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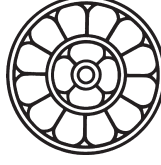
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXXII

No. 6

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## LIFE-UNITY

I housed within my heart the life of things,  
All hearts athrob in the world I felt as mine;  
I shared the joy that in creation sings  
And drank its sorrow like a poignant wine.

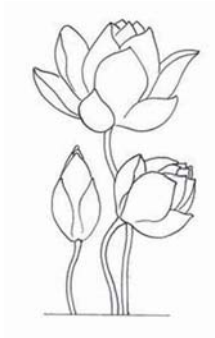
I have felt the anger in another's breast,  
All passions poured through my world-self their waves;  
One love I shared in a million bosoms expressed.  
I am the beast man slays, the beast he saves.

I spread life's burning wings of rapture and pain;  
Black fire and gold fire strove towards one bliss:  
I rose by them towards a supernal plane  
Of power and love and deathless ecstasies.

A deep spiritual calm no touch can sway  
Upholds the mystery of this Passion-play.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 605)*



# NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL MAN

## NATURE

If this is the nature of the operation to be effected, not a perfection of the present human mould but a breaking of it to proceed to a higher type, what then is the power & process that works it out? What is this Nature of which we speak so fluently?<sup>1</sup> We habitually talk of it as if it were something mighty & conscious that lives and plans; we credit it with an aim, with wisdom to pursue that aim and with power to effect what it pursues. Are we justified in our language by the actualities of the universe or is this merely our inveterate habit of applying human figures to non-human things and the workings of intelligence to non-intelligent processes which come right because they must and not because they will and produce this magnificent ordered universe by some dumb blind and brute necessity inconceivable in its origin & nature to intelligent beings? If so, this blind brute force has produced something higher than itself, something which did not exist preconceived in its bosom or in any way belong to it. We cannot understand what being & Nature are, not because we are as yet too small and limited, but because we are too much above being & Nature. Our intelligence is a luminous freak in a darkness from which it was impossibly produced, since nothing in that darkness justified itself as a cause of its creation. Unless mind was inherent in brute matter, — & in that case matter is only apparently brute, — it was impossible for matter to produce mind. But since this leads us to an impossibility, it cannot be the truth. We must suppose then, if matter is brute, that mind is also brute. Intelligence is an illusion; there is nothing but a shock of material impacts creating vibrations & reactions of matter which translate themselves into the phenomena of intelligence. Knowledge is only a relation of matter with matter, and is intrinsically neither different nor superior to the hurtling of atoms against each other or the physical collision of two bulls in a meadow. The material agents involved & phenomenon produced are different & therefore we do not call the recoil of one horned forehead from another an act of knowledge or intelligence, but the thing that has happened is intrinsically the same. Intelligence is itself inert & mechanical & merely the physiological result of a physiological movement & has nothing in it psychical or mental in the time-honoured sense of the

1. *The following sentence was written at the beginning of this essay during revision. It was not worked into the text, and so is given here as a footnote:*

Nature is Force of Consciousness in infinite Being. The opinion that sees a mechanical world in which consciousness is only an exceptional figure of things, is a hasty conclusion drawn from imperfect data.

words soul and mind. This is the view of modern scientific rationalism, — put indeed in other language than the scientist's, put so as to bring out its logical consequences & implications, but still effectively the modern account of the universe.

In that account the nature of a thing consists of its composition, the properties contained in that composition and the laws of working determined by those properties; as for [example] iron is composed of certain elementary substances, possesses as a consequence of its composition certain properties, such as hardness etc. and under given circumstances will act in a given manner as the result of its properties. Applying this analysis on a larger scale we see the universe as the composition of certain brute forces working in certain material substances, possessed in itself and in those substances of certain primary & secondary, general & particular properties and working as a result by certain invariable tendencies & fixed processes which we call by a human figure Nature's Laws. This is Nature. When searchingly analysed she is found to be a play of two entities, Force & Matter; but these two, if the unitarian view of the universe is correct, will some day be proved to be only one entity, either only Matter or only Force.

Even if we accept this modern view of the universe, which, it is not at all dangerous to prophesy, will have disappeared in the course of a century into a larger synthesis, there is still something to be said about the presence or absence of intelligence in Nature. In what after all does intelligence consist, what are its composition, properties, laws? What in its circumstances is human intelligence, the only kind of intelligence which we are in a position to study from within & therefore understand? It is marked by three qualities or processes, the power & process of adaptation towards an end, the power & process of discrimination between the impacts on its senses & the power & process of mentally conscious comprehension. Human intelligence is, to put it briefly, teleological, discriminative and mentally conscious. About other than human beings, about animals, trees, metals, forces, we can say nothing from inside, we can only infer the absence or presence of these elements of consciousness from the evidence collected by an external observation. We cannot positively say, having no internal evidence, that the tree is not a mind imprisoned in matter and unable to express itself in the media it has at its disposal; we cannot say that it does not suffer the reactions of pleasure and pain; but from the external evidence we infer to the contrary. Our negative conclusion is probable, it is not certain. It may be itself negated in the future march of knowledge. But still, taking the evidence as it stands, what are the facts we actually arrive at in this comparison of intelligent & non-intelligent Nature?

First, Nature possesses in a far higher degree than man the teleological faculty & process. To place an aim before one, to combine, adapt, modify, unify, vary means & processes in order to attain that end, to struggle against and overcome difficulties, to devise means to circumvent difficulties when they cannot be overcome, this is one of the noblest & divinest parts of human intelligence. But its action in

man is only a speciality of its universal action in Nature. She works it out in man partly through the reason, in animals with very little & rudimentary reason, mainly through instinct, memory, impulse & sensation, in plants & other objects with very little & rudimentary reason, mainly through impulse & mechanical or, as we call it, involuntary action. But throughout there is the end & the adaptation to the end, & throughout the same basic means are used; for in man also it is only for a selection of his ends & processes that the reason is used; for the greater part she uses the animal means, memory, impulse, sensation, instinct, — instincts differently directed, less decisive & more general than the animal instincts but still in the end & for their purpose as sure; & for yet another part she uses the same merely mechanical impulse & involuntary action precisely as in her mistermmed inanimate forms of existence. Let us not say that the prodigality of Nature, her squandering of materials, her frequent failure, her apparent freaks and gambollings are signs of purposelessness and absence of intelligence. Man with his reason is guilty of the same laches and wanderings. But neither Man nor Nature is therefore purposeless or unintelligent. It is Nature who compels Man himself to be other than too strenuously utilitarian, for she knows better than the economist & the utilitarian philosopher. She is an universal intelligence & she has to attend, not only in the sum, but in each detail, to the universal as well as to the particular effect; she has to work out each detail with her eye on the group and not only on the group but the whole kind & not only on the whole kind but the whole world of species. Man, a particular intelligence limited by his reason, is incapable of this largeness; he puts his particular ends in the forefront and neither sees where absorption in them hurts his general well being nor can divine where they clash with the universal purpose. Her failures have an utility — we shall see before long how great an utility; her freaks have a hidden seriousness. And yet above all she remembers that beyond all formal ends, her one great object is the working out of universal delight founded on arrangement as a means, but exceeding its means. Towards that she moves; she takes delight on the way, she takes delight in the work, she takes delight, too, beyond the work.

But in all this we anticipate, we speak as if Nature were self-conscious; what we have arrived at is that Nature is teleological, more widely than man, more perfectly than man, & man himself is only teleological because of that in Nature & by the same elementary means & processes as the animal & the plant, though with additions of fresh means peculiar to mind. This, it may be said, does not constitute Intelligence, — for intelligence is not only teleological, but discriminative & mentally conscious. Mechanical discrimination, Nature certainly possesses in the highest degree; without it her teleological processes would be impossible. The tendril growing straight through the air comes into contact with a rope, a stick, the stalk of a plant; immediately it seizes it as with a finger, changes its straight growth for a curled & compressive movement, & winds itself round & round the support. What induces the change? what makes it discriminate the presence of a support & the possibility of this new



movement? It is the instinct of the tendril and differs in no way, intrinsically, from the instinct of the newborn pup seizing at once on its mother's teats or the instinct of a man in his more mechanical needs & actions. We see the moon-lotus open its petals to the moon, close them to the touch of the day. In what does this discriminative movement differ from the motion of the hand leaping back from the touch of a flame, or from the recoiling movement of disgust & displeasure in the nerves from an abhorrent sight or from the recoiling movement of denial & uncongeniality in the mind from a distasteful idea or opinion? Intrinsically, there seems to be no difference; but there is a difference in circumstance. One is not attended with mental self-consciousness, the others are attended with this supremely important element. We think falsely that there is no will in the action of the tendril and the lotus, and no discrimination. There is a will, but not mentalised will; there is discrimination but not mentalised discrimination. It is mechanical, we say, — but do we understand what we mean when we say it, — & we give other names, calling will force, discrimination a natural reaction or an organic tendency. These names are only various masks concealing an intrinsic identity.

Even if we could go no farther, we should have gained an enormous step; for we have already the conception of the thing we call Nature as possessing, containing or identical with a great Force of Will placing before itself a vast end & a million complexly related incidental ends, working them out by contrivance, adaptation, arrangement, device, using an unfailing discrimination & vastly fulfilling its complex work. Of this great Force human intelligence would only be a limited and inferior movement, guided and used by it, serving its ends even when it seems to combat its ends. We may deny Intelligence to such a Power, because it does not give signs of mental consciousness & does not in every part of its works use a human or mental intelligence; but our objection is only a metaphysical distinction. Practically, looking out on life & not in upon abstract thought, we can, if we admit this conception, rely on it that the workings of this unintelligent discrimination will be the same as if they were the workings of a universal Intelligence & the aim & means of the mechanical will the aims & means which would be chosen by an Almighty Wisdom. But if we arrive at this certainty, does not Reason itself demand of us that we should admit in Nature or behind it a universal Intelligence and an Almighty Wisdom? If the results are such as these powers would create, must we not admit the presence of these powers as the cause? Which is the truer Rationalism, to admit that the works of Intelligence are produced by Intelligence or to assert that they are produced by a blind Machine unconsciously working out perfection? to admit that the emergence of overt intelligence in humanity is due to the specialised function of a secret intelligence in the universe or to assert that it is the product of a Force to which the very principle of Intelligence is absent? To justify the paradox by saying that things are worked out in a particular way because it is their nature to be worked out in that way, is to play the fool with reason; for it does not carry us an inch beyond the mere

fact that they are so worked out, one knows not why.

The true reason for the modern reluctance to admit that Nature has intelligence & wisdom or is intelligence & wisdom, is the constant association in the human mind of these things with mentally self-conscious personality. Intelligence, we think, presupposes someone who is intelligent, an ego who possesses & uses this intelligence. An examination of human consciousness shows that this association is an error. Intelligence possesses us, not we intelligence; intelligence uses us, not we intelligence. The mental ego in man is a creation & instrument of intelligence and intelligence itself is a force of Nature manifesting itself in a rudimentary or advanced state in all animal life. This objection, therefore, vanishes. Not only so, but Science herself by putting the ego in its right place as a product of mind has shown that Intelligence is not a human possession but a force of Nature & therefore an attribute of Nature, a manifestation of the universal Force.

The question remains, is it a fundamental & omnipresent attribute or only a development manifested in a select minority of her works? Here again, the difficulty is that we associate intelligence with an organised mental consciousness. But let us look at & interrogate the facts which Science has brought into our ken. We will glance at only one of them, the fly catching plant of America. Here is a vegetable organism which has hunger, — shall we say, an unconscious hunger, which needs animal food, which sets a trap for it, as the spider sets it, which feels the moment the victim touches the trap, which immediately closes & seizes the prey, eats & digests it & lies in wait for more. These motions are exactly the motions of the spider's mental intelligence altered & conditioned only by the comparative immobility of the plant & confined only, so far as we can observe, to the management of this supreme vital need & its satisfaction. Why should we attribute mental intelligence to the spider & none to the plant? Granted that it is rudimentary, organised only for special purposes, still it would seem to be the same natural Force at work in the spider & plant, intelligently devising means to an end & superintending the conduct of the device. If there is no mind in the plant, then, irresistibly, mental intelligence & mechanical intelligence are one & the same thing in essence, & the tendril embracing its prop, the plant catching its prey & the spider seizing its victim are all forms of one Force of action, which we may decline to call Intelligence if we will, but which is obviously the same thing as Intelligence. The difference is between Intelligence organised as mind, & Intelligence not organised but working with a broad elementary purity more unerring, in a way, than the action of mind. In the light of these facts the conception of Nature as infinite teleological & discriminative Force of Intelligence unorganised & impersonal because superior to organisation & personality becomes the supreme probability, the mechanical theory is only a possibility. In the absence of certainties Reason demands that we should accept the probable in preference to the possible and a harmonious & natural in preference to a violent and paradoxical explanation.

But is it certain that in this Intelligence & its works Mind is a speciality and Personality — as distinguished from mental ego — is entirely absent except as an efflorescence & convenience of Mind? We think so, because we suppose that where there are no animal signs of consciousness, there consciousness cannot and does not exist. This also may be an assumption. We must remember that we know nothing of the tree & the stone except its exterior signs of life or quiescence; our internal knowledge is confined to the phenomena of human psychology. But even in this limited sphere there is much that should make us think very deeply and pause very long before we hasten to rash negative assertions. A man sleeps, dreamlessly, he thinks; but we know that all the time consciousness is at work within him, dreaming, always dreaming; of his body & its surroundings he knows nothing, yet that body is of itself conducting all the necessary operations of life. In the man stunned or in trance there is the same phenomenon of a divided being, consciousness mentally active within apart from the body which is mentally even as the tree & the stone, but vitally active & functioning like the tree. Catalepsy presents a still more curious phenomenon of a body dead & inert like the stone, not even vitally active like the tree, but a mind perfectly aware of itself, its medium & its surroundings, though no longer in active possession of the medium and therefore no longer able to act materially on its surroundings. In face of these examples how can we assert that there is no life in the stone, no mind in stone or tree? The premise of the syllogism by which science denies mind to the tree or life to the stone, viz that where there is no outward sign of life or conscious mentality, life & mentality do not exist, is proven to be false. The possibility, even a certain probability presents itself, — in view of the unity of Nature & the omnipresent intelligence in her works, that the tree & the stone are in their totality just such a divided being, a form not yet penetrated & possessed by conscious mind, a conscious intelligence within dreaming in itself or, like the cataleptic, aware of its surroundings, but because not yet possessed of its medium (the intelligence in the cataleptic is temporarily dispossessed) unable to show any sign of life or of mentality or to act aggressively on its surroundings.

We do not need to stop at this imperfect probability, for the latest researches of psychology make it almost overwhelming in its insistence & next door to the actual proof. We now know that within men there is a dream self or sleep self other than the waking consciousness, active in the stunned, the drugged, the hypnotised, the sleeping, which knows what the waking mind does not know, understands what the waking mind does not understand, remembers accurately what the waking mind has not even taken the trouble to notice. Who is this apparent sleeper in the waking, this waker in the sleeping in comparison with whose comprehensive attentiveness & perfect observation, memory and intelligence our waking consciousness is only a fragmentary & hasty dream? Mark this capital point that this more perfect consciousness within us is not the product of evolution, — nowhere in the evolved & waking world is there such a being who remembers & repeats automatically the

sounds of a foreign language which is unnoticed jabbering to the instructed mind, solves spontaneously problems from which the instructed mind has retired baffled & weary, notices everything, understands everything, recalls everything. Therefore this consciousness within is independent of evolution and, consequently, we may presume, anterior to evolution. Esha supteshu jagarti, says the Katha Upanishad, This is the Waker in all who sleep.

This new psychological research is only in its infancy & cannot tell us what this secret consciousness is, but the knowledge gained by Yoga enables us to assert positively that this is the complete mental being within who guides life & body, manomayah pranashariraneta. He it is who conducts our evolution & awakes mind out of life & is more & more getting possession of this vitalised human body, his medium & instrument, so that it may become what it is not now, a perfect instrument of mentality. In the stone he also is and in the tree, in those sleepers also there is one who wakes; but he has not in those forms got possession yet of the instrument for the purposes of mind; he can only use them for the purposes of vitality in its growth or in its active functioning.

We see, therefore, modern psychology, although it still gets away from the only rational & logical conclusion possible on its data, marching inevitably & under the sheer compulsion of facts to the very truths arrived at thousands of years ago by the ancient Rishis. How did they arrive at them? Not by speculation, as the scholars vainly imagine, but by Yoga. For the great stumbling block that has stood in the way of Science is its inability to get inside its object, the necessity under which it labours of building on inferences from external study, & all its desperate & cruel attempts to make up the deficiency by vivisection or other ruthless experiments cannot remedy the defect. Yoga enables us to get inside the object by dissolving the artificial barriers of the bodily experience & the mental ego-sense in the observer. It takes us out of the little hold of personal experience and casts us into the great universal currents; takes us out of the personal mind sheath & makes [us] one with universal self and universal mind. Therefore were the ancient Rishis able to see what now we are beginning again to glimpse dimly that not only is Nature herself an infinite teleological and discriminative impersonal Force of Intelligence or Consciousness, *prajna prasrita purani*,<sup>2</sup> but that God dwells within & over Nature as infinite universal Personality, universal in the universe, individualised as well as universal in the particular form, or self-consciousness who perceives, enjoys & conducts to their end its vast & complex workings. Not only is there Prakriti; there is also Purusha.

