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



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MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXXI

No. 11

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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‘VAINLY THE DIVINE WHISPERS SEEK US’

(The Trojan war has gone on for nearly ten years. In these lines from Book VII of Ilion, we see the Greek warriors returning from their assembly, eager to attack Troy.)

Fierce and clear like a flame to the death-gods bright on its altar
Shone in their eyes the lust of blood and of earth and of pillage;
For in their hearts those fires replaced the passions of discord
Forging a brittle peace by a common hatred and yearning.
Joyous they were of mood; for their hopes were already in Troya
Sating with massacre, plunder and rape and the groans of their foemen
Death and Hell in our mortal bosoms seated and shrouded;
There they have altars and seats, in mankind, in this fair-built temple,
Made for purer gods; but we turn from their luminous temptings;
Vainly the divine whispers seek us; the heights are rejected.
Man to his earth drawn always prefers his nethermost promptings,
Man, devouring, devoured who is slayer and slain through the ages
Since by the beast he soars held and exceeds not that pedestal's measure.
They now followed close on the steps of the mighty Atrides
Glued like the forest pack to the war-scarred coat of its leader,
Glued as the pack when wolves follow their prey like Doom that can turn not.
Perfect forms and beautiful faces crowded the tent-door,
Brilliant eyes and fierce of souls that remembered the forest,
Wild-beasts touched by thought and savages lusting for beauty.
Dire and fierce and formidable chieftains followed Atrides,
Merciless kings of merciless men and the founders of Europe,
Sackers of Troy and sires of the Parthenon, Athens and Caesar.
Here they had come to destroy the ancient perishing cultures;
For, it is said, from the savage we rose and were born to a wild-beast.
So when the Eye supreme perceives that we rise up too swiftly,
Drawn towards height but fullness contemning, called by the azure,
Life when we fail in, poor in our base and forgetting our mother,
Back we are hurled to our roots; we recover our sap from the savage.
So were these sent by Zeus to destroy the old that was grandiose.
Such were those frames of old as the sons of Heaven might have chosen
Who in the dawn of eternity wedded the daughters of Nature,
Cultures touched by the morning star, vast, bold and poetic,
Titans' works and joys, but thrust down from their puissance and pleasure

Fainting now fell from the paces of Time or were left by his ages.
 So were these born from Zeus to found the new that should flower
 Lucid and slender and perfectly little as fit for this mortal
 Ever who sinks back fatigued from immortality's stature;
 Man, repelled by the gulfs within him and shrinking from vastness,
 Form of the earth accepts and is glad of the lap of his mother.
 Safe through the infinite seas could his soul self-piloted voyage,
 Chasing the dawns and the wondrous horizons, eternity's secrets
 Drawn from her luminous gulfs! But he journeys rudderless, helmless,
 Driven and led by the breath of God who meets him with tempest,
 Hurls at him Night. The earth is safer, warmer its sunbeams;
 Death and limits are known; so he clings to them hating the summons.
 So might one dwell who has come to take joy in a fair-lighted prison;
 Amorous grown of its marble walls and its noble adornments,
 Lost to mightier cares and the spaces boundlessly calling
 Lust of the infinite skies he forgets and the kiss of the stormwind.
 So might one live who inured to his days of the field and the farm-yard
 Shrinks from the grandiose mountain-tops; shut up in lanes and in hedges
 Only his furrows he leads and only orders his gardens,
 Only his fleeces weaves and drinks of the yield of his vine-rows:
 Lost to his ear is the song of the waterfall, wind in the forests.
 Now to our earth we are bent and we study the skies for its image.
 That was Greece and its shining, that now is France and its keenness,
 That still is Europe though by the Christ-touch troubled and tortured,
 Seized by the East but clasping her chains and resisting our freedom.
 Then was all founded, on Phrygia's coasts, round Ilion's ramparts,
 Then by the spear of Achilles, then in the Trojan death-cry;
 Bearers mute of a future world were those armoured Achaians.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, pp. 433-34)

THE INNER SURRENDER

It was never my intention to suggest that there was only a faint hope of your sadhana depending on the *if* of surrender. I have always said the contrary, that since your soul wants the Divine truly, you are sure to reach him; only if you give up — and that is why I strongly object to these despondencies apart from the suffering they inflict, because they try to drive you to that — can it be frustrated or rather postponed to a far future.

What I wrote was in answer to your statement about your former idea of the Yoga that if one wanted the Divine, the Divine himself would take up the purifying of the heart and develop the sadhana and give the necessary experiences. I meant to say that it can and does happen in that way if one has trust and confidence in the Divine and the will to surrender. For such a taking up involves one's putting oneself in the hands of the Divine rather than trusting to one's own efforts alone and it implies one's putting one's trust and confidence in the Divine and a progressive self-giving. It is in fact the principle of sadhana that I myself followed and it is the central part of the Yoga as I envisage it. It is, I suppose, what Ramakrishna meant by the method of the baby cat in his image. But all cannot follow that at once; it takes time for them to arrive at it — it grows most when the mind and vital fall quiet.

What I meant by surrender was this inner surrender of the mind and vital. There is of course the outer surrender also, the giving up of all that is found to conflict with the spirit or need of the sadhana, the offering, the obedience to the guidance of the Divine, whether directly, if one has reached that stage, or through the psychic or to the guidance of the Guru. I may say that *prāyopaveśana* does not seem to me to have anything to do with surrender; it is a form of tapasya of a very austere and in my opinion very excessive kind, often dangerous. But what I was speaking of in my letter was the inner surrender.

The core of this inner surrender is trust and confidence in the Divine. One takes the attitude, "I want the Divine and nothing else." I do not know why you should think that you can be asked to give up that — if there is not that, then the Yoga cannot be done. "I want to give myself entirely to him and since my soul wants that, it cannot be but that I shall meet him and realise him. I ask nothing but that and his action in me to bring me to him, his action secret or open, veiled or manifest. I do not insist on my own time and way; let him do all in his own time and way, I shall believe in him, accept his will, aspire steadily for his light and presence and joy, go through all difficulties and delays relying on him and never giving up. Let my mind be quiet and turn to him and let him open it to his light; let my vital be quiet and turn to him alone and let him open it to his calm and joy. All for him and myself for him. Whatever happens, I will keep to this aspiration and self-giving and

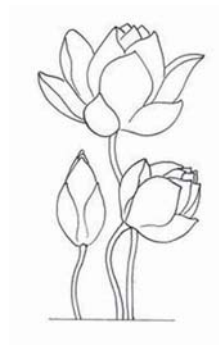
go on in perfect reliance that it will be done.” That is the attitude into which one must grow; for, certainly, it cannot be made perfect at once; mental and vital movements come across; but if one keeps the will to it, it will grow in the being. The rest is a matter of obedience to the guidance when it makes itself manifest — not allowing one’s mental or vital movements to interfere.

It was not my intention to say that this way is the only way and sadhana cannot be done otherwise — there are so many others by which one can approach the Divine. But this is the only one I know by which the taking up of the sadhana by the Divine becomes a sensible fact before the preparation of the nature is done. In other methods the Divine action and help may be felt from time to time, but it remains mostly behind the veil till all is ready. In some sadhanas the Divine action is not recognised; all must be done by tapasya. In most there is a mixing of the two, the tapasya finally calling the direct help and intervention. The idea and experience of the Divine doing all belongs to the Yogas based on surrender.

But whatever way is followed, the one thing to be done is to be faithful and go to the end. You have so often taken that decision — stand by it, do not let the storms of the vital quench the aspiration of your soul.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Letters on Yoga – II, CWSA, Vol. 29, pp. 69-71)



‘GIVE US THE THOUGHT, GIVE US THE WORD, GIVE US THE FORCE’

June 17, 1914

All that has been conceived and realised so far is mediocre, banal, insufficient beside what ought to be. The perfections of the past no longer have any force now. A new puissance is needed to transform the new powers and to subject them to Thy divine will. “Ask and this shall be”, is Thy constant answer. And now, O Lord, Thou must create in this being a constant aspiration, uninterrupted, intense, passionate, in an immutable serenity. Silence, peace are there: there must also be the persistence of the intensity. Oh, Thy heart sings a hallelujah of gladness as if what Thou willest were on the way to its fulfilment. . . . Destroy all these elements, that from their ashes may emerge new elements adapted to the new manifestation.

Oh, the immensity of Thy luminous Peace!

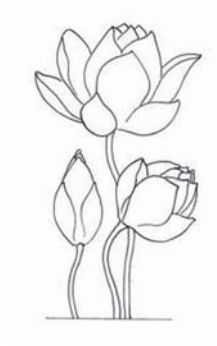
Oh, the omnipotence of Thy sovereign Love!

And beyond all that we can imagine, the ineffable splendour of what we feel to be coming. Give us the Thought, give us the Word, give us the Force.

Enter the arena of the world, O new-born Unknown One!

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 176)



LETTERS TO A YOUNG SADHAK

(Continued from the issue of October 2018)

[This Series is organised broadly by subject into thirteen parts — the form in which it was originally published. The replies here were written between 1933 and 1949 — most of them between 1933 and 1935.]

IV

The Divine is infinite and innumerable, and consequently the ways of approaching Him are also infinite and innumerable, and on the manner of one's approach to the Divine depends what he receives and knows of the Divine. The bhakta meets a Divine full of affection and sweetness, the wise man will find a Divine full of wisdom and knowledge. He who fears meets a severe Divine, and he who is trusting finds the Divine a friend and protector . . . and so on in the infinite variety of possibilities.

*

Fear nothing: the Divine always answers every sincere aspiration and never refuses what is offered to Him whole-heartedly; thus you may live in the peace of the certitude that you are accepted by the Divine.

*

Beloved Mother, how to master this lethargy that overcomes me? I do not live, Mother, I just exist in some way. Mother, I must find something which can divert me.

It is certainly not with such a state of mind that you can hope to find the Divine Presence. Far from seeking to fill your heart with frivolities in order to “divert” it, you must with a great obstinacy empty it of everything, absolutely everything, both great and small, so that the power of that great emptiness may attract the Marvellous Presence. One must know how to pay this supreme Grace the price it deserves.

*

Of each one is asked only what he has, what he is, nothing more, but also nothing less.

*

You are right to want to create the emptiness in you; for you will soon discover that in the depths of this emptiness is the Divine.

*

If I find some solace in books, how can I say that nothing sustains me and that I am plunged in the divine life through an absolute emptiness?

“The absolute emptiness” is more of an image than a reality. It is better to keep in one’s heart a high aspiration rather than an obscure somnolence.

*

When I try to look within myself, I find there a being that is detached from everything, a great indifference reigns there.

Indifference is a stage of development which must lead to a perfect equality of soul.

*

Mother, my life is dry, it was always so; the dryness of my life constantly increases.

This does not depend upon any outer circumstance but on your inner state. It happens because you live in a very superficial region of your mind. You must try to find some depth in your consciousness and dwell there.

*

It is certainly not by becoming morose and melancholy that one draws near the Divine. One must always keep in one’s heart an unshakable faith and confidence and in one’s head the certitude of victory. Drive away these shadows which come between you and me and hide me from your sight. It is in the pure light of certitude that you can become conscious of my presence.

*

The sadder you are and the more you lament, the farther you move away from me. The Divine is *not sad* and to realise the Divine you must reject far from yourself all sadness and all sentimental weakness.

*

Sweet Mother, I am happy because I love You and because I suffer a little in loving You.

I don't see the need of your suffering. Psychic love is always peaceful and joyous; it is the vital which dramatises and makes itself unhappy without any reason. I hope, indeed, that you will soon become conscious of my presence always near you, and that it will give you peace and joy.

*

My most beloved Mother, the idea of separation opens between You and me like a frightening abyss. I am not satisfied; from where does this dissatisfaction come?

It is always the vital being which protests and complains. The psychic being works with perseverance and ardour to make the union an accomplished fact, but it never complains, and knows how to wait for the hour of realisations to come.

*

It is the vital which asks and asks and is never satisfied . . . The psychic, the true deep feelings are always satisfied and never ask for anything. The psychic feels my constant presence, is aware of my love and solicitude, and is always peaceful, happy and satisfied.

*

There is a joy in seeking, a joy in waiting, a joy in aspiring, at least as great as in possessing.

*

Indeed, nothing brings more happiness than a pure and disinterested love.

*

The true divine love is above all quarrels. It is the experience of perfect union in an invariable joy and peace.

*

Radha is the symbol of loving consecration to the Divine.

*

Keep always your balance and a calm serenity; it is only thus that one can attain the true Union.

*

It is in your soul that the calmness can be found and it is by contagion that it spreads through your being. It is not steady because the sovereignty of your soul is not yet definitively established over all the being.

*

I don't see anything wrong in not being sentimental; nothing is further from true love, the divine love, than sentimentality.

*

All will be done, Mother, but why is my heart becoming more and more dry and hard?

Are you quite sure it is so dry and hard? Don't you call "dry and hard" an absence of *sentimentality*, that is, of a weak and superficial emotionalism?

True love is something *very deep* and *very calm* in its intensity; it may very well not manifest itself through outer effusiveness.

*

To love is not to possess, but to give oneself.

*

I don't experience a violent and uncontrollable love for anyone; nobody attracts me. And it is because of this that I told You I was losing all human feelings.

This can hardly be called a loss; I consider it an inestimable gain.

*

A love which is sufficiently strong can make a person the slave of the beloved.

You speak here of vital love, but certainly not of psychic love and still less of the Divine Love.

*

The person I love belongs to me.

This is a very ugly love, quite egoistic.

*

The Ashram is not a place for being in love with anyone. If you want to lapse into such a stupidity, you may do so elsewhere, not here.

*

It is not this person or that who attracts you . . . it is the eternal feminine in the lower nature which attracts the eternal masculine in the lower nature and creates an illusion in the mind; it is the great play, obscure and semi-conscious, of the forces of unilluminated nature; and as soon as one succeeds in escaping from its blind and violent whirlwind, one finds very quickly that all desires and all attractions vanish; only the ardent aspiration for the Divine remains.

*

My beloved Mother, the whole day I thought of nothing else except that red rose which signifies "Human passions changed into love for the Divine". I want to know precisely what the human passions are.

By "passion" we mean all the violent desires which take possession of a man and finally govern his life — the drunkard has the passion for drink, the debauchee the passion for women, the gambler the passion for dice, etc. If one human being feels

a violent and uncontrollable love for another, this is called a *passion*, and it is of this we are speaking; it is this impassioned love which human beings feel for one another that must be changed into love for the Divine.

*

Sensations belong to the vital domain and to that part of it which is expressed through the nerves of the body. It is sentiments and emotions which are characteristic of the heart. It is always preferable not to live in the sensations but to consider them as something outside ourselves, like the clothes we wear.

V

Be courageous and do not think of yourself so much. It is because you make your little ego the centre of your preoccupation that you are sad and unsatisfied. To forget oneself is the great remedy for all ills.

*

Certainly it is always better not to be too busy with oneself.

*

An excessive depreciation is no better than an excessive praise. True humility lies in not judging oneself and in letting the Divine determine our real worth.

*

Perhaps my vanity was better than this humility which so casts me down.

You must avoid the one as carefully as the other.

*

My most beloved Mother, an introspection has revealed to me many things. There is a jealousy in me which blinds me; another part in me is very vain, it gives me the idea that I have already reached my goal.

You have just given a very correct description, but it becomes useful only from the moment you resolve that it is no longer going to be like this, and that you will strive

to conquer your two great enemies: jealousy and vanity. The more we advance on the road, the more modest we become, and the more we find that we have done nothing in comparison with what remains to be done.

*

It is when one feels like a blind man that one begins to be ready for the illumination.

*

Formerly I used to repeat to myself: "I am one of the greatest sadhaks." Now I tell myself: "I am nobody."

The best thing is not to think oneself either great or small, very important or very insignificant; for we are nothing in ourselves. We must want to be only what the divine Will wants of us.

*

All my good intentions, since my childhood, have been of no worth. My nature is just what it was when I was a child. I can scarcely hope that it will be transformed; and after all, is it worth the trouble to try and transform it? It is better not to think of this personal nature as mine; not to identify myself with it is the best remedy I can find against the lower and inconscient nature.

Nothing of all this is the right attitude. So long as you oscillate between wanting to transform yourself and not wanting to transform yourself — making an effort to progress and becoming indifferent to all effort through fatigue — the true attitude will not be there. All your observations should lead you to one certainty, that by oneself one is nothing and can do nothing. Only the Divine is the life of our life, the consciousness of our consciousness, the Power and Capacity in us. It is to Him that we must entrust ourselves, give ourselves without reserve, and it is He who will make of us what He wants in His infinite wisdom.

