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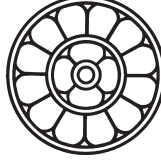
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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A Correction

The heading on p. 21 of the October 2021 issue should have been: ‘I BOW DOWN BEFORE THY GLORY . . .’

THE RAKSHASAS

(The Rakshasa, the violent kinetic Ego, establishes his claim to mastery of the world replacing the animal Soul, — to be followed by controlled and intellectualised but unregenerated Ego, the Asura. Each such type and level of consciousness sees the Divine in its own image and its level in Nature is sustained by a differing form of the World-Mother.)

“Glory and greatness and the joy of life,
Strength, pride, victorious force, whatever man
Desires, whatever the wild beast enjoys,
Bodies of women and the lives of men,
I claim to be my kingdom. I have force
My title to substantiate, and I seek
No crown unearned, no lordship undeserved.
Ask what austerity Thou wilt, Maker of man,
Expense of blood or labour or long years
Spent in tremendous meditations, lives
Upon Thy altar spent of brutes or men,
Or if with gold Thy favour purchasable
I may command, rich offerings to glut
Thy temples and Thy priests. I have a heart,
A hand for any mighty sacrifice,
A fiery patience in my vehement mood;
I will submit. But ask not this of me,
Meek silence and a pale imprisoned soul
Made colourless of its humanity;
Ask not the heart that quakes, the hand that spares.
What strength can give, not weakness, that demand.
O Rudra, O eternal Mahádev,
Thou too art fierce and mighty, wrathful, bold,
Snuffing Thy winds for blood of sacrifice,
And angrily Thou rul’st a prostrate world.
O Rákshasa Almighty, look on me,
Rávan, the lord of all Thy Rákshasas,
Give me Thy high command to smite Thy foes;
But most I would afflict, chase and destroy
Thy devotees who traduce Thee, making Thee
A God of love, a God too sweet to rule.

I have the knowledge; what Thou art, I know,
 And know myself, for Thou and I are one.”
 So prayed the Lord of Lunca, and in Heaven
 Sri Krishna smiled, the Friend of all mankind,
 A smile of sweetness and divine delight,
 And asked, “O Masters of the knowledge, Seers
 Who help me by your thoughts to help mankind,
 Hearken what Rávan cries against the stars,
 Demanding earth for heritage. Advise,
 Shall he then have it?” And a cry arose,
 “He would root out the Brahmin from the earth,
 Impose his dreadful Yoga on mankind,
 And make the violent heart, the iron hand
 Sovereign of all.” Sri Krishna made reply,
 “From out Myself he went to do My will.
 He has not lied, he has the knowledge. He
 And I are one. How then shall I refuse?
 Does it not say, the Veda that you know,
 ‘When one knows That, then whatso he desires,
 It shall be his’?” And Atri sage replied,
 “Let him then rule a season and be slain.”
 And He who reigns, “Something you know, O Seers,
 Not all My purpose. It is long decreed,
 The Rákshasa shall rule the peopled earth.
 He takes the brute into himself for man,
 Yielding it offerings, while with grandiose thoughts
 And violent aspirations he controls;
 He purifies the demon in the race,
 Slaying in wrath, not cruelty. Awhile
 He puts the Vánara out of the world,
 Accustoming to grandeur all mankind;
 The Ifrit¹ he rejects. Were he denied
 His period, man could not progress. But since
 He sees himself as Me, not Me in him,
 And takes the life and body for the whole,
 He cannot last. Therefore is Atri’s word
 Accepted.” And before the Rákshasa,
 Out of the terror of the sacrifice,
 Naked and dark, with a blood-dripping sword

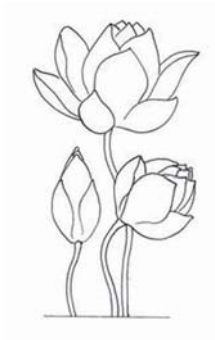
1. The Ifrit, the Djinn, is the demoniac element in Nature.