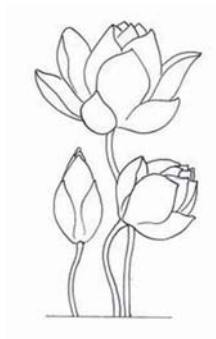
So far, then, we succeed in forming some idea of the great force which is to work out our emergence from our nature to our supernature. It is a force of Conscious

2. Intelligent Consciousness that went forth in the beginning. Swetaswara Upanishad.

Being manifesting itself in forms & movements & working out exactly as it is guided, from stage to stage, the predetermined progress of our becoming & the Will of God in the world.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 122-32)



## MADAN'S SPEECH FROM *LOVE AND DEATH*

. . . But Ruru passioned on, and came with eve  
To secret grass and a green opening moist  
In a cool lustre. Leaned upon a tree  
That bathed in faery air and saw the sky  
Through branches, and a single parrot loud  
Screamed from its top, there stood a golden boy,  
Half-naked, with bright limbs all beautiful —  
Delicate they were, in sweetness absolute:  
For every gleam and every soft strong curve  
Magically compelled the eye, and smote  
The heart to weakness. In his hands he swung  
A bow — not such as human archers use:  
For the string moved and murmured like many bees,  
And nameless fragrance made the casual air  
A peril. He on Ruru that fair face  
Turned, and his steps with lovely gesture chained.  
“Who art thou here, in forests wandering,  
And thy young exquisite face is solemnised  
With pain? Luxuriously the Gods have tortured  
Thy heart to see such dreadful glorious beauty  
Agonise in thy lips and brilliant eyes:  
As tyrants in the fierceness of others’ pangs  
Joy and feel strong, clothing with brilliant fire,  
Tyrants in Titan lands. Needs must her mouth  
Have been pure honey and her bosom a charm,  
Whom thou desirest seeing not the green  
And common lovely sounds hast quite forgot.”  
And Ruru, mastered by the God, replied:  
“I know thee by thy cruel beauty bright,  
Kama, who makest many worlds one fire.  
Ah, wherefore wilt thou ask of her to increase  
The passion and regret? Thou knowest, great love!  
Thy nymph her mother, if thou truly art he  
And not a dream of my disastrous soul.”  
But with the thrilled eternal smile that makes  
The spring, the lover of Rathi golden-limbed  
Replied to Ruru, “Mortal, I am he;

I am that Madan who inform the stars  
With lustre and on life's wide canvas fill  
Pictures of light and shade, of joy and tears,  
Make ordinary moments wonderful  
And common speech a charm: knit life to life  
With interfusions of opposing souls  
And sudden meetings and slow sorceries:  
Wing the boy bridegroom to that panting breast,  
Smite Gods with mortal faces, dreadfully  
Among great beautiful kings and watched by eyes  
That burn, force on the virgin's fainting limbs  
And drive her to the one face never seen,  
The one breast meant eternally for her.  
By me come wedded sweets, by me the wife's  
Busy delight and passionate obedience,  
And loving eager service never sated,  
And happy lips, and worshipping soft eyes:  
And mine the husband's hungry arms and use  
Unwearying of old tender words and ways,  
Joy of her hair, and silent pleasure felt  
Of nearness to one dear familiar shape.  
Nor only these, but many affections bright  
And soft glad things cluster around my name.  
I plant fraternal tender yearnings, make  
The sister's sweet attractiveness and leap  
Of heart towards imperious kindred blood,  
And the young mother's passionate deep look,  
Earth's high similitude of One not earth,  
Teach filial heart-beats strong. These are my gifts  
For which men praise me, these my glories calm:  
But fiercer shafts I can, wild storms blown down  
Shaking fixed minds and melting marble natures,  
Tears and dumb bitterness and pain unpitied,  
Racked thirsting jealousy and kind hearts made stone:  
And in undisciplined huge souls I sow  
Dire vengeance and impossible cruelties,  
Cold lusts that linger and fierce fickleness,  
The loves close kin to hate, brute violence  
And mad insatiable longings pale,  
And passion blind as death and deaf as swords.  
O mortal, all deep-souled desires and all

Yearnings immense are mine, so much I can.”  
 So as he spoke, his face grew wonderful  
 With vast suggestion, his human-seeming limbs  
 Brightened with a soft splendour: luminous hints  
 Of the concealed divinity transpired.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, pp. 123-25)

\* \* \*

*The other day Arjava told me that he considered the long speech of the Love-god Kama or Madan about himself in Love and Death one of the peaks in that poem — he as good as compared it to the descent into Hell. Somehow I couldn't at the time wax extremely enthusiastic about it. Except for the opening eight or ten lines and some three or four in the middle, I couldn't regard it as astonishing poetry — at least not one of the peaks. What is your own private opinion? I need not of course, quote it to anyone.*

My private opinion agrees with Arjava's estimate rather than with yours. These lines may not be astonishing in the sense of an unusual effort of constructive imagination and vision like the descent into Hell; but I do not think I have, elsewhere, surpassed this speech in power of language, passion and truth of feeling and nobility and felicity of rhythm all fused together into a perfect whole. And I think I have succeeded in expressing the truth of the godhead of Kama, the godhead of vital love (I am not using "vital" in the strict Yogic sense; I mean, the love that draws lives passionately together or throws them into or upon each other) with a certain completeness of poetic sight and perfection of poetic power, which puts it on one of the peaks — even if not the highest possible peak — of achievement. That is my private opinion — but, of course, all do not need to see alike in these matters.

10 February 1932

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Letters on Poetry and Art*, CWSA, Vol. 27, p. 225)



# ON HIMSELF AS A WRITER AND ON HIS WRITINGS

## THE TERMINOLOGY OF HIS WRITINGS

### Spiritual and Supramental

*Krishnaprem has always complained (and quite naturally) that it was difficult to get the right meaning of the “technical terms” used by you. . . . Of course a full expounding of the difference between Spiritualisation and Supramentalisation would fatten into a volume, but is it not possible just to indicate why the one is called partial transformation and the other complete transformation? Also in what way the supramental consciousness-force is not identical with the spiritual.*

If spiritual and supramental were the same thing, then all the sages and devotees and Yogis and sadhaks throughout the ages would have been supramental beings and all I have written about the supermind would be so much superfluous rubbish. Anybody who had spiritual experiences would then be a supramental being; the Asram would be chock-full of supramental beings and every other Asram in India also. As for writing about these things, I do not see the utility. I have already two philosophical essays to write and I do not find them writing themselves. If I start explaining the supramental, it would mean a book of 200 pages at least and even then you would be no wiser than before — as everything I wrote would probably be misinterpreted in the terms of mental cognition. The supramental has to be realised, not explained; I therefore prefer to leave it to explain or not explain itself when it is there and not waste my time in explaining mentally the supramental. As to technical terms, I have explained many times over in a way sufficient for those who practise this Yoga. If I have to explain philosophically to others, I must write a few more volumes of the *Arya*. I have no time just now.

I may say that spiritual experiences can fix themselves in the inner consciousness and alter it, transform it, if you like, one can realise the Divine everywhere, the Self, the universal Shakti doing all things, one can feel merged in the Cosmic Self or full of ecstatic bhakti or Ananda, but that need not transform the instrumental being. One can go on thinking with the intellect, willing with the mental will, feeling joy and sorrow on the vital surface, undergoing physical afflictions etc. just as before. The change only will be that the inner self will watch all that without getting disturbed or bewildered, taking it as a part of nature. That is not the transformation I envisage.

12 October 1935

\*

*People seem to misunderstand certain words used by Dr. Sircar in his lectures: “supermind” or “supramental”, “psychic”, “ascent and descent” etc. I think such terms should be defined precisely when used.*

The words supermind and supramental were first used by me, but since then people have taken up and are using the word supramental for anything above mind. Psychic is ordinarily used in the sense of anything relating to the inner movements of the consciousness or anything phenomenal in the psychology; in this case I have made a special use of it, relating it to the Greek word psyche meaning soul; but ordinarily people make no distinction between the soul and the mental-vital consciousness; for them it is all the same. The ascent of the Kundalini — not its descent, so far as I know — is a recognised phenomenon, there is one that corresponds in our Yoga, the feeling of the consciousness ascending from the vital or physical to meet the higher consciousness. This is not necessarily through the chakras but is often felt in the whole body. Similarly the descent of the higher consciousness is not felt necessarily or usually through the chakras but as occupying the whole head, neck, chest, abdomen, body.

18 June 1937

### **Supermind**

Others besides X have assumed that they had the Supermind because something opened in them which was “super” to the ordinary human mind. It is a common mistake. Even the word supermind (which I invented) has been taken up by several people (writers in the *Prabuddha Bharata* and elsewhere) and applied generally to the spiritual consciousness. I see no reason to doubt that X saw things in vision (hundreds of people do) or had experiences.

7 July 1936

### **Supermind and Overmind**

*Is it true that when you write “must”, it is from the Supermind, and when you write “maybe” or “if”, it is from the Overmind?*

No — I can’t say that. The Overmind has its certitudes also, though of a less absolute kind than the supramental.

19 March 1933

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*What is the connection between Overmind and Supermind?*

That would need some chapters to explain. It is not important to know it before you have got some experience of the planes above mind.

23 June 1933

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What you call supramental overmind<sup>1</sup> is still overmind — not a part of the true Supermind. One cannot get into the true Supermind (except in some kind of trance or Samadhi) unless one has first objectivised the overmind Truth in life, speech, action, external knowledge and not only experienced it in meditation and inner experience.

25 February 1934

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*I sent up an article on your Yoga some time ago. You returned it without comment. I do not know whether you have gone through it and approve of its publication or not.*

There are some errors about the Supermind and Overmind, — the two getting rather mixed up as they always do (I had much difficulty in separating them myself); I have tried to clear that up but it is difficult to put in language that the mind can grasp. I hope you will manage to unravel the writing which has become microscopically illegible owing to lack of space for the corrections.

Supermind by the way is synthetic only in the lowest spaces of itself where it has to prepare the principles of Overmind — synthesis is necessary only where analysis has taken place; one has dissected everything, put in pieces (analysis) so one has to piece together. But Supermind is unitarian, has never divided up, so it does not need to add and piece together the parts and fragments. It has always held the conscious Many together as the conscious One.

26 October 1938

1. This expression is a misnomer since overmind cannot be supramental: it can at most receive some light and truth from the higher source.

### Overmind

*In the whole of The Synthesis of Yoga [as originally published in the Arya] there is nowhere any mention of Overmind. If there is anything in that book similar to what you now call Overmind, it would be in the last seven chapters.*

At the time when these chapters were written, the name “overmind” had not been found, so there is no mention of it. What is described in these chapters is the action of the supermind when it descends into the overmind plane and takes up the overmind workings and transforms them.<sup>2</sup> It was intended in later chapters to show how difficult even this was and how many levels there were between human mind and supermind and how even supermind, descending, could get mixed with the lower action and turned into something that was less than the true Truth. But these later chapters were not written.

*The lack of a clear distinction between overmind and supermind is causing me some confusion, as you have said that some of my experiences belonged to the overmind.*

Not exactly that. They result from the overmind pressure on the intervening mental and lower planes, trying to pour into them the overmind movements. The process is very intricate, has many stages, is not of a simple, single, definite character.

13 April 1932

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*Is Overmind the same as what you call “supramental reason” in the Arya?*

No, — although there is a supramentalised overmind which is not very different from it, but overmind has always something relative in its knowledge.

18 March 1933

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*In the Arya there is no mention of the Overmind. You have mentioned the supramental or Divine Reason in the gradations of the Supermind, but from its description it is quite different from the Overmind. Why was the Overmind not mentioned and clearly distinguished from the Supermind in the Arya?*

2. The highest Supermind or Divine Gnosis existent in itself is something that lies beyond still and quite above.

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

20 November 1933

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*Judging from your description of Overmind [in the preceding letter], it would seem that what the Vedantins (especially of the Mayavada School) call kāraṇa is Overmind, īśvara is the cosmic spirit in Overmind, and prājña is individualised being in the Overmind. Supermind would be in turīya and mahākāraṇa, about which they had only a few glimpses. In kāraṇa and īśvara, they must have found something wanting of the Highest Truth.*

That is evidently what they meant. But they had no clear perception of these things because they lived at the highest in the spiritualised higher mind, and for the rest could only receive things from even the Overmind — they could not enter it except by deep samadhi (सुषुप्ति). Prajna and Ishwara were for them Lord of the *susupti*.

20 November 1933

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*Is it possible for another being to take birth in a human being's কারণ দেহ [kāraṇa deha] and see everything from that standpoint?*

The কারণ দেহ may be simply a form answering to the higher consciousness (overmental, intuitive etc.) and I suppose a being could be there working in that consciousness and body. It is not likely to be the supramental being and supramental body — for in that case the whole consciousness, thought, action subjective and objective would

begin to be faultlessly true and irresistibly effective. Nobody has reached that stage yet, even the overmind is, for all but the Mother and myself, either unrealised or only an influence mostly subjective.

24 March 1934

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*In my translation I have been obliged to find or make a word for “Overmind”. I want to know if Hiranyagarbha can be used with a change from its old connotation? It is not prajñā as far as I can make out. Have you any other word more suitable to convey the idea of the Overmind?*

Hiranyagarbha is not the Overmind, but the subtle subjective Consciousness which includes much more than the Overmind. *Prajñā* certainly won't do — *prajñā* belongs to the Mind; you are probably thinking of the *prājñā* प्रज्ञ (cidghana) *caitanya*, but that is a different thing from *prajñā* प्रज्ञा. Perhaps Overmind can be described as आद्य हिरण्यगर्भ चैतन्य (as opposed to the rest of the सूक्ष्म from the intuitive mind to the bottom), but that is a very long phrase. It is really, however, a different classification and other words ought to be found for it. परा मनीषा, आद्या मनीषा, दैवी मनीषा, any of these might do, if no single word can be found or invented.

### Overmind and Intuition

*Is Overmind to the Cosmic Spirit as Intuition is to the individual Self?*

The Cosmic Spirit uses all powers, but Overmind power is the highest it normally uses in the present scheme of things here. In that sense as intuition is normally the highest power used by the individual being in the body, what you say may be considered as correct.

2 June 1933

### Intuition

*In a recent letter to me you wrote: “But the Intuition sees in flashes and combines through a constant play of light — through revelations, inspirations, intuitions, swift discriminations.” Since all these terms connect up with “Intuition”, perhaps “intuitions” is unnecessary.*

“Intuition” is the word for the general power proper to that plane, but it works through a fourfold process expressed in the four words connected together here. If you like you can substitute “intuitive intimations” for the third.

17 October 1936

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*Your intuition says everything to you? Have you nothing to think whether right or wrong? Alas! How then can the shishya follow the Guru?*

Good heavens! after a life of sadhana you expect me still to “think” and what is worse think what is right or wrong. I don’t think, even; I see or I don’t see. The difference between intuition and thought is very much like that between seeing a thing and badgering one’s brains to find out what the thing can possibly be like. Intuition is truth-sight. The thing seen may not be the truth? Well, in that case it will at least be one of its hundred tails or at least a hair from one of the tails. The very first step in the supramental change is to transform all operations of consciousness from the ordinary mental to the intuitive, only then is there any hope of proceeding farther, — not to, but towards the supramental. I must surely have done this long ago, otherwise how could I be catching the tail of the supramental whale?

7 May 1938

### **Jivatman, Spark-Soul and Psychic Being**

The Jivatman, spark-soul and psychic being are three different forms of the same reality and they must not be mixed up together as that confuses the clearness of the inner experience.

The Jivatman or spirit, as it is usually called in English, is self-existent above the manifested or instrumental being — it is superior to birth and death, always the same, the individual Self or *ātman*. It is the eternal true being of the individual.

The soul is a spark of the Divine which is not seated above the manifested being, but comes down into the manifestation to support its evolution in the material world. It is at first an undifferentiated power of the divine consciousness, containing all possibilities, but at first unevolved possibilities, which have not yet taken form, but to which it is the function of evolution to give form. This spark is there in all living beings, from the lowest to the highest.

The psychic being is formed by the soul in its evolution. It supports the mind, vital, body, grows by their experiences, carries the nature from life to life. It is the psychic or *caitya puruṣa*. At first it is veiled by mind, vital and body, but, as it grows, it becomes capable of coming forward and dominating the mind, life and body; in the ordinary man it depends on them for expression and is not able to take them up and freely use them. The life of the being is animal or human and not divine. When the psychic being can by sadhana become dominant and freely use its instruments, then the impulse towards the Divine becomes complete and the transformation of mind, vital and body, not merely their liberation becomes possible.

The Self or Atman being free and superior to birth and death, the experience of the Jivatman and its unity with the supreme or universal Self brings the sense of

liberation; but for the transformation of the life and nature the awakening of the psychic being is indispensable.

The psychic being realises its oneness with the true being, the Jivatman, but it does not change into it.

The *bindu* seen [*in vision by the correspondent*] above may be a symbolic way of seeing the Jivatman, the portion of the Divine; the aspiration there would naturally be for the opening of the higher consciousness so that the being may dwell there and not in the ignorance. The Jivatman is already one with the Divine in reality, but it may want the rest of the consciousness to realise it.

The aspiration of the psychic being is for the opening of the whole lower nature, mind, vital, body to the Divine, for the love and union with the Divine, for its presence and power within the heart, for the transformation of the mind, life and body by the descent of the higher consciousness into this instrumental being and nature.

Both aspirations are necessary for the fullness of this Yoga. When the psychic imposes its aspiration on the mind, vital and body, then they too aspire and this is what was felt as the aspiration from the level of the lower being. The aspiration felt above is that of the Jivatman for the higher consciousness with its realisation of the One to manifest. Therefore both aspirations help each other. The seeking of the lower being is necessarily at first intermittent and oppressed by the ordinary consciousness. It has by *sadhana* to become clear, constant, strong and enduring.

The sense of peace, purity and calm is brought about by the union of the lower with the higher consciousness. It cannot be permanent at first, but it can become so by increased frequency and endurance of the calm and peace and finally by the full descent of the eternal peace and calm and silence of the higher consciousness into the lower nature.

5 May 1935

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*I read a [copy of the preceding] letter on Jivatman, spark-soul and psychic being. I would like to ask some questions. Is Jivatman of (or in) one person different from that of another?*

It is one, yet different. The Gita puts it that the Jiva is an अंशः सनातनः [*amśaḥ sanātanaḥ*] of the One. It can also be spoken of as one among many centres of the Universal Being and Consciousness.

*If different, is it a qualitative or a quantitative difference?*



Essentially one Jiva has the same nature as all — but in manifestation each puts forth its own line of Swabhava.

*Is not what you term “Jivatman” the same as what they call kūtastha?*

No. Kutastha is the अक्षर पुरुष [*akṣara puruṣa*] — it is not the Jivatman.

*What is the plane on which the Jivatman stands?*

It is on the spiritual plane always that is above the mind, but there it is not fixed to any level.

*Is there anything like union of one’s psychic being with another’s?*

No. Affinity, harmony, sympathy, but not union. Union is with the Divine.

3 October 1936

### **Psychic and Spiritual**

Ordinarily, all the more inward and all the abnormal psychological experiences are called psychic. I use the word psychic for the soul as distinguished from the mind and vital. All movements and experiences of the soul would in that sense be called psychic, those which rise from or directly touch the psychic being; where mind and vital predominate, the experience would be called psychological (surface or occult). “Spiritual” has nothing to do with the Absolute, except that the experience of the Absolute is spiritual. All contacts with self, the higher consciousness, the Divine above are spiritual. There are others that could not be so sharply classified and set off against each other.

The spiritual realisation is of primary importance and indispensable. I would consider it best to have the spiritual and psychic development first and have it with the same fullness before entering the occult regions. Those who enter the latter first may find their spiritual realisation much delayed — others fall into the mazy traps of the occult and do not come out in this life. Some no doubt can carry on both together, the occult and the spiritual, and make them help each other; but the process I suggest is the safer.

The governing factors for us must be the spirit and the psychic being united with the Divine — the occult laws and phenomena have to be known but only as an instrumentation, not as the governing principles. The occult is a vast field and complicated and not without its dangers. It need not be abandoned but it should not be given the first place.

### Psychic Being

*I have translated the words “psychic being” as jīva but I was doubtful whether jīva conveys the idea of the psychic being.*

How can *jīva* = psychic being? Ask X for the proper word — if there is any.