VI

My sweet beloved Mother, I read in the Conversations: "Concentration alone will lead you to this goal." Should one increase the time of meditation?

Concentration does not mean meditation; on the contrary, concentration is a state one must be in continuously, whatever the outer activity. By concentration I mean that all the energy, all the will, all the aspiration must be turned only towards the Divine and His integral realisation in our consciousness.

*

To keep constantly a concentrated and in-gathered attitude is more important than having fixed hours of meditation.

*

It would have been better to have sat in my chair and thought about the moonlight playing upon the water.

Or, better still, not to have thought at all but contemplated the Divine Grace.

*

If you do your work as an offering which you lay in all sincerity at the feet of the Divine, work will do you as much good as meditation.

*

Perhaps I am mistaken in believing that I shall find myself close to you more rapidly by dissolving my being than by mixing with many people and doing much work.

I have had the experience myself that one can be fully concentrated and be in union with the Divine even while working physically with one's hands; but naturally this asks for a little practice, and for this the most important thing to avoid is *useless talking*. It is not *work* but *useless talk* which takes us away from the Divine.

*

All depends not on what one does but on the attitude behind the action.

*

If in all sincerity one acts only to express the Divine Will, all actions without exception can become unselfish. But so long as one has not reached this state, there are actions which are more helpful for the contact with the Divine.

*

The yogic life does not depend on what one does but on how one does it; I mean it is not so much the action which counts as the attitude, the spirit in which one acts. To know how to give yourself entirely and without egoism while washing dishes or serving a meal brings you much nearer the Divine than doing what men call “great things” in a spirit of vanity and pride.

*

First of all I must know if this work can be a means of my coming a little closer to You.

It is not the work, any work, in itself which can bring you close to me. It is the spirit in which it is done that is important.

*

Mother, which is this being that receives happily any work from You? Which is this being that loves You?

It is that part of your being which is under the influence of the psychic and obeys the Divine impulsion.

*

Do I serve You as best I can?

You serve me as best you can, but your best of tomorrow must be better than your best of today.

*

Without discipline it is impossible to realise anything on the physical plane. If your heart were not willing to submit to the strict discipline of beating regularly and constantly, you would not be able to live upon earth.

The great realisers have always been the great disciplined men.

*

It is not that there is a dearth of people without work in the Ashram; but those who are without work are certainly so because they do not like to work; and for that disease it is very difficult to find a remedy — it is called laziness . . .

*

The body is naturally phlegmatic. But in working for You it will cease being “tamasic”.

Yes, this is just what will happen.

*

I try always to be more careful, but things get spoilt in my hands.

Yes, this happens often; but you must call in more and more peace and let it enter into the cells of the body; then the suggestion of awkwardness can no longer have any effect.

*

Mother, X has broken a porcelain bowl.

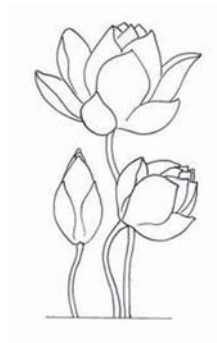
Yesterday you were surprised that she had never broken anything, — naturally today she has broken something; this is how mental formations work. That is why one must state only what one wishes to see realised.

*

You must abstain from thinking about a person when you cannot think anything good about him.

THE MOTHER

(Some Answers from the Mother, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 16, pp. 169-81)



A NEW EDUCATION FOR A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education

(Continued from the issue of October 2018)

(The short notes preceding each section are by the editors of the compilation.

This compilation was published in 1992.)

The Conscious Seeking of the One

*A last and mightiest transformation came.
His soul was all in front like a great sea
Flooding the mind and body with its waves;
His being, spread to embrace the universe,
United the within and the without
To make of life a cosmic harmony,
An empire of the immanent Divine.
In this tremendous universality
Not only his soul-nature and mind-sense
Included every soul and mind in his,
But even the life of flesh and nerve was changed
And grew one flesh and nerve with all that lives;
He felt the joy of others as his joy,
He bore the grief of others as his grief;
His universal sympathy upbore,
Immense like ocean, the creation's load
As earth upbears all beings' sacrifice,
Thrilled with the hidden Transcendent's joy and peace.
There was no more division's endless scroll;
One grew the Spirit's secret unity,
All Nature felt again the single bliss.
There was no cleavage between soul and soul,
There was no barrier between world and God.
Overpowered were form and memory's limiting line;
The covering mind was seized and torn apart;
It was dissolved and now no more could be,
The one Consciousness that made the world was seen;
All now was luminosity and force.*

*Abolished in its last thin fainting trace
The circle of the little self was gone;
The separate being could no more be felt;
It disappeared and knew itself no more,
Lost in the spirit's wide identity.*

*A Bliss, a Light, a Power, a flame-white Love
Caught all into a sole immense embrace;
Existence found its truth on Oneness' breast
And each became the self and space of all.
The great world-rhythms were heart-beats of one Soul,
To feel was a flame-discovery of God,
All mind was a single harp of many strings,
All life a song of many meeting lives;
For worlds were many, but the Self was one.
This knowledge now was made a cosmos' seed:
This seed was cased in the safety of the Light,
It needed not a sheath of Ignorance.
Then from the trance of that tremendous clasp
And from the throbbings of that single Heart
And from the naked Spirit's victory
A new and marvellous creation rose.*

(S33: 318-19; 322-23)

“To live the spiritual life, a reversal of consciousness is needed,” for which the identification with the psychic being has been the first step.

Education then becomes a conscious seeking of the One in all the aspects of knowledge, action and life. The consciousness is turned inwards and establishes itself progressively in the secret Truth.

The way of looking at life, the attitude we take in relation to it, is deeply changed. Eventually we become aware, in all parts of our being, that “all life is yoga”.

There are still new powers of consciousness to manifest, but one has touched the Infinite, the Eternal, the Supreme Oneness which alone wills, knows and acts endlessly through the human beings and the meanders of their evolution.

One has touched this joy of Being, this ecstasy of the Becoming, of the Eternal that plays through the metamorphosis of a cosmic universe perpetually renewing itself . . . and the next metamorphosis will be the emergence upon earth of the supramental man.

To live the spiritual life, a reversal of consciousness is needed. This cannot be compared in any way with the different faculties or possibilities one has in the

mental field. It may be said of someone that he hasn't much mental, vital or physical capacity, that his possibilities are very limited; in that case it may be asked how these capacities may be developed, that is, how new ones may be acquired, which is something rather difficult. But to live the spiritual life is to open to another world within oneself. It is to reverse one's consciousness, as it were. The ordinary human consciousness, even in the most developed, even in men of great talent and great realisation, is a movement turned outwards — all the energies are directed outwards, the whole consciousness is spread outwards; and if anything is turned inwards, it is very little, very rare, very fragmentary, it happens only under the pressure of very special circumstances, violent shocks, the shocks life gives precisely with the intention of slightly reversing this movement of exteriorisation of the consciousness.

But all who have lived a spiritual life have had the same experience: all of a sudden something in their being has been reversed, so to speak, has been turned suddenly and sometimes completely inwards, and also at the same time upwards, from within upwards — but it is not an external "above", it is within, deep, something other than the heights as they are physically conceived. Something has literally been turned over. There has been a decisive experience and the standpoint in life, the way of looking at life, the attitude one takes in relation to it, has suddenly changed, and in some cases quite definitively, irrevocably.

And as soon as one is turned towards the spiritual life and reality, one touches the Infinite, the Eternal, and there can no longer be any question of a greater or smaller number of capacities or possibilities. It is the *mental* conception of spiritual life which may say that one has more or less capacity to live spiritually, but this is not at all an adequate statement. What may be said is that one is more or less ready for the decisive and total reversal. In reality, it is the mental capacity to withdraw from ordinary activities and to set out in search of the spiritual life which can be measured.

But so long as one is in the mental field, in this state, as it were, on this plane of consciousness, one can't do much for others, either for life in general or for particular individuals, because one doesn't have the certitude oneself, one doesn't have the definitive experience, the consciousness has not been established in the spiritual world; and all that can be said is that they are mental activities which have their good and bad sides, but not much power and, in any case, not this power of spiritual contagion which is the only truly effective power.

The only thing that is truly effective is the possibility of transferring to others the state of consciousness in which one lives oneself. But this power cannot be invented. One cannot imitate it, cannot seem to have it; it only comes spontaneously when one is established in that state oneself, when one *lives* within it and not when one is trying to live within it — when one *is* there. And that is why all those who truly have a spiritual life cannot be deceived.

An imitation of spiritual life may delude people who still live in the mind, but

those who have realised this reversal of consciousness in themselves, whose relation with the outer being is completely different, cannot be deceived and cannot make a mistake.

It is these people the mental being does not understand. So long as one is in the mental consciousness, even the highest, and sees the spiritual life from outside, one judges with one's mental faculties, with the habit of seeking, erring, correcting, progressing, and seeking once again; and one thinks that those who are in the spiritual life suffer from the same incapacity, but that is a very gross mistake!

When the reversal of the being has taken place, all that is finished. One no longer seeks, one sees. One no longer deduces, one knows. One no longer gropes, one walks straight to the goal. And when one has gone farther — only a little farther — one knows, feels, lives the supreme truth that the Supreme Truth *alone* acts, the Supreme Lord *alone* wills, knows and does through human beings. How could there be any possibility of error there? What He does, He does because He wills to do it.

For our mistaken vision these are perhaps incomprehensible actions, but they have a meaning and an aim and lead where they ought to lead.

(M9: 413-15)

. . . So one can say that the psychic life is immortal life, endless time, limitless space, ever-progressive change, unbroken continuity in the universe of forms. The spiritual consciousness, on the other hand, means to live the infinite and the eternal, to be projected beyond all creation, beyond time and space. To become conscious of your psychic being and to live a psychic life you must abolish all egoism; but to live a spiritual life you must no longer have an ego.

Here also, in spiritual education, the goal you set before you will assume, in the mind's formulation of it, different names according to the environment in which you have been brought up, the path you have followed and the affinities of your temperament. Those who have a religious tendency will call it God and their spiritual effort will be towards identification with the transcendent God beyond all forms, as opposed to the immanent God dwelling in each form. Others will call it the Absolute, the Supreme Origin, others Nirvana; yet others, who view the world as an unreal illusion, will name it the Only Reality and to those who regard all manifestation as falsehood it will be the Sole Truth. And every one of these expressions contains an element of truth, but all are incomplete, expressing only one aspect of that which is. Here too, however, the mental formulation has no great importance and once you have passed through the intermediate stages, the experience is identical. In any case, the most effective starting-point, the swiftest method is total self-giving. Besides, no joy is more perfect than the joy of a total self-giving to whatever is the summit of your conception: for some it is the notion of God, for others that of Perfection. If this self-giving is made with persistence and ardour, a moment comes when you

pass beyond the concept and arrive at an experience that escapes all description, but which is almost always identical in its effects. And as your self-giving becomes more and more perfect and integral, it will be accompanied by the aspiration for identification, a total fusion with That to which you have given yourself, and little by little this aspiration will overcome all differences and all resistances, especially if with the aspiration there is an intense and spontaneous love, for then nothing can stand in the way of its victorious drive.

(M12: 35-36)

From beyond the frontiers of form a new force can be evoked, a power of consciousness which is as yet unexpressed and which, by its emergence, will be able to change the course of things and give birth to a new world. For the true solution to the problem of suffering, ignorance and death is not an individual escape from earthly miseries by self-annihilation into the unmanifest, nor a problematical collective flight from universal suffering by an integral and final return of the creation to its creator, thus curing the universe by abolishing it, but a transformation, a total transfiguration of matter brought about by the logical continuation of Nature's ascending march in her progress towards perfection, by the creation of a new species that will be to man what man is to the animal and that will manifest upon earth a new force, a new consciousness and a new power. And so will begin a new education which can be called the supramental education; it will, by its all-powerful action, work not only upon the consciousness of individual beings, but upon the very substance of which they are built and upon the environment in which they live.

In contrast with the types of education we have mentioned previously, which progress from below upwards by an ascending movement of the various parts of the being, the supramental education will progress from above downwards, its influence spreading from one state of being to another until at last the physical is reached. This last transformation will only occur visibly when the inner states of being have already been considerably transformed. It is therefore quite unreasonable to try to recognise the presence of the supramental by physical appearances. For these will be the last to change and the supramental force can be at work in an individual long before anything of it becomes perceptible in his bodily life.

To sum up, one can say that the supramental education will result no longer in a progressive formation of human nature and an increasing development of its latent faculties, but in a transformation of the nature itself, a transfiguration of the being in its entirety, a new ascent of the species above and beyond man towards superman, leading in the end to the appearance of a divine race upon earth.

(M12: 37-38)

(A New Education for a New Consciousness,
published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, 1992)

THE MOTHER'S AND SRI AUROBINDO'S WAY WITH ANIMALS

The Mother was known for her love of animals and her deep understanding of their nature. It was a delight to hear her speaking to a cat in a musical tone full of affection, a tenderly modulated baby-talk. She dealt with the Ashram cats as if they had been “persons” with rights. The man who was in charge of the Prosperity Room in the 'thirties was given strict orders not to interfere with the movements of the beautiful female cat Bite-Bite which had made this place its home. If a cupboard was left open by him and Bite-Bite got on to any shelf of it, he had to respect its right to be there: not only was he forbidden to shoo it off but he had also to let it commit nuisance there if it wanted. His job was to develop his own consciousness and remember always to shut the cupboards. Else he should bear with equanimity the catty consequences of his own oversight.

The Mother has recorded many reminiscences of her dealings with cats. When I first came to the Ashram, they were a part of the life in it, serving various occult ends. How powerful the Mother's influence could be was borne in on me when she acted on a semi-wild female cat which she had named “Pichune”. It had got into the habit of spoiling the bed of the sadhika — Lalita — who had it for her companion along with two other she-cats named by the Mother “Pink Nose” and “Black Nose”. The bed was an unprotected area and no amount of hurdles put in the way of Pichune could prevent its perversity. So at last the Mother was informed. From the very next day Pichune was a well-behaved civilised creature.

Pink Nose had the Mother's darshan just before it died. There is a tribe of people in Pondicherry that looks out for cat-meat. These strange persons carry a long pole with a hook at one end. On seeing a cat pass, they rip open its belly with that hook. Pink Nose got attacked by one of the savages. It ran away and hid itself in a place difficult of access. Somehow Lalita and I pulled it out. We took it in a basket to the Ashram dispensary which at that time was within the main block of buildings. While Lalita stayed with her pet, I waited at the back-entrance of the Ashram through which the Mother used to go for her evening drive and return home. As soon as she was back I told her of what happened. At once she came with me to the dispensary. She said something and Pink Nose stood on its hind legs and putting its front paws on the top-rim of the basket looked up at the Mother. The Mother again spoke to it. Its little nostrils quivered. After the Mother had gone we had to get it chloroformed for the operation by Dr. Rajangam: its intestines, which were hanging out, had to be put in and the skin stitched. Naturally Pink Nose tried with its paws to slash away at the chloroform wad and the doctors' fingers. So I had to catch its front legs and hold them forcibly wide apart while the chloroforming

was being done. It gazed at me with a most pained surprise as if wondering why I who loved it so much was torturing it by stretching apart its legs. Then it went under the anaesthetic and was lifted out to the operation-table. The intestines were pushed in and the ripped skin joined with stitches but Pink Nose died. Probably the anaesthetic proved too strong for it.

Almost immediately afterwards there was the Mother's Soup Distribution. The memory of Pink Nose's last look at me of unbelieving bewilderment haunted me all through the meditation. It was quite a trial of my Yoga, keeping my mind and heart quiet before I went to the Mother to get my cupful.

Lalita was very grieved, for she had loved the cat dearly. The Mother gave an interesting explanation of the accident that had happened to Pink Nose. In that period there was a talk of Lalita's moving to a better flat. The Mother said that the desire for such a place had become very strong in her, a wrong movement. This movement drew adverse forces. The cat, being extremely open to its owner and thus easily affected by that desire, found itself exposed to the attack. With the cat-eaters around, it fell a victim and thus sidetracked what might have harmed the owner in some subtle occult way affecting her body.

(In those days the inner movements tended very much to have repercussions in the outer being — a hypersensitive connection used to be there. For example, I once had a horrid crop of boils near my eyes and ears. The Mother reminded me of a certain acute desire I had allowed in myself a little earlier.)