And dreadful eyes that seemed to burn the world,
 Kálí the Rákshasí in flames arose.
 “Demand a boon!” she cried, and all the gods
 Trembled. “Give me the earth for my delight,
 Her gods to be my slaves,” the Giant cried,
 “Of strength and passion let me have my fill,
 Of violence and pride.” “So let it be,”
 She answered. “Shall it be eternal then?”
 Rávan demanded and she thundered, “No!
 For neither thou nor I are best nor last.
 The Asurí shall rise to fill my place,
 The Asura thy children shall dethrone.
 An aeon thou hast taken to evolve,
 An aeon thou shalt rule. But since thy wish
 I have denied, ask yet another boon.”
 “Let this be mine, that when at last I sink,
 Nor brute nor demon, man nor Titan’s hand,
 Nor any lesser creature shall o’erthrow,
 But only God Himself compel my fall.”
 And Kálí answered, smiling terribly,
 “It is decreed,” and laughing loud she passed.
 Then Rávan from his sacrifice arose.

SRI AUROBINDO

[1910. This poem was intended for the first issue of the *Karmayogin*. — Editorial Note in CWSA.]

(*Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, pp. 321-23)



COMMENTS ON SOME REMARKS BY A CRITIC

(Continued from the issue of October 2021)

[. . .] That is enough for the detail of the criticism and we can come to the general effect and his pronounced opinion upon my poetry. Apart from his high appreciation of *Flame-Wind* and *Descent*, *Jivanmukta* and *Thought the Paraclete* and his general approval of the mystic poems published along with my essay on quantitative metre in English, it is sufficiently damning and discouraging and if I were to accept his verdict on my earlier and latest poetry, the first comparatively valueless and the last for the most part pseudo and phoney and for the rest offering only a few pleasant or pretty lines but not charged with the power and appeal of true or great poetry, I would have to withdraw the *Collected Poems* from circulation, throw *Savitri* into the wastepaper-basket and keep only the mystical poems, — but these also have been banned by some critics, so I have no refuge left to me. As Mendonça is not a negligible critic and his verdict agrees with that of the eulogist of my philosophy in *The Times Literary Supplement*, not to speak of others less authoritative like the communist reviewer of Iyengar's book who declared that it was not at all certain that I would live as a poet, it is perhaps incumbent on me to consider in all humility my dismal position and weigh whether it is really as bad as all that. There are some especial judgments in your friend's comments on the *Collected Poems* but these seem to concern only the translations. It is curious that he should complain of the lack of the impulse of self-expression in the *Songs of the Sea* as in this poem I was not busy with anything of the kind but was only rendering into English the self-expression of my friend and fellow-poet C. R. Das in his fine Bengali poem *Sagar Sangit*. I was not even self-moved to translate this work, however beautiful I found it; I might even be accused of having written the translation as a pot-boiler, for Das knowing my impecunious and precarious condition at Pondicherry offered me Rs. 1,000 for the work. Nevertheless I tried my best to give his beautiful Bengali lines as excellent a shape of English poetry as I could manage. The poet and *littérateur* Chapman condemned my work because I had made it too English, written too much in a manner imitative of traditional English poetry and had failed to make it Bengali in its character so as to keep its native spirit and essential substance. He may have been right; Das himself was not satisfied as he appended a more literal translation in free verse but this latter version does not seem to have caught on while some at least still read and admire the English disguise. If Mendonça is right in finding an overflow of sentiment in the *Songs*, that must be my own importation of an early romantic sentimentalism, a contribution of my own "self-expression" replacing Das's. The sea to the Indian imagination is a symbol of life, — one speaks of the ocean of the

samsāra and Indian Yoga sees in its occult visions life in the image of a sea or different planes of being as so many oceans. Das's poem expresses his communing with this ocean of universal life and psychic intimacies with the Cosmic Spirit behind it and these have a character of grave emotion and intense feeling, not of mere sentimentalism, but they come from a very Indian and even a very Bengali mentality and may seem in translation to a different mind a profuse display of fancy and sentiment. The *Songs* are now far away from me in a dim backward of memory and I will have to read them again to be sure, but for that I have no time.

