
 Uttering a secret of eternity locked  
 In caves dumbfounded with a vast black bliss.  
 It sang how sheer divinity grew dust,  
 The miracled Love which left the heart of the sun  
 And crouched with folded fires below Time's feet  
 To give huge wings to the atom's reverie.  
 The surge of light lifted our bodies up  
 As though, in laughing answer to heaven's leap down  
 Into the prisoning space of bone and flesh,  
 Earth now was ready to enter infinitude  
 A blind snake that had swallowed all the stars  
 Unrolled a boundless mystery flecked with flame  
 And undulated shining centuries  
 But none riding the rapture and the glow  
 Saw the still King of the new life's luminous realm,  
 Tamer and charmer of mortality's night—  
 One Heart whose deep on gold-dense deep of love  
 Measured the abyss whose cry is the whole world's death!

AMAL KIRAN  
 (K D SETHNA)



## THE WHITE BIRD

A WHITE bird flew through the pale blue air,  
A white bird flew,  
How like a shot, spontaneous rare,  
Soul of the blue!

Circling in joy with flapping of wing  
It passed beyond sight:  
An essence of God awandering  
Through an essence of light.

It almost seems that nobody saw  
That bird but I,  
Fulfilling unseen some loftiest law  
Of the silent sky.

Nobody saw it circle and go  
Like an arrow through,  
Shot like a white-fire streak from a Bow  
Of a blue within blue.

Nobody noticed the way it shot  
Away and afar,  
How like a miracle of God's thought  
White-aimed at a star!

Was it a pigeon, was it a dove?  
Nobody knows!  
All that I know is that it was like love  
Full of repose,

That it was like some incense fire  
Floated and sent  
Higher and higher and higher and higher  
In the firmament.

White bird, white bird! how like a bloom's  
Spirit you were  
Soaring this noon with your clean white plumes  
Wooing the air.

Where have you gone, ah, who can tell?  
 Ringing apart  
 Deep in my life like a heavenly bell,  
 Deep in my heart.

A musical image of mine own soul  
 Silent and rare,  
 Speeding towards the selfsame goal  
 Both of us share!

5 to 3. Afternoon, 9-4-34

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: Exceedingly beautiful

## RED LOTUS

(Sri Aurobindo's Consciousness)

THAT living Lotus, petal by petal unfolding,  
 Which through the mist of this *avidya* looms,  
 Vicegerent of the Sun, nowise withholding  
 The light we lack in *Maya*'s nether glooms

When spirit-sense to the last high peak gyring  
 Finds all Thy mountain-bud aflame with rose—  
 Touched by the eager hues of Dawn's aspiring—  
 What raptured Silence watches Thee uncloset!

Then the vast span of those Truth-petals reaching  
 To the utmost arc of Being's finitude  
 With vibrant answer to dark's wan beseeching  
 Transforms a world, from Thy grave beauty hued

O puissant heart amidst whose raptured shrining  
 A nameless Love is garbed in Name's disguise,  
 Last metronome to mortal things assigning  
 A fadeless rhythm wrung from Dawn's echoing skies.

29 March 1936

ARJAVA  
 (J A CHADWICK)

Sri Aurobindo's comment Very fine

## THE BIRTH OF THE AVATAR

HE brought with HIM the ancient skies of hush,  
A seed of lightning to the dales of the years,  
A transparent mass of secret rhapsodies  
Golden with a bliss untarnished, immense, unbarred.  
She woke at HIS feet's echoings and HIS call  
And thrilled to the magic of sun's deluge,  
And felt the silent diapasons of the Peak  
Within Her heart-cells of immortality  
Her clay became divine by HIS luminous gait.  
Her veins were rich with HIS blood-wine of peace  
She lived in HIM and in HIS cloistered Whole.  
Their twofold bodies became a single Fire—  
The Fire absolute of the Avatar.

25 8 1958

ROMEN

(From the late poet's unpublished diaries)

## GOD OF LIGHT

God of light sleeping in a mystery-flame,  
Gold of love drawn into an inward rapture,  
All-heaven folded in a sapphire repose,  
Trance-ineffable of a splendoured silence ..  
His the eagle-poise of superconscient peace,  
His the calm of a wide englobing halo..  
Lord of the creative, the conquering force,  
Smile of the Supreme and the winning strength,  
Blaze, noon-intense, of the godhead's brilliant triumph .  
His the penance claiming divinity for man,  
His the destiny's labour with earth's heavy load,  
His the will bringing to soul the Oversoul. .  
A brow of gleaming vision's mystic expanse,  
Breast a diamond-cup of infinity's bliss,  
Sun-feet strolling on eternity's luminous ways,  
Only a blue-gold Elysian hue of the High.  
A Truth-resplendence in tranquil lotus-name...  
King and Poet of the supramental Word!

R Y DESHPANDE



## MAKE ME THINE

Thy Love, O Lord, to soothe the mortal strife,  
Thy Light to spark each cell inanimate,  
Thy Strength to tread the rugged path of life,  
And Grace Supreme to change the earthly fate

Thy Call from far was heard when time was born,  
Thy gentle Touch was felt where space began,  
Thy Will was sown alike in love and scorn,  
And Bliss was blent equal in joy and pain

Thy Hand that guides and sets our paths alight,  
Thy Truth that leaves all ignorance behind—  
From Thee came all but lost Thy touch and sight  
And then to Thee return is slow and blind.

Thy Look pervades Thy endless world-creation,  
Thy Breath sustains Thy play of shade and light—  
And waitest Thou with timeless vast compassion,  
Till we be Thine and all with Thee unite!

D.L

## THE SAVIOURS

O MOTHER, tender earth-embracing Mother,  
In your mighty arms you carry this blind  
And unaware humanity to the other  
Side of the abyss threatening devastation,  
To where a stair is hewn for all to find  
Their way and climb to conscious liberation

O Sri Aurobindo, heart of love and compassion,  
You lead to luminous fields humanity  
Through self-discovery and realization  
Of That which man is truly meant to be

RUTH

## THE SMILE IMMACULATE

WHOSE feet does the heart of children seek, O Lord?  
Deep within them burns ever Thy sacred flame!  
The morning rays sprinkle a liquid gold on earthly nature!  
More precious is the immaculate smile on children's faces!

The world's figure is dark with war and hatred!  
Behold a child's visage bright with an inner Light  
Here we live together, all children of the Mother,  
Dipped in divine love, forgetting worldly worries and cares

Some of us work the whole day, others study and research.  
In the evening we assemble in the open field to play and rejoice!  
Alone at night we meditate on the supernal Sun,  
And at daybreak try to fathom the crimson mystery of the sky.

We imbibe in our hearts the flow of Thy sublime spirit  
And radiate the gift through our transparent smile!  
We forget the difference of age in young and old,  
As seven and seventy weigh the same on Thy eternal scale!

In the ancient past ordained the Rishi's voice,  
"Arise, awake and learn from the great ones!"  
In keeping with the immortal words we worship  
The bygone seers and those who shine amongst us

Like a flower hidden in bud we are within Thy shelter,  
And shall bloom gradually by the working of Thy potent grace  
On the stalk of an unprecedented golden beam  
Where rearest Thou ever-awake, brooding the birth of a new race

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

## THE EARTHWARD SURGE OF IMMORTALITY

THIS world is steeped in falsehood Will the truth take possession of it? This world is wrapped in folds of darkness Is there a possibility of the sun of divine illumination penetrating into it? This world is under the sway of death Can immortality be made a luminous foundation of its future? Drifting and adventive is the fate of the earthly creature and there are pain and suffering in life Is this all? And what about the promised feast of everlasting felicity?

But howsoever gloomy the picture may look, there is a deep-seated urge in man to live in search of happiness and in obtainment of growing riches. When this search becomes the search of the soul, slowly the values acquire a profound meaning and a feeling of enduring realities Activity is not abandoned but carried out with a sense of the Eternal, *brahmi-sthiti*. Slowly the dichotomy of 'this' and 'that' ceases and the experience of oneness embraces all movements. Even so, the ascending slopes of heaven which Vamadeva eulogised in the Veda have yet higher peaks to climb Cows, horses, gold, hero-warriors, chariots, offspring are the kind of wealth a Vedic Rishi symbolically desired An Upanishadic Seer wanted his four-hundred cows to be multiplied to a thousand. Another one drove to his home the herd with nuggets of gold tied to their horns Nothing was left outside the purview of life, though outwardly it may appear to be full of misery and dolefulness. For these praiseworthy ancients, fulfilment in the world was of paramount importance and in their hand it gained another nobility. These spiritual seekers offered inner sacrifices to the gods and in their company aspired to live in plenitude. They were cognisant of the stranglehold of mortality, but they also knew that there are guardian powers to help them and lead them on the path of existence and consciousness and bliss.

Here were the great souls, the true Mahatmas, who raised aloft the earth by the power of their remarkable tapasya. As Vyasa says in his narrative of Savitri, "By the Truth the saints lead the sun; by asceticism the saints uphold the earth; the past, present and future find their refuge in the saints." Practitioners of austerities, keepers of vows, worshippers of God in all circumstances, devotees surrendering themselves entirely to the Lord of their Adoration, contemplators of the supreme reality, mystics given to life-transcendent moods, occultists probing the mysteries of the suprarational—these gleaming dauntless adventurers and explorers opened up newer doors even as the Time-Spirit moved forward. They provided many other dimensions to the Quest of the Eternal However, in the highest sense, the one object of their endeavour was to finally pass through the Gates of the Sun, *suryadvāra*, and win the beatitude of the Wondrous, *adbhuta*. "By the Knowledge of the Self the soul passeth beyond the pursuit of Death and there is no other road for the great passage" The Upanishad speaks of the river flowing to the sea and merging into it, losing its name and form, its identity No doubt this river irrigated the fields on its banks, but then it was lost to the land While the Elsewhere was the mountain source that fed and sustained the stream, it also took it away from the view By the ordinance of Yoga, *yoga-vidhi*, one obtains God, *brahma-*

*prāpti*, and becomes void of death; but earth's nature remains intact and death-full

Then in the inevitable passage of Time arrived, giving another extreme turn to the search, the cult of sannyasins and hermits and monks and friars and mendicants and fakirs and anchorites, the order of the recluse, and it deprived life of its vitality. To the Buddhist it was the relinquishment of the world of agony, of *duhkha*, by stepping into Nirvana. To the Mayavadin the oneness with the passive Brahman was the goal the imperative was to get out of his illusory existence. In either the featureless Absolute or the indefinable Shunya or Void robbed the deeper essentiality of the material creation it was the termination of the terrestrial sojourn. In their extreme negative esoterism these made room for the rush of unregenerate subconscious forces to take possession of human pursuits and occupations. This kind of disownment, deteriorating itself into tamasic indolence, finally drove away the spirit of God from the affairs of the world.