Another cat, which was connected with me and had the Mother's darshan in its last hours, was the tom Miel. It was a very handsome animal. Sehra and I were indeed proud that it stayed with us, but it was never quite domesticated. It had sometimes a savage manner, as if it did not quite like our possession of it. In its sixth month, it caught the infection of an enteric epidemic which had already laid low all the cats in the neighbourhood. I have noticed that cats are very hardy creatures and can survive almost unthinkably adverse conditions of life, but when attacked by diseases their proverbial "nine lives" slip away pretty easily. The malady which affected Miel usually kills its victims within a few hours. Miel amazingly held out for nearly three days and went on suffering, most probably because Sehra whose first feline pet it was, and therefore doubly beloved, was extremely attached to it. At our wits' end we took it to the Tennis Ground where the Mother was having her daily game in the afternoon. When her set was over and she was walking out towards her car, we showed Miel to her. She looked into its eyes and said: "You don't look very brilliant, my little one." We had the impression that she found the case hopeless and did something occult to put an end to the "little one's" misery. Two hours later I noticed a dried-up wizened look on Miel's face. Sehra was perturbed. I gave the cat some drops of Coramine. It crawled under my bed and after half an hour died. The Mother confirmed the next day that she had severed the connecting "cord" between the subtle body and the gross.

Sehra was very cut up by the loss of Miel. The Mother, however, soothed her with the words: "You were attached to Miel, but it was not attached to anybody. It had a free wild nature. The relationship was rather one-sided. It was not particularly upset to lose you. It has gone to a special part of the subtle plane where there is a Cat-Kingdom with a kind of Cat-God ruling it."

The next cat which we had — Goldie — lived longer. It was very affectionate and spent more than half the night in Sehra's bed, sitting on her chest and purring away. The Mother was apprised of whatever unusual happened to it. Thus, when the wheel of a rickshaw once went over its abdomen, Sehra lost no time in informing her. The Mother said: "Cats have some of their inner organs in a flexible mobile position and when the wheel was felt on the abdomen the organs moved away automatically. If the cat is eating its food normally, you don't have to worry." Goldie was much upset by the accident, its "mind" was confused for nearly an hour by what had so heavily passed across its body and it was in a slightly bad temper with us for a while. But it recovered soon enough and took its normal meal after a few hours.

The high spot of each day for it was the afternoon outing in my hand-pulled single-person rickshaw. It sat quietly behind my head on the lowered hood while our fox-terrier Bingo sat at my feet and barked at all passers-by who came too near the vehicle. After a full happy life Goldie, like Miel, succumbed to an enteric infection. When the Mother thought the case hopeless we consulted her as to putting it to sleep and thereby sparing it suffering. She said: "It is better to let it live out its life — unless the suffering is too acute." Goldie died a couple of days later.

Both the dogs which, one after the other, Sehra and I had were also fortunate to be in contact with the Mother. Bingo was already famous with her because it had figured in all the letters we had written from Bombay prior to Sehra's first visit with me to the Holy Land. When on the day of our arrival we went to the Playground, the Mother was standing in the midst of some boys and girls. She put up her right hand in greeting to me and soon came towards us. After Sehra had been introduced and blessed, the Mother caught sight of Bingo which had been given in charge of a friend sitting nearby. Immediately she exclaimed: "I must meet Bingo. I can miss people but Bingo I must meet." She hurried over to the dog, asked an attendant to bring some groundnuts and offered them to it. Bingo returned the Divine's courtesy with a growl of (I hope) gratitude. Sehra cried out: "Mother, don't be afraid. He won't do anything." The Mother turned towards her and, smiling, asked: "I afraid?" She fed the groundnuts to Bingo. The English expression "Lucky dog!" could not have been more literally true.

Bingo died in the Ashram while I was in Bombay to see my grandfather pass away. The Mother was kept in touch with its condition from day to day. Our next dog was *Épave*, meaning "Waif". It was a street pup, a bag of bones, with severe diarrhoea and with a rump hurt by a cow's kick. Thoughtless street-urchins were

harassing it. We took it into our garden to let it have a peaceful death. It survived the crisis and grew into a sturdy specimen of a cross between a bull-terrier and a fox-terrier. When, after years of a happy and even "bossy" life, it fell ill and its condition seemed to go from bad to worse, Sehra informed the Mother. The Mother went into a short meditation and then said: "I don't feel it can recover." Soon after, Épave sank into a coma. Our sadhak-friend Barin Ganguli, a great lover of animals and an expert veterinary doctor, tried his best to bring it round but to no avail. Sehra watched over the inert body all through the night following the evening when she had spoken to the Mother. At one point she felt as if she had to touch the dog to make sure it was alive, but suddenly she saw a faint form approach with outstretched arms and make the motion of taking up Épave. That very moment Épave gave a gasp and died. The next morning Sehra reported the night's experience to the Mother. The Mother said: "Yes, I came to take your dog's soul."

Although within my actual knowledge the Mother had only to do with cats and dogs and the Ashram's bulls and once a small donkey bought by Udar, she was interested in many other animals. She has referred to horses as well as to birds, which, like some cats and dogs known to her, had an aspiration to become human beings. But perhaps the animal she most fancied is the puma. I remember her telling us in the Prosperity Room with a very appreciative smile that the puma had a natural affinity with human beings and could make close friends with them. Of course, the dog is best known for such an affinity but the dog has been a domesticated animal for millennia, while the puma is still a denizen of the wild. *The New American Encyclopedia*¹ has the entry on page 1135: "Puma (or Cougar), a large species of the cat-family found in America, where it ranges from Canada to Patagonia. The puma, sometimes called the American lion, from its tawny colour, is about the size of a leopard, which it resembles in habit, preying upon animals up to the size of deer, but rarely attacking man. It is now scarce in North America, but in South America is found both in the tropical forests of Brazil and up in the snow on the Andes." It is surprising that no book comparable to Joy Adamson's series on a lioness and on its young has come out on this carnivore about which the Mother spoke so enthusiastically.

In my presence she twice talked of snakes. Once in connection with the liquid known by its patent name Lexin she said: "You can safely use it for scorpion-stings. But if a snake bites you it is better to inform me immediately." Lexin is really an effective inhalant antidote for all injuries from insects: I have seen it relieve a scorpion-sting within a matter of twenty minutes. I have not seen a case of snake-bite in the Ashram and evidently the Mother was not willing to take any risk with so serious an injury. It is equally evident that she was confident of curing it by her spiritual force.

1. Published by Books Inc, New York, 1945.

The second occasion on which she mentioned snakes was when she related an experience of hers during one of the outings she made daily in the late afternoon. She said: "I was walking rather absorbed. Suddenly I saw a snake sliding past just in front of my feet. One step more and I would have trodden upon its body. It never struck me that I might be bitten. The only thought I had was: 'I would hurt the snake by stepping on it.'"

Sri Aurobindo too is known to have dealt with animals. During the years of his association with the Mother he came most into touch with cats. Once Purani found him busy arranging a plate of fish for some cat of the Mother's. It is said that if a cat came and sat on his chair he would not allow anyone to disturb it. A certain dog also used to go to his room and lick his toes. When the cat Big Boy was about to die, Sri Aurobindo came down from his room and kept caressing it with his right hand. Very few people, however, have heard of his doings with animals prior to his association with the Mother, though there is a clear evidence of a most unexpected kind. In the course of reading the proofs of the Centenary Edition of his works I came across an early writing, entitled "Some Selected Notes", on an epic by Kalidasa. Sri Aurobindo quotes a commentator on Kalidasa's mention of peacocks. The commentator gives an interpretation which says that peacocks are not attached to their environment. Sri Aurobindo rules out this interpretation and remarks: "I have reared peacocks myself and I can assure the reader that they have as much attachment as any other creature." Sri Aurobindo rearing peacocks is indeed a revelation!

But perhaps from the occult viewpoint this is in the fitness of things. The peacock is the national bird of India just as her national flower is the lotus and Sri Aurobindo laid the true foundation of Indian Nationalism, and his date of birth — August 15 — coincides with the date of India's Independence. Again, in Sri Aurobindo's own symbology, the peacock stands for Victory. November 24, 1926, is the momentous landmark in the Aurobindonian Yoga, called the Day of Siddhi or Victory: on this occasion the Overmind descended into the physical beings of the Master and the Mother, laying the foundation for the future descent of the Supermind. The Victory Day is also the birthday of the Ashram's real and regular start under the Mother, to whom Sri Aurobindo then handed over the charge of his disciples and of the houses in which he and she and they were residing.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

(Reprinted from *Our Light and Delight: Recollections of Life with the Mother*,
Second Edition 2003, pp. 160-66)

POEMS FROM AUROVILLE

WITH THE WEIGHT OF DECADES

With the weight of decades
today has come down
in the clarity of moonlight
over common gardens
and neighbours who dream;
whose curtains move shadow
blots of windblown leaves
swaying in the late night.

Infinite appearances
flood awareness; now dyed
as moonlit visions
but felt as reassurance:
the lawn, a chair, night birds,
laundry in the cool breeze
and the muted whisper
of a sleepless neighbour.

Waxing full I make do
with only thoughts that count,
were tested over time
and honed into precision
for this lucid lapse in living;
this lunar truth to things
with familiar undertones
of human destiny.

A wandering awareness
fuelled by a wilful heart
and common words; mind
is travelling the timeless path
of lips that learned to phrase
the harmless teenage lie,
to later hold with women
in their silent fashions.

But in this night, this life
of light reduced to shades,
my coinciding thoughts
flow without emotion.
Feelings and their bargains
merge in the silver gloss
over the countless things
at one in the present.

LLOYD HOFFMAN

SUMMER RAIN (GRACE)

With the wind and the summer rain
Withering away my greying thoughts,
Let the fresh buds of aspiration
Blossom forth on these knurly knots

Let hands tired from kneading the earth
Not rest content to count the wealth
Squirreled away in building dearth,
In this city that blankets itself in stealth.

The birds chirp madly the morning ritual,
Fragrance permeates the open skies.
Bees & butterflies paint the summer visual,
Scene that is hidden to travelling eyes.

Ebb & flow is but nature of life,
Devoid of Grace, there's little but strife.

CHANDRESH

HOME

O longed-for home, O distant, dazzling height,
So far-off, dreamed-of, deeply sought;
A crowning citadel atop the glaciated valleys of the Night.
The twisted tracks that lead to aspiration's peaks
Beset the traveller with slip and fall
And labour long, unending, as of Time,

Or drop their dire and shadow-dense disguise
 Revealing straight and sunlit ways to tread.
 But where is home when all is plod and plod?
 When can the climber rest, his labour done?
 Where is the summit-home, the promised throne?
 Where is the bliss-brimmed rock that heaven made of clay,
 The light-hewn city, sanctuary at end of weary day?
 Where is the breeze whose shining air I breathed in sleep?
 The coursing sun-winds shooting through my tissue's deep?

Each summit was a golden prison for my soul.
 There is no final pause; to climb — the only goal.

HEART

Sad heart, there is no sanctuary on Earth,
 No earthly arms to comfort you
 If once you choose to tread the path
 And seek the crown of being.
 What lover can with constancy be there
 When all must rise and fall upon the tearful stage
 And man must live the drama of his joy and pain?
 And all the sweetness, all the hope, the trust
 From one kind heart will vanish like a dream
 That fades and throws you into life's unpitiful fire.
 Your prayer, sad heart, was uttered in a space of light.
 So now, sad heart, the work begins, along the roads of Night,
 Inside the caves of loneliness, where sorrow lurks
 To press sweet pain upon your chest.
 No turning back, sad heart, nor running, nor respite;
 Into the fire leap, with tears and all
 Rush onwards to the light.

And now, calm heart, be still and see;
 I was the road, the Night; I came to you as sorrow.
 Mine were the arms that vanished; I was the stage, the flame.
 Who failed you? Crushed you? Me!
 Rejoice, my heart, my fire sets you free.

THE SAMADHI

Stone-solid, eternity seems to slumber
 Bearing on its stage the mutable seasons
 Arrayed in ever-changing moods of form
 Filling the spirit-packed air with transient fragrances
 And bursts of dew-fresh colour, soon to fade.
 Souls, like flowers, come and go,
 Begging the silent Presence to part the sacred curtain.
 Deep communion, pleadings, burdens of tears and bliss,
 Solemn dialogues; The White Force offers solace, strength,
 Shatters the illusion of its dumbness,
 Urges, gently, sleeping matter to become.

Prayers rise like incense borne by breezes.
 Pink roses flood the mind and heart
 With moments,
 Still remembering, frozen moments.
 Time dies.
 Deep whiteness plunges into red dancing dust;
 Orange visions, golden flickerings, pale blue oceans
 Float like music from a flute.

Blackbird caws and brings some other here and now,
 Conscious walking into streets of old familiar faces.
 Hold me still, Oh sweet soft whiteness . . .

VIKAS (ALAN VICKERS)

(Fifty Poems from Auroville, edited by Alan Vickers, Auroville, 2018)

MAN OF A MOMENTOUS MOMENT — MANDELA

(Continued from the issue of October 2018)

Trials, Imprisonment and Life Sentence

Mandela became the No. 1 on the state's 'Most Wanted' list. On the run, Mandela adopted a series of disguises including those of a chauffeur and a gardener. Finally, the police, with the help of an informer, eventually located and arrested Mandela on 5 August 1962. The state did not yet know of his sabotage activities with MK [the revolutionary organisation, 'Spear of the Nation'] and he was sentenced to five years in jail for leaving the country without a permit and inciting workers to strike. He began serving his sentence at the Pretoria Local Prison and in May 1963 he was transferred to Robben Island but returned to Pretoria on 12 June. "Prison," writes Mandela, "not only robs you of your freedom, it attempts to take away your identity."¹ In prison Mandela was placed in solitary confinement. He writes of his travails:

For the next few weeks, I was completely and utterly isolated. I did not see the face or hear the voice of another prisoner. I was locked up for twenty-three hours a day, with thirty minutes of exercise in the morning and again in the afternoon. I had never been in isolation before, and every hour seemed like a year. There was no natural light in my cell; a single bulb burned overhead for twenty-four hours a day. I did not have a wristwatch and I often thought it was the middle of the night when it was only late afternoon. I had nothing to read, nothing to write on or with, no one to talk to. The mind begins to turn in on itself, and one desperately wants something outside oneself on which to fix one's attention. I have known men who took half-a-dozen lashes in preference to being locked up alone. After a time in solitary, I relished the company even of the insects in my cell, and found myself on the verge of initiating conversations with a cockroach. . . . Nothing is more dehumanising than the absence of human companionship.²

Indeed, solitary confinement is no laughing matter as is testified by Sri Aurobindo when he was put in isolation at Alipore Jail. He writes:

1. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 396.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 396-97.

I had enough leisure to realise the enormity or dangerous potentiality of solitary confinement. I could understand why even firm and well-developed intellects break down in such a state of confinement and readily turn towards insanity. . . . Before imprisonment I was in the habit of sitting down for meditation for an hour in the morning and evening. In this solitary prison, not having anything else to do, I tried to meditate for a longer period. But for those unaccustomed it is not easy to control and steady the mind pulled in a thousand directions. Somehow I was able to concentrate for an hour and half or two, later the mind rebelled while the body too was fatigued. At first the mind was full of thoughts of many kinds.

Afterwards, devoid of human conversation and an insufferable listlessness due to absence of any subject of thought, the mind gradually lost its capacity to think. . . . In this uncertain, dull state I suffered an intense mental agony. . . . Had the mind now become so weak that the solitude of a few days could make me so restless? . . . According to the proverb, one who can stand solitude is either a god or a brute, it is a discipline quite beyond men . . . I could feel that even for one accustomed to the yogic life this discipline is not easy to acquire. I remember the terrifying end of the Italian regicide, Brecci. His cruel judges, instead of ordering him to be hanged, had given him seven years of solitary imprisonment. Within a year Brecci had gone mad. But he had endured for some time! Was my mental strength so poor? Then I did not know that God was having a game with me, through which He was giving me a few necessary lessons. First, He showed me the state of mind in which prisoners condemned to solitary cells move towards insanity, and turned me wholly against the inhuman cruelty of the western prison administration . . . His second purpose: it was to reveal and expose before my mind its own weakness so that I might get rid of it for ever. For one who seeks the yogic state, crowd and solitude should mean the same. Indeed, the weakness dropped off within a very few days, and now it seems that the mental poise would not be disturbed even by twenty years of solitude. . . .³

In 1963 the hideout of the ANC's MK headquarters in Rivonia was discovered and Mandela — whilst serving his five year jail term — with several others including Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Katharada, Govan Mbeki, were charged with sabotage and conspiracy which is punishable by death. This was the start of the Supreme Court Case known as the Rivonia Trial; the most significant political trial in the history of South Africa. This trial effectively stilled black opposition for a decade.