Again, I am charged with modern nineteenth-century romanticism and a false imitation of the Elizabethan drama in my rendering of Kalidasa's *Vikramorvasie*; but Kalidasa's play *is* romantic in its whole tone and he might almost be described as an Elizabethan predating by a thousand years at least the Elizabethans; indeed most of the ancient Sanskrit dramas are of this kind, though the tragic note is missing, and the general spirit resembles that of Elizabethan romantic comedy. So I do not think I committed any fault in making the translation romantic and in trying to make it Elizabethan, even if I only achieved a "sapless pseudo-Elizabethan" style. One who knew the Sanskrit original and who, although an Indian, was recognised as a good critic in England as well as a poet, one too whose attitude towards myself and my work had been consistently adverse, yet enthusiastically praised my version and said if Kalidasa could be translated at all, it was only so that he could be translated. This imprimatur of an expert may perhaps be weighed against the discouraging criticism of Mendonça. The comment on my translation of Bhartrihari is more to the point; but the fault is not Bhartrihari's whose epigrams are as concise and lapidary as the Greek, but in translating I indulged my tendency at the time which was predominantly romantic: the version presents faithfully enough the ideas of the Sanskrit poet but not the spirit and manner of his style. It is comforting, however, to find that it makes "attractive reading", — I must be content with small mercies in an adversely critical world. After all, these poems are translations and not original works and not many can hope to come within a hundred miles of the more famous achievements of this kind such as Fitzgerald's splendid misrepresentation of Omar Khayyam, or Chapman's and Pope's mistranslations of Homer which may be described as first-class original poems with a borrowed substance from a great voice of the past. Mendonça does not refer specifically to *Love and Death*, to which your enthusiasm first went out, to *Poems*, to *Urvasie* and to *Perseus the Deliverer* though this last he would class, I suppose, as sapless pseudo-Elizabethan drama; but that omission may be there because he only skimmed through them and afterwards could not get the first volume. But perhaps they may come under his general remark that this part of my work lacks the glow and concentration of true inspired poetry and his further judgment classing it with the works of Watson and Stephen Phillips and other writers belonging to the decline of romantic poetry. I know nothing about Watson's work except for one or two short pieces met by chance; if I were to judge

from them, I would have to regard him as a genuine poet with a considerable elevation of language and metrical rhythm but somewhat thin in thought and substance; my poems may conceivably have some higher quality than his in this last respect since the reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement* grants deep thought and technical excellence as the only merits of my uninspired poetry. It is otherwise with Stephen Phillips: I read *Marpessa* and *Christ in Hades*, the latter in typescript, shortly before I left England and they aroused my admiration and made a considerable impression on me. I read recently a reference to Phillips as a forgotten poet, but if that includes these two poems I must consider the oblivion as a considerable loss to the generation which has forgotten them. His later poetry disappointed me, there was still some brilliance but nothing of that higher promise. The only other poet of that time who had some influence on me was Meredith, especially his *Modern Love* which may have helped in forming the turn of my earlier poetic expression. I have not read the other later poets of the decline. Of subsequent writers or others not belonging to this decline I know only A. E. and Yeats, something of Francis Thompson, especially the *Hound of Heaven* and the *Kingdom of God*, and a poem or two of Gerard Hopkins; but the last two I came across very late, Hopkins only quite recently, and none of them had any influence on me, although one English reviewer in India spoke of me in eulogistic terms as a sort of combination of Swinburne and Hopkins and some have supposed that I got my turn for compound epithets from the latter! The only romantic poets of the Victorian Age who could have had any influence on me, apart from Arnold whose effect on me was considerable, were Tennyson perhaps, subconsciously, and Swinburne of the earlier poems, for his later work I did not at all admire. Still it is possible that the general atmosphere of the later Victorian decline, if decline it was, may have helped to mould my work and undoubtedly it dates and carries the stamp of the time in which it was written. It is a misfortune of my poetry from the point of view of recognition that the earlier work forming the bulk of the *Collected Poems* belongs to the past and has little chance of recognition now that the aesthetic atmosphere has so violently changed, while the later mystical work and *Savitri* belong to the future and will possibly have to wait for recognition of any merit they have for another strong change. As for the mystical poems which your friend praises in such high terms, they are as much challenged by others as the rest of my work. Some reviewers have described them as lacking altogether in spiritual feeling and void of spiritual experience; they are, it seems, mere mental work, full of intellectually constructed images and therefore without the genuine value of spiritual or mystic poetry.