15 June 1931

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*Can antarātmā or ḥṛt-puruṣa do for “psychic being”? Or your own term caitya puruṣa?*

*Antarātmā* is the inner being — it is a larger term than the psychic being. *Ḥṛt-puruṣa* or *caitya puruṣa* would do.

June 1931

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*As directed, “psychic being” has been translated as caitya puruṣa. Does this mean the puruṣa in the citta? Is jīva the combined and the fundamental being of all the beings — the vital, the psychic and others?*

चैत्य पुरुष [*caitya puruṣa*] means rather the पुरुष [*puruṣa*] in the चित् [*cit*], the fundamental (inner) consciousness.

जीव [*jīva*] is the fundamental, or as we call it, the central being. But the fundamental being is not *combined* of the mental, vital, psychic etc., these are only expressions of the Jivatman; the Jivatman itself is self-existent in the Divine; *essential* in its being, it cannot be regarded as a combination of things.

1 July 1931

### The Psychic

*How is it that in the Arya you never laid any special stress on the psychic centre and considered the centre above the head the most important in your Yoga? Is it because you wrote under different conditions and circumstances? But what exactly made you shift your emphasis?*

You might just as well ask me why in my pre-Arya writings I laid stress on other things than the centre above the head or in the post-Arya on the distinction between overmind and supermind. The stress on the psychic increased because it was found that without it no true transformation is possible.

5 July 1937

## Transformation

*If you find time to answer my letter, do at least remember my chief questions: (1) whether in Vaishnavism and Ramakrishnaism there wasn't partial transformation at least, and (2) does not any light of realisation, if it is to be lasting, presuppose some transformation of the ādhāra in order that the descent may not be fugitive?*

Under your pressure (not supramental) I have splashed about a little on the surface of the subject — the result is imperfect and illegible. (I am sending it down to Nolini to wrestle with it.) Your fault! How on earth do you expect me to go deep on the point or do anything else but scribble when I have no time at all, at all, at all.

I am not sure what you mean by the Vaishnava transformation or Ramakrishna's, so I can't say anything about that. I can only say that by transformation I do not mean some change of the nature — I do not mean for instance sainthood or ethical perfection or Yogic siddhis (like the Tantrik's). I use transformation in a special sense, a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific kind which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of the consciousness such as and greater than what took place when a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world. If anything short of that takes place or at least if a real beginning is not made on that basis, a fundamental progress towards it, then my object is not accomplished. A partial realisation does not meet the demand I make on life and Yoga.

Light of realisation is not the same thing as Descent. I do not think realisation by itself, necessarily transforms anything; it may bring only an opening or heightening or widening of the consciousness so as to realise something in the Purusha part without any radical change in the parts of Prakriti. One may have some light of realisation at the spiritual summit of the consciousness but the parts below remain what they were. I have seen any number of instances of that. There must be a descent of the light not merely into the mind or part of it but into all the being down to the physical and below before a real transformation can take place. A light in the mind may spiritualise or otherwise change the mind or part of it in one way or another, but it need not change the vital nature, a light in the vital may purify and enlarge the vital movements or else silence and immobilise the vital being, but leave the body and the physical consciousness as it was, or even leave it inert or shake its balance. And the descent of Light is not enough, it must be the descent of the whole higher consciousness, its Peace, Power, Knowledge, Love, Ananda. Moreover, the descent may be enough to liberate, but not to perfect, or enough to make a great change in the inner being, while the outer remains an imperfect instrument, clumsy, sick or unexpressive. Finally, the transformation effected by the sadhana cannot be complete unless it is a supramentalisation of the being. Psychicisation is not enough, it is only a beginning; spiritualisation

and the descent of the higher consciousness is not enough, it is only a middle term; the ultimate achievement needs the action of the supramental consciousness and Force. Something less than that may very well be considered enough by the individual, but it is not enough for the earth consciousness to take the definitive stride forward it must take at one time or another.

I have never said that my Yoga was something brand new in all its elements. I have called it the integral Yoga and that means that it takes up the essence and many procedures of the old Yogas — its newness is in its aim, standpoint and the totality of its method. In the earlier stages which is all I deal with in books like the *Riddle* or the *Lights* or in the new book to be published [*Bases of Yoga*] there is nothing in it that distinguishes it from the old Yogas except the aim underlying its comprehensiveness, the spirit in its movements and the ultimate significance it keeps before it — also the scheme of its psychology and its working: but as that was not and could not be developed systematically or schematically in these letters, it has not been grasped by those who are not already acquainted with it by mental familiarity or some amount of practice. The later stages of the Yoga which go into little known untrodden regions, I have not made public and I do not at present intend to do so.

I know very well also that there have been seemingly allied ideals and anticipations — the perfectibility of the race, certain Tantric sadhanas, the effort after a complete physical Siddhi by certain schools of Yoga, etc. etc. I have alluded to these things myself and have put forth the view that the spiritual past of the race has been a preparation of Nature not merely for attaining to the Divine beyond the world, but also for the very step forward which the evolution of the earth-consciousness has now to make. I do not therefore care in the least, — even though these things were far from identical with mine, — whether this Yoga and its aim and method are accepted as new or not, that is in itself a trifling matter. That it should be recognised as true in itself and make itself true by achievement is the one thing important; it does not matter if it is called new or a repetition or revival of the old which was forgotten. I laid emphasis on it as new in a letter to certain sadhaks so as to explain to them that a repetition of the old Yogas was not enough in my eyes, that I was putting forward a thing to be achieved that has not yet been achieved, not yet clearly visualised, even though it is the natural but still secret destined outcome of all the past spiritual endeavour.

It is new as compared with the old Yogas

(1) Because it aims not at a departure out of world and life into a Heaven or a Nirvana, but at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object. If there is a descent in other Yogas, yet it is only an incident on the way or resulting from the ascent — the ascent is the real thing. Here the ascent is the first step, but it is a means for the descent. It is the descent of the new consciousness attained by the ascent that is the stamp and seal of the sadhana. Even Tantra and Vaishnavism end in the release from life; here the

object is the fulfilment of life.

(2) Because the object sought after is not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth consciousness here, a cosmic not a supra-cosmic achievement. The thing to be gained also is the bringing in of a Power of consciousness (the supramental) not yet active directly in earth-nature, even in the spiritual life, but yet to be organised and made directly active.

(3) Because a method has been preconised for achieving this purpose which is as total and integral as the aim set before it, viz., the total and integral change of the consciousness and nature, taking up old methods but only as a part action and present aid to others that are distinctive. I have not found this method as a whole or anything like it proposed or realised in the old Yogas. If I had I should not have wasted my time in hewing out paths and in thirty years of search and inner creation when I could have hastened home safely to my goal in an easy canter over paths already blazed out, laid down, perfectly mapped, macadamised, made secure and public.

5 October 1935

### **Brahma — Brahman — Brahmin**

*Please favour me with the correct transliteration of the words ब्रह्म and ब्राह्मण in the English language. In the Essays on the Gita, they are spelt alike, viz. Brahman. What is the necessity of an “n” when transliterating ब्रह्म ?*

In English, Brahma = the Creator, one of the Trinity.

Brahman is the Eternal and Infinite. In English very often the stem is taken as the form of the name in transliterating and not the nominative form e.g. Pururavas, not Pururavā. So Vivekananda writes “Sannyasin bold” instead of Sannyasi.

1 February 1933

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*You have given me the spellings of ब्रह्म (the Eternal) and ब्रह्मा (the Creator). Kindly write to me the correct spelling of ब्राह्मण (a caste) also.*

I spoke of Brahma the Creator in order to explain why the *n* was necessary in transliterating ब्रह्म the Eternal.

As for the other word the correct English is Brahmin, but it is often transliterated Brahmana or Brahman in order to be nearer the Sanskrit. Usually, I write Brahmin but in the Press it gets altered into Brahman.

2 February 1933

### Dynamis

Dynamis is a Greek word, not current, so far as I know, in English; but the verb *dunamai*, I can, am able, from which it derives, has given a number of words to the English language including dynamise, dynamics, dynamic, dynamical, dyne (a unit of force), so that the word can be at once understood by all English readers. It means power, especially energetic power for energetic action. It is equivalent to the Sanskrit word, Shakti. Philosophically it can stand as the opposite word to status, Divine Status, Divine Dynamis.

### Ineffugable

*“Infinity imposes itself upon the appearances of the finite by its ineffugable self-existence.”*<sup>3</sup>

[Note by a correspondent:] *“Ineffugable is a new word, like dynamis, introduced into the English language by Sri Aurobindo. It means inescapable, inevitable, not to be avoided. A similar word was used by Blount in 1656 with slight change of form — ineffugible. Etymologically it is an adaptation of the Latin ineffugibilis, from effugere, to flee from, avoid. (Vide, Oxford English Dictionary.)”*

Ineffugible is the correct formation, but it has not force or power of suggestive sound in it. The *a* in ineffugable has been brought in by illegitimate analogy from words like “fugacious”, Latin *fugare*, because it sounds better and is forcible.

1 October 1943

### Sublate

*“It claims to stand behind and supersede, to sublatare and to eliminate every other knowledge. . . .”*<sup>4</sup>

“Sublate” means originally to remove: it implies denial and removal (throwing off) of something posited. What appeared to be true, can be sublated by a greater truth contradicting it. The experience of the world can be sublated by the experience of Self, it is denied and removed; so the experience of the Self can be sublated by the experience of Sunya; it is denied and removed.

3. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, volume 21 of CWSA, p. 81.

4. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 487.

[Note by a correspondent:] “*Hegelian philos. (rendering G. aufheben, used by Hegel as having the opposite meanings of ‘destroy’ and ‘preserve’). See quotation: ‘Nothing passes over into Being, but Being equally sublates itself, is a passing over into Nothing, Ceasing-to-be. They sublatae not themselves mutually, not the one the other externally; but each sublates itself in itself, and is in its own self the contrary of itself.’* (Vide, Oxford English Dictionary.)”

Hegel could not have used the word “sublate” as he wrote in German.<sup>5</sup> I do not know what word he used which is here translated by sublate, but certainly it does not mean both destroy and preserve, nor in fact does it mean either. Being passes over into Non-being, so it sublatae itself, changes and eliminates itself as it were from the view, becomes Non-being instead of being; but so also does Non-being, what was Non-being passes over into being; where there was nothing, there is being; nothing has eliminated itself from the view. This, says Hegel, is not a mutual destruction by two contraries each of which was outside the other. Being inside itself becomes nothing or Non-Being; Non-Being or Nothing equally inside itself passes into being. They do not really sublatae or drive out each other, but each sublatae itself into the other. In other words it is the same Reality that presents itself now as one and now as the other.

31 July 1944

### Global

“To contact” is a phrase that has established itself and it is futile to try to keep America at arm’s length any longer; “global” also has established itself and it is too useful and indeed indispensable to reject; there is no other word that can express exactly the same shade of meaning. I heard it first from Arjava who described the language of *Arya* as expressing a global thinking and I at once caught it up as the right and only word for certain things, for instance, the thinking in masses which is a frequent characteristic of the Overmind.

2 April 1947

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, CWSA, Vol. 35, pp. 141-58)

5. *Aufheben*, if that is the German word, must mean the same as the Latin word *subtollere* p.p. *sublatus*, to heave up and off, or throw, from which “sublate” is taken.

## ‘A SIMPLE RULE IN APPEARANCE’

In the field of action desire takes many forms, but the most powerful of all is the vital self’s craving or seeking after the fruit of our works. The fruit we covet may be a reward of internal pleasure; it may be the accomplishment of some preferred idea or some cherished will or the satisfaction of the egoistic emotions, or else the pride of success of our highest hopes and ambitions. Or it may be an external reward, a recompense entirely material, — wealth, position, honour, victory, good fortune or any other fulfilment of vital or physical desire. But all alike are lures by which egoism holds us. Always these satisfactions delude us with the sense of mastery and the idea of freedom, while really we are harnessed and guided or ridden and whipped by some gross or subtle, some noble or ignoble, figure of the blind Desire that drives the world. Therefore the first rule of action laid down by the Gita is to do the work that should be done without any desire for the fruit, *niṣkāma karma*.

A simple rule in appearance, and yet how difficult to carry out with anything like an absolute sincerity and liberating entireness! In the greater part of our action we use the principle very little if at all, and then even mostly as a sort of counterpoise to the normal principle of desire and to mitigate the extreme action of that tyrant impulse. At best, we are satisfied if we arrive at a modified and disciplined egoism not too shocking to our moral sense, not too brutally offensive to others. And to our partial self-discipline we give various names and forms; we habituate ourselves by practice to the sense of duty, to a firm fidelity to principle, a stoical fortitude or a religious resignation, a quiet or an ecstatic submission to God’s will. But it is not these things that the Gita intends, useful though they are in their place; it aims at something absolute, unmitigated, uncompromising, a turn, an attitude that will change the whole poise of the soul. Not the mind’s control of vital impulse is its rule, but the strong immobility of an immortal spirit.

The test it lays down is an absolute equality of the mind and the heart to all results, to all reactions, to all happenings. If good fortune and ill fortune, if respect and insult, if reputation and obloquy, if victory and defeat, if pleasant event and sorrowful event leave us not only unshaken but untouched, free in the emotions, free in the nervous reactions, free in the mental view, not responding with the least disturbance or vibration in any spot of the nature, then we have the absolute liberation to which the Gita points us, but not otherwise. The tiniest reaction is a proof that the discipline is imperfect and that some part of us accepts ignorance and bondage as its law and clings still to the old nature. Our self-conquest is only partially accomplished; it is still imperfect or unreal in some stretch or part or smallest spot of the ground of our nature. And that little pebble of imperfection may throw down the whole achievement of the Yoga!



There are certain semblances of an equal spirit which must not be mistaken for the profound and vast spiritual equality which the Gita teaches. There is an equality of disappointed resignation, an equality of pride, an equality of hardness and indifference: all these are egoistic in their nature. Inevitably they come in the course of the sadhana, but they must be rejected or transformed into the true quietude. There is too, on a higher level, the equality of the stoic, the equality of a devout resignation or a sage detachment, the equality of a soul aloof from the world and indifferent to its doings. These too are insufficient; first approaches they can be, but they are at most early soul-phases only or imperfect mental preparations for our entry into the true and absolute self-existent wide evenness of the spirit.

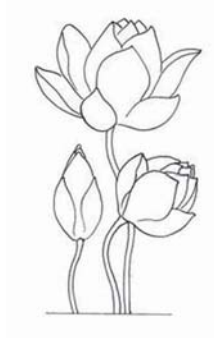
For it is certain that so great a result cannot be arrived at immediately and without any previous stages. At first we have to learn to bear the shocks of the world with the central part of our being untouched and silent, even when the surface mind, heart, life are strongly shaken; unmoved there on the bedrock of our life, we must separate the soul watching behind or immune deep within from these outer workings of our nature. Afterwards, extending this calm and steadfastness of the detached soul to its instruments, it will become slowly possible to radiate peace from the luminous centre to the darker peripheries. In this process we may take the passing help of many minor phases; a certain stoicism, a certain calm philosophy, a certain religious exaltation may help us towards some nearness to our aim, or we may call in even less strong and exalted but still useful powers of our mental nature. In the end we must either discard or transform them and arrive instead at an entire equality, a perfect self-existent peace within and even, if we can, a total unassailable, self-poised and spontaneous delight in all our members.

But how then shall we continue to act at all? For ordinarily the human being acts because he has a desire or feels a mental, vital or physical want or need; he is driven by the necessities of the body, by the lust of riches, honours or fame, or by a craving for the personal satisfactions of the mind or the heart or a craving for power or pleasure. Or he is seized and pushed about by a moral need or, at least, the need or the desire of making his ideas or his ideals or his will or his party or his country or his gods prevail in the world. If none of these desires nor any other must be the spring of our action, it would seem as if all incentive or motive power had been removed and action itself must necessarily cease. The Gita replies with its third great secret of the divine life. All action must be done in a more and more Godward and finally a God-possessed consciousness; our works must be a sacrifice to the Divine and in the end a surrender of all our being, mind, will, heart, sense, life and body to the One must make God-love and God-service our only motive. This transformation of the motive force and very character of works is indeed its master idea; it is the foundation of its unique synthesis of works, love and knowledge. In the end not desire, but the consciously felt will of the Eternal remains as the sole driver of our action and the sole originator of its initiative.

Equality, renunciation of all desire for the fruit of our works, action done as a sacrifice to the supreme Lord of our nature and of all nature, — these are the three first Godward approaches in the Gita's way of Karmayoga.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(The Synthesis of Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 23, pp. 102-05)*



**‘WHAT HAS TO BE WILL BE,  
WHAT HAS TO BE DONE WILL BE DONE’**

**June 22, 1914**

What has to be will be, what has to be done will be done. . . .

What a calm assurance Thou hast put into my being, O Lord. Who or what will manifest Thee? Who can say it yet? . . . In all things that strive towards a new, ever higher and completer expression, Thou art present. But the centre of the light is still not manifested, for the centre of manifestation is not yet perfectly adapted.

O divine Master, that which has to be will be and it will perhaps be very different from what all expect. . . .

But how is it possible to express certain silent secrets?

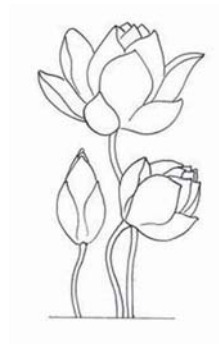
The force is here; in it is the self.

When and how will this force spring forth? When Thou findest the instrument ready.

Oh, the sweetness of Thy calm assurance, the power of Thy Peace! . . .

THE MOTHER

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 1, p. 181)*



## A CONVERSATION OF 14 APRIL 1929

*What are the dangers of Yoga? Is it especially dangerous to the people of the West? Someone has said that Yoga may be suitable for the East, but it has the effect of unbalancing the Western mind.*

Yoga is not more dangerous to the people of the West than to those of the East. Everything depends upon the spirit with which you approach it. Yoga does become dangerous if you want it for your own sake, to serve a personal end. It is not dangerous, on the contrary, it is safety and security itself, if you go to it with a sense of its sacredness, always remembering that the aim is to find the Divine.

Dangers and difficulties come in when people take up Yoga not for the sake of the Divine, but because they want to acquire power and under the guise of Yoga seek to satisfy some ambition. If you cannot get rid of ambition, do not touch the thing. It is fire that burns.

There are two paths of Yoga, one of *tapasyā* (discipline), and the other of surrender. The path of *tapasyā* is arduous. Here you rely solely upon yourself, you proceed by your own strength. You ascend and achieve according to the measure of your force. There is always the danger of falling down. And once you fall, you lie broken in the abyss and there is hardly a remedy. The other path, the path of surrender, is safe and sure. It is here, however, that the Western people find their difficulty. They have been taught to fear and avoid all that threatens their personal independence. They have imbibed with their mothers' milk the sense of individuality. And surrender means giving up all that. In other words, you may follow, as Ramakrishna says, either the path of the baby monkey or that of the baby cat. The baby monkey holds to its mother in order to be carried about and it must hold firm, otherwise if it loses its grip, it falls. On the other hand, the baby cat does not hold to its mother, but is held by the mother and has no fear nor responsibility; it has nothing to do but to let the mother hold it and cry *ma ma*.