To put things in perspective Sri Aurobindo, in an article dated April 1907, has written:

3. Sri Aurobindo, *Tales of Prison Life*, 4th Ed., pp. 38-42.

It is the common habit of established Governments and especially those which are themselves oppressors, to brand all violent methods in subject peoples and communities as criminal and wicked. When you have disarmed your slaves and legalised the infliction of bonds, stripes and death on any one of them, man, woman or child, who may dare to speak or to act against you, it is natural and convenient to try and lay a moral as well as a legal ban on any attempt to answer violence by violence, the knout by the revolver, the prison by riot or agrarian rising, the gallows by the dynamite bomb. But no nation yet has listened to the cant of the oppressor when itself put to the test, and the general conscience of humanity approves the refusal. . . . Liberty is the life-breath of a nation; and when the life is attacked, when it is sought to suppress all chance of breathing by violent pressure, any and every means of self-preservation becomes right and justifiable, — just as it is lawful for a man who is being strangled to rid himself of the pressure on his throat by any means in his power. . . .⁴

About the trial Mandela notes: “We were not concerned with getting off or lessening our punishment, but with making the trial strengthen the cause for which we were all struggling — at whatever cost to ourselves.”⁵

At the Rivonia 1964 trial, Mandela spoke from the dock in the courtroom, to convey his beliefs about democracy, freedom and equality. These are the closing words:

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.⁶

The Supreme Court Judge found eight accused including Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Govan Mbeki guilty on all four counts and the sentence was to be announced a few days later. To the utter shock and amazement of the defence counsel all three decided not to appeal if they received the death sentence. Mandela explains his decision thus:

Walter, Govan and I believed an appeal would undermine the moral stance we had taken. . . . If a death sentence was passed, we did not want to hamper the

4. CWSA, Vol. 6, p. 278.

5. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, pp. 428-29.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 438.

mass campaign that would surely spring up. In light of the bold and defiant line we had taken all along, an appeal would seem anti-climactic and even disillusioning. Our message was that no sacrifice was too great in the struggle for freedom.

. . . I was prepared to die secure in the knowledge that my death would be an inspiration to the cause for which I was giving my life. My death — our deaths — would not be in vain; if anything we might serve the cause better in death as martyrs than we ever could in life. . . .

I was prepared for the death penalty. To be truly prepared for something, one must actually expect it. One cannot be prepared for something while secretly believing it will not happen. We were all prepared, not because we were brave but because we were realistic.⁷

It is captivating when Sri Aurobindo divulged how he and Barin conquered fear of death during the revolutionary days. When asked, “How to conquer fear?” Sri Aurobindo replied:

By mental strength, will and spiritual power. In my own case, whenever there was any fear I used to do the very things that I was afraid of even if it entailed a violent death. Barin also had much fear while he was in the revolutionary activities. But he would compel himself to do those things. When the death sentence was passed he took it very cheerfully.⁸

Finally, to the relief of many, instead of a death sentence, they were sentenced to life imprisonment. Demonstrations throughout South Africa and international pressure undoubtedly weighed on the Judge’s mind in not giving the death sentence. The prospect of life imprisonment is terrifying. When Upendra Nath Banerjee learnt that he was sentenced to transportation for life to the Andamans for his role in the Alipore Bomb Case, he gloomily reflected:

To think that the rest of the life was to be sweated away in the prisons! Why, the gallows were a more welcome thing. My God! What a long price it was that I had to pay — and that to the last farthing. . . .

And yet when in jail I was cut off from all works, my life lost its steerage. I looked out for a support, and my mind called out in dark despair, “Save me, my God, save me.”⁹

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 444-45.

8. A.B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., p. 566.

9. Upendra Nath Banerjee, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, pp. 95, 97.

Upendra Nath Banerjee has also written of the adverse effects of the inhuman prison conditions in Andamans: “Indu Bhusan, who had been a strong man, and never smarted under the severest hardship, hanged himself. Petty insults meted out to him had exhausted his patience. He would often say, ‘I don’t think I would weather it out for these ten years of my life.’ One night he tore his shirt into shreds to make a rope which he fastened to a window high up in the back wall of his cell, and hanged himself.”¹⁰

Referring to Ullaskar Dutt, Upendra Nath Banerjee writes: “He was punished with seven days of standing handcuffed. But on the first day at 4.30 p.m. when the Petty Officer went to take off his hand-cuffs he found Ullas drooping in high fever. He was at once removed to the Hospital. The fever rose to 106 degrees in the night; and when day broke on our dark convict world, Ullas was found to be completely changed, though the fever was off. The man who had kept an even temper through all the tempests of life, whose face had not been darkened under the severest pain, was unhinged.”¹¹

Mandela was held in Robben Island Prison from 1964 to 1982 and in Pollsmoor Prison where he was until 1988 and then shifted to Victor Verster Prison. Freedom was intrinsic to Mandela. He writes that he “was not born with a hunger to be free. I was born free.” In his boyhood he was free to run in the fields, free to swim in the streams and ride on slow-moving bulls in the village. But in college life he saw his freedom was curtailed. Slowly he saw that the freedom of all who looked like him was severely restricted. That is when he joined the ANC. “It was this desire for the freedom of my people to live their lives with dignity and self-respect that animated my life,” he writes, “that transformed a frightened young man into a bold one, that drove a law-abiding attorney to become a criminal, that turned a family-loving husband into a man without a home, that forced a life-loving man to live like a monk.”¹²

A warder’s first words when Mandela and his ANC comrades arrived at Robben Island were: “This is the Island. This is where you will die.”¹³ Regarding the start of his term in Robben Island maximum security prison, Mandela wrote: “In prison you come face to face with time. There’s nothing more terrifying.”¹⁴ At Robben Island Mandela was known as ‘Prisoner 46664’ — the 466th prisoner to arrive in 1964. He was put in a cell measuring less than 8 feet by 7 feet. A tall man, he could barely stretch out fully. After his release in 1990 he visited Robben Island a few times to reminisce and wondered how he had managed to stay in such a small cell. “Back then I was used to it, and I could do all sorts of things in there, like exercise every

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-38.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

12. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 750.

13. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-23618727>.

14. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-25256818>.

morning and evening. But now that I'm on the outside, I don't know how we survived it — the space was so small," he said.¹⁵

The first eighteen years of Mandela's twenty-seven-year imprisonment was a period of tremendous hardship. There were freezing winter nights, suffocating summer days, poor food and back-breaking labour. Never had they experienced such bone-chilling cold in winter. He slept on a thin mat on a stone floor for most of his time behind bars. Taken-for-granted necessities in the outside world were actually precious luxuries in prison. Milk for tea, for example, was an event. So, too, were visits and letters. In the initial years, Mandela was allowed to write only one letter in six months and receive one visitor a year. For many years, his wife was only allowed to a rare visit and his children not at all.

In the early years in prison Mandela and his comrades were forbidden from keeping watches or clocks. He initially made a calendar on the wall of his cell. Later he was allowed to keep an annual desk calendar.

In a *Time* magazine interview just days after his release he was asked, "What was the hardest thing about prison life?" He replied, "We went through very harsh experiences at the beginning of our life imprisonment. I was never brutally assaulted, but many of my colleagues around me were."¹⁶

Until about April 1965 those incarcerated in the isolation section of Robben Island Prison, like Mandela, were made to work in the quadrangle breaking large chunks of stone into pebbles using four-pound hammers. The authorities had put six hardened criminals among them to harass and terrorise them. The work was tedious and difficult enough to make all the muscles ache. Later they were made to work in a blindingly bright quarry digging out limestone from an enormous white crater cut into a rocky hillside. This work was far more strenuous than breaking stones. The glaring sun on the white stone caused permanent damage to his eyes. Mandela and his comrades worked daily in the limestone quarry for years, and repeatedly asked for the practice to end. In 1977, the authorities agreed and abolished manual labour for the inmates.

Mandela notes: "Robben Island was without question the harshest, most iron-fisted outpost in the South African penal system. It was a hardship station not only for the prisoners but for the prison staff. . . . The warders, now white and overwhelmingly Afrikaans-speaking, demanded a master-servant relationship." He adds, "Prison and the authorities conspire to rob each man of his dignity," and "Prison is designed to break one's spirit and destroy one's resolve. To do this, the authorities attempt to exploit every weakness, demolish every initiative, negate all signs of individuality — all with the idea of stamping out that spark that makes each of us human and each of us who we are."¹⁷

15. http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub_view.asp?pg=item&ItemID=NMS1233&txtstr=interview.

16. http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub_view.asp?pg=results.

17. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, pp. 459, 463-64.

But the embers of Mandela's spirit were inextinguishable. He would be the first to protest over any ill-treatment to the prisoners; as a result he would often be punished by solitary confinement. Of the first time he was put in solitary confinement in Robben Island he writes:

In isolation, one was deprived of company, exercise and even food; one received only rice water three times a day for three days. . . .

I found solitary confinement the most forbidding aspect of prison life. There was no end and no beginning; there is only one's mind, which can begin to play tricks. Was that a dream or did it really happen? One begins to question everything. Did I make the right decision, was my sacrifice worth it? In solitary, there is no distraction from these haunting questions.

But the human body has an enormous capacity for adjusting to trying circumstances. I have found that one can bear the unbearable if one can keep one's spirits strong even when one's body is being tested. Strong convictions are the secret of surviving deprivation; your spirit can be full even when your stomach is empty.¹⁸

Mandela's first stint of solitary confinement was soon followed by another lasting four days. He writes: "In those early years, isolation became a habit. We were routinely charged for the smallest infractions and sentenced to isolation. A man might lose his meals for a sidelong glance or be sentenced for failing to stand when a warder entered the room. The authorities believed that isolation was the cure for our defiance and rebelliousness."¹⁹

Over time Mandela's leadership qualities slowly came to the fore in prison. Walter Sisulu writes that Mandela's emerging leadership was displayed in a rebellion over the quarry: "The prison authorities would rush us . . . 'Hardloop!' That means run. One day they did it with us. It was Nelson who said: 'Comrades let's be slower than ever.' It was clear therefore that the steps we were taking would make it impossible ever to reach the quarry where we were going to. They were compelled to negotiate with Nelson. That brought about the recognition of his leadership."²⁰

One is reminded when Mandela and his fellow prisoners were asked to jog to their prisons immediately on their arrival at Robben Island. But Mandela told a fellow prisoner that if they gave in now they would be at the mercy of the guards for the rest of their stay. When they started to walk, instead of jogging, the guards threatened to kill them but Mandela stood firm. Soon after, a captain approached Mandela with a threat to strike him. Mandela writes: "I was frightened; it is not a

18. *Ibid.*, p. 494.

19. *Ibid.*

20. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-23618727>.

pleasant sensation to know that someone is about to hit you and you are unable to defend yourself. When he was just a few feet from me, I said, as firmly as I could, ‘If you so much as lay a hand on me, I will take you to the highest court . . .’ The moment I began speaking, he paused, and by the end of my speech he was staring at me with astonishment. I was a bit surprised myself. I had been afraid, and spoke not from courage but out of a kind of bravado. At such times one must put up a bold front despite what one feels inside.”²¹

In his autobiography Mandela writes: “I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. I felt fear myself more times than I can remember, but I hid it behind a mask of boldness. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”²²

Mac Maharaj, friend and prison-mate of Mandela, reveals another incident where Mandela displayed his leadership qualities. One day a warder assaulted a prisoner and bruised him. Mandela was irked and intended to complain to the authorities. His friends tried to talk him out of it as the prisoner was a hardened criminal and it was not worth taking a personal risk upon oneself. Mandela did not relent. In the enquiry this criminal denied he was assaulted; the jail authorities had bribed him with tobacco. Mandela was fortunate to escape, for any false complaint was punishable by six lashes. Later Mandela’s comrades ragged him since they had already advised him not to take up the matter with this untrustworthy prisoner. But for Mandela it did not matter who the prisoner was, an injustice was an injustice.

At Robben Island warder Jack Swart was asked if anything stood out in Mandela as a prisoner. Alluding to prisoners being charged for any indiscipline, Swart said, “If there were problems and if prisoners were charged, Mandela was always the man who went to represent them . . . they always went to him when there were problems, asked him for advice . . . He was always the person, the central person. When they broke for lunch also, they always went to sit with him and talk to him. He was the person who sort of went to defend them when they were charged with a misdemeanour in prison.”²³

On more than one occasion Mandela and his comrade, Ahmed Kathrada smuggled out letters, especially to lawyers, to complain about conditions in prison. For example, in January 1977 Mandela wrote, in tiny handwriting, a long letter to lawyers in Durban instructing them to take action against the prison authorities for a list of instances for “abusing their authority”.

Mandela writes: “Even in the grimmest times in prison, when my comrades and I were pushed to our limits, I would see a glimmer of humanity in one of the

21. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 407.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 748.

23. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/mandela/prison/swart.html>.

guards, perhaps just for a second, but it was enough to reassure me and keep me going. Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished."²⁴

But all that — the crude jailers, tiny cells, humiliations and prison injustices could not take away his pride and his dignity. South African Judge and activist Albie Sachs said: "There was a dignity, a sense of assuredness, polish, style about Mandela."²⁵ Mandela refused to be intimidated in any circumstance. *Time* magazine's former managing editor, Richard Stengel, writes: "Eddie Daniels, a 5-ft. 3-in. mixed-race freedom fighter, recalled how anytime he felt demoralised, he would just have to see the 6-ft. 2-in. Mandela walking tall through the courtyard and he would feel revived. Eddie wept as he told me how when he fell ill, Mandela — 'Nelson Mandela, my leader!' — came into his cell and crouched down to wash out his pail of vomit and blood and excrement."²⁶ Mandela has said: "We drew strength and sustenance from the knowledge that we were part of a greater humanity than our jailers could claim."²⁷

However, in all his writings from the very early days to even after he had retired Mandela was at pains to point out that not every prison warder or apartheid official was bad. This view was underpinned throughout by his assertion that to get along in life one should see the good in all people. In his autobiography Mandela writes: "I always knew that deep down in every human heart, there was mercy and generosity. No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion."²⁸

Christo Brand came to Robben Island in 1978 as a pro-apartheid white prison guard, but his interactions with Mandela changed his views on white superiority. Brand said of Mandela, "He treated me with respect and my respect for him grew. After a while, even though he was a prisoner, a friendship grew."²⁹ Mac Maharaj writes: "We were locked up in cells with a window to the corridor, but two panes were removed so we could talk to the warder. Most of us saw the jailers as the enemy, but Madiba was always polite to them."³⁰

The first time his lawyer, George Bizos, visited him, Mandela greeted him and then introduced his eight guards by name — to their amazement — as "my guard of honour". The prison authorities began treating him as a prison elder statesman.³¹ Mandela's dignified ways in prison evoke a saying of Mother: "If you want to be respected, always be respectable."³²

24. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 749.

25. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/06/nelson-mandela-remembered-south-africa>.

26. <http://world.time.com/2013/12/05/nelson-mandela-1918-2013-remembering-an-icon-of-freedom/>

27. <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/collection/nelson-mandela-centre-of-memory>.

28. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 749.

29. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/may/20/nelsonmandela>.

30. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/06/nelson-mandela-remembered-south-africa>.

31. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/06/world/africa/nelson-mandela_obit.html?

32. *Collected Works of the Mother*, 2nd Ed., Vol. 15, p. 225.

In an interview after his release from prison with celebrated television talk show host Oprah Winfrey, Mandela comes across as a man of great understanding, dignity and kindness. He used these qualities to cultivate his relationships with the wardens and even influenced them to be better human beings. We reproduce an extract of this interview:

Oprah: But when I visited the prison I was told that at 4 p.m. each day, the cell doors were closed and you weren't allowed to speak.

Nelson Mandela: That's true, but we challenged that rule. The officers who were senior to the wardens treated them like vermin, but because we treated the wardens with respect, they helped us. Once the cells were locked and the senior officers went away, the wardens allowed us to do anything except open the cell doors, because they didn't have keys. They let us speak to those in the cells opposite us. As a result of the way we treated the wardens, they tended to become good people.

Oprah: Do you believe people are good at their core?

Nelson Mandela: There is no doubt whatsoever, provided you are able to arouse the goodness inherent in every human. Those of us in the fight against apartheid changed many people who hated us because they discovered that we respected them.

Oprah: How can you respect people who oppress you?

Nelson Mandela: You must understand that individuals get caught up in the policy of their country. In prison, for instance, a warden or officer is not promoted if he doesn't follow the policy of the government — though he himself does not believe in that policy.

Oprah: So you can change someone who is only carrying out a policy, since that person himself isn't the policy.