Well, then, what is the upshot? What have I to decide as a result of my aesthetic examination of conscience? It is true that there are voices on the other side, not only from my disciples but from others who have no such connection with me. I have heard of individuals nameless or fameless in England who chanced to come across *Love and Death* and had the same spontaneous enthusiasm for it as yourself; others

have even admired and discovered in my earlier work the beauty and the inspiration which Mendonça and the *Times* reviewer find to be badly lacking in it. It is true that they have differed in the poems they have chosen; Andrews cited particularly the *Rishi* and the epigram on Goethe as proof of his description of me as a great poet; an English critic, Richardson, singled out *Urvasie* and *Love and Death* and the more romantic poems, but thought that some of my later work was less inspired, too intellectual and philosophical, too much turned towards thought, while some work done in the middle he denounced altogether, complaining that after feeding my readers on nectar for so long I came later on to give them mere water. This critic made a distinction between great poets and good poets and said that I belonged to the second and not to the first category, but as he classed Shelley and others of the same calibre as examples of the good poets, his praise was sufficiently “nectarous” for anybody to swallow with pleasure! Krishnaprem, Moore and others have also had a contrary opinion to the adverse critics and these, both English and Indian, were men whose capacity for forming a true literary judgment is perhaps as good as any on the other side. Krishnaprem I mention, because his judgment forms a curious and violent contrast to Mendonça’s: the latter finds no overtones in my poetry while Krishnaprem who similarly discourages Harin’s poetry on the ground of a lack of overtones finds them abundant in mine. One begins to wonder what overtones really are, or are we to conclude that they have no objective existence but are only a term for some subjective personal reaction in the reader? I meet the same absolute contradiction everywhere; one critic says about *Perseus* that there is some good poetry in it but it is not in the least dramatic except for one scene and that the story of the play is entirely lacking in interest, while another finds in it most of all a drama of action and the story thrilling and holding a breathless interest from beginning to end. Highest eulogy, extreme disparagement, faint praise, mixed laudation and censure — it is a see-saw on which the unfortunate poet who is incautious enough to attach any value to contemporary criticism is balanced without any possibility of escape. Or I may flatter myself with the idea that this lively variation of reaction from extreme eulogy to extreme damnation indicates that my work must have after all something in it that is real and alive. Or I might perhaps take refuge in the supposition that the lack of recognition is the consequence of an untimely and too belated publication, due to the egoistic habit of writing for my own self-satisfaction rather than any strong thirst for poetical glory and immortality and leaving most of my poetry in the drawer for much longer than, even for twice or thrice the time recommended by Horace who advised the poet to put by his work and read it again after ten years and then only, if he still found it of some value, to publish it. *Urvasie*, the second of the only two poems published early, was sent at first to Lionel Johnson, a poet and *littérateur* of some reputation who was the Reader of a big firm. He acknowledged some poetic merit, but said that it was a repetition of Matthew Arnold and so had no sufficient reason for existence. But Lionel Johnson, I was told, like

the Vedantic sage who sees Brahman in all things, saw Arnold everywhere, and perhaps if I had persisted in sending it to other firms, some other Reader, not similarly obsessed, might have found the merit and, as romanticism was still the fashion, some of the critics and the public too might have shared your and Richardson's opinion of this and other work and, who knows, I might have ranked in however low a place among the poets of the romantic decline. Perhaps then I need not decide too hastily against any republication of the *Collected Poems* or could even cherish the hope that, when the fashion of anti-romanticism has passed, it may find its proper place, whatever that may be, and survive.

As regards your friend's appraisal of the mystical poems, I need say little. I accept his reservation that there is much inequality as between the different poems: they were produced very rapidly — in the course of a week, I think — and they were not given the long reconsideration that I have usually given to my poetic work before publication; he has chosen the best, though there are others also that are good, though not so good; in others, the metre attempted and the idea and language have not been lifted to their highest possible value. I would like to say a word about his hesitation over some lines in *Thought the Paraclete* which describe the spiritual planes. I can understand this hesitation; for these lines have not the vivid and forceful precision of the opening and the close and are less pressed home, they are general in description and therefore to one who has not the mystic experience may seem too large and vague. But they are not padding; a precise and exact description of these planes of experience would have made the poem too long, so only some large lines are given, but the description is true, the epithets hit the reality and even the colours mentioned in the poem, "gold-red feet" and "crimson-white mooned oceans", are faithful to experience. Significant colour, supposed by intellectual criticism to be symbolic but there is more than that, is a frequent element in mystic vision; I may mention the powerful and vivid vision in which Ramakrishna went up into the higher planes and saw the mystic truth behind the birth of Vivekananda. At least, the fact that these poems have appealed so strongly to your friend's mind may perhaps be taken by me as a sufficient proof that in this field my effort at interpretation of spiritual things has not been altogether a failure.