In contrast to such tendencies borne predominantly by the shunners of the world, there have also been its staunch assertors, claiming it alone and nothing else. Indeed, human pursuits and occupations themselves brought back, though perhaps in more clamorous and haughty a manner, the urge to be, to exert, to exploit, to enjoy life's manifold possibilities. The clamour and the haughtiness of the manner do not disdain or throw away what we are, rather their pragmatism bases itself upon insistent actualities, sees its own meaning and substance in all that is. Science and art, commerce, technology, craft, industry, and active polity, and the word of social wisdom, and rationalism, and empirical certitude, whatever that we respect and value as secular, have very well steadied the drifting boat on the waters of terrestrial gains. Today's civilisation is an urban civilisation, indisputably with more of science and less of religion, and is moving with urban speed, carrying urban comforts—as also urban problems and anxieties. In the process the Wealth of Nations has become the handbook of the haves, only to be questioned by the creed of the Welfare State supposedly meant for the have-nots. Mundane problems have their own keennesses and cutting edges. It is believed that these problems are a part of our existence and our existence itself can tackle them in every regard, without invoking any intervention of supra-existent agencies. As a matter of fact, one would doubt whether such agencies do exist at all and, if they do, one would assert that they would be of no consequence for us, being supra-existent in their character.

Thus we have esoteric conflicts between the world of spirit and the world of phenomena, we also have secular conflicts with various imbalances, of opportunities and capabilities clashing with each other. If the one extreme of the first throw in India, the other of the second was flagrantly and very insensitively adopted by the West. This made the East East and the West West, with the possibility of the twain never coming together. Which means that the conflict we experience is essentially between 'this' and 'that', having its roots in the first cause of things we do not directly discern or witness. We cannot just wish it not to be, we cannot ignore it or dismiss it, neither in recoil do we need to run away from it. The path of 'that' is the path of exclusive liberation and the path of 'this' of grandiose indulgence in the immediate. The stress on 'this' alone

led man to the crudities of materialism. The pursuit of 'that' starved him in worldly matters for a reward of the elusive or mysterious unknown. Therefore, 'this' is the refusal of the ascetic and 'that' the denial of the materialist. The one saw not God in the world and the other needed him not in the world.

In this context Vivekananda's twofold message has significance from a much wider perspective, providing a richer and completer synthesis. The imperative is that adamant and stark materialism should open itself to spirituality and, at the same time, the distant etheriality of the spirit must come closer and give to the earthly substance its gleaming contents. To the West he cried: "Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within." To the Indian his exhortation was to break all other idols and worship God the Poor, *daridra-nārāyaṇa*: ". . .the only God I believe in, the sum-total of all souls,—and above all my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species is the special object of my worship." If the vitalistic consumerism is sinful, then the tamasic negativism is equally ruinous and hellish. The thought of man can be put on the pay-roll of life chasing its thousand passions; or it can busy itself in the darkness of ignorance. Both are retrograde moods and must be spurned without a second thought. Not only that; an affirmative direction to all our ideas and ideals has to be given for a fuller and more satisfying fulfilment. The notion that the higher consciousness, as says the Mother, "deals with higher things and the lower things do not interest it at all," has been the cause of India's degradation and downfall. This has to be corrected, as much as the blindfold recklessness of materialist societies by giving them a vision of wholesome realities of consciousness. If we are to see a purpose in the creation, then that purpose would seem to be to live, even here, in the joy of God-awareness. Someone said, "Put God in your programme." True, but please, let God also have a programme for us. And for that programme let both put themselves together, in the manner rain and sunshine bring cheer to the land.

Man has to prepare himself as a mental being in 'this', in the material involvement, so that he may get ready for prospects of the transcendent 'that'; this 'that' has then to step into his soul and take care of his triple ignorant condition, take possession of his mind and life and body and turn them into their truer diviner propositions of manifestation. The meaning of 'this' is to make its unfolding spaces available for 'that' to pour itself into it in full abundance. Practicality in existence is a present fact of existence; the possibility to widen its own scope of action, to bring newer dimensions in its swift operative dynamics, is also an aspect of its broader and ennobling intention. The thetic and the anti-thetic have to meet and join in the synthetic. The division between the secular and the esoteric has to disappear; 'this' and 'that' must unreservedly merge into its happy oneness. The will of man, his reason, his emotion and sensibility, his deeper and purer intuition, the calm and silent promptings of his soul, all have to be recognised and given a natural place. To the extent this progress is made, it is in that measure that Beauty, Joy, Knowledge, Truth, Power are won in the earthly scheme of things. It is in that integrality that the secret divinity, residing within us and above us, finds its way in our means and methods. In fact, there is a constant pressure of these

urgings to give to the individual and communal life desirable harmony in the great excellence of the spirit itself. Then can the futility of man's fate be redeemed or removed. When it becomes death-marked, then in the true sense the task of Death in Mortality gets accomplished. The cry of the Rishi to lead him from falsehood to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality, *mṛtyormāmṛtam gamaya*, in such an eventuality acquires another poignancy. It becomes an imploration, to put it in Sri Aurobindo's phrase, for "bringing out the Infinite infinitely into form of being". Indeed, such shall be the happy miracle of the gnostic manifestation of life in a creative outrush of delight. And it is that we celebrate in the birth of this Avatar

R Y DESHPANDE

# **EARTH SHALL BE MADE A HOME OF HEAVEN'S LIGHT**

## **A DREAM FOR ALL**

As we know, "the whole of existence is real because it is eternally creative. So the problem that concerns man, the riddle that humanity has to solve is how to find out and follow the path of creativity."

We now need to think of a new discovery and we are aware that we all are set towards perfect harmony. So, if we try to become creative, we shall find a great change in our midst. At the end surely we will all open our doors in a new way towards that great change.

In this new world we need to follow the lives of great persons, who are not only extraordinary beings but with their natural gifts born for others to follow, to form a new humanity.

If we can watch the history of man where sages and creators have left abundant resources, it will give us a novel way of thinking for our earth. This way will unfold many new phenomena.

Man is not an animal and he will never go back to animality. Why, then, do we not educate our nature for a great breakthrough?

Let us hearken to some of the eminent thinkers' advice for an Ideal Solution and let us see the new images they have created for all mankind.

A great saint has said "These principles founded on the essential and constant tendencies of Nature in the development of human life ought clearly to be the governing ideas in any intelligent attempt of the unification of the human race. The present arrangement of the world has been worked out by economic forces, by political diplomacies, treaties and purchases and by military violence without regard to any moral principle or any general rule of the good of mankind."

Cruelty, oppression, bloodshed and revolt are the principles we follow to-day to bring humanity more together. These unideal policies have spread practically everywhere and whole masses have been convinced that only by unmoral doings can they create a new humanity or govern this present world.

Quite often we read in the newspapers about various scandals. It will be very sad if our students, citizens of the future, see every day that all the rich people, ministers, big merchants, and bureaucrats, are involved in such odd doings.

This is so not only in India, it is everywhere in the world. Masses we cannot change and change of consciousness is not altogether in our hands. So, what we have to do is to move away from such things, to have this golden opportunity we must go where enormous hidden things are still waiting for all mankind.

"Men readily listen to utopias and are easily induced to believe that in some wonderful manner everybody will become everybody's friend, especially when someone is heard denouncing the evils now existing which are said to arise out of the

possession of Private Property ' As we all know, human nature, the human average, is nearer to the beast than to the god.

The great majority of men are natural dunces and sluggards; in any system whatever these men will sink to the bottom, and to help them with State subsidies is like 'pouring water into a leaking cask'.

Here we have something from the past thinkers—as when they conceive in various ways that, like the celestial bodies, little vessels should sail round the whole globe for the happiness of our age These times may justly use *plus ultra*—more beyond—where the ancient used *non plus ultra* It was an age of achievement, hope and vigour; of new beginnings, and enterprises in every field; an age that waited for a voice, some synthesising visionary soul to sum up its spirit and resolve its needs It was Bacon, 'the most powerful mind of modern times,' who rang the bell that called the wits together, and announced that Europe had come of age

'The minds of men of lofty genius are most active in invention when they are doing the best external work.'

The essence of the aesthetic activity is this motionless effort of the artist to conceive the perfect image that shall express the subject he has in mind; it lies in a form of intuition that involves no mystic insight, but perfect sight, complete perception and adequate imagination The miracles of art lie not in the externalization but in the conception of the idea, externalization is a matter of mechanical technique and manual skill

A great philosopher, Croce, observed 'When we have mastered the internal word, when we have vividly and clearly conceived a figure or a statue, when we have found a fixed theme, expression is born and is complete, nothing more is needed'

There is a proverb 'Only those who see the invisible can do the impossible'

Our beloved Master is very precise in his expression, as when we read, 'What has been said of great creative art, that being the form in which normally our highest and intensest aesthetic satisfaction is achieved, applies to all beauty, beauty in nature, beauty in life as well as beauty in Art We find that in the end the place of reason and the limits of its achievement are precisely of the same kind as in regard to religion. It helps to enlighten and purify the aesthetic instincts and impulses, but it cannot give them their highest satisfaction or guide them to a complete insight The highest spirituality indeed moves in a free and wide air far above that lower stage of seeking which is governed by religious form and dogma, it does not easily bear their limitations and, even when it admits, it transcends them; it lives in an experience which to the formal religious mind is unintelligible.'