Nelson Mandela: Absolutely. When I went to jail, I was a trained lawyer. And when the wardens received letters of demands or summonses, they didn't have the resources to go to an attorney to help them. I would help them settle their cases, so they became attached to me and the other prisoners.³³

33. <http://www.oprah.com/world/Oprah-Interviews-Nelson-Mandela/>

The warders that Mandela helped were “the most ruthless and brutal of the apartheid regime’s characters,” says Allister Sparks, the great South African historian, and he “realised that even the worst and crudest could be negotiated with.”³⁴

In the aforesaid interview Mandela was asked, “In your autobiography, you say that you understood you could defeat your opponent without dishonouring him. How did you learn that?” He replied: “My colleagues and I did not want to speak to the apartheid rulers at all, but some of us did the type of work that brought us into contact with our oppressors. For instance, when blacks were forced to leave Johannesburg and go back to their homelands, a man would come to me and say, ‘Help me. I have lost my job. I have a wife and children in school, and I am now required to leave my home.’ As a lawyer, I would go to the top authorities and say, ‘Look, I’m approaching you as a human, and here is my problem. I have to rely on you.’ Invariably, the person would allow the man to look for a job. So I discovered even before I went to jail that apartheid was not run by people who were monolithic in their approach. Some of them didn’t even believe in apartheid.”³⁵

After the first few months on the island, life settled into a pattern. “Prison life is about routine: each day like the one before; each week like the one before it, so that the months and years blend into each other,” Mandela wrote. However, over time, and varying according to who was running the prison, so-called privileges would be granted. Those who wanted could apply for permission to study. Mandela learned Afrikaans, the language of the dominant whites, and urged other prisoners to do the same. ANC and Communist Party stalwart Mac Maharaj remembers it as a cause of a falling out with Mandela: “He was urging let us study Afrikaans and I was saying no way — this is the language of the damn oppressor. He persuaded me by saying, ‘Mac, we are in for a protracted war. You can’t dream of ambushing the enemy if you can’t understand the general commanding the forces. You have to read their literature and poetry, you have to understand their culture so that you get into the mind of the general.’ Here he was showing right at the outset this focus of thinking of the other side, understanding them, anticipating them and so at the end of the day understanding how to accommodate them.”³⁶

In prison Mandela studied regularly and encouraged his colleagues to study. He explained, “No country can really develop unless its citizens are educated. Any nation that is progressive is led by people who have had the privilege of studying. I knew we could improve our lives even in jail. We could come out as different men, and we could even come out with two degrees. Educating ourselves was a way to give ourselves the most powerful weapon for freedom.”³⁷

34. content.time.com/time/subscriber/article (Interview with *Time*).

35. <http://www.oprah.com/world/Oprah-Interviews-Nelson-Mandela/>

36. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-23618727>.

37. <http://www.oprah.com/world/Oprah-Interviews-Nelson-Mandela/>

Indeed, everyone from ordinary jailers to President P.W. Botha, whom he first met in 1986, was impressed by Mandela's willingness to speak Afrikaans and his knowledge of Afrikaner history. He even brushed up on his knowledge of rugby, the Afrikaners' beloved sport, so he would be able to compare notes on teams and players. We now momentarily fast forward and cover a period when he was already one year into his presidency. Prior to the 1995 Rugby World Cup hosted by South Africa, François Pienaar, captain of the South African Rugby team, received an unexpected call from Mandela's personal secretary, inviting him for tea with the President. Pienaar said: "The first thing he said to me was in Afrikaans, and most of our conversation was in Afrikaans. I tried to switch to English, which was not a great thing for me to do, and he kept steering back to Afrikaans, so we had an hour's chat which was very special. I didn't realise then how special it was."³⁸

Mandela understood that blacks and Afrikaners had something fundamental in common: Afrikaners believed themselves to be Africans as deeply as blacks did. He knew, too, that Afrikaners had been the victims of prejudice themselves: the British government and the white English settlers looked down on them. Afrikaners suffered from a cultural inferiority complex almost as much as blacks did.

There were other positive sides that Mandela concentrated on. In conversation, he would often say prison had given him time to think. Mandela's long spell of incarceration had led him to deep reflection. He also honed his skills as a leader, negotiator and a political philosopher, and not only the factions among the prisoners but also some of the white administrators found his charm and iron will irresistible. He credited his prison experience with teaching him the tactics and strategy that would make him President.

In the 1970s Mandela was allowed a bit of time to follow his passion of gardening. At school Mandela worked in the garden of his principal, Reverend Harris. "Working in his garden," writes Mandela, "planted in me a lifelong love of gardening and growing vegetables."³⁹ The political prisoners had a small garden in their cell block courtyard. Alan Titchmarsh, gardener and broadcaster, wrote that "it was gardening, after all, that got him through those seemingly interminable years on Robben Island. Plants, he told me, were special. They were the one thing over which a prisoner could exercise control."⁴⁰ Many of his vegetables graced the tables of his warders.

In 1969 Mandela's first son, aged 25 years, was killed in a motor accident. "It left a hole in my heart that can never be filled",⁴¹ he wrote. The preceding year he had lost his mother. In both instances he was not allowed to attend the funeral. On

38. <http://www.bbc.com/sport/rugby-union/25305354>.

39. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 41.

40. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/06/nelson-mandela-remembered-south-africa>.

41. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 531.

a visit to Robben Island in 1994 as a free man, Mandela reflected: “Wounds that can’t be seen are more painful than those that can be seen and cured by a doctor. One of the saddest moments of my life in prison was the death of my mother. The next shattering experience was the death of my eldest son in a car accident.”⁴²

The 1970s saw the rise of the militant “Black Consciousness Movement” which believed that African people had to overcome the enormous psychological and cultural damage imposed on them by a succession of white racist regimes. The movement and the death in custody in 1977 of one of its founders, Steve Biko, gave an impetus to the ANC and rekindled interest in Mandela.

In 1976 the Minister of Prisons came to Robben Island with an offer to Mandela that if he recognised the legitimacy of the government of Transkei, the place where he was born and brought up, his sentence would be dramatically reduced. A month later the minister renewed the offer but Mandela again turned him down. He notes, “It was an offer only a turncoat could accept.”⁴³ South African journalist, Benjamin Pogrund, wrote the reason for offering the release was that “the Afrikaner leaders were worried lest Mandela, now in his 60s, died in prison and became a martyr in the apartheid struggle.”⁴⁴ Mandela later said: “Our people outside of prison used my name to mobilise the community locally and internationally. But for me to be treated separately from my colleagues, who had contributed as much as and even more than I had, would have been a betrayal of them.”⁴⁵

The anti-apartheid movement of the 1970s included the global Free Mandela campaign, whose success led Prime Minister of South Africa, John Vorster, to bemoan the fact that the world was seeing Mandela as the “real” leader of black South Africa. Exiled ANC leaders decided that Mandela was the perfect hero to symbolise their movement against apartheid.

By 1979, thanks to the international community, the authorities were more caring about to the prisoner’s health. Mandela developed an intense pain in his heel and was taken by boat to Cape Town to meet a surgeon. On arrival at the Cape Town docks he felt debased, noting: “We were met by more armed guards and a small crowd. It is a humiliating experience to watch the fear and disgust on ordinary citizens’ faces when they watch a convict go by. My inclination was to duck and hide, but one could not do that.”⁴⁶

In 1980, the Indian government awarded the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding to Mandela. Close Mandela associate and ANC President in exile, Oliver Tambo, travelled on an Indian passport to receive the award on his

42. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-23618727>.

43. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 574.

44. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/06/nelson-mandela-remembered-south-africa>.

45. <http://www.oprah.com/world/Oprah-Interviews-Nelson-Mandela/>

46. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 600.

behalf. Addressing a gathering Tambo said: “Nelson Mandela’s 18 years’ imprisonment has in no way destroyed him, and will not.”⁴⁷ In his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela writes that the award was “another piece of evidence of the resurgence of the struggle. I was of course refused permission to attend the ceremony, as was Winnie, but Oliver accepted the award in my absence. We had a sense of a reviving ANC.”⁴⁸

In March 1982, after 18 years in Robben Island, Mandela, Walter Sisulu and two others were transferred to Pollsmoor Prison, a few miles southeast of Cape Town. The four were accommodated in a spacious room on the top floor with four proper beds with sheets and towels quite in contrast to Robben Island where one slept on thin mats on a stone floor. Compared with Robben Island they were in a five-star hotel.

From 1984 Mandela, for the first time, was allowed to have “contact visits” with his family members which meant there was no glass partition separating them and they could physically touch each other. Gillian Slovo, novelist and daughter of Joe Slovo — an anti-apartheid activist and a close comrade of Mandela — writes that Mandela “understood the sacrifices that the families of activists had to make. This . . . was his greatest, perhaps his only, regret: that his children, and the children of his comrades, had suffered for their parents’ commitment.”⁴⁹

In 1986 the government, after assessing Mandela’s political ideology, felt that he was the most balanced and trustworthy ANC leader to negotiate with. Moreover he had a mass following. Mandela has said, “Well, people respond in accordance to how you relate to them. If you approach them on the basis of violence, that’s how they’ll react. But if you say we want peace, we want stability, we can then do a lot of things that will contribute towards the progress of our society.”⁵⁰ At this crucial juncture Mandela took a decision to enter into secret negotiations with the government without informing or consulting his comrades, knowing fully well that they would resist. It was a moment of great leadership, but fraught with great danger for he could be accused of undermining the anti-apartheid movement. “My comrades did not have the advantages that I had of brushing shoulders with the V.I.P.s who came here, the judges, the Minister of Justice, the Commissioner of Prisons, and I had come to overcome my own prejudice towards them,” he recalled. “So I decided to present my colleagues with a *fait accompli*.”⁵¹

Mandela was alone, negotiating with a committee of four people. In a battle of wills he could easily have been overpowered. The harsh conditions at Robben Island Prison could easily have weakened Mandela, but instead he became more deter-

47. www.telegraphindia.com.

48. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 603.

49. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/06/nelson-mandela-remembered-south-africa>.

50. http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub_view.asp?pg=results.

51. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/06/world/africa/nelson-mandela_obit.html?pagewanted=all.

mined, following a discipline in his life and steeling his iron will; a quality that stood him in good stead during the negotiations. He noted: “Prison — far from breaking our spirits — made us more determined to continue with this battle until victory was won.”⁵² Mandela’s friend and comrade in prison Mac Maharaj said that Mandela was “a person with an immense capacity for self-control.”⁵³ Another very close comrade, Ahmed Kathrada, told a BBC correspondent that Mandela fought a war of attrition in everything. In prison, he once played chess against a medical student who had just come in for five years. “They played for many hours in one day and they had to ask the warders to lock the chessboard up in the cell next door. They continued the next day and each move was so slow — this was a war of attrition. After a few hours the young chap said ‘Look, you win. Just take your victory.’ He wins.”⁵⁴ Says Mandela: “Prison is itself a tremendous education in the need for patience and perseverance. It is, above all, a test of one’s commitment . . .”⁵⁵

Bill Keller, executive editor of *The New York Times* and Pulitzer Prize winner, writes: “Friends say his experiences steeled his self-control and made him, more than ever, a man who buried his emotions deep, who spoke in the collective ‘we’ of liberation rhetoric. . . . Above all, prison taught him to be a master negotiator.”⁵⁶

Mandela held firm that he was committed to a non-racial society. The first condition of the Committee was that the ANC must renounce violence before negotiations could begin but Mandela stood his ground by stating, “. . . if the state decided to use peaceful methods, the ANC would also use peaceful means.” The Committee was also concerned of the ANC’s alliance with the Communist Party as communism and the Soviet Union were anathema. Mandela was at pains to explain that the Communist Party did not have an influence with the ANC. But for months the Committee was not convinced and finally in exasperation Mandela told them: “You gentlemen consider yourselves intelligent, do you not? You consider yourselves forceful and persuasive, do you not? Well, there are four of you and only one of me, and you cannot control me or get me to change my mind. What makes you think the communists can succeed where you have failed?”⁵⁷

During the negotiations, in August 1988, Mandela had an attack of tuberculosis and was admitted to a luxurious hospital for six weeks. Mandela writes: “The nurses — who were either white or Coloured; no black nurses were permitted — spoiled me; they brought extra desserts and pillows and were constantly visiting, even during their time off. One day they decided to hold their party in my room, insisting they could not have it without me. . . . these young ladies in party frocks descended on

52. <https://google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/assetyard-chairs-robben-island/>

53. <http://www.politicsweb.co.za>.

54. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-23618727>.

55. <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/collection/nelson-mandela-centre-of-memory>.

56. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/06/world/africa/nelson-mandela_obit.html?

57. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 642.

my room with cake and punch and gifts.”⁵⁸ Curiously, the first black patient was receiving attention that even the whites were not receiving. How the tables were turning!

In December 1988 Mandela was shifted to Victor Verster Prison, located in the countryside. He was given a lovely cottage with a swimming pool. The reason for this was that he could hold his discussions in private and in comfort. He was also given a chef to do the cooking for him and his guests. On his 71st birthday Mandela was visited by his entire family.

Even though Mandela constantly briefed the ANC exiled leadership on the negotiations, there were some concerns amongst some of the ANC leaders that Mandela had gone weak in prison and was about to sell out or compromise with the Nationalist Party in return for his freedom. Even at Mandela’s release in February 1990, there was a lingering suspicion among some comrades that he might have turned. This would immediately be proven wrong. In fact, Mandela had entered Robben Island a good leader, and returned a great leader.

In July 1989 a meeting between Mandela and the South African President P. W. Botha was arranged. Just at the moment of entering Mr. Botha’s office Niel Barnard — the head of the apartheid regime’s National Intelligence Service and a close confidant of Botha — noticed Mandela’s shoe-laces were loose and he bent down to tie them. It was a defining moment in the struggle for a non-racial society. Mandela looked much more an elder statesman in his suit and tie than a guerrilla leader. The half-hour meeting was friendly right through.

In August 1989 Botha resigned and was replaced by F. W. de Klerk. de Klerk was a pragmatist. Soon after, seven comrades of Mandela, to their utter delight, including Walter Sisulu and Ahmed Kathrada, were released. On 2 February 1990 de Klerk removed the ban on the ANC and other political parties. Finally Mandela was released on 11 February 1990; he went to prison when he was forty-four years old and was released when he was seventy-one. About his farewell from prison he writes: “I wanted initially to address the people of Paarl, who had been very kind to me during my incarceration, but the [ANC] reception committee was adamant that that would not be a good idea; it would look curious if I gave my first speech to the prosperous white burghers of Paarl.”⁵⁹ Of his departure from prison, he says:

Warrant Officer Swart prepared a final meal for all of us and I thanked him not only for the food he had provided for the last two years but also the companionship. Warrant Officer James Gregory was also there at the house, and I embraced him warmly. In the years that he had looked after me from Pollsmoor to Victor Verster, we had never discussed politics, but our bond was an unspoken one

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 647-48.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 671.

and I would miss his soothing presence. Men like Swart, Gregory and Warrant Officer Brand reinforced my belief in the essential humanity even of those who had kept me behind bars for the previous twenty-seven and a half years.

There was little time for lengthy farewells. The plan was that Winnie and I would be driven in a car to the front gate of the prison. I had told the authorities that I wanted to be able to say good-bye to the guards and warders who had looked after me and I asked that they and their families wait for me at the front gate, where I would be able to thank them individually.

. . . We drove through beautiful green vineyards and manicured farms, and I relished the scenery around me.

The countryside was lush and well-cared for, but what surprised me was how many white families were standing beside the road to get a glimpse of our motorcade. They had heard on the radio that we were taking an alternative route. Some, perhaps a dozen, even raised their clenched right fists in what had become the ANC power salute. This astonished me; I was tremendously encouraged by these few brave souls from a conservative farming area who expressed their solidarity. At one point I stopped and got out of the car to greet and thank one such white family and tell them how inspired I was by their support. It made me think that the South Africa that I was returning to was far from different from the one I had left.⁶⁰

Mandela was scheduled to give a speech at the great square opposite the old City Hall but the thrilled crowd that came to greet him was over-excited and thus unmanageable. His car was surrounded by an excited mass of bodies. “At that very moment,” he writes, “I began to worry. I felt as though the crowd might very well kill us with their love.”⁶¹ He writes of his address: “I spoke from the heart. I wanted first of all to tell the people that I was not a messiah, but an ordinary man who had become a leader because of extraordinary circumstances. I wanted immediately to thank the people all over the world who had campaigned for my release. . . .”⁶² Mandela has also written: “That day had come about through the unimaginable sacrifices of thousands of my people, people whose suffering and courage can never be counted or repaid.”⁶³

On his release from prison Mandela reflected:

I knew . . . that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man’s freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 672, 674.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 675.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 676.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 748.

free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken away from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity.

When I walked out of prison, that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both. . . .⁶⁴

After his release from prison Mandela played an indispensable role in keeping the country together by not discriminating if people were black or white. His legacy of forgiveness and reconciliation is permanently etched in golden letters in South African history.