But how then are we to account for the same critic's condemnation or small appreciation of *Savitri* which is also a mystic and symbolic poem although cast into a different form and raised to a different pitch, and what value am I to attach to his criticism? Partly, perhaps, it is this very difference of form and pitch which accounts for his attitude and, having regard to his aesthetic temperament and its limitations, it was inevitable. He himself seems to suggest this reason when he compares this difference to the difference of his approach as between *Lycidas* and *Paradise Lost*. His temperamental turn is shown by his special appreciation of Francis Thompson and Coventry Patmore and his response to *Descent* and *Flame-Wind* and the fineness of his judgment when speaking of the *Hound of Heaven* and the *Kingdom of God*,

its limitation by his approach towards *Paradise Lost*. I think he would be naturally inclined to regard any very high-pitched poetry as rhetorical and unsound and declamatory, wherever he did not see in it something finely and subtly true coexisting with the high-pitched expression, — the combination we find in Thompson's later poem and it is this he seems to have missed in *Savitri*. For *Savitri* does contain or at least I intended it to contain what you and others have felt in it but he has not been able to feel because it is something which is outside his own experience and to which he has no access. One who has had the kind of experience which *Savitri* sets out to express or who, not having it, is prepared by his temperament, his mental turn, his previous intellectual knowledge or psychic training, to have some kind of access to it, the feeling of it if not the full understanding, can enter into the spirit and sense of the poem and respond to its poetic appeal; but without that it is difficult for an unprepared reader to respond, — all the more if this is, as you contend, a new poetry with a new law of expression and technique.

Lycidas is one of the finest poems in any literature, one of the most consistently perfect among works of an equal length and one can apply to it the epithet "exquisite" and it is to the exquisite that your friend's aesthetic temperament seems specially to respond. It would be possible to a reader with a depreciatory turn to find flaws in it, such as the pseudo-pastoral setting, the too powerful intrusion of St. Peter and puritan theological controversy into that incongruous setting and the image of the hungry sheep which someone not in sympathy with Christian feeling and traditional imagery might find even ludicrous or at least odd in its identification of pseudo-pastoral sheep and theological human sheep: but these would be hypercritical objections and are flooded out by the magnificence of the poetry. I am prepared to admit the very patent defects of *Paradise Lost*: Milton's heaven is indeed unconvincing and can be described as grotesque and so too is his gunpowder battle up there, and his God and angels are weak and unconvincing figures, even Adam and Eve, our first parents, do not effectively fill their part except in his outward description of them; and the later narrative falls far below the grandeur of the first four books but those four books stand for ever among the greatest things in the world's poetic literature. If *Lycidas* with its beauty and perfection had been the supreme thing done by Milton even with all the lyrical poetry and the sonnets added to it, Milton would still have been a great poet but he would not have ranked among the dozen greatest; it is *Paradise Lost* that gives him that place. There are deficiencies if not failures in almost all the great epics, the *Odyssey* and perhaps the *Divina Commedia* being the only exceptions, but still they are throughout in spite of them great epics. So too is *Paradise Lost*. The grandeur of his verse and language is constant and unsinking to the end and makes the presentation always sublime. We have to accept for the moment Milton's dry Puritan theology and his all too human picture of the celestial world and its denizens and then we can feel the full greatness of the epic. But the point is that this greatness in itself seems to have less appeal to Mendonça's aesthetic

temperament; it is as if he felt less at home in its atmosphere, in an atmosphere of grandeur and sublimity than in the air of a less sublime but a fine and always perfect beauty. It is the difference between a magic hill-side woodland of wonder and a great soaring mountain climbing into a vast purple sky: to accept fully the greatness he needs to find in it a finer and subtler strain as in Thompson's *Kingdom of God*. On a lower scale this, his sentence about it seems to suggest, is the one fundamental reason for his complete pleasure in the mystical poems and his very different approach to *Savitri*. The pitch aimed at by *Savitri*, the greatness you attribute to it, would of itself have discouraged in him any abandonment to admiration and compelled from the beginning a cautious and dubious approach; that soon turned to lack of appreciation or a lowered appreciation even of the best that may be there and to depreciation and censure of the rest.