But man does not arrive immediately at that highest elevation and, if it were demanded from him at once, he would never arrive there

### Conclusion

As the Upanishad says: There are two categories of Knowledge, the Superior and the Inferior



The development of the mind and life and body belongs to the domain of the Inferior Knowledge. The development of the Soul and the discovery of the Spirit mean the Superior Knowledge.

“The unsatisfying surface play of our feeble egoistic emotions must be ousted and there must be revealed instead a secret deep and vast psychic heart within that waits behind them for its hour, all our feelings impelled by this inner heart in which dwells the Divine will be transmuted into calm and intense movements of a twin passion of divine love and manifold Ananda.”

ASHOK

## SRI AUROBINDO—THE ARCHITECT OF ‘NEW LIGHT’, ‘NEW WORLD’

THE symbol of a country is the symbol of its nature and individual character. It illustrates the Soul and Dharma of the country. Growth, decay, changes and revolutions may occur in the body of a country, in its outer form, but so long as the soul is kept secure, living and conscious, there is no danger to the country.

The Upanishadic seers discovered the soul to be the principal fact of personality, and the general trend of Indian culture then became spiritual.

The growth in the consciousness of the country enhanced the meaning of the symbol. What more appropriate symbol would be there for our *Bharat* than the ‘hundred-petalled lotus’? The name ‘Sri Aurobindo’ means the lotus. Sri Aurobindo is the hundred-petalled lotus. Harmonious synthesis is the soul of Sri Aurobindo’s teaching, thought, and yogic life. Integral synthesis is their basis.

The fifteenth of this month is Sri Aurobindo’s birthday. This was destined to be the day of our freedom from foreign domination. There seems to be some mystic inner connection, some secret significant suggestion in this. The country must learn in all humility and reverence Sri Aurobindo’s synthesising wisdom. Through such harmonious action alone can the many differences and conflicts that are now raging in the land dissolve in a grand finale of Unity.

The awakening soul of India had already seen the light of liberty in Bankim’s vision of the country as the Mother, in the vision of Vivekananda that India was rising not for herself alone but for the whole world. Sri Aurobindo said, ‘It has been the Mantra of my life to aspire towards the freedom of my nation.’ He has also declared: ‘The Sun of India’s destiny [will] rise and fill all India with its light and overflow Asia and overflow the world.’

The truth which India found in Sri Aurobindo its chosen instrument and made him its mighty voice to assure her children and humanity of their liberation into the light of her soul. Rightly viewed, the life of Sri Aurobindo was the beginning of the awakening of India’s soul. So from that temple of light that mighty soul radiates its splendour over the world.

Nationalism became a Dharma when the struggle for India’s freedom from British rule began. Sri Aurobindo illuminated it in the following words.

‘It is not by patriotic desires that the nation can be liberated, it is not by patriotic work that a nation can be built. For every stone that is added to the National edifice, a life must be given. It is not talk of Swaraj that can bring Swaraj, but it is the living of Swaraj by each man among us that will compel Swaraj to come.’

‘The Kingdom of Heaven is within you, free India is no place of wood or stone that can be carved into the likeness of a nation but lives in the hearts of those who desire her, and out of these She must be created. We must first ourselves be free in heart before our country can be free... When her sons have learned to be free in themselves, free in prison, free under the yoke which they seek to remove, free in life, free in

death then the chains will fall off of themselves and outward circumstances be forced to obey the law of our inward life ”<sup>1</sup>

For this inward upliftment, a first great preparation started with the Vedic Seers whose spiritual experiences developed the intuitive mind of India. In her second stage India discovered the Dharma, the right line of her evolution. In the third, the classical age, her soul experienced the material basis of life which expressed itself through the richness of her vital being. This completed a cycle preparing for the New Age of the Spirit manifesting in Matter. The age was heralded by the Renaissance of India. New seers and teachers had to appear. The interval was prolonged. But the light of India’s soul had not completely died when the West came bringing in a new problem. Rather it was an old one in a new but insistent form, so there was a reconciling of the material basis of the West with the force of the Spirit.

To review the work of Sri Aurobindo for India is very difficult, since, to quote his own words, “My life has never been on the surface for man to see.” But it can be observed that every major event of his own life and that of the world was as if willed by a Higher Force.

K. D. Sethna in his article “Sri Aurobindo and the Modern World” wrote:

“Sri Aurobindo’s avowed mission was to lead the world a step further in its evolution—to establish a new status of human consciousness. The old Upanishadic cry—

From Darkness lead us to Light,  
From Appearance lead us to Reality,  
From Death lead us to Immortality—

may be summed up in Aurobindonian terms

From Mind lead us to Supermind,  
From Man lead us to Superman,  
From Earth lead us to Super-earth.

These terms signify not merely transcendence, as in that great ancient mantra, they signify also a transformation by means of transcendence.

“To climb beyond is not the goal. The goal is to rise above and bring the Light, the Reality, the Immortality of the altitude to the abyss. A divine faculty of self-knowledge and world-knowledge, a divine power of life within the human mould to discover and invent manifold means of self-fulfilment and world-fulfilment, a divine mode of physical existence, an enduring radiant well-being for both self and world: these ultimately are what Light and Reality and Immortality connote for Sri Aurobindo.”<sup>2</sup>

As a young boy, Sri Aurobindo had a strong feeling, which began then to grow in him, that a period of general upheaval and revolutionary changes was coming in the world and he himself was destined to play a part in it. On this point Sri Aurobindo wrote to his wife in 1905: “Others look upon their country as an inert piece of matter

—a few meadows and fields, forests, and hills and rivers—I look upon my country as the Mother, I adore Her I worship Her as the Mother What would a son do if a demon sat on his mother's breast and started sucking her blood? Would he quietly sit down to his dinner, amuse himself with his wife and children, or would he rush out to deliver his mother? I know I have the strength to deliver this fallen race It is not physical strength,—I am not going to fight with sword or gun,—but the strength of knowledge The power of the Kshatriya is not the only one, there is also the power of the Brahmin, the power that is founded on knowledge This feeling is not new to me It is not of today I was born with it, it is in my very marrow God sent me to accomplish this great mission. The deed began to sprout when I was fourteen: by the time I was eighteen the roots of the resolution had grown firm and unshakable''<sup>3</sup>

1893 is a landmark in the long history of India's spiritual evolution. It marks a remarkable coincidence. Swami Vivekananda goes out to the West, Sri Aurobindo comes home to the East. The one to illuminate the West with the light of the East as a preparation for a greater light to follow. The other to liberate the Mother and through her to liberate the whole world It is as if the Divine Mother had set two mighty sons on two mighty conquests.

Early in 1893, Sri Aurobindo joined the Baroda Service in which he spent the next thirteen years of his life It was simultaneously a period of prodigious literary and revolutionary labours

During 1905-6 Sri Aurobindo was the principal of Baroda College The Partition of Bengal became a fact on 16 October 1905 Sri Aurobindo knew that the "Hour of God" had come indeed In his inspired article with that title, he writes

There are moments when the Spirit moves among men and the breath of the Lord is abroad upon the waters of our being. .when even a little effort produces great results and changes destiny. .unhappy is the man or the nation which, when the divine moment arrives, is found sleeping or unprepared to use it, because the lamp has not been kept trimmed for the welcome and the ear is sealed to the call. But thrice woe to them who are strong and ready, yet waste the force or misuse the moment<sup>4</sup>

1905, a memorable year in the history of Bengal, the year that was the starting-point of the freedom movement, the year when the nation, after writhing under the slow torture of a century and a half of foreign rule, resolved to reject it for ever.

The 1905 session of the Congress at Benares met under circumstances that were the most exciting in the political life of India. The Bengal partition was then a settled fact Maharashtra led by Tilak and the Punjab by Lajpat Rai stood by the Bengal Nationalists led by Sri Aurobindo for whom Swadeshi and Boycott were the two immediate means and Swaraj or absolute autonomy the goal, the only solution of the problem that the Partition of Bengal had created for the country

Sri Aurobindo writes on this occasion as follows

The object of all our political movements and therefore the sole object with which we advocate passive resistance is Swaraj or national freedom. The latest and most venerable of the older politicians who have sat in the Presidential Chair of the Congress, pronounced from that seat of authority Swaraj as the only remedy for all our ills—Swaraj as the one demand nothing short of which will satisfy in the United Kingdom or the Colonies,—such was his definition of Swaraj. We of the new school would not pitch our ideal one inch lower than absolute Swaraj.<sup>5</sup>

Sri Aurobindo felt the need of an organ through which to keep up and intensify the national will to freedom and revolutionary ideas. Dadabhai Naoroji knew of the stand of Nationalists, most powerfully affirmed by Sri Aurobindo in the columns of *Bande Mataram* in which he expressed his views about complete freedom, “absolute autonomy free from British control”

The readers must be aware of his inner realisation—the spiritual realisation he had in Alipore Jail. He narrated.

I believed that I had a mission to work for the people of my country and until that work was done I should have Thy protection. Why then am I here to change? A day passed and a second day and a third when a voice came to me from within: ‘Wait and see’. Then I grew calm and waited.

After some time he realised why God had sent him to prison. In Alipore Jail he heard a voice:

‘. I have brought you here to teach you what you could not learn for yourself and to train you for my work.’ Then he placed the Gita in my hands. His strength entered into me and I was able to do the Sadhana of the Gita.<sup>6</sup>

Sri Aurobindo’s vision of the “New India and New World” is couched in the following lines about his inner experiences in Alipore Jail, and the voices he heard; the first message was: “I have called you to work, and that is the Adesh for which you have asked. I give you the Adesh to go forth and do my work.”