If you take up this path of surrender fully and sincerely, there is no more danger or serious difficulty. The question is to be sincere. If you are not sincere, do not begin Yoga. If you were dealing in human affairs, then you could resort to deception; but in dealing with the Divine there is no possibility of deception anywhere. You can go on the Path safely when you are candid and open to the core and when your only end is to realise and attain the Divine and to be moved by the Divine.

There is another danger; it is in connection with the sex impulses. Yoga in its process of purification will lay bare and throw up all hidden impulses and desires in you. And you must learn not to hide things nor leave them aside, you have to face them and conquer and remould them. The first effect of Yoga, however, is to take

away the mental control, and the hungers that lie dormant are suddenly set free, they rush up and invade the being. So long as this mental control has not been replaced by the Divine control, there is a period of transition when your sincerity and surrender will be put to the test. The strength of such impulses as those of sex lies usually in the fact that people take too much notice of them; they protest too vehemently and endeavour to control them by coercion, hold them within and sit upon them. But the more you think of a thing and say, "I don't want it, I don't want it", the more you are bound to it. What you should do is to keep the thing away from you, to dissociate from it, take as little notice of it as possible and, even if you happen to think of it, remain indifferent and unconcerned.

The impulses and desires that come up by the pressure of Yoga should be faced in a spirit of detachment and serenity, as something foreign to yourself or belonging to the outside world. They should be offered to the Divine, so that the Divine may take them up and transmute them.

If you have once opened yourself to the Divine, if the power of the Divine has once come down into you and yet you try to keep to the old forces, you prepare troubles and difficulties and dangers for yourself. You must be vigilant and see that you do not use the Divine as a cloak for the satisfaction of your desires. There are many self-appointed Masters, who do nothing but that. And then when you are off the straight path and when you have a little knowledge and not much power, it happens that you are seized by beings or entities of a certain type, you become blind instruments in their hands and are devoured by them in the end. Wherever there is pretence, there is danger; you cannot deceive God. Do you come to God saying, "I want union with you" and in your heart meaning "I want powers and enjoyments"? Beware! You are heading straight towards the brink of the precipice. And yet it is so easy to avoid all catastrophe. Become like a child, give yourself up to the Mother, let her carry you, and there is no more danger for you.

This does not mean that you have not to face other kinds of difficulties or that you have not to fight and conquer any obstacles at all. Surrender does not ensure a smooth and unruffled and continuous progression. The reason is that your being is not yet one, nor your surrender absolute and complete. Only a part of you surrenders; and today it is one part and the next day it is another. The whole purpose of the Yoga is to gather all the divergent parts together and forge them into an undivided unity. Till then you cannot hope to be without difficulties — difficulties, for example, like doubt or depression or hesitation. The whole world is full of the poison. You take it in with every breath. If you exchange a few words with an undesirable man or even if such a man merely passes by you, you may catch the contagion from him. It is sufficient for you to come near a place where there is plague in order to be infected with its poison; you need not know at all that it is there. You can lose in a few minutes what it has taken you months to gain. So long as you belong to humanity and so long as you lead the ordinary life, it does not matter much if you mix with the

people of the world; but if you want the divine life, you will have to be exceedingly careful about your company and your environment.

*What is the way to establish unity and homogeneity in our being?*

Keep the will firm. Treat the recalcitrant parts as disobedient children. Act upon them constantly and patiently. Convince them of their error.

In the depths of your consciousness is the psychic being, the temple of the Divine within you. This is the centre round which should come about the unification of all these divergent parts, all these contradictory movements of your being. Once you have got the consciousness of the psychic being and its aspiration, these doubts and difficulties can be destroyed. It takes more or less time, but you will surely succeed in the end. Once you have turned to the Divine, saying, "I want to be yours", and the Divine has said, "Yes", the whole world cannot keep you from it. When the central being has made its surrender, the chief difficulty has disappeared. The outer being is like a crust. In ordinary people the crust is so hard and thick that they are not conscious of the Divine within them. If once, even for a moment only, the inner being has said, "I am here and I am yours", then it is as though a bridge has been built and little by little the crust becomes thinner and thinner until the two parts are wholly joined and the inner and the outer become one.

Ambition has been the undoing of many Yogis. That canker can hide long. Many people start on the Path without any sense of it. But when they get powers, their ambition rises up, all the more violently because it had not been thrown out in the beginning.

A story is told of a Yogi who had attained wonderful powers. He was invited by his disciples to a great dinner. It was served on a big low table. The disciples asked their Master to show his power in some way. He knew he should not, but the seed of ambition was there in him and he thought, "After all, it is a very innocent thing and it may prove to them that such things are possible and teach them the greatness of God." So he said, "Take away the table, but only the table, let the table-cloth remain as it is with all the dishes upon it." The disciples cried out, "Oh, that cannot be done, everything will fall down." But he insisted and they removed the table from under the cloth. Lo, the miracle! The cloth and all that was upon it remained there just as though the table was underneath. The disciples wondered. But all on a sudden the Master jumped up and rushed out screaming and crying, "Nevermore shall I have a disciple, nevermore! Woe is me! I have betrayed my God." His heart was on fire; he had used the divine powers for selfish ends.

It is always wrong to display powers. This does not mean that there is no use for them. But they have to be used in the same way as they came. They come by union with the Divine. They must be used by the will of the Divine and not for display. If you come across someone who is blind and you have the power to make

him see — if it is the Divine Will that the man shall see, you have only to say, “Let him see” and he will see. But if you wish to make him see simply because you want to cure him, then you use the power to satisfy your personal ambition. Most often, in such cases, you not only lose your power but you create a great disturbance in the man. Yet in appearance the two ways are the same; but in one case you act because of the Divine Will and in the other for some personal motive.

How are we to know, you will ask, when it is the Divine Will that makes us act? The Divine Will is not difficult to recognise. It is unmistakable. You can know it without being very far on the path. Only you must listen to its voice, the small voice that is here in the heart. Once you are accustomed to listen, if you do anything that is contrary to the Divine Will, you feel an uneasiness. If you persist on the wrong track, you get very much disturbed. If, however, you give some material excuse as the cause of your uneasiness and proceed on your way, you gradually lose the faculty of perception and finally you may go on doing all kinds of wrong and feel no uneasiness. But if, when once you feel the least disturbance, you stop and ask of your inner self, “What is the cause of this?” then you do get the real answer and the whole thing becomes quite clear. Do not try to give a material excuse when you feel a little depression or a slight uneasiness. When you stop and look about for the reason, be absolutely straight and sincere. At first your mind will construct a very plausible and beautiful explanation. Do not accept it, but look beyond and ask, “What is it that is behind this movement? Why am I doing this?” Finally you will discover, hidden in a corner, the little ripple — a slight wrong turn or twist in your attitude that is causing the trouble or disturbance.

One of the commonest forms of ambition is the idea of service to humanity. All attachment to such service or work is a sign of personal ambition. The Guru who believes that he has a great truth to teach to humanity and who wants many disciples and who feels uncomfortable when the disciples go away or who seizes on anybody that comes and tries to make him a disciple, is evidently following nothing but his ambition. You must be able, if you are ready to follow the divine order, to take up whatever work you are given, even a stupendous work, and leave it the next day with the same quietness with which you took it up and not feel that the responsibility is yours. There should be no attachment — to any object or any mode of life. You must be absolutely free. If you want to have the true yogic attitude, you must be able to accept everything that comes from the Divine and let it go easily and without regret. The attitude of the ascetic who says, “I want nothing” and the attitude of the man of the world who says, “I want this thing” are the same. The one may be as much attached to his renunciation as the other to his possession.

You must accept all things — and only those things — that come from the Divine. Because things can come from concealed desires. The desires work in the subconscious and bring things to you which, although you may not recognise them as such, nevertheless do not come from the Divine but from disguised desires.

You can easily know when a thing comes from the Divine. You feel free, you are at ease, you are in peace. But when something presents itself to you and you jump at it and cry out, "Oh, at last I have it", then you can know for certain that it does not come from the Divine. Equanimity is the essential condition of union and communion with the Divine.

*Does not the Divine sometimes give what you desire?*

Certainly. There was a young man who wanted to do Yoga. But he had a mean and cruel father who troubled him very much and tried to prevent him from doing it. He wished ardently to be free from the father's interference. Soon the father fell ill and very seriously; he was about to die. Whereupon the other side of the boy's nature rose up and he loudly bewailed the misfortune and cried, "Oh, my poor father is so ill! It is such a sad thing. Alas, what shall I do?" The father got well. The young man rejoiced and turned once more to Yoga. And the father also began again to oppose and torment him with redoubled violence. The son tore his hair in despair and cried, "Now my father stands in my way more than ever." The whole thing is to know exactly what one wants.

The Divine always brings with it perfect calm and peace. A certain class of Bhaktas, it is true, present generally a very different picture; they jump about and cry and laugh and sing, in a fit of devotion, as they say. But in reality such people do not live in the Divine. They live largely in the vital world. You say that even Ramakrishna had periods of emotional excitement and would go about with hands uplifted, singing and dancing? The truth of the matter is this. The movement in the inner being may be perfect; but it puts you in a certain condition of receptivity to forces that fill you with intense emotional excitement, if your external being is weak or untransformed. Where the external being offers resistance to the inner being or cannot hold the entirety of the Ananda, there is this confusion and anarchy in expression.

You must have a strong body and strong nerves. You must have a strong basis of equanimity in your external being. If you have this basis, you can contain a world of emotion and yet not have to scream it out. This does not mean that you cannot express your emotion, but you can express it in a beautiful harmonious way. To weep or scream or dance about is always a proof of weakness, either of the vital or the mental or the physical nature; for on all these levels the activity is for self-satisfaction. One who dances and jumps and screams has the feeling that he is somehow very unusual in his excitement; and his vital nature takes great pleasure in that.

If you have to bear the pressure of the Divine Descent, you must be very strong and powerful, otherwise you would be shaken to pieces. Some persons ask, "Why has not the Divine come yet?" Because you are not ready. If a little drop



makes you sing and dance and scream, what would happen if the whole thing came down?

Therefore do we say to people who have not a strong and firm and capacious basis in the body and the vital and the mind, “Do not pull”, meaning “Do not try to pull at the forces of the Divine, but wait in peace and calmness.” For they would not be able to bear the descent. But to those who possess the necessary basis and foundation we say, on the contrary, “Aspire and draw.” For they would be able to receive and yet not be upset by the forces descending from the Divine.

*In the case of some persons who turn to the Divine it happens that every material prop or everything they are fond of is removed from their life. And if they love someone, he also is taken away.*

It is a thing that does not happen to all. It happens to those that are called.

Whatever difference there is between the West and the East in relation to spiritual life lies not in the inner being or nature, which is an invariable and constant thing, but in the mental habits, in the modes of outer expression and presentation which are the result of education and environment and other external conditions. All people, whether occidental or oriental, are alike in their deepest feelings; they are different in their way of thinking. Sincerity, for example, is a quality which is the same everywhere. Those who are sincere, to whichever nation they belong, are all sincere in the same way. Only the forms given to this sincerity vary. The mind works in different ways in different peoples, but the heart is the same everywhere; the heart is a much truer reality, and the differences belong to the superficial parts. As soon as you go deep enough, you meet something that is one in all. All meet in the Divine. The sun is the symbol of the Divine in the physical nature. Clouds may modify its appearance, but when they are no longer there, you see it is the same sun always and everywhere.

If you cannot feel one with somebody, it means you have not gone deep enough in your feeling.

THE MOTHER

*(Questions and Answers 1929-1931, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 3, pp. 4-12)*

## A CONVERSATION OF 5 FEBRUARY 1951

Mother reads the beginning of the talk of 14 April. Having spoken of the dangers of Yoga (“If you cannot get rid of ambition, do not touch the thing. It is fire that burns.”), Mother speaks of the two methods of Yoga:

*“There are two paths of Yoga, one of tapasyā (discipline) and the other of surrender.”*

*Questions and Answers 1929 (14 April)*

What is surrender?

*It means that one gives oneself entirely to the Divine.*

Yes, and then what happens? If you give yourself entirely to the Divine, it is He who does the Yoga, it is no longer you; hence this is not very difficult; while if you do tapasya, it is you yourself who do the yoga and you carry its whole responsibility — it is there the danger lies. But there are people who prefer to have the whole responsibility, with its dangers, because they have a very independent spirit. They are not perhaps in a great hurry — if they need several lives to succeed, it does not matter to them. But there are others who want to go quicker and be more sure of reaching the goal; well, these give over the whole responsibility to the Divine.

*“The first effect of Yoga, however, is to take away the mental control, and the hungers that lie dormant are suddenly set free; they rush up and invade the being. . . . What you should do is to keep the thing [the sex impulse] away from you, to disassociate from it, take as little notice of it as possible and, even if you happen to think of it, to remain indifferent and unconcerned.”*

*Ibid.*

This is much more difficult than to sit upon a difficulty! It is much more difficult to stand back from the difficulty, to look at it as something which does not concern you, which does not interest you, does not belong to you, which belongs to the world and not to you — but it is only by doing this that you can succeed. This demands a kind of liberation of spirit and a confidence in your inner being: you must believe that if you take the right attitude, it is the best that will happen to you; but if you are afraid when something unpleasant happens to you, then you can do nothing. You must have this confidence within you, whatever the difficulty, whatever the obstacle. Most of the time, when something unpleasant happens, you say, “Is it

going to increase? What other accident is yet going to happen!” and so on. You must tell yourself, “These things are not mine; they belong to the subconscious world; naturally I have nothing to do with them and if they come again to seize me, I am going to give a fight.” Naturally you will answer that this is easy to say but difficult to do. But if truly you take this attitude of confidence, there is no difficulty that you will not be able to conquer. Anxiety makes the difficulty greater.

Evidently there is one difficulty: in your conscious being something does not want the difficulty, wishes sincerely to overcome it, but there are numberless movements in other parts of your consciousness of which you are not conscious. You say, “I want to be cured of that”; unfortunately it is not sufficient to say “I want”, there are other parts of the consciousness which hide themselves so that you may not be busy with them, and when your attention is turned away these parts try to assert themselves. That is why I say and shall always repeat, Be perfectly sincere; do not try to deceive yourself, do not say, “I have done all that I could.” If you do not succeed, it means that you do not do all that you can. For, if you truly do “all” that you can, you will surely succeed. If you have any defect which you want to get rid of and which still persists, and you say, “I have done all that I could”, you may be sure that you have not done all that you should have. If you had, you would have triumphed, for the difficulties that come to you are exactly in proportion to your strength — nothing can happen to you which does not belong to your consciousness, and all that belongs to your consciousness you are able to master. Even the things and suggestions that come from outside can touch you only in proportion to the consent of your consciousness, and you are made to be the master of your consciousness. If you say, “I have done all that I could and in spite of everything the thing continues, so I give up”, you may be already sure that you have not done what you could. When an error persists “in spite of everything” it means that something hidden in your being springs up suddenly like a Jack-in-the-box and takes the helm of your life. Hence, there is only one thing to do, it is to go hunting for all the little dark corners which lie hidden in you and, if you put just a tiny spark of goodwill on this darkness, it will yield, will vanish, and what appeared to you impossible will become not only possible, practicable, but *it will have been done*. You can in this way in one minute get rid of a difficulty which would have harassed you for years. I absolutely assure you of it. That depends only on one thing: that you truly, sincerely, want to get rid of it. And it is the same for everything, from physical illnesses up to the highest mental difficulties. One part of the consciousness says, “I don’t want it”, but behind there hides a heap of things which say nothing, do not show themselves, and which just want that things continue as they are — generally out of ignorance; they do not believe that it is necessary to be cured, they believe that everything is for the best in the best of worlds. As the lady with whom I had those conversations used to say, “The trouble begins as soon as you want to change.” A great French writer has repeated this and has made out of it his pet

theory: “Misery begins when you want to perfect yourself; if you do not wish to perfect yourself, you won’t have any misery!” I may tell you that this is absolutely wrong, but there are, all the same, things in you that want absolutely to be left alone, not to be disturbed in any way: “Oh! What a nuisance you are, leave us alone!”

*“The whole world is full of the poison [doubt, hesitation, depression]. You take it in with every breath. If you exchange a few words with an undesirable man or even if such a man merely passes by you, you may catch the contagion from him. . . . So long as you belong to humanity and so long as you lead the ordinary life, it does not matter much if you mix with the people of the world; but if you want the divine life, you will have to be exceedingly careful about your company and your environment.”*

*Questions and Answers 1929 (14 April)*

To try to solve this problem ascetics used to go away into forests and sit under a tree; there, of course, they had not to fear any contagion from other human beings. But it is very difficult to go to the very end of this resolution, for it quickly gets known that a saint is sitting under a tree in meditation, and immediately everybody rushes there! Not only does he not escape from the difficulty, but he increases it, for there is not a thing more dangerous than to teach others. You know just a little and you begin to teach others, and you are immediately compelled to say more than you know, because people put questions to you which you cannot answer, unless you are a hero of silence. In the world, those who want to pass themselves off as spiritual teachers — when people come and ask them something they do not know, they invent it. Therefore, if in your inner discipline you begin to pretend, you may be sure of falling into the worst hole — of all things pretence is the most ruinous. In the world you may perhaps pass for what you are not, for people allow themselves to be easily deceived, and that will not lead you to a catastrophe (although if you exaggerate, it always leads to a catastrophe), but in the spiritual world, you don’t have to deal with human beings, you have to deal with the Divine; it is impossible for you to pretend that you are this or that, for the Divine knows better than you, doesn’t He? He knows what you are and it is not what you will say which will influence Him.