In *Pretoria News*, Jermaine Craig wrote about Mandela's release from prison: "South Africa was a ticking time bomb . . . Millions felt anger, fear, resentment and hate. But thanks to Mr. Mandela, the strongest emotion turned out to be reconciliation."⁶⁵

In an interview Mandela was asked, "One of the greatest lessons your life teaches us all is the power in forgiving our oppressors. As you once told me, you 'made the brain dominate the blood.' How were you able to practise that principle?" He replied: "We all struggled with it, especially since we were dealing with an enemy who was more powerful than us. But because we wanted to avoid slaughtering each other, we had to suppress our feelings. That is the only way to bring about a peaceful transformation."⁶⁶

In a *Time* magazine interview just days after his release Mandela was asked:

Q. Are you bitter that you lost these years of your life?

A. Yes and no. I am bitter. There were aspects that were rewarding. I have lost a great deal in the sense that I spent 27 years of my life in prison.

Q. Was your sacrifice worth it?

A. Yes, it was worth it. To go to prison because of your convictions, and be prepared to suffer for what you believe in, is something worthwhile. It is an achievement for a man to do his duty on earth irrespective of the consequences.⁶⁷

In a *Reader's Digest* interview he was asked if there was something that helped sustain him and keep up his spirits in Robben Island Prison. He replied, "There was a poem by an English poet, W. E. Henley, called 'Invictus'. The last lines go:

64. *Ibid.*, p. 751.

65. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/jun/03/southafrica.sandrasmith>.

66. <http://www.oprah.com/world/Oprah-Interviews-Nelson-Mandela/>

67. http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub_view.asp?pg=results.

It matters not how strait the gate,
 How charged with punishments the scroll,
 I am the master of my fate,
 I am the captain of my soul.”

In another interview he spoke of how he coped with imprisonment: “Our presence in prison was that of a collective of comrades. Mentally and spiritually we supported one another and were collectively sustained by the knowledge that we were there on behalf of the people. Of course, ultimately one had to cope as an individual but that was made infinitely easier by the knowledge that we were acting for a moral cause.”⁶⁸

While in prison, it seems, Mandela acquired monk-like capacities. Peter Ustinov, the veteran actor, author, and international citizen, met Mandela in South Africa in 1998 and was struck by the importance Mandela attached to the long period of solitude in prison. “I had a most inspiring meeting with Nelson Mandela,” Ustinov said. “He told me with a certain amount of irony and wickedness: ‘I am grateful for the 27 years I spent in prison because it gave me the opportunity to meditate and think deeply. . . . But since I came out of prison, I haven’t had the time.’”⁶⁹

Mandela’s friend and fellow political prisoner, Mac Maharaj writes:

Many people often remark on how many former prisoners who have undergone unspeakable torture and harsh treatment in apartheid’s prisons, and how Mandela in particular shows no bitterness. Truth, it is said, is better than fiction. . . .

To those who have been tempted to regard him as a saint, he has a ready response that a saint is a sinner who keeps trying. Madiba, I would argue is as much an inspirational as an aspirational role model. Aspirational, because his life beckons us with the goodness in each of us. We can, each of us in each our own ways, be a little bit of Madiba. . . .⁷⁰

Soon after his release in 1990, Mandela led the formal negotiations with the National Party and its allies. Over the next four years Mandela would be embroiled in a laborious negotiation, not only with the white government but also with his own fractious alliance. He writes: “It is a relatively simple proposition to keep a movement together when you are fighting a common enemy. But creating a policy when that enemy is across the negotiating table is another matter altogether. In the new ANC, we had to integrate not only many different groups, but many different points of view.”⁷¹

68. *Ibid.*

69. http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub_view.asp?pg=item&ItemID=NMS764&txtstr=quotes.

70. <http://www.politicsweb.co.za>.

71. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 710.

Another problem was the Inkatha party of the Zulu tribe who wanted to retain Zulu power and identity in a new South Africa. The Inkatha supporters were permitted to carry their traditional weapons to political rallies and had killed hundreds of ANC supporters in a series of violent attacks in the Zulu dominated state of Natal. Prior to the election Mandela arranged to meet his rival, Chief Buthelezi of the Inkatha party, to convince him to participate in the elections. “I will go down on my knees to beg those who want to drag our country into bloodshed . . .”⁷² he told a rally before this meeting. Mandela’s people skills came to the fore whilst dealing with Chief Buthelezi. He noted that Buthelezi was the nephew of a Zulu king and was raised in the royal court, but treated as an outsider. “He was deprived of parental love and care, so he grew up with this insecurity,” he explained. “Once you understand that, Buthelezi is a very fine person. When we are together, he is very, very courteous. But when he is away from you, he behaves totally differently because he does not know if he is still your friend or not.”⁷³

Finally a date was set for the country’s first national, non-racial, one-person-one-vote election: 27 April 1994. The government assured free elections in exchange for a share of power for the white opposition parties and a guarantee that whites would not be subjected to reprisals. Meanwhile Mandela was notified that he had won the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize, jointly with de Klerk. During the election campaign Mandela told the white voter not to leave the country as this was their land too. Ten days before the vote Mandela and de Klerk held their only television debate. During the debate he strongly criticised de Klerk and his party but ended on a magnanimous note. He writes:

But as the debate was nearing an end, I felt I had been too harsh with the man who would be my partner in a government of national unity. In summation, I said, “The exchanges between Mr. de Klerk and me should not obscure one important fact. I think we are a shining example to the entire world of people drawn from different racial groups who have common loyalty, a common love, to their common country. . . . In spite of criticism of Mr. de Klerk,” I said, and then looked over at him, “Sir, you are one of those I rely upon. We are going to face the problem of this country together.” At which point I reached over to take his hand and said, “I am proud to hold your hand for us to go forward.” Mr. de Klerk seemed surprised, but pleased.⁷⁴

“From the moment the results were in and it was apparent that the ANC was to form the government,” writes Mandela, “I saw my mission as one of preaching

72. *Ibid.*, p. 738.

73. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/day-life-mandela-charm-control-bit-acid-bill-keller>.

74. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, pp. 740-41.

reconciliation, of binding the wounds of the country, of engendering trust and confidence. I knew that many people, particularly the minorities, whites, Coloureds and Indians, would be feeling anxious about the future, and I wanted them to feel secure. . . . At every opportunity, I said all South Africans must now unite and join hands and say we are one country, one nation, one people, marching together into the future.”⁷⁵

On 10 May 1994 Nelson Mandela was sworn in as South Africa’s first democratically elected President. The government he formed was an improbable fusion of races and beliefs, including many of his former oppressors. When he became president, he invited three of his white prison wardens to the inauguration.

[The next section delves deeper into Mandela’s persona — with all his weaknesses and strengths — and traces his evolution as a man.]

(To be continued)

GAUTAM MALAKER

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 744-45.

The resistance and the contrary suggestions come from the vital nature which is in all men obscure and attached to ordinary ideas and aims and easily listens to such ideas and suggestions as those you mention. Faith and devotion come from the soul and it is only when the vital has entirely submitted to the soul that one can truly lead the spiritual life.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga – IV, CWSA, Vol. 31, p. 136)

DEVOTED AFFECTION AND OBEDIENCE

The dog is the symbol of devoted affection and obedience. (S30: 169)

*

The dog usually indicates fidelity and as it is yellow, it would be fidelity in the mind to the Divine — but the other black and white one is difficult to interpret — it is something in the vital, but the meaning of the black spots is not clear. (S30: 170)

*

(In a vision the correspondent saw a dog's face bathed in blue light, with its eyes full of white light)

The dog generally signifies devoted obedience — so it may indicate the action of a devoted obedience spiritualised in the higher consciousness. (S30: 169-70)

*

The dog on the envelope means: obedience. (M17: 4)

*

The dog [*in the vision*] indicates something in the physical (the part that is faithful, obedient etc.) waiting confidently for the Light to come. (S30: 139)

Goldy — a very unusual dog

Lakshmibai used to bring Goldy — a very unusual dog — to Mother. From there Goldy herself used to come to Sri Aurobindo's room — remarkable indeed! I would pick her up in my arms and carry her to Sri Aurobindo who would smile and caress her with both hands. One day she went straight to where Sri Aurobindo was sitting and started to lick his feet, one after the other. Sri Aurobindo not only allowed it, but even bent over and patted her. Goldy was free from sexuality. She never allowed any dog to come near her, and was furious if any tried. One who knew her would never permit the term 'dog' to denote sexuality. (*Champaklal Speaks*, Edited by Madhav Pandit and Revised by Roshan, 2002, pp. 130-31)

*

1940s. Goldy was a small golden dog with long hair. Her mother was black. She belonged to Lakshmibai, a lady who grew spectacular roses for the Mother. When she went up to Mother with flowers and fruit, Goldy went with her. She was completely at home there and wandered freely everywhere, including Sri Aurobindo's room. She carried the flower basket in her mouth and went upstairs.

She has been sketched by the Mother. Goldy did not allow any dog to come near her so she never mated.

*

Flora

My father (Manoranjan Ganguli) had a dog called Flora, who went to Mother. I looked after her. My sister, Bubu loved all dogs, even street dogs. She had 5 or 6 dogs.

Our dog was brought from Calcutta. The day she came, I told Mother our dog had arrived. At that time, the Mother used to come out on the terrace. When I spoke to her in the morning, she asked me to wait for her downstairs with the dog. She went inside and sat on the steps of the staircase and said, "Let Arun bring the dog." I took the dog to her and she blessed the dog. It was a cocker spaniel called Flora. Flora had 5 or 6 puppies. One was golden. Lakshmibai told the Mother, "I would like to keep one and I will come and choose." The Mother asked me to bring the whole litter to her at 4 o'clock. She said, "I will be in Pavitra's room; Lakshmibai will come." Lakshmibai chose the golden puppy (which I had actually wanted for myself). . . . She was called Goldy. When she was older, she would carry a flower basket in her mouth to Sri Aurobindo's room.

We gave two puppies to Cazanove, . . . one to an Ashramite . . . one to Gauri Pinto. Mother asked us not to keep any guard dogs at Le Faucheur because she said that thieves would poison the dogs just in order to steal a few coconuts.

(Arun Ganguli's recollection)

*

Tara-ben showed me a sketch of Goldy which she used to keep on a stool at the entrance to her room. She told me that the Mother gave it to her, saying: "Keep this painting with you; she will guard you." (Gauri Pinto's recollection)

12.12.34

My dear faithful Baby,

This morning Nolini brought in two puppies. I asked him if they were for me, he said no it is only to show and he took them away. Tonight the puppies came back. This time I shall keep them, they are very amusing. . . . I took them as a symbol of my Baby's faithfulness.

With love and blessings, always.

(Mother's letter to Ambu, from Gauri's exhibition on Ambu)

*

Spotted Beauty

Once, when I was very young, a dog bit me. So I had a great fear of dogs. My father's aunt, a well-known doctor in Bangalore, used to visit us sometimes in Pondicherry. When she noticed that I was afraid, she decided that this should be cured. So, the next time she visited us, she brought me a Dalmatian pup.

It wasn't long before all of us loved her. Mother gave her the name 'Spotted Beauty'.

The then French Governor's wife, Madame Baron, was very friendly with the Mother. She asked Mother if her male Dalmatian could be allowed to mate with Beauty.

The Mother arranged a visit to Mme. Baron. My mother and I were to take Beauty with us to the Governor's House. Mother gave me a note saying, "Madame, puis-je venir voir Beauty de temps en temps?" which I learnt by heart.

Madame, puis-je
venir voir Beauty
de temps en temps?

When we met this lady in the garden of the Governor's House, I nervously recited this message to her. She naturally agreed very graciously.

But by next morning, Beauty escaped and ran back to us at home!

In a few months, Beauty had seven tiny pups, quite cute and delightful. When they were a few weeks old, my mother put them all in a basket and we took them upstairs to show them to Mother. Mother liked them so much that she took all seven to Sri Aurobindo!

We waited in her Boudoir. (I wished she had taken me too!)

When Mother returned with the pups, she told me to keep the third eldest one because he had sat and gazed at Sri Aurobindo. "His name will be Beau," Mother told me.

I loved Beau like a brother. (Gauri's recollection)

*

When my mother went cycling, Beau would run alongside; that is how she took him for his exercise. One day, Bala, while driving the Mother's car, ran over Beau. Biren-da picked him up and brought him to our house, Fenêtres. When Mother was informed about the incident, she said: "If he is receptive, he will recover." But he died and I was heart-broken. He had been like my brother, as I was an only child. He would sleep next to me on the mat. To console me, the Mother sent me a photograph of hers, and she said, "It is called 'Certitude de la Victoire'."

It was the Mother who had chosen Beau for me. (Gauri's recollection)

*

Lucky

'Lucky' was my first dog. The Mother had seen him. On the cards that Mother used to give on birthdays, at the back, was his photo. On one of them, she has written: he will be a son well loved.

We brought a dog from Darjeeling (a local *bhutia* dog) — he was such a lovely dog and Mother liked him very much.

My mother had a dream that she saw a white dog and bought it from a *bhutia* for Rs. 20. We were in Darjeeling and we were walking down the road and she was telling us the story of her dream. Just then, we saw a *bhutia* walking towards us, with a white dog; when we asked him, he wanted exactly Rs. 20 for the dog. So we bought him. We were in a 5-star hotel, and dogs were not allowed. So I hid him in my coat.

I took permission from the Mother to bring this fellow to the Tennis Ground. Mother asked me, how big was the dog. I said, "He is very small." Mother said,

“You say that and then I will see a dog like this . . .” (*gesture with hands*) I said, “No, Mother, he really is very small.” She said, “All right, bring him.” So I took him to the Tennis Ground. Pranab asked me to chain him! I went a little early, thinking that the Mother would finish her game and then I would wait for her to come. All the time while playing tennis she went on looking at the dog. After the game, she asked for a few balls, and gave him two tennis balls to play with (or rather, she gave the balls to me, to give to Lucky and she played with the dog). He started barking at the Mother, looking at her. Like a wise fool, I tried to stop him but the Mother said, “Don’t stop him. He is talking to me.” She then put the dog in my hands and caressed him and said, “He is very nice.”

When he died, she wrote to me, “Now he is resting. In his next life he will be born in a human form with parents who will love him and he will be very well looked after.” When he died, I was not well so Mona didn’t tell me about his death, so as not to upset me. She only told me three days later. And gave me the letter from Mother.

Champaklal was very fond of this dog.

There was another dog I had; he had been to Mother’s room. I bought him in Chennai. We brought one from Bombay, she was Lily; then there was Blanche, then Tiku. (Gautam Chawalla’s recollection)

*

Faith

This was Chitra’s dog. It was perhaps the only dog who has received a birthday card from the Mother.

*

Animals’ love for man

What kind of love do animals have for men?

It is almost the same as that of rather unintellectual men for the Divine. It is made of admiration, trust and a sense of security. Admiration: it seems to you something really very beautiful. And it is not reasoned out: an admiration from the heart, so to speak, spontaneous. For instance, dogs have this in a very high degree. And then, trust — naturally this is sometimes mixed with other things: with the feeling of some need and dependence, for it is that person who will give me to eat when I am hungry, give me shelter when it is rough weather, who will look after me. This is not the most beautiful side. And then, unfortunately, it gets mixed up (and I believe —

I consider it entirely man's fault) with a kind of fear; a feeling of dependence and a kind of fear of something which is much stronger, much more conscious, much more . . . which can harm you, and you have no strength to defend yourself. It is a pity, but I believe it is altogether man's fault.

But if men really deserved the love of animals, it would be made of a feeling of wonder and of the sense of security. It is something very fine, this sense of security; something that's able to protect you, to give you all that you need, and near which you can always find shelter.

Animals have an altogether rudimentary mind. They are not tormented by incessant thoughts like human beings. For example, they feel a spontaneous gratitude for an act of kindness towards them, whilst men, ninety-eight times out of a hundred, begin to reason and ask themselves what interest one could have in being good. This is one of the great miseries of mental activity. Animals are free from this and when you are kind to them they are grateful to you, spontaneously. And they have trust. So their love is made of that, and it turns into a very strong attachment, an irresistible need to be near you.

There is something else. If the master is really a good one and the animal faithful, there is an exchange of psychic and vital forces, an exchange which becomes for the animal something wonderful, giving it an intense joy. When they like to be quite close to you in that way, when you hold them, it is that they vibrate internally. The force one gives them — the strength of affection, of tenderness, protection, all that — they feel it, and it creates a deep attachment in them. Even fairly easily, in some of the higher animals like dogs, elephants, and even horses, it creates quite a remarkable need for devotion (which indeed is not thwarted by all the reasonings and arguments of the mind), which is spontaneous and very pure in its essence, something that's very beautiful.