The second message came and it said, “Something has been shown to you in this year of seclusion, something about which you had your doubts and it is the truth of the Hindu religion. It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the Rishis, saints and Avatars, and now it is going forth to do my work among the nations. I am raising up this nation to send forth my word. This is the Sanatan Dharma, this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you. The agnostic and the sceptic in you have been answered, for I have given you the proofs within and without you, physical and subjective, which have satisfied you. When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for the Sanatan Dharma that they arise, it is for the

world and not for themselves that they arise I am giving them freedom for the service of the world When therefore it is said that India shall rise it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall be great When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world It is for the Dharma and by the Dharma that India exists''<sup>7</sup>

A message on India's Independence was given by Sri Aurobindo at the request of All India Radio, Trichinopoly, and broadcast on 14th August 1947

“August 15th is my own birthday and it is naturally gratifying to me that it should have assumed this vast significance I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, but as the sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guides my steps on the work with which I began life, the beginning of its full fruition Indeed, on this day I can watch almost all the world-movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though then they looked like impracticable dreams, arriving at fruition or on their way to achievement In all these movements free India may well play a large part and take a leading role

“The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India India today is free but she has not achieved unity At one moment it almost seemed as if in the very act of liberation she would fall back into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest But fortunately it now seems probable that this danger will be averted and a large and powerful, though not yet a complete union will be established Also the wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly has made it probable that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure But the old communal division into Hindus and Muslims seems now to have hardened into a permanent political division of the country It is to be hoped that this settled fact will not be accepted as settled for ever or as anything more than a temporary expedient ...

“Another dream was for the resurgence and liberation of the peoples of Asia and her return to her great role in the progress of human civilisation. Asia has arisen, large parts are now quite free

“The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way, there is an imperfect initiation organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties But the momentum is there and it must inevitably increase and conquer Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold swift development

“For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement Its necessity for the nations is also clear, for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure. The

unification is therefore to the interests of all, and only human imbecility and stupid selfishness can prevent it, but these cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will

“Another dream, the spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun India’s spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure That movement will grow, amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice

“The final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society This is still a personal hope and an idea, an ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must proceed through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers

“Such is the content which I put into this date of India’s liberation, whether or how far this hope will be justified depends upon the new and free India ”

NILIMA DAS

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## NATIONALISM AND GLOBALISM IN THE LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S THOUGHT

ONE of the notable developments in modern thought is a growing recognition of the unity and interdependence of life and the need for what is now called the global vision and outlook on the problems of humanity. Aggressive nationalism is considered by many progressive minds as a great obstacle to the realisation of this global vision in society. There are some who go to the extent of decrying the very idea of nationality or national sovereignty. But the Indian view, as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo, takes a less drastic, less impatient, and a more balanced outlook, synthesising nationalism and globalism in an evolutionary perspective.

Undoubtedly, "ethno-centric" nationalism based on "cultural superiority" or aggressive expansionist ambitions of the national ego is on the way out, it is a relic of the past and has no place in the future. It is also true that in any consideration of the ideals and values of the future, unity and oneness of Mankind and its ultimate evolutionary aims must get precedence over the aims of the separative national egos. Sri Aurobindo wrote in *Bande Mataram*, in the beginning of this century, "patriotism is good, excellent, divine only when it furthers the end of universal humanity. Nationality divorced from humanity is a source of weakness and evil and not of strength and good."<sup>1</sup> But he wrote this when he was fiercely championing a creed of firebrand nationalism for the liberation of India from foreign rule. How to reconcile this apparent contradiction? Sri Aurobindo himself gives the answer which resolves the contradiction with a clear and luminous synthesis based on Indian insights.

"In India we do not recognise the nation as the highest synthesis to which we can rise. There is a higher synthesis, humanity; beyond that there is a still higher synthesis, this living, suffering, aspiring world of creatures, the synthesis of Buddhism; there is a highest of all, the synthesis of God, and that is the Hindu synthesis, the synthesis of Vedanta. With us today Nationalism is our immediate practical faith and gospel not because it is the highest possible synthesis, but because it must be realised in life if we are to have the chance of realising the other. We must live as a nation before we can live in humanity. It is for this reason that Nationalist thinkers have always urged the necessity of realising our separateness from other nations and living to ourselves for the present, not in order to shut out humanity, but that we may get that individual strength, unity and wholeness which will help us to live as a nation for humanity. A man must be strong and free in himself before he can live usefully for others, so must a nation. But that does not justify us in forgetting the ultimate aim of evolution. God in the nation becomes the realisation of the first moment to us because the nation is the chosen means or condition through which we rise to the higher syntheses, God in humanity, God in all creatures. God in Himself and ourselves."<sup>2</sup>

So, though Unity of Mankind or Globalism is the highest collective ideal, nationality and nationalism cannot be dispensed with so early. There are two factors which make nationality and nationalism a pragmatic necessity in the present condition of



humanity The first is what Sri Aurobindo has explained clearly, the evolutionary needs of national development “ to live in one’s self, determining one’s self-expression from one’s own centre of being in accordance with one’s own law of being is the first necessity ” It is by this national self-realisation that a nation becomes conscious of its true and unique spirit and genius and ready to bring its special contribution to the evolution of humanity This must be the true aim of nationalism The way to this collective self-discovery is through the awakening of its people to the unique and enduring values of the cultural heritage of the nation as well as by making them the central and inspiring motive-force for national development

The second factor in favour of nationality is the present evolutionary status of humanity At present the nation is the living collective unit, it is not only a political reality but a psychological reality in the consciousness of the race But the concept of Mankind has not yet become such a living psychological reality for the race The truth of oneness of Mankind and the ideal of human unity exist as a vague or a shining abstraction in the thinking elite, but has not yet become a living vital need and fact of human consciousness in the masses For example, the ideals of human unity or well-being and progress of humanity do not have as much motivational and emotional appeal for the masses as the ideals of patriotic nationalism Mankind as a whole is not yet morally and psychologically ready for a higher collective unity and synthesis than that of the nation All the great and wise leaders of humanity recognised this fact of evolution An ideal which is too high and remote from the present condition of human consciousness is not likely to have any emotional or motivational appeal for human beings In the evolution of collective human groups the best and safest method of development is to raise them by stages, clarifying to them the highest truths, aims and laws that govern human evolution, but for practical motivation, constantly presenting to them ideals which motivate them to aspire for and transcend their present condition, motives and values for those of the immediately higher level In the history of humanity nationalism has been a strong motive force which has helped individuals and groups to rise beyond their immediate self-interest to a higher level Nationalism has also led to a lot of evils like conflicts, war, etc But every human ideal is corrupted and misused by the human ego Even the ideal of human unity, if it is attempted to be realised on the basis of external accommodation of collective egos, may lead to a greater evil than nationalism Nationalism has also done a lot of good to humanity, it was one of the most powerful forces for national integration, it has helped nations to realise their cultural identities, it has freed nations from colonial oppression and foreign rule So until humanity as a whole is morally and psychologically ready to rise beyond its collective egoism and arrive at a higher collective synthesis than that of the nation, nationality and nationalism have their utility and purpose in the evolution of humanity Even when humanity is able to realise this higher synthesis and the unity of mankind becomes a living fact in the consciousness of the race, the nation as a cultural and spiritual unit may remain, expressing the cultural diversity of mankind with each cultural unit bringing its unique system of values and special contribution and genius to

the progress of the whole. For this cultural and spiritual dimension of the nation is the deeper and the more enduring and lasting part of the national organism than its economic, social and political structures. This may well remain even when the nation as a political unit disappears or merges into a larger aggregate. So nationalism is not a bar to human unity or globalism, provided it is not made into an end in itself but used as a means for realising the higher evolutionary destiny of Mankind and subserves this higher purpose. National self-realisation is the aim of nationalism, but this is not for any exclusive glorification of the "Motherland" but to release the national energy and genius for fulfilling the evolutionary destiny of Mankind. Thus, in this higher view of nationalism, the ideal law of national development is "to perfect its corporate existence by a free development from within" but at the same time "to respect and to aid and be aided by the same free development of other nations" and "harmonise its life with that of the human aggregate and to pour itself out as a force for growth and perfection on humanity"<sup>4</sup>

But the important fact which has to be kept in mind is that the aim of nationalism is not the development and expansion of the national ego but the discovery of the nation-soul, the deeper and higher self of the nation which is a unique aspect and power of the Universal Energy of the divine Self and therefore in total solidarity with the self of all other nations. The souls of nations complement each other in an organic unity and harmony like the limbs or organs of the body of man. This is the reason why great patriots of the world who are able to enter into a living communion with the spirit of their nation are also great humanists. They recognise that nationalism is only a means and a stage in the evolution of mankind and not an end by itself.

For example, the great patriot-sages of modern India, Sri Aurobindo and Swami Vivekananda, tirelessly preached and worked for the cultural and spiritual regeneration of India not out of any cultural chauvinism but because they saw with their intuitive vision that the spiritual regeneration of India which "preserves the knowledge that preserves the world" is indispensable for the spiritual regeneration of the world. The destiny of India is to preserve, manifest and radiate into the world the light of some supreme spiritual values on which depend the ultimate well-being and fulfilment of mankind. In this way India has to fulfil her destiny and manifest her spiritual genius for the spiritual evolution of Mankind.

M S SRINIVASAN

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## SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MODERN WORLD

THE world in which we have been living is a world of contradictions, problems, paradoxes and growing perplexities. The look of it has changed so immeasurably for the worse that it appears to be 'a heap of broken images' if we may use a phrase from T. S. Eliot's well-known poem *The Waste Land*. Dark clouds of materialistic civilization are hovering over the heads of modern people. The entire earth is in the grip of disastrous situations sans permanent solution. Its overall look is so gloomy and tortured that it seems to be inching towards decay, destruction and death. Deep down in the heart of suffering humanity, there is a prayer for a new world order.

It is evident that the maladies which afflict mankind today lie too deep to be cured by any superficial treatment. In the words of Sri Aurobindo.