In all spiritual disciplines the first thing that you are taught is not to narrate your experiences to others. If you need to clarify your mind, tell your experiences to your spiritual teacher and to no one else, and even before your spiritual teacher you must be very careful. When you present or explain to him what has happened in you, if you observe yourself closely, you will see that there are things in you of which you are not wholly aware; in your experiences often there are gaps, interruptions in the continuity (it is extremely difficult to get at the continuity of consciousness and to follow the movement to the end); then, if you narrate your

experience without wanting to add anything whatsoever, without failing in sincerity, even so you put in what is not there. When people come and tell me something, an inner event, they find me at times inattentive, not attaching much importance to what I am being told — it is not that, it is that I listen to what is within, I see what is perfectly exact and the little facts that have been added. And it is because of this that generally I do not encourage these things. I know that people may feel relieved, comforted, if they can tell me what has happened, but then one must come with a wonderfully scientific spirit. A scientist would never tell you, “It is this”, “It is that”, unless he has made all the possible experiments to have the proof of what he says. And for spiritual things one must follow the same method. Instead of saying, “I did that, things happened like that”, one must say, “I had the impression that . . . things seemed to be like this” and “It looked as if there was a connection between this and that . . .” and not only as a conversational phrase, but as something which expresses truly a mental state. If you seek for a clarification, you yourself must not explain the thing in advance, for once you have given me the explanation, I have no longer any explanation to give you! You bring me flowers, for instance, flowers of all kinds, but you do not arrange them, you tell me, “Here I bring you some flowers, it is for you to make a bouquet out of them.” In this way, it is much more easy for me, isn’t it? I can take those that I need and give you the explanation of what’s happened! But if you bring me a ready-made bouquet where I see flowers which are not flowers, which are imitations, I have nothing to tell you, for I need solely things which are so to say “pure”. Therefore, remember this advice: I am always ready to listen to you but do not bring to me ready-made things. Give me the exact record of what has happened and even so you may be sure that as soon as there is a mental transcription, the mind always knows how to fill up the holes — it likes things to be logical, continuous; and without your knowing it, quite spontaneously it supplies elements which were missing in your experience. I do not blame anyone, I know that it is a spontaneous phenomenon. One must be extremely attentive in order to be quite exact and precise.

*Is it not dangerous to say, “My movements are not mine, I have not to think of them”?*

Yes, evidently, if you say, “I can do nothing, that belongs to Nature, the movement has to follow its natural course”, you do exactly what I have told you not to do, you make use of the Divine as a fine cloak to cover the satisfaction of your desires. But the opposite movement, “I am good for nothing because such an idea has crossed my mind” is equally wrong, isn’t it?

Naturally, if an impulse happens to come to you which you do not want, the first thing to do is to will that it does not come again; but if, on the contrary, you do not sincerely want it to disappear, then keep it, but do not try to do yoga. You

should not take the path unless you have resolved beforehand to overcome all difficulties. The decision must be sincere and complete. You will notice, besides, as you gradually advance, that what you believed to be complete is not so, what you considered to be sincere is not so, and then you will progress little by little; but to succeed you must have as total a will for progress as possible. If you have this will and if an impulse seizes you with violence, keep the will firm, your being must not vacillate; you must expect these things to come, but when they come, tell yourself, "Well, they come from below, I do not want them to recur, they are not mine." This is not the same thing as saying, "Let it go, since it is Nature."

There must already be a beginning of realisation in the vital for it to revolt against the impulses that come to it. Most human beings and even those who expect to do yoga say, as soon as the impulse comes, "It is quite all right, there is nothing to do, it is all right." Then, if something in you revolts, if something says, "I don't want it", that is the higher part of your being. What takes the resolution to do yoga is not your body or your vital, not even your mind, it is the higher part of your mind or it is your psychic being. It is that alone which can take the resolution — your body does not know very well what it is all about, your vital looks at the beginning of transformation with some anxiety, the mind with its ideas declares, "This can be done in that way, can be explained like this", and so on. So if you have made a resolution, it comes from the higher part of your being, and it is upon this that you have to take your support, not upon anything else — that is the "I". And it must understand in the end that it is not a personal "I", but universal and divine.

*But is it not the vital itself which finally should take the decision to change?*

I may assure you that the vital, left to itself, will never take the decision to be transformed — it is quite satisfied with itself and, over and above this, being an accomplice of the mind, the mind will furnish it with all possible explanations for whatever it does. People who live in their vital consciousness are, even when they do not say so, always very satisfied with themselves. They are also very satisfied with all that happens to them and they always say of their impulses, "How interesting it is, how interesting!" So, if you wait for the vital to take the decision, you may have to wait for a long time!

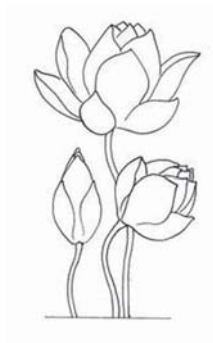
You must teach your vital that it must obey. Before feeling any satisfaction, it must understand that it has nothing else to do but obey. That is why I say that it is not very easy to begin the yoga; if you are not sincere, do not begin.

The body is very obedient; truly it tries to do its best, but it does not know whom to obey, for generally it is not in direct contact with the higher being or the psychic. Impulses come to it directly from the mind or from the mind clothed with the vital, and it does what they desire. Before the vital takes a decision (and I have told you, it is not very easy for it to take a decision), a light must begin to dawn in

the highest part of the mind, a light which puts you in touch with a higher consciousness or with your psychic, and it is upon this light that you must take your support to explain things to the mind, to the vital and finally to the body.

THE MOTHER

*(Questions and Answers 1950-1951, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 4, pp. 72-79)*



## A CONVERSATION OF 8 FEBRUARY 1951

*“The outer being is like a crust. In ordinary people the crust is so hard and thick that they are not conscious of the Divine within them. If once, even for a moment only, the inner being has said, ‘I am here and I am yours’, then it is as though a bridge has been built and little by little the crust becomes thinner and thinner until the two parts are wholly joined and the inner and the outer become one.”*

*Questions and Answers 1929 (14 April)*

Have you ever thought of unifying your being? Have you been disturbed, sometimes, to see that now you are one person, at other times another, at one time you want to do one thing, at another time you cannot do it, that you find yourself facing an individuality which you can call *yourself* and yet at the same time there are many parts of this individuality which escape you?

*I have not attempted the unification of the different personalities which may be in me, but I have tried to put them face to face, the good opposite the bad, and I have never found in the good a sufficient dynamism to fight against the bad.*

Have you never thought that your judgment of what is “good” and “bad” was a purely human judgment? And that it might not necessarily tally with the judgment of the divine Presence within you? The “bad” things you could not get rid of were probably things not in their place, things not properly balanced, and it would be a great pity if they were eliminated because, perhaps, a part of your energy and of your divine Presence would disappear at the same time. People who do not do yoga under the direction of a guide follow ordinary moral notions and at times they feel very perplexed because with all their goodwill they do not get the expected result; that happens because generally they wish to approve of their being instead of transforming it and because moral notions are very bad. In the work of unification of the being, you must needs have imagination enough to be able to put the movements you have, the movements you wish to keep, to put them before what you are capable of imagining as most akin to the divine Presence; naturally, at first it is only an imagination quite far from the truth, but it would help you to get out a little from moral narrowness and also from the limitations of your consciousness. For example, you have the idea of putting what you are and what you do before a consciousness which is at once infinite and eternal. These two words do not perhaps



make much sense at the beginning, but they compel you to break the limits and to put yourself in front of something which surpasses you so much on every side that its judgment cannot be the same as that of a human mentality. One must begin absolutely like that. If you try to analyse yourself according to moral principles, you may be sure of going contrary to the divine plan. Not that the Divine is amoral, mark that, but this is not a kind of morality that mankind understands at all, it is not the same.

*“Ambition has been the undoing of many Yogis. . . .*

*“A story is told of a Yogi who had attained wonderful powers. He was invited by his disciples to a great dinner. It was served on a big low table. The disciples asked their Master to show his power in some way. He knew he should not, but the seed of ambition was there in him and he thought, ‘After all, it is a very innocent thing and it may prove to them that such things are possible and teach them the greatness of God.’ So he said, ‘Take away the table, but only the table, let the table-cloth remain as it is with all the dishes upon it.’ The disciples cried out, ‘Oh, that cannot be done, everything will fall down.’ But he insisted and they removed the table from under the cloth. Lo, the miracle! The cloth and all that was upon it remained there just as though the table was underneath. The disciples wondered. But all of a sudden the Master jumped up and rushed out screaming and crying, ‘Nevermore shall I have a disciple, nevermore! Woe is me! I have betrayed my God.’”*

*Questions and Answers 1929 (14 April)*

This is a temptation that every teacher meets at each step, for the very simple reason that ordinary humanity, in a general way, not being in personal contact with the divine powers, understands nothing of what an illumined consciousness may be and asks for material proofs. It is on this demand that most religions are established and, for reasons which I may very frankly call “political”, they have put at the origin of their religion a more or less considerable number of miracles as having been performed by the founders, and they have thus more or less crudely encouraged among ignorant people the taste, the necessity for seeing what they call “miracles” in order to believe in the divine power of a person. This is an extraordinary ignorance, because it is not at all necessary to have a divine power or consciousness to perform miracles. It is infinitely more easy to perform miracles with the help of small entities of the vital world who are material enough to be in touch with the physical world and act upon it, than to live in the consciousness of the higher regions and to work upon Nature only through the intermediary of all the other domains. It has been repeated over and over again to all human intellects that the proof of a being’s divinity is that he can raise the dead, cure maladies, and do many other things of the

same kind (except making a fool wise).<sup>1</sup> Well, I guarantee that this is not a proof; it proves only one thing, that these “Masters” are in contact with the powers of the vital world and that with the help of those beings they can perform these miracles, that’s all. If one relies upon that to recognise the superiority of a man, one would make a glaring mistake. Naturally, there are other religions which are established on revelations made to their founders. These revelations are more or less happy mental transcriptions of the knowledge they received. This is already of a higher order but it is not yet a proof. And I would finally say, the human demand for proofs is not at all favourable to one’s development. Because the true divine power has organised the world according to a certain plan and in this plan there was no question of things happening in an illogical way; otherwise from the very beginning the world would have been illogical and it is not so. Men imagine for the most part one of two things, either that there is a material world to which they belong, that all comes from there, all returns there and all ends there — these are the unbelievers — or, the believers, most of them, that there is something which they call “God” and then the physical world, and that this physical world is the creation of that God who knows what he is doing or does what he wants; and the confusion lies in saying that everything happens by a kind of arbitrariness, natural or supernatural. There are very few people who know that there exists in the universe an infinite number of gradations and that each one of these gradations has its own reality, its own life, its own law, its own determinism, and that the creation did not come about “like that”, by an arbitrary will, in an arbitrary way but is a deploying of consciousness and each thing has evolved as a logical result of the preceding one. I am telling you all this as simply as I can, you see, it is a very incomplete expression, but if I wanted to tell you the story exactly as it is, it would be a little difficult to make you understand. Only I would like you to know my conclusion (I have already spoken about it several times, more or less in detail), it is this: each one of these numberless regions has its own very logical determinism everything proceeds from cause to effect; but these worlds, although differentiated, are not separate from each other and, by numerous processes which we may study, the inner or higher worlds are in constant contact with the lower or external worlds and act upon these, so that the determinism of one changes the determinism of the other. If you take the purely material domain, for instance, and if you notice that the material laws, the purely material laws are altered by something all of a sudden, you ought to say that it was a “miracle”, because there is a rupture of the determinism of one plane through the intervention of another, but usually we do not call this a miracle. For example, when the human will intervenes and changes something, that seems to you quite natural, because

1. Mother added later: This is a Mohammedan story, I believe. As it was said that Jesus raised the dead, healed the sick, made the dumb speak, gave sight to the blind, one day an idiot was brought to him, to be made intelligent and Jesus ran away! “Why did you run away?” he was asked. “I can do everything,” he answered, “except give intelligence to an idiot.”

you have been accustomed to it from your childhood; you remember, don't you, the example I gave you the other day: a stone falls according to the law of its own determinism, but you wish to interrupt its fall and you stretch out your hand and catch it; well you ought to call this a "miracle", but you don't because you are used to it (but a rat or a dog would perhaps call it a miracle if they could speak). And note that it is the same for what people call a "miracle"; they speak of a "miracle" because they are absolutely ignorant, unaware of the gradations between the will which wants to express itself and the plane on which it expresses itself. When they have a mental or a vital will, the thing seems quite natural to them, but when it is a question of the will of a higher world — the world of the gods or of a higher entity — which all of a sudden upsets all your little organisation, that seems to you a miracle. But it is a miracle simply because you are unable to follow the gradations by which the phenomenon took place. Therefore, the Supreme Will, that which comes from the very highest region, if you saw it in its logical action, if you were aware of it continually, it would seem to you altogether natural. You can express this in two ways: either say, "It is quite natural, it is like this that things must happen, it is only an expression of the divine Will", or, each time you see on the material plane an intervention coming from another plane, you ought to say, "It is miraculous!" So I may say with certainty that people who want to see miracles are people who cherish their ignorance! You understand my logic, don't you? These people love their ignorance, they insist upon seeing miracles and being astounded! And that is why people who have done yoga seriously consider it altogether fatal to encourage this tendency; hence it is forbidden.

There is a "miracle" because you do not give people time to see the procedure by which you do things, you do not show them the stages. Thus, some men have reached higher mental regions and do not need to follow step by step all the gradations of thought; they can jump from one idea to a far distant conclusion without the intermediary links; this is usually called intuition (it is not altogether an "intuition"; it is that the idea, to begin with, is at a great height and from there these people can see while descending the whole totality of things and consequences without passing through all the gradations as ordinary human thought is obliged to do). It is an experience I have had; when I used to speak with Sri Aurobindo, we never had the need to go through intermediary ideas; he said one thing and I saw the far off result; we used to talk always like that, and if a person had happened to be present at our conversations he would have said, "What are they talking about!" But for us, you know, it was as clear as a continuous sentence. You could call that a mental miracle — it was not a miracle, it was simply that Sri Aurobindo had the vision of the totality of mental phenomena and hence we had no need to waste a good deal of time in going through all the gradations. For any person capable of following the line, the thing would have been quite natural and logical; for ignorant people it was a "miracle".

*“They [powers] have to be used in the same way as they came. They come by union with the Divine. They must be used by the will of the Divine and not for display.”*

*Questions and Answers 1929 (14 April)*

If you use power to show that you possess it, it becomes so full of falsehood and untruth that finally it disappears. But it is not always thus, because, as I said at the beginning, when it concerns a power like the power of healing or the power of changing an altogether external thing — of making an unfavourable circumstance favourable, of finding lost objects, all these countless little “miracles” which are found in all religions — it is much more easy and even more effective to do these “miracles” with the help of the entities of the vital world which are not always recommendable, far from it; and then these beings make fun of you. This begins very well, very brilliantly, and usually finishes very badly.

I know the story of a man who had a few small powers and indulged in all kinds of so-called “spiritualist” practices, and through repeated exercises he had succeeded in coming into conscious contact with what he called a “spirit”. This man was doing business; he was a financier and was even a speculator. His relations with his “spirit” were of a very practical kind! This spirit used to tell him when the stocks and shares would go up and when they would come down; it told him, “Sell this”, “Buy that” — it gave him very precise financial particulars. For years he had been listening to his “spirit” and had followed it, and was fantastically successful; he became tremendously rich and naturally boasted a lot about the spirit which “guided” him. He used to tell everybody, “You see, it is really worthwhile learning how to put oneself in contact with these spirits.” But one day he met a man who was a little wiser, who told him, “Take care.” He did not listen to him, he was swollen with his power and ambition. And it was then that his “spirit” gave him a last advice, “Now you can become the richest man in the world. Your ambition will be fulfilled. You have only to follow my direction. Do this: put all that you have into this transaction and you will become the richest man in the world.” The stupid fool did not even realise the trap laid for him: for years he had followed his “guide” and succeeded, so he followed the last direction; and he lost everything, to the last penny.

So you see, these are small entities who make fun of you, and to make sure of you they work these little miracles to encourage you, and when they feel that you are well trapped, they play a fine trick upon you and it is all over with you.

We have said that there is only one safety, never to act except in harmony with the divine Will. There is one question: how to know that it is the divine Will which makes you act? I replied to the person who put to me this question (although this person did not agree with me) that it is not difficult to distinguish the voice of the Divine: one cannot make a mistake. You need not be very far on the path to be able to recognise it; you must listen to the still, small peaceful voice which speaks in the

silence of your heart.

I forgot one thing: to hear it you must be absolutely sincere, for if you are not sincere, you will begin by deceiving yourself and you will hear nothing at all except the voice of your ego and then you will commit with assurance (thinking that it is the real small voice) the most awful stupidities. But if you are sincere, the way is sure. It is not even a voice, not even a sensation, it is something extremely subtle — a slight indication. When everything goes well, that is, when you do nothing contrary to the divine Will, you will not perhaps have any definite impression, everything will seem to you normal. Of course, you should be eager to know whether you are acting in accordance with the divine Will, that is the first point, naturally, without which you can know nothing at all. But once you are eager and you pay attention, everything seems to you normal, natural, then all of a sudden, you feel a little uneasiness somewhere in the head, in the heart or even in the stomach — generally one doesn't give it a thought; you may feel it several times in the day but you reject it without giving it any attention; but it is no longer quite the same; then, at that moment, you must stop, no matter what you may be doing, and look, and if you are sincere, you will notice a small black spot (a tiny wicked idea, a tiny false movement, a small arbitrary decision) and that's the source of the uneasiness. You will notice then that the little black spot comes from the ego which is full of preferences; generally it does what it likes; the things it likes are called good and those it does not are called bad — this clouds your judgment. It is difficult to judge under these conditions. If you truly want to know, you must draw back a step and look, and you will know then that it is this small movement of the ego which is the cause of the uneasiness. You will see that it is a tiny thing curled back upon itself; you will have the impression of being in front of something hard which resists or is black. Then with patience, from the height of your consciousness, you must explain to this thing its mistake, and in the end it will disappear. I do not say that you will succeed all at once the very first day, but if you try sincerely, you will always end with success. And if you persevere, you will see that all of a sudden you are relieved of a mass of meanness and ugliness and obscurity which was preventing you from flowering in the light. It is those things which make you shrivel up, prevent you from widening yourself, opening out in a light where you have the impression of being very comfortable. If you make this effort, you will see finally that you are very far from the point where you had begun, the things you did not feel, did not understand, have become clear. If you are resolved, you are sure to succeed.

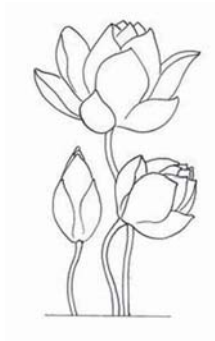
This is the first step towards unifying yourself, becoming a conscious being who has a central will and acts only according to this will, which will be a constant expression of the divine Will. It is worth trying.

And I may tell you from my personal experience that there is nothing in the world more interesting. If you begin making this effort you will find that your life is full of interest — you know, of the ordinary life of people at least a third is a kind of

dull boredom (I say a third, but for some two-thirds of the day is a dull boredom), and all that gets volatilised! Everything becomes so interesting, the least little thing, the least casual meeting, the least word exchanged, the least thing displaced — everything is full of life and interest.