The working of the mind in man in its rudimentary form, its first manifestation has spoilt many things which were much finer before.

Naturally, if man rises to a higher level and makes good use of his intelligence, then things can take on a much greater value. But between the two, there is a passage where man makes the most vulgar and low use of his intelligence; he makes it an instrument for calculation, domination, deception, and there it becomes very ugly. I have known in my life animals I considered much higher than many people, for that sordid calculation, that wish to cheat and profit was precisely not there in them. There are others that catch it — through contact with man they catch it — but there are those who don't have it.

The unselfish movement, uncalculating, is one of the most beautiful forms of psychic consciousness in the world. But the higher one rises in the scale of mental activity, the rarer it becomes. For with intelligence come all the skill and cleverness, and corruption, calculation. For instance, when a rose blossoms it does so spontaneously, for the joy of being beautiful, smelling sweet, expressing all its joy of

living, and it does not calculate, it has nothing to gain out of it: it does so spontaneously, in the joy of being and living. Take a human being, well, apart from a very few exceptions, the moment his mind is active he tries to get some advantage out of his beauty and cleverness; he wants it to bring him something, either men's admiration or even much more sordid gains yet. Consequently, from the psychic point of view, the rose is better than human beings.

Only, if you climb a rung higher and consciously do what the rose does unconsciously, then it is much more beautiful. But it must be the same thing: a spontaneous flowering of beauty, uncalculating, simply for the joy of being. Little children have this at times (at times, not always). Unfortunately, under the influence of their parents and the environment, they learn to be calculating when yet very young.

But this kind of wish to gain by what one has or does is truly one of the ugliest things in the world. And it is one of the most widespread and it has become so widespread, that it is almost spontaneous in man. Nothing can turn its back on the divine love more totally than that, that wish to calculate and profit. (M5: 238-41)

*

Faithfulness

Aren't dogs more faithful than men?

Certainly! Because it is their nature to be faithful, and they have no mental complications. What prevents men from being faithful are their mental complications. Most men are not faithful because they fear being duped. You don't know what it is to be duped? They fear being deceived, being exploited. They fear . . . Behind their faithfulness there is still a very big egoism which is more or less hidden, and there is always that bargaining, more or less conscious, of give-and-take: one gives oneself to someone but whether one tells oneself this or not, one expects something in exchange. You are faithful, but also want others to be faithful to you, that is, look after you, to be quite sweet to you, and, especially not to try to profit by your faithfulness. None of these complications are there in the dog, for its mind is very rudimentary. It does not have this marvellous capacity of reasoning that men have, a capacity which has made them commit so many stupidities.

Only one cannot turn and go back. One cannot become a dog again. So one must become a higher man and have the quality of the dog on a higher plane; that is, instead of its being a half-conscious fidelity, and in any case very instinctive, a sort of need that ties it down, it must be a willed, conscious fidelity, and especially above all egoism. There is a point where all the virtues are united: it is a point that goes beyond the ego. If we take this faithfulness, if we take devotion, take love, the meaning of service, all these things, when they are above the egoistic level, they meet, in the

sense that they give themselves and do not expect anything in exchange. . . .

(M6: 182-83)

*

Little Boy

One day I will find his [*Théon's*] photo and show it to you; he is there with a big dog he called 'Little Boy', a dog that could exteriorise — he would dream and go out of his body! This dog had a kind of adoration for me. (I should mention that at a fixed time in the afternoons I used to meditate and go into trance. When it was finished I would go out walking with *Théon*, and the dog always came with us, usually coming to fetch me in my room.) One day I was lying on a divan in trance when I felt his cold muzzle nudging my hand to wake me. I opened my eyes . . . no dog. Yet I had positively, clearly felt his cold muzzle. So I got ready, went downstairs, and who did I find fast asleep on the landing but Little Boy — he was in trance as well! He had come to wake me in his sleep. When I reached the landing he woke up, shook himself and trotted off.

(Mother's conversation with a disciple on 4 February, 1961)

*

Seeing the Lord in a puppy

. . . Personally, I could do pranam before a puppy dog, *mon petit*, in all sincerity — seeing the Lord in it. You have only to think of the Lord, no?

(Mother's conversation with a disciple on 8 September, 1962)

*

Admiration, trust, security

It is man's mental consciousness that has filled all Nature with the idea of sin and all the misery which it brings! Animals are not unhappy in the way we are, not at all, not at all, except, as Sri Aurobindo says, those that have been corrupted. The corrupted ones are those that live with men. Dogs have the sense of sin and guilt. It is because their whole aspiration is to become like man — man is god — and then, dissimulation, falsehood. Dogs do lie. Men admire that; they say, "Oh! How intelligent they are!"

They have lost their divinity.

The human species, in the spiral ascent, is truly at a point which is not pretty.

(M15: 347-48)

*

Aspiration

I knew animals which aspired to become human beings, but they were living with human beings. Cats and dogs, for example, which lived in a close intimacy with human beings, truly had an aspiration. I had a cat which was very, very unhappy for being a cat, it wanted to be a man. It had an untimely death. It used to meditate, it certainly did a kind of sadhana of its own, and when it left, even a portion of its vital being reincarnated in a human being. The little psychic element that was at the centre of the being went directly into a man, but even what was conscious in the vital of the cat went into a human being. But these are rather exceptional cases.

(M5: 227-28)

*

Cat and Dog

The cat is more vital than psychic. The dog is psychic (psychic in the physical) *i.e.* the development of the dog is one way, of the cat another way. — Sri Aurobindo

(From Chidanandam's notebooks at the Archives)

The two worlds

Between the beings of the supramental world and men, almost the same separation exists as between men and animals. Some time ago I had the experience of identification with animal life, and it is a fact that animals do not understand us; their consciousness is so constructed that we elude them almost entirely. And yet I have known pet animals — cats and dogs, but especially cats — that used to make an almost yogic effort of consciousness to reach us. But usually, when they see us as we live and act, they do not understand, they do not *see* us as we are and they suffer because of us. We are a constant enigma to them. Only a very tiny part of their consciousness has a link with us. And it is the same thing for us when we try to look at the supramental world. Only when the link of consciousness is established shall we see it — and even then only the part of our being which has undergone transformation in this way will be able to see it as it is — otherwise the two worlds would remain apart like the animal and human worlds. (M9: 271)

*

Worse than a beast

The boy X who was working in the Building Department was dismissed some two days back, not for the crime of theft but for some rash dragging of a cart and thus causing some slight hurt to a dog. So may I keep him as a substitute for his brother?

Certainly not.

*

If you are pleased to permit, as it is only for a day, I have no objection. He works very satisfactorily. Awaiting orders.

No, he is very rude and a boy who can almost willingly hurt a dog is likely to do the same with the cow and calf.

This boy has been dismissed by *my orders* and will not be given work in the Ashram.

A man who is cruel with beasts is worse than a beast. (M16: 110)

*

The Divine is everywhere, in everything

But isn't a dog more conscious than a tiger, more evolved, and higher in the spiral, that is to say, nearer to the Divine?

To be conscious is not the point. Man is more evolved than the tiger, there is not the shadow of a doubt, but the tiger is more divine than man. You must not confuse things: the two things are quite different.

You see, the Divine is everywhere, in everything. You should never forget that, not for a second should you forget it. He is everywhere, in everything; and unconsciously, but spontaneously and therefore sincerely, everything that is below the mental manifestation is divine without mixture, that is to say, spontaneously, by its very nature. It is man with his mind who has introduced the idea of guilt. Naturally he is much more conscious! That is not to be disputed, it is well understood, because what we call consciousness (what "we" call, that is to say, what man calls consciousness) is the power to objectify and mentalise things. It is not the true consciousness, but it is what men call consciousness. So in this human way, it is understood that man is much more conscious than the animal. But with man comes sin and perversion, which do not exist outside the state that we call "conscious", but which is not truly

conscious, which simply consists in mentalising things, in having the capacity to objectify them.

It is a curve of ascent, but that curve moves away from the Divine, and one must rise much higher to find again, naturally, a higher Divine, for it is a conscious Divine, whereas the others are divine without being conscious, spontaneously and instinctively. And our whole moral notion of good and bad, we have thrown all that upon the creation with our deformed and perverted consciousness. It is we who have invented it.

We are the deforming intermediary between the purity of the animal and the divine purity of the gods. (M15: 348-49)

*

A change of consciousness

For the animality to disappear completely, the form must be totally transformed. As long as the body-functioning, for instance, remains what it is, well, we shall participate more than enough in the animality, you see; and this indeed can only disappear when, ah well, we no longer have a heart, lungs, a stomach, and all the rest. We say that this will come much later.

In fact, the only thing which is very important for the moment is the change of consciousness. And don't think that this is so easy. If you observe yourself attentively, you will perceive that you think, feel, experience and construct like a human animal, that is, like an infrarational being who is three-fourths subconscious, through almost the whole of your day. It is possible that at certain moments you escape from this; but you still need an effort to escape from it. It may happen spontaneously, as by grace, at certain moments; but most of the time you have to make an effort to be able to catch something which is not purely this. At any time whatever of your day, if you take just a small step backwards and observe yourself, you will catch yourself, you will see that. When is it that . . . suddenly, you see, if I said all of a sudden, here, now, "Look at yourself!" like that, without warning you beforehand, what was it, there in the field of your consciousness? If you catch that, you will see; certainly at least ninety-nine times out of a hundred, it is the animal that's there; an animal which is a little improved, you know, not altogether a dog, not altogether a monkey, but still not very far from that.

There are many things which men have transformed into marvellous virtues, which I have found in animals as spontaneous movements — and they at least have the advantage of not being proud and not having any vanity. They did things spontaneously which, surely, were very remarkable — very remarkable in devotion, abnegation, foresight, educative sense. They did them spontaneously and without writing books on them and boasting about them as something marvellous. Therefore

much is needed to come out of the animal, much more than one would think.

(M7: 325-26)

*

Nature is not consciously intelligent? . . .

There is an intelligence which acts in her and through her, in her action, but she is not conscious of this intelligence. You can understand this with animals. Take ants, for example. They do exactly what they have to do; all their work and organisation is something which really looks perfect. But they are not conscious of the intelligence which organises them. They are moved mechanically by an intelligence of which they are not aware. And even if you take the most developed animals, like the cat and dog for instance, they know exactly what they have to do: a cat bringing up its little ones brings them up just as well as a woman hers — sometimes better than a woman but it is impelled by an intelligence which moves it automatically. It is not conscious of the intelligence which makes it do things. It is not aware of it, it can't change anything at all in the movement by its own will. Something makes it act mechanically but over that it has no control.

If a human being intervenes and trains a cat, he can make it change its behaviour; but it is the consciousness of the human being which acts upon it, not its own consciousness. It is not conscious of the intelligence which makes it act.

And this kind of self-awareness, this possibility of watching oneself acting, of understanding why one does things, how one does them and, therefore, of having a control and changing the action — that belongs to the mind and in his own right to man. This is the essential difference between a man and an animal — that a man is conscious of himself, that he can become aware of the force which makes him act, and not only become aware of it but control it.

But all those who feel themselves driven by a force and say, “I was forced to do it”, without the participation of their will, show that they are still deeply rooted in animality, that is to say, in the inconscient. One begins to become a conscious human being only when one knows why one does things and when one is capable of changing one's action by a determined will, when one has a control. Before having any control, one is still more or less an animal with a small embryo of consciousness which is just beginning, a little flame flickering and trying to burn, and likely to be blown out by the slightest passing breeze. (M8: 60-61)

*

Perfect in comparison with what is

Mother, because of our imperfection we have to do something. But when the supramental race descends, it will be perfect; then what will be there to do?

Perfect! Perfect in comparison with us but not in comparison with what will come later. The world is in perpetual movement and perpetual progression, and it is very obvious that each time a new consciousness has manifested upon earth, one has felt that it would be . . . perhaps not a definitive realisation but in any case a considerable progress. And it is also very obvious that for . . . say, the consciousness of an elephant or a dog . . . human capacities are something absolutely marvellous. To the extent they are able to understand it, imagine it, sense it — dogs sense them — human faculties are for them something divine. (M7: 321)

*

Animals and the senses

Animals have much more perfect senses than those of men. I challenge you to track a man as a dog does, for instance!

This means that in the curve or rather the spiral of evolution, animals (and more so those we call “higher” animals, because they resemble us more closely) are governed by the spirit of the species which is a highly conscious consciousness. Bees, ants, obey this spirit of the species which is of quite a special quality. And what is called “instinct” in animals is simply obedience to the spirit of the species which always knows what ought and ought not to be done. There are so many examples, you know. You put a cow in a meadow; it roams around, sniffs, and suddenly puts out its tongue and snatches a tuft of grass. Then it wanders about again, sniffs and gets another tuft of grass, and so it goes on. Has anyone ever known a cow under these conditions to eat poisonous grass? But shut this poor animal up in a cow-shed, gather and put some grass before it, and the poor creature which has lost its instinct because it now obeys man (excuse me), eats the poisonous grass along with the rest of it. We have already had three such cases here, three cows which died from having eaten poisonous grass. And these unfortunate animals, like all animals, have a kind of respect (which I could call unjustifiable) for the superiority of man — if he puts poisonous grass before the cow and tells it to eat, it eats it! But left to itself, that is, without anything interfering between it and the spirit of the species, it would never do so. All animals which live close to man lose their instinct because they have a kind of admiration full of devotion for this being who can give them shelter and food without the least difficulty — and a little fear too, for they know that if they don’t do what man wants they will be beaten!

It is quite strange, they lose their ability. Dogs, for instance the sheep-dog which lives far away from men with the flocks and has a very independent nature (it comes home from time to time and knows its master well, but often does not see him), if it is bitten by a snake, it will remain in a corner, lick itself and do all that is necessary till it gets cured. The same dog, if it stays with you and is bitten by a snake, dies quietly like man. (M4: 236-37)

*

Vibration of fear

Of course, those animals — all animals — feel it if one is afraid, even if one doesn't show it. They feel it extraordinarily, with an instinct which human beings don't have. They feel that you are afraid, your body produces a vibration which arouses an extremely unpleasant sensation in them. If they are strong animals this makes them furious; if they are weak animals, this gives them a panic. But if you have no fear at all, you see, if you go with an absolute trustfulness, a great trust, if you go in a friendly way to them, you will see that they have no fear; they are not afraid, they do not fear you and don't detest you; also, they are very trusting.

It is not to encourage you to enter the cages of all the lions you go to see, but still it is like that. When you meet a barking dog, if you are afraid, it will bite you, if you aren't, it will go away. But you must really not be afraid, not only appear unafraid, because it is not the appearance but the vibration that counts. (M7: 28-29)

*

SRI AUROBINDO: Man has accused the animal for nothing. In the infrarational are also included the Rakshasa and the Asura. Man has always been speaking of the animal, the Pashu in a superior way. But take the dog's faithfulness and affection. These qualities are universal among dogs. But even when they are found among men, you can't say the same.

(Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, pp. 153-54)

*

SRI AUROBINDO: People say animals can't think or reason. It is not at all true. Their intelligence has evolved to act only within the narrow limits of life, according to their own needs. But they have latent faculties which have not been developed.

Cats have a language of their own. They utter different kinds of mews for different purposes. For instance, when the mother cat mews in a particular tone and rhythm after leaving her kittens behind a box, the little ones understand that they

are not to move from that place until she comes back and repeats that mew. It is through the tone and the rhythm that cats express themselves.

Even donkeys, which are supposed to be very stupid, are sometimes unusually clever. Once some horses and donkeys were confined together, with the gate shut, to see if they could get out. While the horses were helpless, a donkey got out by lifting the latch and opening the gate.

Why go so far? Even in our Ashram the Mother's cat Chikoo was extraordinarily clever. One day she was confined in a room. It was discovered that she was trying to open the window in exactly the same way as the Mother used to do. Evidently Chikoo had watched the Mother carefully.

We had a dog, a bitch left by somebody in the first house we rented. One day she was locked out. Finding it impossible to push the door open, she just sat in front of it and began to think, "How to get in?" The way she sat and the attitude of her head and eyes showed clearly that she was thinking. Then suddenly she got up, as saying to herself, "Ah, there is the bathroom door. Let me try it." And she went in that direction. The door was open and she got in.

It is the Europeans who make a big difference between man and animal. The only difference is that animals can't form concepts and can't read or write or philosophise.

NIRODBARAN: They can't do Yoga, either.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know about that. Once, while the Mother and I were meditating, a cat happened to be present. We found that she was behaving oddly. She passed into a trance and was almost on the point of leaving her body and dying, when suddenly she recovered. Evidently she was trying to receive something.

(Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, pp. 222-23)

*

In the days before the Mother came, we used to have a pet dog. Its story was much the same. All of a sudden one day there appeared from nowhere in our earliest residence a common street dog — it was a bitch; she too came and just stayed on. Sri Aurobindo gave her the name of Yogini. He used to tell a story about her intelligence. It was already nightfall and we did not know that she had not yet come in. She came to the front door, pushed against it and did some barking, but we heard nothing as we were in the kitchen next to the back-yard. Suddenly she recalled that there was a door at the back through which she might perhaps gain entrance or at least draw our attention. She now ran around the three corners of the house and appeared at the back door. From there she could make herself heard and was admitted. She too bore some puppies and two of them became particular favourites with Sri Aurobindo.

(Nolini Kanta Gupta and K. Amrita, *Reminiscences*, Sep. 1969, pp. 78-79)

*

T related to me another incident of her life in South Africa. They had gone to see a neighbour who had a few hounds which never allowed anyone to enter the compound. The others waited outside, but T entered the compound; the hounds surrounded her, affectionately dragged her sari and showed her the way to the house. The owner was surprised as it was the first time the ferocity of his hounds was curbed and even turned into affection. Did they recognise something fine in the person?

It was the psychic contact. Animals (especially dogs) recognise the psychic immediately. (Bulletin, April 2014)

*

Psychic part

In the evolution, the animal is at a lower stage than man. How then do we sometimes find dogs and horses so faithful and skilful that even for a human being it would be difficult to act like them?

Faithful yes but how skilful, except in the special connection of dogs and horses? These are faithful because of the psychic part in them, but in mind they are inferior. (Nagin Doshi, *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, p. 76)

*

The animal mind

SRI AUROBINDO: I saw the other day the report of a dog which made friends with a horse. The groom used to steal from the ration of the horse. Either the horse complained to the dog, or the dog itself came to know about it, but the dog knew about the theft. One day, when the man was actually stealing, it went to the master and brought him there!

Animals seem to act upon memory, association, invention and adaptation of means to an end. They think with the vital mind while man thinks with the reason. (A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 2007, p. 409)

*

Awaking to the necessity of the next step

Sri Aurobindo says here that each species is satisfied with the particular characteristics of that species, the principles of its structure, and does not try to transform or change

itself into a new species. The dog remains satisfied with being a dog, the horse with being a horse and never tries, for instance, to become an elephant! Starting from this Sri Aurobindo asks the question: Will man remain satisfied with being man or will he awaken to the necessity of being something other than man, that is, a superman? . . .

I have seen pet animals which truly had a sort of inner *need* to become something other than what they were. I knew dogs which were like that, cats, horses and even birds like that. The outer form was inevitably what it was, but there was something living and perceptible in the animal which was making an obvious effort to achieve another expression, another form. And every man who has gone beyond the stage of the animal man and become the human man truly has what I might call an “incorrigible” need to be something other than this thoroughly unsatisfactory semi-animal — unsatisfactory in its expression, its means of expression and its means of life. So the problem is this: Will this imperious need be effective enough in its aspiration for the form itself, the species, to develop and transform itself, or will it be only this thing, this imperishable consciousness in the being, which will leave this form when it perishes to enter into a higher form which, besides, as far as we can see now, does not yet exist?

And the problem before us is: How will this higher form be created? If we consider the problem, it becomes very interesting. Is it by some process which we have to imagine, that this form will gradually transform itself in order to create a new one, or is it by some other means, a means still unknown to us, that this new form will appear in the world? (M9: 233-34)

*

Behind all, there is the supreme Light

Someone has said that if there were no ticks to bite the dogs, they would always be in a state of inertia, stretched out on the ground, motionless. Now, these trouble them, they begin to scratch, they move, and this awakens them a little from their *tamas*. For men, it is the same thing. When they have a small desire which they cannot satisfy, they are a little shaken up: they come out of their inertia and try to find a solution to their problem. It is like that. There is no absolute unconsciousness — there is no absolute ignorance, no absolute night. Behind all unconsciousness, behind all ignorance, behind the night, there is always the supreme Light which is everywhere. The least little thing suffices for a beginning of contact to be established. (M4: 347-48)

*

Super sense

. . . Or take the dog which, if given something to smell, finds the trail of that scent again, can follow it with its nose. Well, it is one kind of super-sense, that is, a sense that has reached such a degree of intensity and refinement that it can indeed feel what the ordinary sense does not feel . . . (M6: 11)

*

A warning

. . . I have been told that in Aspiration there is a big number of cats and dogs. It is true? You know, I have nothing against cats and dogs. I have kept some also at one time. But the climate is not good; it is almost impossible to avoid . . . to avoid rabies. And then, you understand, it becomes dangerous and you will have to kill them, which is not a pleasant business. It would be better to diminish the number as much as possible. I have been obliged to ask not to keep dogs; some keep them all the same. But you can't have a pleasant contact with them. They carry the illness. There are some diseases, rather serious, and dogs, cats, carry them. I don't want to give nasty descriptions, but . . . It is not safe and it cannot be peaceful. Do you know the illness they carry? There are two: one is plague, the other is leprosy.

Are they personal animals or belonging to the community?

A: Some belong to the community, but some are personally owned.

They live in their huts?

A: Some of them. (Murmurs of disagreement; A corrects himself) No, they don't live in the huts any more.

They are not allowed to come in?

A: No, not in the huts, but even so they are in the camp. They are often in the cafeteria where we have our meals.

And then, well, they breed. (*Laughter*) There is no end to it. And breeding — what can we do? Drown them all? It is not pleasant. Naturally, you could easily tell me: if we chase them away from here they will go somewhere else. But, anyway, what I would like is that this should not be encouraged. You know, you will have more cats and dogs than human beings. That's how it is. Then — there is one interesting thing you could do. Far, far away, in some deserted area where no one lives, you

could put them all together, in a protected area, so that they could not get out. Then they will find something to eat. Say, a spot of virgin forest — they still exist in India. With cats it is very easy. When a cat has kittens, if you carry the babies off somewhere and put them there, the mother never comes back, she stays with the little ones. Something should be found, a remote spot. They still exist in India. But not on Auroville land.

In fact, all I am asking you to do is not to allow the number to increase, in any case. One day you will come to me all in tears, saying: life has become unbearable! (*Laughter*) So, I am warning you. (M13: 327-28)

*

To realise the Divine, not become animals

We are here to give up all desires and turn towards the Divine and to become conscious of the Divine. The Divine we seek is not remote and inaccessible. He is at the core of His own creation and what He wants us to do is to find Him, and by our personal transformation to become capable of knowing Him, of uniting with Him and, in the end, of manifesting Him consciously. This is what we should consecrate ourselves to, this is our true reason for existence. And our first step towards this sublime realisation is the manifestation of the supramental Consciousness.

To realise and manifest the Divine in our own lives is the way, not to become animals and live like cats and dogs.

Just the opposite! . . . Well, it is time for all that to come to an end. (M13: 347)

[Our thanks to Vilas Patel, Gauri Pinto for the stories, Gautam Malaker for the quotes and to the Archives for the pictures that follow. — Eds.]



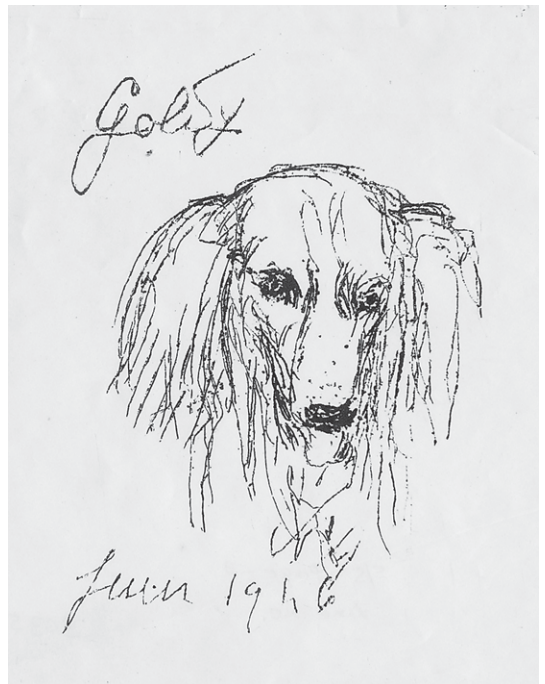
The Mother with 2 dogs, Goro and Puchi (Japan, 1918)



Théon and his dog, Little Boy

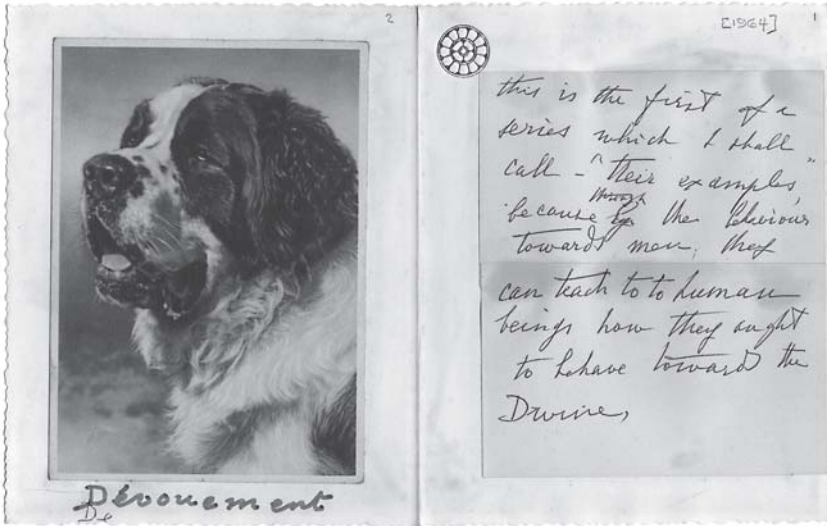


Goldy — photo taken in November 1946



Two sketches of Goldy by the Mother

On the 1st of the month — from August 1964 to January 1965 — Sehra received from the Mother a card with a picture of a dog. The Mother indicated the quality represented by the picture and added a note for Sehra.



1.8.64:

Dévouement [Devotion]

This is the first of a series which I shall call — “Their examples” because through the behaviour towards men, they can teach to human beings how they ought to behave towards the Divine.

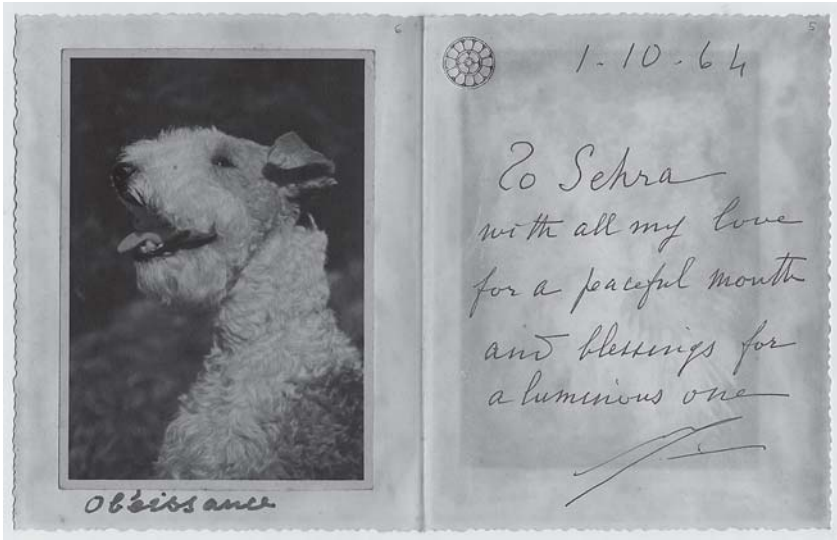


1.9.64:

Fidélité [Faithfulness]

Here is no. 2. fine?...

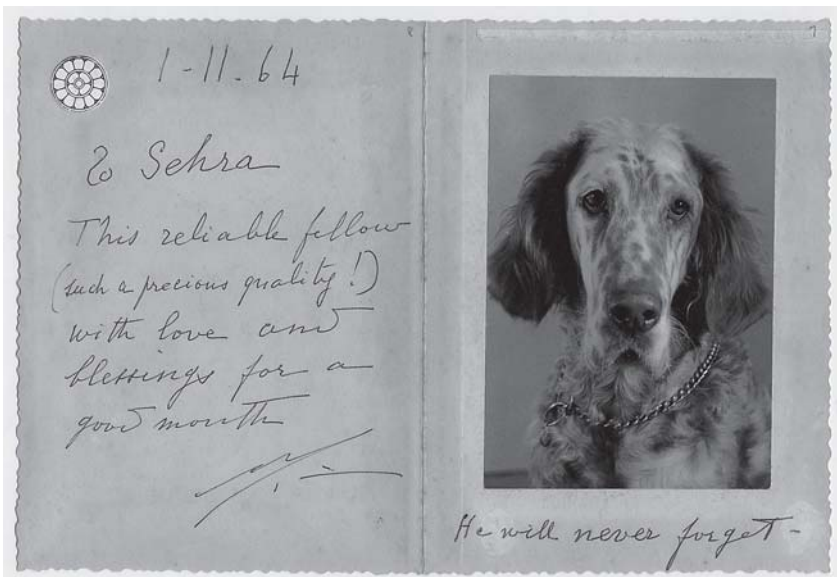
To Sehra with love and blessings for the month



1.10.64

Obéissance [Obedience]

To Sehra with all my love for a peaceful month and blessings for a luminous one



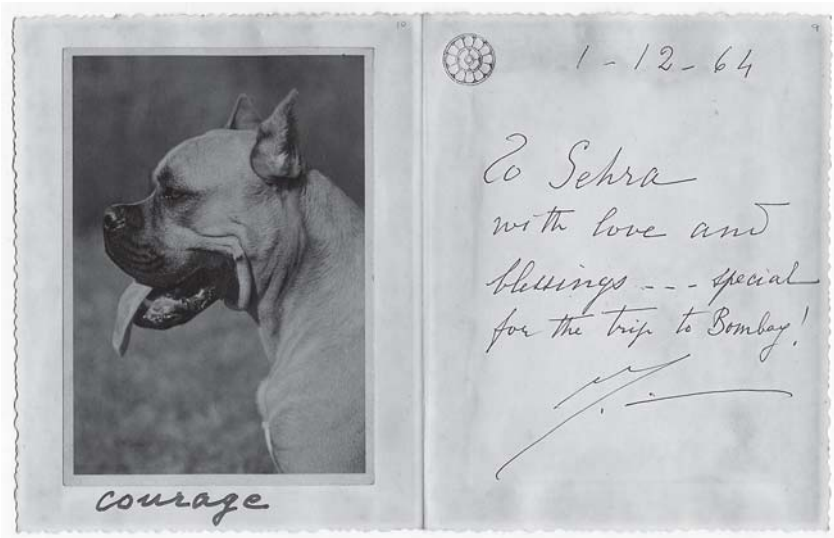
1.11.64

He will never forget

To Sehra

This reliable fellow (such a precious quality!)

With love and blessings for a good month



1.12.64

Courage

To Sehra with love and blessings . . . special for the trip to Bombay!



1.1.65

Adoration

bonne année!

Here is the climax . . .

To Sehra with love and blessings for a luminous year

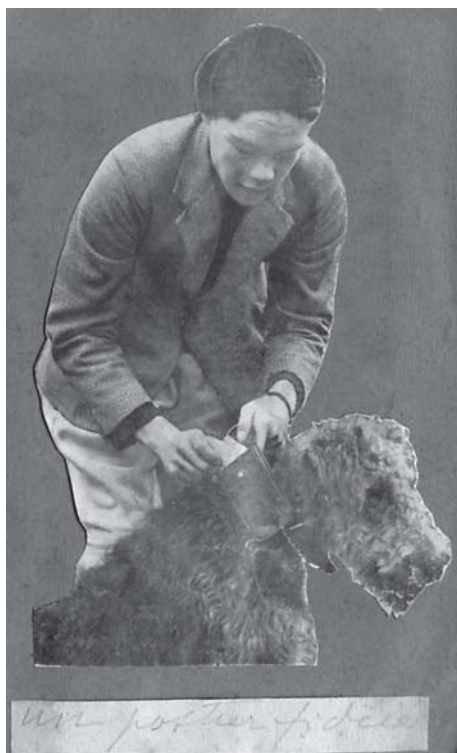


bons amis

[Good friends]

un postier fidèle

[a faithful postman]



A scrapbook was prepared to teach French to Dayakar when he was little. The Mother captioned the pictures. Here are 2 of them.



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