Man has created a system of civilization which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites <sup>1</sup>

Strangely, man is struggling with his limited capacity but the task is so big and baffling that he seems to be caught in a quagmire and to struggle in a quagmire is definitely not progress. No social, political or economical panaceas can improve his condition. They have been tried times without number but have disappointed human beings miserably. Man's life has sunk to the level of the beast. So, it is futile to hope for a change of his life unless his nature is transformed and liberated. As Samar Basu rightly remarks

Man cannot remain satisfied with his animal nature. And it is a fact, one may admit or not, that he is not satisfied also with his present human nature <sup>2</sup>

In other words, man is passing through a crisis of identity and a crisis of transformation. This period of frustration in man's life is a period of doubt and darkness. But we should not give up our hope to change our society and the world because 'Night is darkest before dawn' and 'if winter comes, can spring be far behind?' At this critical juncture, when we are groping in the dark and 'there is something rotten in the state of Denmark' and we are not in a position to decide what 'to be or not to be', the teachings of Sri Aurobindo can illumine our path and lead us to a world of peace and bliss if we go to him with an open heart. Samar Basu also writes in the preface to his book *Man: Towards His Splendid Destiny*.

We firmly believe that in the present darkest situation, it is Sri Aurobindo's light that can guide bewildered humanity to find out the right way to progress <sup>3</sup>

Without an iota of doubt, Sri Aurobindo happens to be a unique product of the

modern Indian Renaissance. His personality is multifaceted. In him one gets the essence of a culture which is the perfect synthesis of the East and the West. The great metaphysician has explained himself in writings each of which glitters as a superb work of art. His remarkable works, to mention a few of the Birth Centenary Volumes, are *Savitri*, *The Life Divine*, *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, the compilations *The Hour of God* and *The Supramental Manifestation*. But this is not the end of the list of his books. He is so many things at the same time and in every sphere his success is tremendous. 'Everywhere Mount Everest seems to face Mount Everest' in the Himalayan personality of this spiritual supremo. Here it will not be out of place to quote K. Venkatasubramanian, who spoke at a Symposium on Sri Aurobindo on 23 February 1990, organised by the Department of Philosophy, Pondicherry University and the Sri Aurobindo Society. He says

Sri Aurobindo is unique. There is no one in the East and the West with whom he can be compared. He combined in himself several aspects which will not ordinarily go together. His western upbringing did not stand in the way of his total absorption in Indian tradition and culture. He was a traditionalist with a revolutionary outlook. He was a revolutionary with a constructive programme of action. He was a philosopher with a poetic vision. He was a poet with a philosophical bent of mind. He was an intellectual interested in yogic practice. His yoga was based on a firm and coherent theoretic basis. He was a freedom fighter and a political worker with a vision for the future.<sup>4</sup>

As a matter of fact, Sri Aurobindo is not an armchair philosopher but a man of vast and varied experiences of life. His each word is a magazine of power. D. L. Murray adequately writes

In fact, he is a new type of thinker, one who combined in his vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East. To study his writings is to enlarge the boundaries of one's knowledge..<sup>5</sup>

No wonder that to read Sri Aurobindo is not only to enlarge one's boundaries of knowledge but also to arm oneself with mental and spiritual ammunition to face the uncertain present and the challenging future. It is essential to know the mission of Sri Aurobindo before going through his writings dealing with diverse subjects. In this connection the Mother observes:

What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history is not a teaching, not even a revelation, it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme.<sup>6</sup>

Hence it is clear that his pen was not a personal instrument but was used to fulfil the divine will. Teaching, poetry, politics, philosophy, yoga—all are part of Sri

Aurobindo's sadhana of self-transformation and world-transformation. His sadhana begins with experience and proceeds to bring the Divine Consciousness down to earth. In his yoga, work is as important as meditation. Work done in full concentration and in the spirit of self-surrender takes one's consciousness nearer to the Divine Knowledge, work, devotion and meditation are all integrated in this yoga. Change of consciousness is the sole effective way of changing man's life and for this Sri Aurobindo prescribes an integral discipline. If the inner consciousness can be changed and delivered from darkness and limitations, the change of man's nature and life will follow as a natural corollary sooner or later.

Sri Aurobindo's yoga means union of the human soul with the Divine, the union of man with God. All the paths, the ways and practices which lead to this union are called paths of yoga. The object of his yoga is to transform life by bringing down into it the Light, Power and Bliss of the divine Truth. The final aim is to create a divine life on this earth and in the earthly existence. He does not teach an escape from life; he wants to change this world through an all-round evolution. A harmonised and integral culture of man's physical, vital and mental potentialities can alone enable him to rise to a supramental realisation of truth, transforming and divinising his total being.

Sri Aurobindo offers the supermind as the all-satisfying solution of the ills of the world. The supermind is the supreme creative Light and Force of the Divine. Achieving it would mean an ascent of the human consciousness into its absolute glories. The descent of supermind into human nature and life means not only a complete transformation of the consciousness of man but also a transfiguration of his mind, life and body. The supramental Light will reveal not only the truth of the Soul or the Spirit, but also the fundamental truths and principles of the universal existence and their multitudinous working in all beings and things.

Albeit the objective conditions for the new age have not been prepared, it is not beyond human reach. It is the firm belief of Sri Aurobindo that a new world shall emerge. A new age is in the offing. A new man is about to be born. All the stages of evolution that have gone before have been only steps leading to a radiant new age that is to come. It will be an epochal event, a landmark in the spiritual culture of man. It will inaugurate a new era so far unknown to history and humanity.

In fact, the urge of the age tends towards the unity of man. Sri Aurobindo aims at human unity. It is one of the principal themes of his works. However, unity is not uniformity. In God's creation there is a place for each one and no one can replace another. Nations like individuals have distinct souls although all souls are ultimately one. The Mother believes in an everlasting unity of mankind. She remarks,

The unity of all the nations is the compelling future of the world. But for the unity of all nations to be possible, each nation must first realise its own unity.<sup>7</sup>

Sri Aurobindo weaves the structure of his 'scheme of human unity' chiefly on the ground of historicity but as a visionary he goes beyond reason when and where reason

does not seem to be a healthy guide. He does not plead for a rigid system as is evident from the alternative schemes he prophesies to shape the future world. His faith in the ultimate union of the world's peoples remains unshaken, for his ideals have been translated into action through the foundation of not only his Ashram but also Auroville, a symbol of human unity and world amity, in Pondicherry on 28 February 1968, by the Mother. For its inauguration, the soil of one hundred and twenty-eight countries of the world were brought and mixed as a gesture symbolising world union. It is, of course, a small plant but the time will come when it will grow into a big tree underneath which the peoples from various countries will come together and enjoy divine light and happiness. Sri Aurobindo's work not only continues but grows vaster, richer every day through the Ashram and the International Centre of Education at Pondicherry. It is a vast 'laboratory', a field of experiment, where all the basic difficulties of human nature, all the problems of human life, are faced and sought to be conquered. Now centres in the name of Sri Aurobindo are being started all over the world to accelerate the dawn of a new age upon the earth.

Thus a close investigation of Sri Aurobindo's progressive ideal gives us the clue that, only by reaching the supramental can we know the ultimate secret of the world and solve its problems. In it alone is our true growth.

SARYUG YADAV

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# THE EMERGENCE OF BIG SCIENCE

(Continued from the issue of July 1997)

## 4. The Decision to Develop and Make Nuclear Weapons

THE process of chemical separation to extract  $U^{238}$  from uranium ore at that early time proved to be unsuccessful. But the discovery of the transuranic element plutonium made it possible to circumvent the difficulty in another way. In fact, we may say that when the process of producing plutonium from  $U^{238}$  is understood, any reactor becomes, in a certain sense, a component of the nuclear weapon.

In 1940 Enrico Fermi was, with his team, spearheading the American research in creating self-sustained nuclear reaction. But it is interesting to look into how far the Germans had at this time progressed in that direction.

By 1941 they had occupied Denmark. In an effort to promote German culture a German Cultural Institute was established in Copenhagen. Among its activities were also organized scientific meetings. Heisenberg visited Copenhagen during one of such meetings and stayed there for a week. While there, he visited Bohr's Institute on several occasions. In the course of such a visit Bohr and Heisenberg had a private talk. In an investigative article about this meeting, Bernstein, Professor of Physics at the Stevens Institute of Technology, writes "Neither man seems to have made any notes, so one cannot be entirely sure what was said. Nevertheless, Bohr came away from the discussion with the distinct impression that Heisenberg was working on nuclear weapons. There was such a lack of agreement between the two men as to what exactly was said that we will probably never know for sure. As a corollary to this larger puzzle there is a smaller one. There is evidence that during the course of the Copenhagen meeting, Heisenberg made the drawing of a heavy-water reactor he was planning to build, at the meeting or beforehand. . . This drawing, or a replica, found its way to Los Alamos Laboratory in December 1943 ... It appeared to contain direct information about how the Germans were planning to make nuclear weapons." (*Scientific American*, May 1995, pp. 72-73) Bohr was under the impression that the sketch was Heisenberg's plan to build a bomb. In contradiction to this the American expert Hans Bethe—acknowledged as one of the leading nuclear theorists in the world and the first to explain the nuclear process in the stars—with Edward Teller explained in a two-page memorandum that it was the design of a reactor. To reconcile with Bohr's conception, it was speculated that the Germans had intended to use the reactor as an explosive device. As put by Bethe "This is a drawing of a reactor, not a bomb. This is amazing. Do the Germans want to drop a reactor on London?" (*Scientific American*, May 1995, p. 74)

Would it not be surprising, then, that the Germans never came up with any nuclear weapon despite developing the necessary know-how? Well, as the American physicists would later figure out from the diagram and descriptions given by Bohr, the design was

actually that of a faulty reactor which Heisenberg had proposed in late 1939 and early 1940 and to which he clung until the end of the War

To return to the American and British efforts in 1940 While the American nuclear research effort was still concentrated on a nuclear reactor to be made operational, the British played a decisive part in showing that a nuclear weapon might be a realistic objective