But there is the other reason which is more effective. He sees and feels nothing of the spiritual meaning and the spiritual appeal which you find in *Savitri*; it is for him empty of anything but an outward significance and that seems to him poor, as is natural since the outward meaning is only a part and a surface and the rest is to his eyes invisible. If there had been what he hoped or might have hoped to find in my poetry, a spiritual vision such as that of the Vedantin, arriving beyond the world towards the Ineffable, then he might have felt at home as he does with Thompson's poetry or might at least have found it sufficiently accessible. But this is not what *Savitri* has to say or rather it is only a small part of it and, even so, bound up with a cosmic vision and an acceptance of the world which in its kind is unfamiliar to his mind and psychic sense and foreign to his experience. The two passages with which he deals do not and cannot give any full presentation of this way of seeing things since one is an unfamiliar symbol and the other an incidental and, taken by itself apart from its context, an isolated circumstance. But even if he had had other more explicit and clearly revealing passages at his disposal, I do not think he would have been satisfied or much illuminated; his eyes would still have been fixed on the surface and caught only some intellectual meaning or outer sense. That at least is what we may suppose to have been the cause of his failure, if we maintain that there is anything at all in the poem; or else we must fall back on the explanation of a fundamental personal incompatibility and the rule *de gustibus non est disputandum*, or to put it in the Sanskrit form *nānārucirhi lokaḥ*. If you are right in maintaining that *Savitri* stands as a new mystical poetry with a new vision and expression of things, we should expect, at least at first, a widespread, perhaps, a general failure even in lovers of poetry to understand it or appreciate; even those who have some mystical turn or spiritual experience are likely to pass it by if it is a different turn from theirs or outside their range of experience. It took the world something like a hundred years to discover Blake; it would not be improbable that there might be a greater time-lag here, though naturally we hope for better things. For in India at least some understanding or feeling and an audience few and fit may be possible.

Perhaps by some miracle there may be before long a larger appreciative audience.

At any rate this is the only thing one can do, especially when one is attempting a new creation, — to go on with the work with such light and power as is given to one and leave the value of the work to be determined by the future. Contemporary judgments we know to be unreliable; there are only two judges whose joint verdict cannot easily be disputed, the World and Time. The Roman proverb says, *securus judicat orbis terrarum*; but the world's verdict is secure only when it is confirmed by Time. For it is not the opinion of the general mass of men that finally decides, the decision is really imposed by the judgment of a minority and élite which is finally accepted and settles down as the verdict of posterity; in Tagore's phrase it is the universal man, *viśva mānava*, or rather something universal using the general mind of man, we might say the Cosmic Self in the race that fixes the value of its own works. In regard to the great names in literature this final verdict seems to have in it something of the absolute, — so far as anything can be that in a temporal world of relativities in which the Absolute reserves itself hidden behind the veil of human ignorance. It is no use for some to contend that Virgil is a tame and elegant writer of a wearisome work in verse on agriculture and a tedious pseudo-epic written to imperial order and Lucretius the only really great poet in Latin literature or to depreciate Milton for his Latin English and inflated style and the largely uninteresting character of his two epics; the world either refuses to listen or there is a temporary effect, a brief fashion in literary criticism, but finally the world returns to its established verdict. Lesser reputations may fluctuate, but finally whatever has real value in its own kind settles itself and finds its just place in the durable judgment of the world. Work which was neglected and left aside like Blake's or at first admired with reservation and eclipsed like Donne's is singled out by a sudden glance of Time and its greatness recognised; or what seemed buried slowly emerges or re-emerges; all finally settles into its place. What was held as sovereign in its own time is rudely dethroned but afterwards recovers not its sovereign throne but its due position in the world's esteem; Pope is an example and Byron, who at once burst into a supreme glory and was the one English poet, after Shakespeare, admired all over Europe but is now depreciated, may also recover his proper place. Encouraged by such examples, let us hope that these violently adverse judgments may not be final and absolute and decide that the waste-paper-basket is not the proper place for *Savitri*. There may still be a place for a poetry which seeks to enlarge the field of poetic creation and find for the inner spiritual life of man and his now occult or mystical knowledge and experience of the whole hidden range of his and the world's being, not a corner and a limited expression such as it had in the past, but a wide space and as manifold and integral an expression of the boundless and innumerable riches that lie hidden and unexplored as if kept apart under the direct gaze of the Infinite, as has been found in the past for man's surface and finite view and experience of himself and the material world in which he has lived striving to know himself and it as best he