THE MOTHER

*(Questions and Answers 1950-1951, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 4, pp. 80-89)*



## “GOD’S DOORWAY”

A shining door, immense and unmoving, stands between our worship and the Beyond. That is all the light vouchsafed to us, a hard light blocking our passage to the ultimate Secrecy. We knock and knock, but no grace slides through the fast fitting, no glimpse of the other side is given us by any relenting of the giant hinges. Still, we find that every knock gathers — with its harsh and hurtful rebound from the surface of gold confronting us — a ringing sweetness, a most melodious and heart-ravishing “Nay” to all the importunate prayers of our flesh and blood. Here is a refusal that is a rapture more rich than our grandest triumphs in the world. Out of its mysterious reverberation our deepest poetry takes birth and, though we fail, the failure of our effort to pass beyond our finitude is an affliction which is the most wonderful creativity known to mortals.

But is this superb affliction everlasting? Yes, so long as our attempt to draw an answer from the Beyond remains entangled with outward things. We look at the tremendous beauty that shines upon us from the universe in spite of all the shadows that fall across its face and we throw our minds upon the huge and baffling spectacle to understand its appearances. But to know what is inside those appearances we must go inside the consciousness in us that catches their challenge. The mind must turn inward its sense of the cosmic beauty. The usual subjective tensions of poetry do not go far enough. Their “soul-searchings” no more than hover on the verge of the true abyss that must be plumbed. Not on the peripheries or the mid-ways but in the centre of our cosmos-thrilled being is to be found the magic perfection which inspires each effort of ours to outgrow finitude. What is behind the universe is also behind ourselves who are a part of the universe. But while we cannot break open the universe’s heart, we have pathways leading towards our own depths, knowing which we shall know the Beyond that is at once hinted and hidden everywhere. The shining door by which we are blocked is the outward gaze of our eyes; our eyes open and the Mystery gets shut. By shutting them completely and looking inward to the sheer centre we shall see what lies on the other side of the “great door — the Divine Loveliness — and having done so we may open them outward to find the Light and the Beauty no longer hard but yielding and responsive to our touch, letting us in through their splendour to the same supreme Delight. From our turning towards this vision and experience there is born the poetry that is called mystical.

People believe mysticism to be an exalted dumbness and incompatible with any mode of speech, even the exalted speech of poetry. The mystical plane, they argue, is above distinctions — an infinite featureless unity. How can such a world be expressed in the language of a world of countless objects that are separate and clearly defined? This question is rooted in an error. The mystical world is not a

featureless unity. It has indeed a vast unity which can be felt as featureless by an exclusive concentration on it; but, on the basis of the experience of an inalienable oneness, there is an experience of infinite diversity — distinctions innumerable are visioned and felt though with no sense of rigid limitation or mutual exclusiveness. Line, colour, mass, design are not lost: they cease to be a hard shutting in and shutting out, they become pervaded by a single reality, a single consciousness, a single bliss. That is the nature of the balanced mystical experience, whether cosmic or transcendental.

The cosmic experience, enfolding a universe whose parts have jagged edges looking imperfect and ugly, bears a vision in which the jagged edges of the different parts fit into one another and make a perfect and beautiful whole. The transcendental experience has the vision of a universe whose perfect whole carries the fitting together of parts that have themselves flawlessly beautiful contours: this is the universe of archetypes, of ideal forms which our jagged universe is meant progressively to manifest. Both in the cosmic vision and the transcendental, there is no compulsive loss of distinctions and so no inability to use language with its lights and shadows of a world where distinctions have play. Doubtless, the language of mysticism does not move always in step with the language of logic; but neither does poetry obey the logician’s dictate. Not systematic thinking so much as harmonious perception is the power of the poetic consciousness — and this power mysticism seizes upon as akin to its own and charges with its hidden intensities. To charge it thus is to make poetry’s habitual “in-feeling”, its moment after moment of sudden felicitous penetration of things, function in a new province of its own nature: the mystic does not distort it to a use utterly alien and unpoetic. Hence he need be no outcast from the golden-voiced circle of the Muse.

The end of mysticism is not silence. But the source of mystical poetry must ever be a deep and large ego-exceeding silence, a hushed receptivity of the mind and heart in which they are swept beyond their merely human experiences. When that silence is found in the being, even for an instant, the poet becomes capable of hearing voices which come from above the normal level of consciousness, above even the subliminal recesses to which he is usually open. Only when we attempt, without any self-exceeding or illumination, to utter mystical truths we are borne down by the conviction that we are trying to utter the Unutterable, define the Indefinable: an awed impotence seems all our art in the face of that Mystery. We lapse, not unnaturally, to the conclusion that the Spirit escapes utterance and negates distinctions, whereas the sole legitimate conclusion is that the speech of the mere mind is not competent and that our normal imagination is incapable of getting spiritual reality into focus. To discard speech and lay aside vision as non-mystical is a grave blunder.

Every plane of consciousness in us has its own speech and vision, characterised by its own peculiar rhythm of being. Shakespeare’s



After life’s fitful fever he sleeps well

is a triumph of exquisite pathos that goes home to our vital nerves, as it were, making us feel and see poignantly through the sensitive life-force in us: our guts seem to respond — like flames that are wind-shaken and go out. Shelley’s

He has outsoared the shadow of our night

has an exaltation, a threnodic thrill, of the intellect — its words are plucked out of a passion of the mind-energy and not the life-force: our brain-cells grow warm and appear to stretch upward a kindled thought-power. Suppose we came across an account of death in some such terms as Sri Aurobindo’s

Rapt thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal’s breast.<sup>1</sup>

The whole movement here is different from Shakespeare’s and Shelley’s. It does not take place in the impassioned life-force or the impassioned mind-energy, though it has affinities with both of them — a word-design and rhythm-urge that have a concrete touch upon our nerves as in Shakespeare and at the same time an atmosphere of ideative height as in Shelley — but added to these is a draw inward, a pull deep within that seeks to liberate us into some unknown yet intense and intimate immensity reaching out around and above without end. This sense is created by the words being caught from a plane beyond the human: the rhythmic vibration no less than the stuff of significance is derived from an ampler consciousness and carries the actual thrill of it. If that plane were contacted and drawn upon all the time, poetry would lay bare the Spirit’s own speech wherein the nature of the mystical world is not something that fits ill, or by half, the shape and sound of language but makes one organically moving body with it. Simile and metaphor become then no dubious effort to suggest what seems to the mere mind a state of formless being that is outside the range of imagery: language with its various devices grows a natural mode of expressing the one yet manifold cosmic Divine as well as the archetypal Transcendent.

The mental energy and the life-force can both poetically catch fire when the Spirit presses upon them, a fine outburst of revealing figures is possible on these planes of consciousness if somehow a channel has been cleared between them and the Unknown till

1. ‘Jivanmukta’, *Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 552.

From cloud-zoned pinnacles of the secret Spirit  
 Song falls precipitant in dizzying streams.

But in a Thompsonian sonority like that, the Spirit’s accent is attuned to a force belonging to the human rather than the Superhuman: the sight and the movement are of the inspired imagination, they have not the profound ease and colossal freedom of a direct spiritual experience. More inward, more authentically swept with the true spiritual suggestion and resonance is the poetic soul of those two lines about mystical inspiration, by the Indian poet Harindranath Chattopadhyaya during his stay in Sri Aurobindo’s Ashram:

See me go from silence to deeper silence  
 Song by song bird-marking a cloudless azure.

In rendering the process and the meaning of his music alive to us, the poet here does not take his sense of the Divine and proceed to make it concrete to himself by equating it with figures from Nature — “cloud-zoned pinnacles”, “dizzying streams”; he appears rather to intuit the Divine in a concrete way from the first and then proceed to envelop and permeate natural figures with that intuition. The secret Spirit is not felt through Nature so much as Nature is felt through the secret Spirit: that is why the vision-impact and the rhythm-movement bear some kind of largeness and directness that is more revelatory than an imaginative magnificence helping out mysticism.

An even more puissant largeness and directness should be the mystic’s goal. In the just-quoted lines, haunted though they are by the mood of the In-world and the Over-world, there is yet something missing from the highest spiritual point of view. Aesthetically, they are faultless — so too are Thompson’s lines; mystically, their revelatory rapture is not altogether the sheer substance of the Spirit thrown out in luminous speech. To get that substance and its direct disclosure, the poet must practise a deeper concentration, realise a keener concreteness of the Eternal and its thronged infinities. Above everything else, he must still all the vibrations of his ordinary being, no matter how grand or exquisite they may be, and fix himself on letting loose without any reshaping by those vibrations the pure rhythms of the wide and massive Divine such as the ancient Indian scriptures carry and in our own day Sri Aurobindo’s recent work in which

Swiftly, swiftly crossing the golden spaces  
 Knowledge leaps, a torrent of rapid lightnings;  
 Thoughts that left the Ineffable’s flaming mansions,  
 Blaze in my spirit.

Slow the heart-beats’ rhythm like a giant hammer’s;  
Missioned voices drive to me from God’s doorway  
Words that live not save upon Nature’s summits,  
Ecstasy’s chariots.<sup>2</sup>

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

(First published in *Mother India*, July 1957 issue;  
reprinted here from *Inspiration and Effort: Studies in Literary Attitude and Expression*,  
The Integral Life Foundation, U.S.A., 1995, pp. 89-94.)

2. ‘Descent’, *Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 578.

***Myself and My Creed***

*I belong to no nation, no civilisation, no society, no race, but to the Divine.  
I obey no master, no ruler, no law, no social convention, but the Divine.  
To Him I have surrendered all, will, life and self; for Him I am ready to  
give all my blood, drop by drop, if such is His Will, with complete joy; and  
nothing in His service can be sacrifice, for all is perfect delight.*

*The Mother*

(*Words of Long Ago*, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 2, p. 170)

## AN INTRODUCTION AND TWO EDITORIALS

[The first issue of *Mother India* came out for the Mother's birthday 21 February 1949 under the editorship of K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran). Soli Albless was the Assistant editor. We reproduce below the editorial of the inaugural issue and the one written when the journal began its second year. Both pieces were unsigned.

These two editorials are preceded by an introduction which Amal wrote in 1997 for the book *India and the World Scene*, a collection of his political editorials during the years 1949-1951.]

### INTRODUCTION

Soon I shall be 93 years old. In these introductory words I am looking back on articles written several decades before. They are the creations of a comparatively young journalist with an ardent mission. One devoted to Sri Aurobindo cannot help having an unusual objective: a work of enlightenment. But to pursue that aim in the field of political journalism was the acme of the exceptional for me, a writer given to poetry, literary criticism, historical research, philosophic thought, scientific theory.

How did this phenomenon come about? It took shape because a devotee of Sri Aurobindo's who was a businessman could not rest with stocks and shares and the general market of material exchanges. He wanted political journalism to carry a touch of the Aurobindonian light. Along with a friend of his in the industrial sphere — Yogendra Rastogi — Keshavdev R. Poddar, renamed Navajata, "the New-born", by Sri Aurobindo and his radiant helper known as the Divine Mother of the Master's Ashram of Integral Yoga at Pondicherry, conceived the idea of a fortnightly paper participating in the public affairs of current life with an outlook based on the world-vision of these two spiritual personalities. He put his project before the Mother and suggested my name as the Editor. She gave her approval. My wife Sehra struck upon the caption "Mother India" for the new venture. This caption had previously been associated with a book attempting to cast a shadow and a slur on Indian life and culture. Some friends tried to dissuade its adoption, but it was finally chosen as not only the most apt in itself but also as countering its recent defilement and setting it high in its own right.

A number of interviews to obtain definite guide-lines were arranged between the Mother and Navajata, Yogendra, myself and Soli Albless, whom I had chosen as Associate Editor. When it was stipulated that the fortnightly was to include comments on the political themes of the day, I confessed to the Mother: "I have never associated myself with politics. I know nothing about them." The Mother smiled and said: "Neither

do I.” With natural concern I exclaimed: “Then what shall we do?” The Mother calmly declared: “There is Sri Aurobindo. He will do everything.”

And indeed he did. Just as Napoleon is said to have created first-rate generals out of mud, as it were, by the action of his own superb genius, Sri Aurobindo built me into a political thinker. Not only were my editorials written under his inner inspiration: they were also sent to him for approval. Only when his “Yes” was wired to us did we plunge into publication. There was such a rapport between him and the editorial office that when an acquaintance doubted whether the master had been truly represented, Sri Aurobindo, on being told of the misgiving, exclaimed: “Doesn’t he know that *Mother India* is my paper?”

The direct rapport between the Master and the disciple may be flashed out by a more incisive incident. When the Indian government hurried to recognise Red China immediately after Mao-tse-tung came to power, *Mother India* published a series of articles vehemently condemning the action. The Mother happened to look at the opening sentences of the very first article: “In recognising Red China the Indian Government has committed a mistake whose gravity beggars description. We have made a New Year’s gesture which would rank as one of the stupidest in our history if its stupidity were not surpassed by its perniciousness.” Taken aback by the vehemence of the condemnation, she took the copy of the article to Sri Aurobindo’s room and, reading out the lines, exclaimed, “Amal has been very violent here. Have you approved of it?” Sri Aurobindo indulged in one of his moments of decisive monosyllabic eloquence: “Yes.” There was an end to the controversy.

During the early days of *Mother India* when the office was in Bombay, several experienced journalists would visit it and proffer advice which was meant to be helpful. Once I was asked how much matter I had in hand after the first issue would come out. I said, “For a couple of more issues but I am always on the alert to collect vital items.” My visitor raised his hands and cried out, “That’s not enough. You must have something like six months’ stuff in reserve. Else you will go up like a rocket and come down like a stick. There will be a fiasco.”

I wrote this to the Mother and told her that my own attitude was akin to that of Marshal Foch during the battle of the Marne in World War I. When asked about his position at the front he sent the message: “My left wing is broken. My centre is giving way. The situation is excellent. I am attacking.” I added that I had the feeling I could fill the whole paper single-handed if necessary every fortnight. However, I admitted that this feeling might be a symptom of *folie de grandeur*, delusion of greatness. In any case, it would be better to have several writers with their own styles and viewpoints. I ended with the question: shall we postpone the proposed date of our first number? I got the telegram: “Stick to the date. Live on faith.” We went into action with a whoop. And we have stuck to every due date — never once missing to come out on time, no matter what difficulties cropped up.

I was summoned by the Press Council because I had declared that Kashmir

was to be claimed for India under the conditions that obtained there in 1949-50. I believe our attitude towards Pakistan was the most uncompromising in the whole sphere of Indian journalism. But, of course, we had to be careful not to embarrass the Government unnecessarily.

Here I may quote an observation by the Mother to me after Sri Aurobindo had left his body and she would be the final judge of my editorials. She said in effect. "Our goals are always the same but our approaches may differ. Our public backgrounds in India are not the same. He was an acknowledged Nationalist leader at one time."

The cultural editorials have already been published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram under the title *The Indian Spirit and the World's Future*. Most of them have relevance also to the present volume, for they have political undertones that should not be neglected. So they have been included.

I am grateful to Shri Vijay for taking the initiative, with the approval of the Ashram Trustees, to pull out of limbo a series of pronouncements that, in spite of Sri Aurobindo's full backing in private, had lain overlooked for years.

August 15<sup>th</sup> 1997

K. D. SETHNA

### WHAT WE STAND FOR

We are here to answer a grave need of the times. This country has gained independence, but it has not found its proper line of life. There is a welter of ideologies and our minds are divided. A host of parties has sprung up, each with a different aim. In the clash of parties the right destiny of India is forgotten. We have named our paper "Mother India" with a purpose. There is a tendency among us to regard India as just a collection of human beings with certain common racial and cultural characteristics. But India is more than a collection of human beings. India is a living entity, a presiding genius, the one self of all these human beings and the one consciousness that is at work in them. You cannot make a nation with a mere aggregate of individuals. A nation is a single being.

It is this single being, the life of our life, that we have to serve. It is the one Mother of whom we are the myriad children. Until we realise this, we shall never achieve greatness. Our first requirement is to live for and look up to a presiding genius which animates us, which unites us, which alone has made our culture and civilisation persist through thousands of years and which alone can make us fulfil our destiny.

The sense of India as the living Mother is what we are aiming to kindle everywhere in this country. But to kindle this sense is not to answer the whole need

of the times. Every country has a presiding genius, whether openly acknowledged or not. But every country has predominant qualities, a typical nature, a central function. We must realise what exactly are the face and form of our presiding genius. What is Mother India?

Mother India is manifold. Art, philosophy, science, politics, industry — all these she has been known for through the ages. Yet brighter than her fame for these has been her fame for seeking the Godhead secret within earth's life. Her art, philosophy, science, politics and industry have been inspired directly or indirectly by this seeking. And unless we realise that Mother India is a spiritual light we shall either fumble in the dark or run after delusive gleams. We cannot fulfil our destiny without following the instinct of divinity in us.

Does this mean we must be religious zealots, fanatics of a creed? Certainly not. The spiritual light that is Mother India is wider than religiosity. It has room for a thousand different ways of worship. Inasmuch as it is not limited to a narrow sectarianism it makes for a secular view of the State. But by "secular" we must not understand indifference to the instinct of divinity. To be secular can be for Indians nothing except being widely spiritual rather than narrowly religious. The instinct of divinity we must never lose hold on: without it we shall be false to our whole historical development and to the power that has made us great in the past and led to our survival while all other ancient civilisations have died. It shows us our "swabhava", our real fountainhead of action. If we deny our "swabhava" we shall miss our goal.

There is, of course, in every nation the instinct of divinity. It is, however, not the master-instinct and has not played too fundamental a part. That is why, more than any other nation, we Indians have to keep it burning if we are to fulfil ourselves and be to the entire world a source of illumination. Many things today work to dim this instinct. Perhaps the most dangerous of all things is the idea assiduously spread that it is unworldly and impoverishes earth-life. We have to admit that there has been a trend in India to look too much beyond the world and renounce earth-life. But it is not the only trend, and spirituality can be dynamic as so often spirituality has been in India. The full flowering, the full richness of life on earth is what we aim at when we point to the instinct of divinity as the "swabhava" of the Indian nation.

Our paper, therefore, will not stand aloof from the march of events. It will be in the very thick of them and take its position in the arena of politics. But in the hubbub of political slogans we bring a standard that is non-political. Though we shall never stop touching politics as also we shall never stop touching all that constitutes man's many-faceted life, we are not a political party. And our standard of judgment, by being essentially non-political and above all parties, will conduce to an impartiality, a freedom, a wideness, a depth of vision.

We are on the side of neither capitalism nor communism nor any other political "ism". In every field of activity we shall criticise whatever militates against the instinct of divinity and blocks the work of the spiritual force that is Mother India.

We shall give the utmost constructive help we can to whatever encourages this instinct and facilitates this work. The Godhead secret within man is the truth of man and most keenly the truth of the Indian nation, the truth that has to be lived out as much as possible. Not for any lesser ideal do we launch our paper and only this highest ideal we have in mind when we take as our motto the ancient cry: "Great is truth and it shall prevail".