In March 1940 Otto Frisch and Rudolf Peierls (a refugee from Germany, working at the University of Birmingham in England) calculated the minimum amount of  $U^{235}$  that would be needed to carry out an explosive chain reaction They worked without government support; in fact, it was being done clandestinely. Frisch and Peierls arrived at the startling result that the critical mass for such a device would be just a few kgs

These calculations, coupled with ideas for isotope separation, were later duly conveyed in a memo to Winston Churchill, the War-time British Prime Minister, his Cabinet took a decision to pursue in earnest the research, with the hope that it would lead towards a nuclear device of unprecedented destructive power

During this time, Leo Szilard, who along with Eugene Wigner and Edward Teller had discovered the nuclear chain reaction, met Einstein. They convinced him of the usefulness and necessity of the nuclear device that could be designed from this new discovery They also persuaded him to write to this effect to President Roosevelt, thus lending his scientific weight to the programme of nuclear weapons. He signed the following letter explaining the possibility of a nuclear bomb; it urged that the United States should not allow the enemy to come into possession of it first

Albert Einstein  
Old Grove Rd  
Nassau Point  
Peconic, Long Island  
August 2nd, 1939

F D Roosevelt,  
President of the United States,  
White House  
Washington, D C

Sir,

Some recent work by E. Fermi and L. Szilard, which has been communicated to me in manuscript, leads me to expect that the element uranium may be turned into a new and important source of energy in the immediate future Certain aspects of the situation which has arisen seem to call for watchfulness and, if necessary, quick action on the part of the Administration. I believe therefore that it is my duty to bring to your attention the following facts and recommendations:

In the course of the last four months it has been made probable—through the work of Joliot in France as well as Fermi and Szilard in America—that it may become



possible to set up a nuclear chain reaction in a large mass of uranium, by which vast amounts of power and large quantities of new radium-like elements would be generated. Now it appears almost certain that this could be achieved in the immediate future.

This new phenomenon would also lead to the construction of bombs, and it is conceivable—though much less certain—that an extremely powerful type of bomb, carried by boat and exploded in a port, might very well destroy the whole port together with some of the surrounding territory. However, such bombs might very well prove to be too heavy for transportation by air.

The United States has only very poor ores of uranium in moderate quantities. There is some good ore in Canada and the former Czechoslovakia, while the most important source of uranium is Belgian Congo.

In view of this situation you may think it desirable to have some permanent contact maintained between the Administration and the group of physicists working on chain reaction in America. One possible way of achieving this might be for you to entrust with this task a person who has your confidence and who could perhaps serve in an official capacity. His task might comprise the following:

a) to approach Government Departments, keep them informed of the further development, and put forward recommendations for Government action, giving particular attention to the problem of securing a supply of uranium ore for the United States,

b) to speed up the experimental work, which is at present being carried on within the limits of the budgets of University laboratories, by providing funds, if such funds be required, through his contacts with private persons who are willing to make contributions for this cause, and perhaps also by obtaining the co-operation of industrial laboratories which have the necessary equipment.

I understand that Germany has actually stopped the sale of uranium from the Czechoslovakian mines which she has taken over. That she should have taken such early action might perhaps be understood on the ground that the son of the German Undersecretary of State, von Weizsacker, is attached to the Kaiser-Wilhelm Institute in Berlin where some of the American work on uranium is now being repeated.

Yours very truly,  
Sd /- Albert Einstein

The letter had its effect and a big research team was put together in the United States; the Allied nations also contributed substantially—with one aim, to produce the atom bomb. It is in these war-time developments and exigencies that the genesis of the Manhattan Project could be traced.

Later history has shown that the menace of a German uranium bomb, which triggered off this thinking and effort, was no more than an unsubstantial bogey. After the War Einstein said with deep regret: "If I had known that the Germans would not succeed in constructing the atom bomb, I would never have moved a finger."

At the end of the War there were many prominent scientists—Joliot-Curie, Cecil Powell, Joseph Rotblat and Hideki Yukawa among others who, unlike Einstein, had actively participated in the Manhattan Project, later, realising the destructive capabilities of their creation, they appealed “Shall we choose death because we cannot forget our quarrel? We appeal as human beings to human beings Remember your humanity and forget the rest”

The decade of the forties was a time of great trials and difficult decisions for science and scientists Joseph Rotblat, a British nuclear physicist taking part in the Project, rightly described the moral and political issues that came in conflict, that influenced the minds of these men who would decide the fate of the War, the World and its inhabitants “This was truly a choice between the devil and the deep blue sea The very idea of working on a weapon of mass destruction is abhorrent to a true scientist, it goes against the basic ideals of science On the other hand, these very ideals were in danger of being uprooted, if by refusing to develop the bomb a most vile regime were enabled to acquire world domination I do not know of any other case in history when scientists were faced with such an agonizing quandary” (*Scientific American*, May 1996, p. 24)

The War exigencies, and especially the German threat, asserts Rotblat, drove home the importance of exploring the nuclear chain reaction The actual intention of constructing a bomb was, of course, kept a top secret, restricted to small boundaries of the laboratory at Los Alamos It was only here that Rotblat heard about the intentions of it for the first time He recalls what one night Gen Leslie Groves, the Military Commander of the Manhattan project, mentioned at dinner-time “The real purpose in making the bomb was to subdue the Soviets” Rotblat began to speak out with other Los Alamos physicists against the bomb, but the usual response was “We started an experiment we must see it through” (*Scientific American*, January 1996, p 25)

In late 1944, when Rotblat learned from Chadwick of an intelligence report which indicated that the Germans were not working on the bomb, he decided to dissociate himself from the project. It seems that Hitler ordered the closing down of the Project, as the findings of his research group would have leaked to the enemy and that the enemy would have capitalised on the German researches He was quite aware of the heavy spying practised by everybody during the War

By the Spring of 1945 the scepticism regarding the outcome of the weapon of mass destruction began to surface amongst the participating scientists The feelings of many scientists at the time just prior to the Alamogordo test were put thus by Szilard “During 1943 and part of 1944 our greatest worry was the possibility that Germany would perfect an atomic bomb before the invasion of Europe In 1945 we ceased worrying about what the Germans might do to us, we began to worry about what the Government of the United States might do to other countries.”

Even the Franck Report of June 1945, which had amongst its signatories Franck, Szilard, Rabinowitch and Seaborg, appealed against the use of the nuclear weapon It warned that the weapon’s destructive capabilities were beyond the scientists’ scope of

developing an anti-nuclear protection and also cautioned of a flying start towards an unlimited armaments race.

Despite the internal protests, the Manhattan Project proved to be successful in view of Japan's immediate surrender after the first atom bomb dropped over Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 at 0815 hrs and the second over Nagasaki two days later, at the same time on 8 August 1945. Japan thought that if there was going to be such bombing every alternate day, the whole nation would be reduced to nuclear ash. In reality, however, at that time the Americans had only two weapons in their possession.

But was the victory of the Allied forces over the Axis the only contribution of the Manhattan Project?

Before we take up this question let us see what Sri Aurobindo had foreseen about the devastating capabilities of the nuclear fission process.

On 25 September 1939 Sri Aurobindo wrote the sonnet *A Dream of Surreal Science*. It was a grim prophecy, in the form of poetry, of the consequences of nuclear energy:

One dreamed and saw a gland write Hamlet, drink  
 At the Mermaid, capture immortality  
 A committee of hormones on the Aegean's brink  
 Composed the Iliad and the Odyssey

A thyroid, meditating almost nude  
 Under the Bo-tree, saw the eternal Light  
 And, rising from its mighty solitude,  
 Spoke of the Wheel and eightfold Path all right

A brain by a disordered stomach driven  
 Thundered through Europe, conquered, ruled and fell,  
 From St Helena went, perhaps, to Heaven  
 Thus wagged on the surreal world, until

A scientist played with atoms and blew out  
 The universe before God had time to shout.<sup>1</sup>

The last two lines are clear indications as to how up-to-date Sri Aurobindo was about the major events occurring around the world and also well aware of their possible consequences still beyond the conception of man.

To remain up-to-date was important for him, for his own spiritual ideals and purposes. He had to see that God had enough time to shout before something disastrous was done by the stupidity of man or by the machinations of the devil. Sri Aurobindo used to read the *Manchester Guardian* regularly and perhaps it is through this source

that he had come to know about the discovery of nuclear fission. In his occult vision he immediately saw that the danger is serious, in fact, we may even conjecture that the closing down of the nuclear programme by Hitler had some kind of connection with this involvement of Sri Aurobindo's. Sri Aurobindo used to get the *New Statesman* and the *Nation* as well as the *Manchester Guardian* through his English disciple Arjava (John A. Chadwick) which only goes to show that the material clue can come from any immediate circumstance. This also means that Sri Aurobindo's 'Cave of Tapasya' was actually a place of intense activity on every plane and in every phase of time. We may also recall what the Mother said, on 30 August 1945, after the explosion of atomic bombs on Japan

The atomic bomb is in itself the most wonderful achievement and the sign of a growing power of man over material nature. But what is to be regretted is that this material progress and mastery is not the result of and in keeping with a spiritual progress and mastery which alone has the power to contradict and counteract the terrible danger coming from these discoveries. We cannot and must not stop progress, but we must achieve it in an equilibrium between the inside and the outside.<sup>2</sup>

We shall be concerned here with the socio-scientific changes that have occurred as a consequence of the war-time nuclear programmes

*(To be continued)*

ANIRBAN DEB

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## APPOINTMENT WITH SRI AUROBINDO IN THE NOONDAY SUN

THIS morning I had gone to Jacques, the dentist, in Auroville by car. On the way back I decided to stop by Paola's for a moment to see how she was. I must have omitted to tell the driver to wait and by the time I came out, at about 12:45, he and the car had disappeared. It is a time at which I do not usually venture out in the April sun and I admit that my reaction was not one of immediate delight, but within seconds I remembered that whenever I'm in an unusual situation like this something interesting happens and it was certainly no great distance from Paola's house to my own, even if at this time there is no shade. I plunged into the field of infinite possibilities, because that is what one moves through and invites when in a state of receptivity or equanimity or joyful expectation of nothing in particular. It is a meditation that seems to invite the universal creativity, an emptiness, a making room for anything that wants to come. Yet I reached the Playground corner, went past Corner House and turned left into the Ashram street without anything happening. I had come to the Ashram corner and decided that the universe was missing a good opportunity when Nilima stopped me and at first I didn't recognize it. Usually what I talk of as heaven's creative gesture is when I unexpectedly meet someone that I need to see or phone. Only the other day I reluctantly had to go out on an errand and five people that I wanted to contact crossed my path one after another. The Mother says that that is a sign of the Force working and that it is working for all of us. The overmind force is very obvious and works in evident miracles, but the highest force does so quite naturally at a sort of accelerated pace so that you usually don't notice it except to say, "Oh, that was just what I wanted!" But in this case I had no particular business with Nilima and I even tried to hurry on, explaining that I had never really made friends with the noonday sun.