can with a limited mind and senses. The door that has been shut to all but a few may open; the kingdom of the Spirit may be established not only in man's inner being but in his life and his works. Poetry also may have its share in that revolution and become part of the spiritual empire.

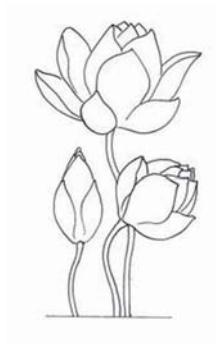
I had intended as the main subject of this letter to say something about technique and the inner working of the intuitive method by which *Savitri* was and is being created and of the intention and plan of the poem. Mendonça's idea of its way of creation, an intellectual construction by a deliberate choice of words and imagery, badly chosen at that, is the very opposite of the real way in which it was done. That was to be the body of the letter and the rest only a preface. But the preface has become so long that it has crowded out the body. I shall have to postpone it to a later occasion when I have more time.

4 May 1947

(Concluded)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Letters on Poetry and Art, CWSA, Vol. 27, pp. 346-57)



THE MANVANTARAS

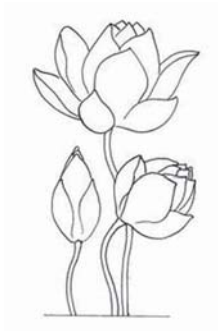
The Evolutionary Scale — III

The disposition of the Manwantaras may now be described. It will be remembered that there are fourteen Manus and ten gavas of the Dashagava. How are these divided among the Manus? In this Kalpa or rather Pratikalpa the type Pashu is the Vanara, but as in all Nature's movements, even in manifesting the Vanara, the others first make their appearance rapidly before the type "arrives"; those most germane to the matter are the lion, tiger, elephant, dog, wolf, cat, bull & cow, bear, fox, ass, horse, bee, ant, butterfly, fish, eagle (also kite, hawk & vulture), songbird, crow & cuckoo etc. In all these human egos readily incarnate & the human type absorbs them all. The first Manu takes all these totems & applies them to the general type of the Asura, driving at the evolution of a giant Vanara-Asura who has in him all these elements & combines them into an animal harmony dominated by curiosity, humour, adaptability & adaptiveness, the Ape virtues which bring that type nearest to man. This Vanara Asura the first Manu hands on to the second, who takes the type, fulfils it and evolves it into the Pishacha-Asura. This he does by bringing the Ape curiosity uppermost and applying it to all the experiences of man's animal life, to play, work, domesticity, battle, pleasure, pain, laughter, grief, relations, arrangements etc. All the higher qualities — imagination, reflection, invention, thought, spirituality even are turned towards these experiences & their possibilities, — cognitional not aesthetic exhausted so far as the human animal can exhaust them. This however, is done only in the third Manwantara. In the second it is the Vanara who satisfies his humour, curiosity & adaptiveness in a far more elementary & summary fashion, but as he does so, he begins to refine & evolve in search of new sensations until the full Pisacha Asura is born. This type is handed over to the third Manu to fulfil, & to it two Manvantaras are devoted, in the third the Pisacho-Pramatha of the Asura type evolves; in the fourth the Pisacha Pramatha evolves into the full Pramatha-Asura. The curiosity ceases to be merely cognitional & practically scientific, it becomes aesthetic with an animal & vital aestheticism; the Pramatha seeks to extract their full emotional & aesthetic values, their full rasa out of everything in life, out of torture equally with ecstasy, death equally with life, grief equally with joy. That type is evolved by the fifth Manu into the Pramatha-Rakshasa of the Asura type, & by the sixth into the full Rakshasa-Asura. The Rakshasa it is who first begins really to think, but his thought is also egoistic & turned towards sensation. What he seeks is a gross egoistic satisfaction in all the life of the mind, prana & body, in all the experiences of the Pashu, Pisacha, Pramatha & his own. But as this type is not a pure Rakshasa, but a Rakshasasura, the thought is there from the beginning, for the