### THE TRUTH WE SERVE

*Mother India* is launching on its second year. And we have chosen February 21 to celebrate its anniversary because this day is memorable, year after year, as one of the four on which the public at large takes the blessings of Sri Aurobindo and his radiant co-worker who in the Ashram at Pondicherry is called the Mother and whose birthday falls on February 21. We started our career with the light of this birthday in our eyes and our whole aim has been to see with the help of that light the nature of every world-movement and to judge all events according as they manifested or retarded the secret Truth which that light represents. The Truth we have sought to serve is the presence of the Divine in the human, the presence that India throughout her history has regarded as the master-key to human progress and fulfilment.

And because India, more than any other nation, has been afire with a sense of the Divine and because there has been down the ages a persistent cultural consciousness with this sense as its centre, we Indians in our collectivity should feel that through space and time we are held together by a supra-individual being which is not only our nationhood, the one self of our myriad Indianness, but also a dynamic delegate of the Divine. An emanation of the Supreme Creative Force, instinct with a special mission of the Infinite and the Eternal to raise mankind to the highest and harmonise all life: this is how we must intuit the reality we have so often spoken of in our patriotic moods as *Hind Mata*. Unless we are aware of living within such a national being, unless we stir to such a presiding genius, we shall never give our culture its full power and our dream of a fairer world will never tend completely to materialise. To be scattered individuals with great aims and capacities will be all our lot: we shall lack the inner cohesion without which no collectivity can come to total fruition and make its most effective cultural mark on the world.

The development of a national awareness of a mighty Mother, who is a face and figure of the infinite Divine, side by side with the development of an individual awareness of the authentic Person within us who is a flame of the Eternal — a divine psychological growth towards Godhead is the ideal for which during the past year our fortnightly has worked. That growth has an extreme world-importance: There is at present, because of many causes, a general decline of values and a general confusion of mind all over the earth. In India this state of affairs has a critical



significance obtaining nowhere else. Not that the Indians are in comparison with other peoples more demoralised or distracted. But India has been in history the home of the immensest aspiration and the intensest search after the Good, the Beautiful and the True. The dimming of the fire in the hearts of her inhabitants and the paling of the light in their minds are, therefore, the gravest of tragedies and most to be fought against. For, if Indians can bring forth the real genius of their country the world's degeneration will be halted: the hope of the future is in the renaissance and resurgence of essential India. And all the more powerful will be her influence because her genius is not only the typical idealist of the Divine but also a multi-mooded idealist, holding something of all national souls, functioning with an assimilative capacity which makes her as diverse in expression as she is single in motive. She can be all things to all men and so her uplifting force will be everywhere the most creative. And today even her inherent omni-effectivity is rendered more concentrated because, as a result of a long and pervasive impress on her by the Western mind through her past British rulers, she is a meeting-ground of the East and the West, and the consciousness with which she works is profoundly Asiatic with yet a strong European colour. In rising victorious over the tide of decadence and debasement now sweeping across the earth she will epitomise in every respect the entire humanity's victory.

But how shall we defeat this dangerous tide? Or, to put it more positively, how shall we grow in spirituality? Paradoxically the answer is: "Not only by overcoming all that has been looked upon as unspiritual but also by getting beyond what at the present day we take to be spiritual." The fact is that our current ideas about spirituality are inadequate and the inadequacy is itself a portion of the harm wrought by the dangerous tide we have to defeat. We talk of India's ancient wisdom, but we conceive it in terms that do it scant justice. So when we think of giving a new vitality, a contemporary life, to this wisdom we go no further than morality and religion. We never stop to ask: What is meant by India's ancient wisdom? Surely the most pointed answer is: the Upanishads and the Gita. There are various interpretations of these scriptures, but no interpretation can have any value if it denies that these scriptures put before us a life of direct concrete experience of the Eternal, the Infinite, the Divine. This experience must be distinguished from the merely moral frame of mind. One can be a great mystic, a great Yogi, as well as a highly moral person. But to be a practitioner of a moral life — however that may be conceived — does not necessarily make one a great mystic, a great Yogi. To be a knower of Brahman, Atman, Ishwara and let that supra-intellectual knowledge issue in a life lived in the light of a more-than-human consciousness is something far greater than to be a moralist following certain set principles of conduct by means of will-power and fellow-feeling. The moral life in itself can be a fine thing, but it cannot be compared in greatness to the mystical life — the life of a Krishna, a Chaitanya, a Mirabai, a Ramakrishna, a Vivekananda. Nor can we deny that it is the mystical life, the Yogic

spirituality, that is the aim and ideal of the Upanishads and the Gita, the vibrant luminous essence of India's ancient wisdom.

When we add religion to morality we do bring in something more that is valuable, but mere religion cannot be put on a par with God-realisation. Religion at its best is a mental and emotional acceptance of the Eternal, the Infinite, the Divine. It can be a good preparation for the truly spiritual life, just as the practice of moral virtues could be. But to be religious, no matter how highly, is not the same thing as to know the unitive life, the state of inner union with a more-than-human, a divine reality that brings a light, a bliss, a power, a love the purely mental and emotional acceptance of God can never compass. To have faith in God and even to listen to an "inner voice" is to encourage and practise the ordinary religious temper and the ordinary moral conscience. A man of unusual calibre may encourage and practise these things in an unusual way, but they still remain, for all their intensification, within the domain of ordinary morality and religion and never cross the barrier between them and God-realisation.

Here a very common misuse of terms must be exposed. Much glib talk is going on about what is called Karma Yoga and about the high place given it in Indian scriptures. Popularly, Karma Yoga is supposed to be the doing of work with trust in God, a keen sense of duty and as much disinterestedness as possible. And the motive behind it is believed to be service of mankind. But one may inquire, "How does such action become Yoga?" Yoga means union — with the Divine; where is any room here for the unitive life? What we have in such action is yet a mixture of religion and morality. The true Karma Yogi is aflame with aspiration to unite with the Eternal and the Infinite. Service of mankind is only a means to an end for him: it is a means towards the mystical experience by enlarging one's scope of action beyond the small individual ego and, when the mystical experience is reached, service of mankind is a means to express it in the world. But this service is not the only means. And true Karma Yoga is done fundamentally by a threefold process: (1) there is a deeply devoted inner offering of one's actions to the Supreme Lord — a constant remembrance and consecration; (2) there is an inner detachment not only from the fruit of one's actions but also from the actions themselves, an ever-increasing detachment until the infinite desireless impersonal peace of the Atman, the one World-Self that is an ever-silent Witness or Watcher, is attained and a spontaneous superhuman disinterestedness becomes possible; (3) there is, through this attainment and through complete surrender of one's nature-parts to the Lord, the Ishwara, the transmission of a divine dynamism, a superb World-Will from beyond the world, in all one's actions. God-realisation is the essence of Karma Yoga as of all other Yogas.

Without this God-realisation a man cannot give a new vitality, a contemporary life, to India's ancient wisdom — for he will not at all embody that wisdom at its purest and profoundest. This is not to refuse greatness to him, but it is not the greatness ancient India upheld as the top reach of the human soul. If India has

anything to give humanity at present, it is that wisdom in a form suitable and applicable to modern needs, that wisdom with a further development of its potency in certain directions. But in the absence of that wisdom the greatness one may achieve in oneself and induce in others is certainly never what ancient India considered the highest achievement in life and what modern India in tune with her inmost being could charge with appropriate new values and offer as the highest achievement.

Of course, all men cannot be Yogis in the full sense. But there must be a clear recognition of what genuinely constitutes the Indian ideal and in some way or other the ordinary existence must be brought into touch with it. Also, there must be whole-hearted acknowledgment of the actualisation of the ideal in those who have dedicated themselves for years to it. And towards these rare souls the mind of the nation must turn more and more. On the other hand, we must take care not to allow the Godward aspiration to end in a total neglect of earth. Earth's concerns are part of the scheme of things and the supreme Creative Force has not produced either an inexplicable illusion or an incomprehensible blunder in setting up the tremendous cosmos within which life agonises and exults, strives and falls and rises, presses forward as though some mysterious perfection urged it from behind and allured it from beyond. If by spirituality we understand a renunciation of the world's various calls and an impoverishment of life to the bare minimum, we diminish in a different way its significance as much as we do when we take it to connote nothing else than morality and religion. Spirituality is at the same time a direct going of the human to the Divine and a direct coming of the Divine to the human.

If we Indians are to march in the van of the world and fulfil a mission which no other people can accomplish, we must feel that our genius is a dynamic world-transforming spirituality which lives in a concrete contact and communion with a Perfect Being, Consciousness, Power and Bliss. All events and movements must be evaluated by reference to one standard: Do they, however remotely, tend towards the increase of such spirituality? The phrase "however remotely" has some importance. For, all happenings do not have an easily perceptible connection with the Spiritual Truth. There are plenty of intellectual questions, social issues, political problems, economic situations that seem far away from matters mystical. The apparent far-awayness should not lead us to regard them as irrelevant and to decide them with considerations within a narrow and isolated sphere. If the Divine is the centre of things, there can be nothing on even the remotest periphery without an invisible radius running out towards it. We must find the radius and discern in the peripheral object the point at which contact is made or refused. The point is difficult to fix, but it is always there and certain broad indications can help us.

The Divine has three simultaneous poises of being: the transcendent, the universal, the individual. The point of contact with the transcendent Divine is in general distinguishable by the sense of utter freedom, the sense of the inexpressible beyond formulas, the sense of the absolute perfection that puts "a yonder to all

ends” while holding for each term its legitimate climax and consummation. The universal Divine is suggested generally by the sense of wideness and equality, the sense of unity-in-multiplicity, the sense of greatly diversified yet persistent order. The general sign of the individual Divine is the sense of plastic form, the sense of adventurous variation without losing balance, the sense of numerous initiatives that compete and yet avoid mutual destruction. We must develop insight enough to mark the Divine at general play in any one of the poises or in a combination of more than one or in all at once, and according to the strength in which there is the play or according to the measure in which the threefold integrality is approached we must pass judgment. Of course, things are never to be taken at their surface value, many an undesirable force masquerades under attractive guises. Also, nothing should be studied in disparate sections — a whole view must be taken so that all the sections fall into their proper places and the complete nature of a force emerges. The labour of discovering whether there is or there is not a point of contact, however subtle, with the spiritual goal of mankind calls for intellectual no less than intuitive examination. To that labour *Mother India* has pledged itself and it puts no limits to the field which is to be examined. To help itself in its labour and become a force of action for world-change, it directs both mind and heart to whatever in this land of India must manifest the light of the Supreme Being, Consciousness, Power and Bliss. And that is why, on the occasion of starting our second year of serving to the best of our ability the Truth of truths that is the Divine’s presence within the human, we join our obeisance to that of thousands who, whether in India or abroad, thrill to the day of *darshan* — February 21 — when for hours a stream of people will pass reverently under the calm yet compassionate eyes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother whose combined life-work is a sustained Yoga to embody the Divine Truth and bring about for earth — in the words of Sri Aurobindo’s epic poem *Savitri* —

*What most she needs, what most exceeds her scope,  
A Mind unvisited by illusion’s gleams,  
A Will expressive of soul’s deity,  
A Strength not forced to stumble by its speed  
A Joy that drags not sorrow as its shade.*<sup>1</sup>

(*India and the World Scene* by K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran);  
Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences, Pondicherry, 1997)

1. Pp. 51-52

*Keeping in mind these words that encapsulate the aims and ideals of this journal, we invite authors to send us their articles, poems, reviews, creative expressions for consideration for publication in Mother India.*

## HOW AND WHY I CAME TO PONDICHERRY

I am a deputy of the aspiring world,  
My spirit's liberty I ask for all.

– Savitri

I was born on the auspicious Ekadashi day of Kartik, on a Sunday, which according to the Gregorian calendar was the 28<sup>th</sup> day of October, the month of revolutions, and the year was 1906 when Sri Aurobindo was living in Baroda and had already made some advance in his sadhana.

About the time I was born, my father was frantically searching for a guru who would help him to swim across the sea of ignorance which this human life is and attain liberation. He was, however, a teacher, and was endowed with a rather critical intellect. He used to say that a teacher would teach but could not easily learn from another teacher. Hence, however much he felt attracted towards a prospective guru, he would sooner or later notice some weakness in him and go away from him. Once he did succeed in finding a guru whom he could accept and he was so happy in his devotion to the chosen guru that he wrote and published a pamphlet entitled *Easy Path to Deliverance*. But this devotion, too, did not last long. His desire for liberation had thus remained unfulfilled when I was born and he had been content to lead a decent moral life and be a model teacher in a Government school. After twenty-five years of brilliant career as a teacher and winning recognition for his services, he retired from service. Against the twenty-five years of active service, he lived for thirty years in retirement and died at the ripe old age of eighty-five. My father inculcated in me a deep love for morality and religion and sent me for my secondary education to the famous Dadabhai Naoroji High School in Anand, where I was put up in the school's boarding house. I was twelve at that time. The atmosphere in the school was permeated with great moral idealism in those days and the teachers, who lived near the school premises, exercised a wholesome moral influence on the pupils. Being rather quick in my studies, I did not have to spend much time over the texts and preferred to give a good deal of it to reading biographies of saints and holy men. Thus the love of good life inculcated by my father found rich nourishment in the school and at the young age of fourteen I had imbibed the inspiring influence of men like Swami Ramatirtha, Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Inspired by the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, at the age of sixteen I started the practice of meditation. During the long school vacation, I would stay on in the boarding house and day after day pore over the book containing Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. My efforts to practise whatever I understood from the book were rewarded with happy experiences. I read the Bible, too, and under its influence tried the

method of prayer to cure ailing friends. I also made successful experiments in thought-transference through mental communion with friends and sending messages to distant friends and calling them over to me. Thus the seed sown by my father sprouted into a plant and bore some fragrant flowers.

Since Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda were no longer alive to guide me in my newly awakened spiritual quest, I started, even while in the D. N. High School at Anand, looking for a guru who would help me to realise the presence of God. I came to hear about Sri Aurobindo, who was asking his disciples not to renounce the world but to realise the Divine in the midst of the world. But it took me some time to procure any of his writings. At last, I read a book called *Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy* and felt that he would be an ideal guru for me and resolved to accept his sadhana which was to be done in the midst of the world and decided to go to him one day and surrender myself to his way of life. While still at the school, I read Jnaneshvar's commentary on the *Gita* and was deeply impressed by the incident referred to in it of Jnaneshvar humbling Change's pride by ordering the porch where he was sitting to move forward to receive the latter who was coming to meet him, seated on a tiger. I wondered in my mind what perfect oneness Jnaneshvar must have established with the inert porch to make it obey his order. This incident silenced my sceptical mind ever prone to doubt and filled me with the ambition to cultivate strength of mind and spirit.

When, after repeated readings of the teachings of Swami Ramatirtha, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, I started practising meditation, my mind would often sink into total silence and remain in that condition for many hours. Man is a slave of his nature, *prakriti*. The awakened soul keenly feels this slavery and, failing in its struggle to master the *prakriti*, it turns towards the Lord of Mercy and prays to Him for deliverance from its slavery. In such a state of mind one day, all alone on a dark night in the school compound during the vacation, I was praying to the Lord from the depth of my heart to deliver me from the bonds of my nature, *prakriti*, and was sunk into the silent depths of my heart, when all at once the darkness was transformed into a blue light and I saw Sri Krishna, flute in hand, standing beside me and gently soothing me with his hand. I heard him repeat the *Gita* verse, "Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in me alone; I will deliver you from all sins; do not grieve." I woke up from the trance and ever since I have been trying to understand the meaning of this vision and trying to live up to Sri Krishna's teaching. The Lord's Grace descended on me and He took me up in His lap, as a mother takes her child in hers.

In the school the birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna, Janmashtami and other sacred days were celebrated with great devotion so as to awaken love of holiness in the pupils' hearts. Both teachers and pupils participated in these celebrations with utmost zest. During the annual day celebrations trained pupils staged skits and dramatic scenes on moral and religious themes. On one such occasion I was selected

to represent the dialogue between Nachiketa and Yamaraja, the Lord of Death. Even today I find myself ceaselessly striving against Yamaraja as Savitri had done in the ancient legend.

This religious atmosphere in the school awakened and strengthened spiritual aspirations in the pupils' hearts and the pupils spontaneously engaged themselves in activities intended to build strong character. Some of us who stayed in the school's boarding house, had started a "self-improvement society". The society's meetings used to be held in secret late in the night after the other pupils had gone to bed. We met every week and each member gave an account of the efforts he had made during the preceding week to improve his habits. This exchange of our experiences was a great source of strength to those of us who really wished to grow morally and spiritually. Though our meetings were held in secret, our beloved teacher Sri Bhikhabhai Patel, who acted as a kind of moral guardian, watched the proceedings unknown to us, and rejoiced over our zeal for moral improvement.

As the Matriculation examination drew near, we realised that we would soon be leaving our dear school. We felt sad and shed tears in secret for many a day. On the other hand, my efforts to seek Sri Aurobindo's guidance had become more intense than ever. Two of my teachers had some writings of Sri Aurobindo with them and also subscribed to the journal *Arya* published from Pondicherry. I used to read those writings and have occasional discussions with the teachers who also practised meditation. In 1925, they left the school and went over to Pondicherry. I had left off study and joined Gandhiji's movement for swaraj which had swept over the country since 1920. I had two attacks of appendicitis that year but had cured them with the help of nature-cure methods. When, however, I got the third attack, Gandhiji decided, without asking for my consent to get me operated upon, telling me: "We don't wish to lose you." He called in the doctors and handed me over to them, after obtaining from them an assurance that I would be returned to him safe and healthy. He then left to attend the Annual Session of the Congress at Gauhati. After the operation the intestines became so weak that I could take nothing except liquids. After returning from Gauhati, Gandhiji sent me over to the Antyaja Sevamandal Ashram at Navsari to rest and recover my health there by living on mango juice and milk for some weeks.

While I was at the Navsari Ashram, I was in correspondence with my school teacher, Sri Rambhai who was living in Pondicherry. After the establishment of the Ashram in Pondicherry in November 1926, I wrote for permission to join it. The Mother asked for my photograph and it was sent to her. I was accepted as one of the sadhakas and left Navsari for Pondicherry in the last week of December 1927.

When I alighted at Pondicherry station, my school teacher Sri Rambhai, who had come to receive me, told me that Sri Aurobindo had retired into complete seclusion and the Ashram was being run by the Mother. This was news to me. I was both surprised and pained. But Sri Rambhai added that I was to meet the Mother at



11 a.m. the next day in the library-room of the Ashram and that she had got a room cleaned and furnished for me. During the very first night of my stay in that room, I had a wonderful experience. I dreamt as if a wonderful golden sun was shining in front of me and I became a small flame with my gaze fixed on it. I spent the whole night in indescribable bliss. The next day was the 31<sup>st</sup> of December and, when I met the Mother on that day, I saw shining over her the same sun which I had seen in my dream the previous night. Spontaneously I bowed down to her and obtained her blessings.