"I will give you shade," she said and held her big black umbrella above us both. She explained that a special issue of *Mother India* was being prepared to commemorate Sri Aurobindo's 125th birth anniversary and asked me to write something. I must have looked my doubt. Who can write about Sri Aurobindo? But she merely pressed a deadline on me, removed the luxury shade and let me out into the sun again. 10 days, 15 days. That wasn't even enough time in which to decide about what to write on. No! I mustn't get involved in this. But no sooner had I passed the Ashram than with a rush of emotion I knew I would write about what Sri Aurobindo meant to me, how he had changed my life. I was immediately flooded by sweet memories and just before being overwhelmed by them I sent a blessing to the driver for having "stranded" me in the field of infinite possibilities. Whether the words would be published or not, I had been given the opportunity of recalling how Sri Aurobindo had come into my life and what it all meant to me. The driver's disappearance had given me an appointment with Sri Aurobindo.

I was 17, in Paris, just after World War II which I had spent with my parents and my brothers in South Africa. It was a bewildering world that I discovered when I

returned to the city of my birth Paris had been occupied by the Germans and my uncle had been in the resistance, risking his life every day My favourite aunt and uncle had been killed in a concentration camp and their daughter, my favourite cousin, had come out of it a walking skeleton, her number tattooed on her arm She would still wake up screaming in the middle of the night The camp life of which she spoke was such a nightmare that I was haunted by the total malice of its organization Everywhere we visited we heard tales of miraculous escapes, of hiding in cellars or attics, of raids by the Gestapo, of never being able to walk along a street without feeling that the footsteps behind belonged to someone who would catch up and arrest you, of never hearing a car without fearing that you would be bundled into it never to be seen again All this belied the beauty of Paris in Springtime, and yet Paris, the Seine flowing below her graceful bridges under that light grey blue sky which is her particular colour, also belied the nightmare There was sap in the trees lining the avenues. Nothing had discouraged nature and sometimes I was energized by the crisp air, the trees, the fluffy white clouds scudding along the sky. sometimes, but not always And on one occasion when thoughts of the horrors I had heard of assailed me as I was walking along the Champs-Élysées, I turned into a bookshop to find a book that would dispel the shadows I can't remember if I had anything particular in mind, perhaps a novel, but I was strangely attracted to a book with the drawing of a lotus bud on its spine. It drew me like a magnet and I went straight to it and opened it On the front cover was an opened lotus I don't think I had ever seen a lotus before. In those days the lotus did not grow either in France or in South Africa, but something in me seemed to recognize it. The book was *Essays on the Gita* by Sri Aurobindo in the French translation by Jean Herbert I knew that that was the book I had come for, though when I looked inside what I read was totally incomprehensible to the rational mind. This book too was about war, just what I was trying to get away from, yet it was the book I wanted Somehow every phrase had a soothing effect on me.

After that, whenever I heard a tragic story I was aware, ever more aware, of a part of me that looked on untouched, understanding what I could not understand with my mind So with that very first encounter Sri Aurobindo saved me from the torment of seeing a large part of the world become, even if temporarily, a torture chamber.

I read the book daily, not quite knowing why, not understanding it deeply perhaps, but sure that it was important for me I returned to Africa, went to university, but found that nothing satisfied me deeply but the reading of this book and the state induced by it in me Then one day I understood that through the book Krishna was talking to me, talking to me directly, saying that it was better for me to do what I had to do, even if I were to fail, than to do what others might be doing, even were I to do it with great success And this was the second important gift of Sri Aurobindo to me A light had been shone into my life I tried to understand where it was leading me It did lead me, again to a bookshop, where I found a copy of the first volume of *The Synthesis of Yoga*. This time there was no lotus on the cover but Sri Aurobindo's symbol (which I had seen before in gold, spinning in my vision like a golden disk and resolving itself into this

symbol when I came out of sleep or out of trance) How this book came to be there I still do not know, nor did anyone in the shop. For it was the time of an embargo on all Indian goods—nothing South African could enter India and vice-versa. But now this second great gift began to change my life even more. It was not only a confirmation of all that I had ever dreamed or seen in vision and never been able to talk about, but it opened vast new vistas and carried a promise that suffering would one day be abolished, and that the prayer which every Christian says, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” had been heard. It would become reality. Reading the *Synthesis* I never doubted that we were on our way to this. Like everyone who sets out on the road of Integral Yoga I had battles to fight, difficulties to overcome, but this certainty that it all had a meaning never left me. There was nothing more important in my life than this book of Sri Aurobindo’s, yet strangely enough I never thought to write to the publisher. I was very young, of course, and not very conversant with the world of publishing, but mainly it was, I think, that the voice seemed to come straight from heaven and not through any terrestrial agency—the question of posting letters to God did not arise.

I had many Gujarati friends in Africa and one day one of them told me of a Sri Aurobindo Ashram in India. It was as if heaven had dropped, if not quite onto my lap, then very nearby. Sooner or later, I knew, I would have to reach that Ashram. A group of my Gujarati friends left for a tour of India and when they returned they brought the one thing I had asked for—a whole set of Sri Aurobindo’s books, including the second and third volumes of the *Synthesis*, *Savitri*, *The Life Divine*, *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*. I plunged right in, barely emerging to draw breath from time to time. When I came out of this five-year period of intense reading I knew I had to go to India—but how and when?

Then something happened that made me leave Africa. My mother had been admitted with leukaemia into a nursing home in the south of France and I went to nurse her. I was with her for six months before she left her body. When I went back to Africa I found that the bonds I had thought would be so difficult to break had been greatly loosened. Those dear to me had survived and would survive my departure. I somehow felt that my mother, who had been a mystic, was helping me from the other side to set out on the path. By then I had written to the Ashram and got a reply from the Mother saying that when the time came I would visit the Ashram. I knew I had to make a pilgrimage to the place where He had lived. Once I made that decision the road opened even further. I was given the opportunity to go to a congress on the great religions of the world which was being held in Manila. This gave me a good reason to travel eastward, for one had to have a good reason in those days. One could not talk about wanting to change one’s consciousness. Such a phrase seemed to imply insanity.

And then I set out on the greatest adventure of my life, an adventure to which Sri Aurobindo had beckoned me and from which I have never really looked back. Sri Aurobindo was there at every step, his magnificent presence resonating in me, lifting me above doubt and difficulty. I speak of Sri Aurobindo rather than the Mother because at that time I was aware of Him and hardly aware of the Mother. The journey eastwards

was a pilgrimage to the site where Sri Aurobindo had lived and taught and set down the words which were drawing me across the ocean with such an irresistible pull. When I finally found myself beside his Samadhi reading the words that the Mother had inscribed on it I wept. I knew I had come home, that every moment since my birth, and even long before, had led me to this moment. The voice that had spoken to me from other dimensions had been heard here in his room which I would visit and when I found myself there, among his books, where he had sat and slept, the other dimensions descended onto earth for me. But my real meeting with him came when I looked into the Mother's eyes, for what I saw then was the consciousness that I had thought of as belonging to Sri Aurobindo alone. Their consciousness was indeed one.

In looking back I see that everything that happened refers to these three time marks: the day I found the *Essays on the Gita*, the day I started reading Sri Aurobindo's *Synthesis*, and the day I met the Mother who then became the centre of my universe—so much so that it is difficult to speak separately of Sri Aurobindo without evoking her.

Sri Aurobindo's writings had been the pillars of my life. To say that they had bestowed on me many great gifts is not enough. They had given me everything. Without them life had had little coherence. The life of visions and meditations had almost nothing to do with my life of every day and if I had had to choose I knew which one I could most easily do without. It was Sri Aurobindo who anchored me to earth and made me understand the great gift that was my life on earth and the use I had to make of it. His promise of transformation, of a life and a world of unalloyed joy and light and beauty were made real whenever I read him. His sentences were so mantric that I felt them moulding me, hammering at resistances sometimes but most often melting them. They would take shape again, of course, but always and ever that voice, now no longer distant, wore away and wore away the things that had to go.

These things that I am saying are probably much a part of every devotee's experience. The space allotted to me in this special issue of *Mother India* being limited, I will try and skip what must have been experienced by so many and speak of something which was and is of special concern to me and which turned the evolutionary tide in such a momentous way that my mind still staggers to contemplate it. I refer to what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother did during World War II and what would have been had they not done it.

Everybody who knows anything about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother knows that they have come to usher in an entirely new evolutionary cycle. Less known about their work, because they did not speak much of these things when guiding their disciples, is the battle they had to wage against the opposing forces. The constant keynote of their letters is encouragement with reminders that the Light is always there. Always they counsel us not to dwell on the darkness. To battle the adverse forces was their job, and though in *Savitri* and in such poems as *A God's Labour* and *The Children of Wotan* we are given chilling insights into the realms of night, we are never asked to enter them ourselves, though it may sometimes be that our paths are crossed by something from



these worlds with which we must do combat. But on the whole we are exhorted to follow the sunlit path. The Mother asks us to be simple, to be happy. Cheerfulness is itself a shield against these powers of darkness and it is indeed the way in which the Mother led me and which for the most part I have been fortunate enough to be able to follow. However, it fell to my lot to research into the struggle of forces behind World War II and the role that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother played in that struggle. The role that Sri Aurobindo played in securing India's independence is well known, but as he himself says in a letter to a disciple, if the dark forces threatening humanity's evolution in World War II had not been vanquished, the whole of India would have been engulfed and subjected to something much worse than British domination. I offer my findings about this occult war as a contribution to something not yet given its full importance in the history of the world. Indeed it is only as people begin to realize that events here are always formed on other planes that Sri Aurobindo's work will be understood. And what they will understand is that during the Second World War Sri Aurobindo saved the world from madness, veritably lifting it from a bottomless pit into which it was falling.

I will try and tell how it came to pass that I found myself engaged in this subject. More than a quarter century ago I had written a story, *Great Sir*, based on an American soldier's experiences in World War II throughout which he had been guided by Sri Aurobindo whom he had met on the battlefield. The book had been rejected by my publisher who opined that the story could not possibly be true.

It looked very much as though the book was fated never to be published.

I was happily and busily working upon the third volume of my version of the *Mahabharata* when I had the following dream.

I was purring along on a moped in open country reminiscent of Auroville (only more undulating) when my moped stopped. I looked into my petrol tank. It was so dry that there was not even the iridescent gleam of a last drop. Then, without transition, I was with Sri Aurobindo and I understood my task was to heat water for him.

As for the first part of the dream the moment I woke up I knew that the steady, often inspired flow of writing for *The Great Golden Sacrifice of the Mahabharata* would, at least temporarily, not be available. And indeed, when I tried to write, I found myself dry as any rusty petrol tank. So I told Sri Aurobindo that I was prepared to do whatever was required to heat the water but that I needed specific instructions. None were forthcoming.

No author ever puts out a welcome mat for a writer's block but this time I actually enjoyed my respite, though never before had I come to such an abrupt halt. Over the next two or three days I wrote letters and attended to all sorts of matters that had been pending.

Three or four days after the dream a carpenter was called in for minor repairs to my door. When the carpenter came to say that he had finished it struck me it would be a

good time to have him open a drawer that had been stuck for several years. He had me remove its contents. As soon as I lifted out the copy of *Great Sir*, I knew, and hugged it to me. 'Thank you, Great Sir.'

When I had finished revising *Great Sir* I found that I needed an introduction and author's note which would explain what happened after the War and would give a certain background regarding Sri Aurobindo's position during World War II, his insight into and, indeed, his prophetic vision of Nazism.

The Mother had already told me years before when I accompanied John Kelly, the American soldier whose experiences are recounted in *Great Sir*, for his birthday darshan that Sri Aurobindo used to tell her in advance what Churchill would be saying in his speeches. She and Sri Aurobindo had put their yogic force behind Churchill and De Gaulle and the Allied cause. Now I was led to certain books and documents which made it plain that Hitler and his high command were trained in occultism and were agents of the darkest Satanic forces. The more I read the more I became convinced that Sri Aurobindo had saved the world from unimaginable horror.

Reluctant as I am to return to the scene of these horrors which I found myself compelled to visit and write about in the introduction to *Great Sir*, which itself turned into a book, *The Light that Shone into the Dark Abyss*, I now quote certain passages therefrom. They more than support Sri Aurobindo's statement about the difference between British Raj and the domination by Nazism. It would be well to preface these passages with Hitler's reply when he was accused of being the enemy of the mind and spirit. He boasted:

We are often abused for being the enemies of the mind and spirit. Well, that is what we are, but in a far deeper sense than bourgeois science, in its idiotic pride, could ever imagine.

I think I would have had grave doubts about publishing this book had I not been supported by what the Mother said in her *Questions and Answers* (9 April 1951).

Naturally, men are always very anxious to forget. There are already those who have begun to say, "Are you quite sure it was like that?" But those who have gone through that, do not want it to be forgotten, so the places of torture, massacre—hideous places which go beyond all the worst the human imagination can conceive—some of these places have been preserved. You can go and visit the torture-chambers the Germans built in Paris, and they will never be destroyed, I hope, so that those who come and say, "Oh! you know, these things have been exaggerated" (for one does not like to know that such frightful things have happened), could be taken by the hand and told, "Come and see, if you are not afraid."

This forms character. If it is taken in the right way (and I think there are people who have taken it in the right way), this may lead you straight to yoga,

straight That is, one feels such a deep detachment for all things in the world, such a great need to find something else, an imperious need to find something which is truly beautiful, truly fresh, truly good then, quite naturally, this brings you to a spiritual aspiration

What was this satanic world? It is best understood, if it can be understood, by a description of what went on in the concentration camps The following is recorded by Leonard Peikoff in *The Ominous Parallels*

The men, women and children who were to become the looted corpses or the living skeletons of the Nazi concentration camp system were seized in Germany, then across Europe, by the hundreds and thousands, then by the millions They were seized from homes, offices, factories, farms, schools, and even at random from fields and streets

The transportation of the prisoners to the camps followed a certain pattern According to Bruno Bettelheim, a survivor of Buchenwald and a brilliant observer of camp life, "the nature of the trip was part of a definite plan "

The newly arrested prisoners were taunted, screamed at, slapped, gouged, kicked, whipped Some were ordered to stare into lights, or to kneel for hours Some were forced to hit or beat other prisoners Some were forced to curse themselves, their loved ones, and their most precious values Under threat of instant death, none dared utter a murmur of protest or make a gesture of self-defence or move a step to help a wife or husband lying in plain sight, bleeding and dying

Hitler set out spinning his hellish future by preparing the human material required to actualize it on earth

Prisoners were herded into freight cars, crammed naked against one another driven back and forth senselessly, sometimes for days, then deposited in extermination centers and turned over to trained torturers. .

The salient feature of the camp world was not merely injustice, or even horror, but horror which was unintelligible to the victim

When they arrived at the camps, many of the prisoners, dazed by their arrest and nightmare transport, did not know what was happening to them or even where they were As a rule the Nazis told them nothing and answered no questions The guards' manner was that of a response to the self-evident, they behaved as if the prisoners were creatures with no faculty of intelligence, or as if the prisoners had now entered a realm in which such a faculty was irrelevant

In the larger society, the Nazis counted heavily on the power of ideology, there is no other way to rule an entire country The dissemination of ideology, however—any ideology, even the Nazi one—implicitly underscores the importance of ideas of individual choice and judgment, of their listeners' mind In the camps no such implication was to be permitted

No attempt was made to present the Nazi viewpoint to the prisoners. There were no self-justifying speeches, no summaries of *Mein Kampf*, no propaganda, no proselytizing. "Education [in the camps]," declared Himmler, "consists of discipline, never of any kind of instruction on an ideological basis."

The S S did not want the prisoners' intellectual acceptance of Nazism and rebuffed any overtures from would-be converts. When certain prisoners sought to make their peace with the Gestapo, Bettelheim reports, the Gestapo's response was to insist that the prisoners refrain from expressing any of their feelings, even pro-Nazi ones. "Free consent," observes Miss Arendt, "is as much an obstacle to total domination as free opposition."

The camp rulers would not tolerate a prisoner's concerning himself with ideas of any kind, whether Nazi or otherwise. Ideas are irrelevant to an inmate—this was the guiding idea, in Buchenwald and Auschwitz, thought had no place.

Neither, the inmates soon learned, did individuality have any place. When a prisoner entered the camp, he brought with him the knowledge achieved by civilized man, it was self-evident to him that he (like all men) was a separate entity with a unique identity. The camps proceeded methodically to flout this self-evidency.

Characteristically, the guards did not know or seek to know anything about any particular inmate. Often they failed or deliberately refused to recognize any difference at all between one prisoner and another. An eerie egalitarianism prevailed; to the S S the things manipulated by screams, kicks, and guns were not separate human entities, each with his own appearance, character, life; they were indistinguishable cells of an undifferentiated mass, faceless units made of agony, filth, and grovelling, each equal to and interchangeable with hundreds or millions of other such units.

The first chapter of *The Light that Shone into the Dark Abyss*, Sri Aurobindo's *Light*, goes on about the exquisite tortures worked out and inflicted in an effort to stamp out the human spirit, but I will spare the readers of *Mother India*.

I titled the book that eventually emerged *The Light that Shone into the Dark Abyss*. To write the book at all was a fairly torturous experience, requiring, as it did, that I gaze at some length into that "dark abyss," but I felt that bearing witness to the role Sri Aurobindo had played had somehow fallen to me, though this small tribute could never encompass the magnitude of what had been averted and the victory that had been won.

In the week that the book came out there appeared in the right hand upper corner of a big photo of the Mother, which hangs on my wall, an image of Sri Aurobindo. I took it as His acceptance and endorsement of the book. As I said at the outset, this is in the nature of a personal document and no words can say how much I owe to Sri Aurobindo. When I was 17, Sri Aurobindo lifted me above the terrifying implications of the War and almost half a century later I was sent a dream. It must have taken him all

that time to ripen me for something I had to do, for something which was a part of my learning experience and work. For a long time I had no inkling of what the second part of the dream meant, that I had to heat water, then one day it came in a flash, not a conclusion but an undeniable glimpse that went like this: it is the midwife's task to heat water, perhaps what was being born was a new understanding in myself of Sri Aurobindo, or one aspect of him, for who can encompass the whole?

We all owe everything to Them. When I think of the world, of how it would have been without Them, it seems a dim and grey and barbaric obsolescence. The glories of the past only make sense in the light of the future They have heralded. In many ways our stories, the stories of those of us whose lives are founded in Them must overlap, at least our feelings, our love, our gratitude, our sense of awe, our sense of immense good fortune, but as we know from our satsang and the various books and stories published, each life and sadhana is entirely different. Each one is led along a unique path. It is impossible to tell the whole story. That would mean a day-to-day and hour-to-hour account, for once one's feet are set on the evolutionary path of the Integral Yoga there is nothing that is not part of one's life with Them, as I was once again reminded by the disappearance of the driver and by my meeting with Nilima under her black umbrella in the midday sun.

MAGGI