I got my first opportunity to see Sri Aurobindo on February 21, 1928. It was a great experience and I felt that the decision I had made while at school to accept Sri Aurobindo as my guru was perfectly right. I, therefore, surrendered myself heart and soul to him and felt reassured that he would save me from all my sins in the same way as Sri Krishna had promised Arjuna. When I had my second darshan of Sri Aurobindo in the August of 1928, he was satisfied with my yearnings for sadhana and progress in it and conveyed his satisfaction and had sent compliments to me through the Mother. After that day my spiritual bond with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother continually grew stronger and my gurus helped me in my sadhana with all their spiritual powers. In 1929 Barindrakumar, the younger brother of Sri Aurobindo, left the Ashram without informing the Mother or taking her permission. Next morning the Mother sent a note asking me to shift to that room vacated by Barindrakumar. This room was situated on the back side of Sri Aurobindo's room, on the first floor of the office of the building department of the Ashram where I was working. A road was running between the Master's residence and my room.

In this way, the Master's grace granted me the boon of physical nearness, when I was striving to understand the real meaning of the word — "yoga", and the significance of the retirement of the Master. One day during meditation, the Master made me understand that the meaning of the word "yoga" is to unite, to establish inner relation. 'It is for teaching the sadhakas, the way to establish the inner relation that I have withdrawn, so that I can help them in a better way.'

In 1931, I felt the longing to withdraw from the outer world, to hark to music of the inner Self, who was calling me. I informed the Mother of my feeling. Sri Aurobindo, replied immediately: "You can withdraw if you are feeling so. The Mother will make all necessary arrangement for you." When one accepts a guru, and the guru takes him to his heart; when their relation is deep and intimate enough, the disciple approaches and identifies himself with the Master; the Master receives him with all love and makes him sit in his great heart and he takes his seat in the heart of the disciple. They remain no more separate entities, but begin to live in union.

It was for this reason that I was granted the physical nearness. It was the Master who had suggested me to retire, so that he can teach me how to establish intimacy and union. In this way, he started sadhana within me and gave me hundreds of

experiences and wrote hundreds of letters to explain them. During meditation, when I rushed to him, entered his heart, united and identified with him . . . he would run with all love to his window, open it, build a bridge of Light between our two windows, and would tell me . . . “I am with you.” I can see his majestic form standing there to respond to the call of his devotee, defying all rules and breaking all bondages. . . .

Here is the graceful bounty of the Divine Master. The experiences given by him and the letters written to explain them are being offered here for those who are on the path, my fellow-pilgrims, to remind them of the presence of the Master’s guide lights to support their conviction and faith.

A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme;  
His nature we must put on as He puts ours,  
We are sons of God and must be even as He;  
His human portion, we must grow divine,  
Our life is a paradox with God for key.

– *Savitri*

### SOME REMINISCENCES

I reached the Ashram on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1927, i.e., thirteen months after the birth of the Ashram. The descent of the light of overmind consciousness had illumined and charged the atmosphere with concentration and dynamic electrification, and whoever entered and breathed the air used to get his mind illumined and feel as if he was pushed deep into the ocean of a dynamic peace. The pressure and the working of overmental descent was so very strong throughout the day and night that everyone was driven to remain inward and one could hardly open his eyes fully even while working. Everyone was having two types of experiences — there was an experience that *sat-chit-ananda* consciousness with all its peace and power was forcing its way through the top of the head; there was another experience that a strong stream of peace and meditation was being poured in through the head, and everybody in the Ashram was forced to remain under the spell of peace and meditation throughout the day and night and was having a multitude of experiences.

When I reached the Ashram, the number of the inmates was about 30 and my number was 31. When I reached the Ashram in December 1927, I was a young boy of twenty-one and perhaps the youngest among those who were in the Ashram at the time.

In the morning there used to be a common meditation in the presence of the Divine Mother on the ground-floor verandah of Sri Aurobindo’s house. The Mother comes down at 7 a.m. In meditation, I open myself up in all parts of my being and strive to receive her Light and Grace to purify and illumine my whole being. The

meditation lasts for half an hour or forty minutes. After the meditation everyone offers pranam to the Mother and after receiving a suggestive flower message from her everyone returns to his room and retires for breakfast or to the work which each sadhaka accepts as his daily sadhana as a preparation for meeting the Divine.

The Mother came to the library-room at 11 a.m. and saw the newcomers and gave them interviews. The interviews over, the Mother proceeded to the dining-room, which was situated in the corner by the side of the present 'Prosperity'. It was a small room, and at the entrance a chair was kept on which the Mother sat and gave each of us our dishes kept ready for distribution which we received after offering our pranam to her. The Mother first tasted the food separately kept in small dishes. She threw a gracious glance on each of us while going.

There was a cook who used to prepare only rice and vegetables. We used to get bread from the market. The morning breakfast at 6 a.m. consisted of bread, milk-cocoa and plantains. The lunch at 11.30 consisted of bread, rice, vegetable, curd or milk, plantains and one dish prepared by a batch of inmates. Dara was fond of preparing *payasa*. Merchantman was fond of preparing potato *vada*. The Bengali batch used to prepare *puri* and we used to prepare special *khichri* (kedgerie). Evening meal at 6.30 p.m. consisted of bread, vegetable, milk and plantains.

In the beginning the Mother came on the terrace of Sri Aurobindo's house at 6 p.m. and walked there for half an hour. After a year she started going out to the lake in the car that was driven by Pavitra, and walked there for half an hour or more and returned at 6.30 p.m. There was a programme of soup distribution at about 7 p.m. above the reception-room verandah. During the soup distribution most of us reported our experiences of the day to the Mother and she gave explanations of our experiences and at times she would tell us her experiences regarding each of us.

This was a golden period in the sadhana in the Ashram, when gods were called down to inhabit those who were fit to assimilate their consciousness. The Grace of the Divine Mother had begun to work upon me and I was dragged many a time into trance and came back with different types of experiences. Once I saw myself acting as a military officer on a mountain in one of my past lives. When I reported this vision at soup time, she said 'Yes, in one of your past lives you were that officer' and then added, 'You were with me in Italy and were one of the best sculptors.' She had suggested to me to write poetry because I was a well-known poet in France in one of my past lives. There was night meditation after 9.30 p.m. We sat in the upper verandah in the presence of the Mother. During this session of night meditation many people used to have experiences.

There are many incidents which took place by the Grace of the Divine Mother. It so happened, one day, that the main gate was locked from inside for morning meditation by a young gate-keeper and he joined the meditation. When the meditation was over we were leaving the Mother and receiving flowers from her. The gatekeeper was to bow first of all to receive flower blessings from the Mother and then he

would open the gate. On that day I had finished my pranam and after receiving flowers I approached the gate, but it was closed and the younger gate-keeper was searching for the gate-key. I asked him and he said that he had lost the key. I was in a most collected and concentrated mood and by the Grace of the Mother, I followed the Light that was flowing out from my third eye, asking him to follow me. I proceeded with semi-closed eyes where my third eye led me and led the gate-keeper to the key which was lying in a corner of the garden.

There were many such incidents of miraculous nature. However, I was much alert about these powers and miracles. I had been acquainted with thought transmission, telepathy and establishing keen contact at long distances through identification since my school days. But these things had not helped me to control my nature or to transform it. These did help me to break my mental, vital and physical limitations or to grow into a wider consciousness. I was no more at the mercy of circumstances. The Grace of the Mother made it possible for me to control external conditions.

Time was passing fast and the number of inmates increased from 24 to 150 in 1935. The descent of the over-mental consciousness and Light had charged the atmosphere of the Ashram with dynamic silence. The main object, however, was to transform the human nature into the divine and that demanded its own pace. A good deal of human patience was called for.

GOVINDBHAI PATEL

*(My Pilgrimage to the Spirit by Govindbhai Patel,  
Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry, 1974, 1977)*

*There should be no straining after power, no ambition, no egoism of power. The power or powers that come should be considered not as one's own, but as gifts of the Divine for the Divine's purpose. Care should be taken that there should be no ambitious or selfish misuse, no pride or vanity, no sense of superiority, no claim or egoism of the instrument, only a simple and pure psychic instrumentation of the nature in any way in which it is fit for the service of the Divine.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(Letters on Yoga – II, CWSA, Vol. 29, p. 245)*

# SRI AUROBINDO'S EARLY POETRY ACCORDING TO RASAVĀDA

(Continued from the issue of May 2019)

## II

After this all too brief an account of the basic theory it behoves us now to turn our attention to the poems themselves. As has already been said, we shall take up the poems included in the first section of *Collected Poems*.<sup>1</sup> They were written during 1890-1900, most of them “between the age of 18 and 20 in England”. They number thirty and will yield a rich harvest as far as insight into the young poet’s individual talent is concerned. Let the reader not be offended that the word “genius” has not been used here. That particular word is so much bandied about that I have become somewhat allergic to it.

The first poem, ‘Songs to Myrtilla’ is a pastoral. The poem is not dated but perhaps we can take it to have been written in 1890. It is remarkable how the young poet has caught the spirit of the pastoral and reproduced it faultlessly. Elsewhere<sup>2</sup> I have written about this, but another aspect has to be pointed out first. I have no doubts at all that a more ultra-modern critic will call the poem a derivative one, an “imitation”. I am sorry to say that I am not at all ultra-modern. In fact, I am defiantly traditional and so far as “imitation” goes my outlook can definitely be called hoary with age. It goes back to Longinus who included imitation as one of the ways to produce sublimity in poetry:

. . . in addition to those already mentioned, there is another way that leads to the sublime. And what kind of a way is this? It is the imitation and emulation of the great historians and poets of the past.<sup>3</sup>

What does Pope, following Horace, say?

Be Homer’s work your study and delight  
Read them by day and meditate by night.<sup>4</sup>

1. *Collected Poems*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972. This is the edition which will be referred to.

2. *Ātam*, Uttarpara Sri Aurobindo Parishad, ‘Sri Aurobindo’s Poetry and the Pastoral Tradition’, 16.11.05 onwards.

3. *Classical Literary Criticism*, Translation with Introduction by T. S. Dorsch, Penguin, 1965, p. 119.

4. Kronenberger, A., *Pope: Selected Works*, Modern Library, NY, p. 35.

So when I say that the poem is a highly successful reproduction of pastoral poetry I mean that the poem is to be praised for being so and studied seriously.

Pastoralism has been studied extensively as well as in depth by several scholars and it is not the present writer's intention to use a delaying tactic before turning to the actual poem. Suffice it to say that the present poem is the simplest kind of pastoral poetry, with two shepherds, Glaucus and Æthon singing praises to Myrtilla. The name Glaucus means the colour grey-green and is also a certain sacred grove. The name Æthon is also the name of one of the immortal horses of Apollo. Myrtilla is the sacred bush of myrtle. In other words, therefore, greenery is something that is indivisibly associated with pastoral poetry. But our concern here is not pastoral poetry but the ancient doctrine of *rasavāda*.

*Prakṛti* or *udātta* is one of the rasas established by modern scholars. Acharya Ramchandra Shukla has established it firmly in the twentieth century and many others have accepted it. V. Chiptunker, R. V. Joshi and V. V. Vide are among them. The *sthāyi* of this rasa is *rati*, with nature as the *ālambana* and not the *uddīpana*. In other rasas, as for example *śṛṅgāra*, nature may be the *uddīpana* as in a scene like the *Janak-vātika-prasaṅga* in which the beauty of the moonlight and the garden generates love in Rama. But in a scene dealing with *prakṛti-rasa* nature itself is the *ālambana* as here. There are wonderful passages of nature-descriptions. Glaucus opens the poem with one such:

Sweet is the night, sweet and cool  
As to parched lips a running pool;  
Sweet when the flowers have fallen asleep  
And only moonlit rivulet's creep  
Like glow-worms in the dim and whispering wood,  
To commune with the quiet heart and solitude.<sup>5</sup>

Another line in connection with this is:

And the green murmurous broad deep-thoughted wood.<sup>6</sup>

In the essay in *Ṛtam* I have cited I had written:

This later line will be written by a mature artist and one of the greatest mystics the world has ever seen.

The two lines really should not be compared, except for the fact that in the present poem we see the acorn of the great oak.<sup>7</sup>

5. *Collected Poems*, p. 1.

6. *Savitri*, Bk. I, Canto II, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1995.

7. *Ṛtam*, p. 42.

## III

Since our prime concern is the evolution of *rasa*, I have refrained from drawing attention to the other features of the passage, but it would be a criminal omission not to notice the use of irregular couplets as in classical poetry, and the quietly musical metre. As it is a song in the night-time, the poem is a serenade, but it is nothing like the frantic "I die, I faint, I fail" of Shelley's 'Indian Serenade'. Everything is quiet — the description, the tone, the music — as is but consonant with classical poetry.

This is the song by Glaucus; what about the one sung by Æthon? He takes up a position which is opposite of that adopted by Glaucus, i.e. he praises the beauty of the woods during the day. If Glaucus sings a serenade, the one by Æthon is an aubade and an almost exact parallel to that of Glaucus's. The two shepherds sing alternately, painting the woodland landscape in entrancing detail. This goes on for about four pages and finally the theme of love is introduced (in line 137). Glaucus mentions the girl Florimel, with whom he had been in love till now, but who has been eclipsed by Myrtilla. At once Æthon barges in by talking about his beloved Cymothea, now eclipsed by Myrtilla:

But what were Cymothea, placed  
Where like a silver star Myrtilla blooms?<sup>8</sup>

The same is the case with Glaucus:

But Florimel beside thee, sweet,  
Pales like a candle in the brilliant noon.  
Snowdrops are thy feet,  
Thy waist a crescent moon,<sup>9</sup>

The poem ends with Glaucus's song. But, from the viewpoint of both *rasavāda* and that of English criticism, we have not finished yet. *Rasavāda* tells us that more *rasas* are involved here than just *prakṛti*. The poem is, after all, a love poem though the theme of love is introduced quite late in the poem and, admittedly, takes up less space. Yet *śṛṅgāra-rasa* is definitely present. Love is personified by Glaucus as a winged god, as Cupid:

Love's feet were on the sea  
When he dawned on me.<sup>10</sup>

8. *Collected Poems*, p. 5.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

But he is not the cherub-like Cupid with whom we are familiar and indeed he should not be. He is the Greek Cupid we see in the story of Psyche. The variety of *śṛṅgāra* we find here is difficult to classify, since both of them are eloquent about their love for Myrtila and there they stop. It is actually *pūrva-rāga* because they have neither of them been united with her, nor are they really separated from her, suffering from *viraha*. It is like love before union, i.e., *pūrva-rāga*. This itself is of three kinds, *nīlī*, *manjiṣṭhā* and *kusumbha*. The best exposition of these have been given by Viśvanāth Kavirāj in his book *Sahitya-Darpana*:

*Na cāti śobhate yarmāpaiti prema manogatam  
Tannīlī rāgamākhyātam yathā Śrī-Rāma-Sītayo.  
Kusum bharāgan tatprāhuryadāpaiti ca śobhate  
Manjiṣṭ haragamāhustada yannāpaiti śobhate.*

[That fondness which makes no great show and which, yet, when it has come into the mind, does not depart, they call the Indigo love — the Indigo being a colour that will well stand washing — such was the love of Rama and Sita. They call that the Safflower love which should but depart — like the dye of safflower, which fades in the washing. They call that the Madder love which does not depart and which does shine.]<sup>11</sup>

In other words, we have here an example of *manjiṣṭhā* love which is attractively expressed as well as enduring love or according to the translation given above, Madder love. This translation might seem to many to be more difficult than the original to understand, but as I am never tired of pointing out, I take my metaphorical hat off to the two translators who carried out this remarkable work way back in 1861. I respect J. R. Ballantyne specially, because he showed scholarly mentality specially because he put his name after that of a mere Bengali babu.

Be that as it may, the love that is expressed by the two swains “does shine” as a few lines taken from both will show:

Æthon: As roses red, as roses sweet,  
The west wind in his feet,  
Tulip-girdled, kind and bold,  
With heartsease in his curls of gold,

Glaucus: Snowdrops are thy feet,  
Thy waist a crescent moon,

11. Mitra, Babu P. and Ballantyne, J. R. translation, *The Sahitya Darpana or Mirror of Composition*, Bibliotheca Indica, 1861, pp. 109, 115.



And like a silver wand  
Thy body slight doth stand.<sup>12</sup>

This description is rich in diction and in the sentiments expressed, so this is *manjiṣṭhā-rāga*.

#### IV

I quote from my essay in *Ṛtam*:<sup>13</sup>

This feature of presenting two different aspects of any object (in this case the forest) successively is a highly traditional feature of classical English poetry. In fact, it used to be the custom at one time in schools to set the students exercises in writing poems on a set argument or theme. Milton had been set such an exercise on “whether day or night be the more excellent,” and it was out of this schoolboy exercise that the two companion-poems ‘L’Allegro’ and ‘Il Penseroso’ later grew. Here in this poem we see that the same process has been followed approximately — one shepherd extolling the night and the other the day. The poem thus proceeds in just the way to gladden the heart of a critic like Cleanth Brooks — by parallelisms and contrasts. It does not, however, end inconclusively, for both of them unite in their love for Myrtilla. The twin themes of nature and love are thus brought neatly together.

The reader might have noticed that the poem is written mainly in iambic couplets of varying length. We have iambic trimetres:

The spotted lizards crawl  
Upon the sun-kissed wall

We also have longer couplets in iambic pentametres:

They see her beauty sport, her splendours done  
They seek a younger earth, a surer sun

This variety in the length of the lines saves the poem from monotony.

Next, a few words about the mosaic of literary allusions in the poem. The entire poem is full of literary allusions but these are not obvious ones like those

12. *Collected Poems*, pp. 5-6.

13. *Ṛtam*, p. 44.

used by T. S. Eliot at the end of 'The Waste Land'. Rather, they are like the ones used by Gray — unconsciously, as a mode of writing, not as rhetoric. The poet, in other words, is so steeped in poetry that he uses these allusions quite automatically, instinctively. If the reader can catch them, he is lucky. If he cannot, even then he is lucky — for he has read the poem and appreciated it.

*(To be continued)*

RATRI RAY

*It is the psychic personality in us that flowers as the saint, the sage, the seer; when it reaches its full strength, it turns the being towards the Knowledge of Self and the Divine, towards the supreme Truth, the supreme Good, the supreme Beauty, Love and Bliss, the divine heights and largenesses, and opens us to the touch of spiritual sympathy, universality, oneness. On the contrary, where the psychic personality is weak, crude or ill-developed, the finer parts and movements in us are lacking or poor in character and power, even though the mind may be forceful and brilliant, the heart of vital emotions hard and strong and masterful, the life-force dominant and successful, the bodily existence rich and fortunate and an apparent lord and victor. It is then the outer desire-soul, the pseudo-psychic entity, that reigns and we mistake its misinterpretations of psychic suggestion and aspiration, its ideas and ideals, its desires and yearnings for true soul-stuff and wealth of spiritual experience.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(The Life Divine, CWSA, Vol. 21, pp. 239-40)*



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