Rakshasa has already established it in the human mould in the fifth pratikalpa. It now, however, in the Asura ceases to be subservient to the vital & animal instincts & becomes the instrument instead of a vigorous, violent & clamorous intellectual ego. As the main type is that of the Asura, there is always a tendency to subordinate the lower ego to the intellectual Aham, but the subordination is at first only a self-disciplining for a more intelligently victorious self-indulgence, like the tapasya of Ravana. This type evolved is fixed in the character of Ravana and takes possession of its field in the Manwantara of the seventh Manu, Vaivasvata. In that Manwantara it evolves into the Asuro-Rakshasa in which the intellectual ego & the emotional, sensational ego enter into an equal copartnership for the grand enthronement & fulfilment of the human ahankara. As the type of the sensational & emotional Rakshasa-Asura is Ravana, so the type of the more mightily balanced Asura Rakshasa of the Asura type is Hiranyakashipu. In the eighth Manwantara this Asura Rakshasa evolves into the pure Asura who serves his intellectual ego & subordinates to it all the other faculties. That type reigns with the ninth Manu & evolves into the Asuradeva of the Asura mould & in the tenth Manvantara into the Devasura who enthrones the vijñana and glorifies the Asura existence by the vijñanamaya illuminations playing on the whole of the triple mental[,] vital & bodily life of man. In the eleventh & twelfth manwantaras the Devasura evolves into the Sadhya, the Anandamaya Asura who at first with the pure Ananda, then with the Tapomaya Ananda, then with the Sanmaya Ananda dominates the reigns of the thirteenth & fourteenth Manus & completes the apotheosis of the Asura in man. With the Siddhadeva in the Asura the hundredth Chaturyuga of the sixth Pratikalpa comes to a glorious close.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, pp. 1330-332)



**‘ . . . TO UNITE WITH THEE INTEGRALLY,
CLOSELY, DEFINITELY ’**

July 17, 1914

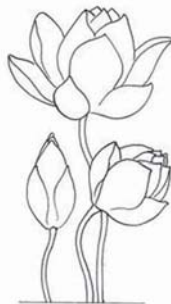
Earthly realisations easily take on a great importance in our eyes, for they are proportionate to our external being with this limited form which makes us men. But what is an earthly realisation beside Thee, before Thee? However perfect, complete, divine it may be, it is nothing but an indiscernible moment in Thy eternity; and the results obtained by it, however powerful and marvellous they may be, are nothing but an imperceptible atom in the infinite march to Thee. This is what Thy workers must never forget, otherwise they will become unfit to serve Thee. . . .

O my sweet Master, what childishness to think oneself responsible for anything at all and want to individualise Thy supreme and divine Will! Is it not enough to unite with Thy heart and live there permanently? Then Thou takest all the responsibilities and Thy will works without even our needing to know it. . . . Only a realisation independent of all outer circumstances, free from all attachment and all understanding, however high, is a true realisation, a valuable realisation. And the only such realisation is to unite with Thee integrally, closely, definitively. As for the care of Thy transitory, momentary manifestation in a fugitive existence and in a transient world, it is Thou who must be responsible for it and do what is necessary for it to exist, if Thou thinkest it good.

O my sweet Master, sovereign Lord, Thou hast taken away all my cares and left me only the Beatitude, the supreme ecstasy of Thy divine Communion.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 204)



A CONVERSATION OF 20 JUNE 1956

Sweet Mother, here Sri Aurobindo writes: “And yet there is in the heart or behind it a profounder mystic light . . .”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 149

What is this mystic light?

It is love.

But after that, Sri Aurobindo continues: “which, if not what we call intuition, — for that, though not of the mind, yet descends through the mind, — has yet a direct touch upon Truth and is nearer to the Divine than the human intellect in its pride of knowledge.” Is there a relation between this mystic light and intuition?

It is not intuition. It is knowledge through love, light through love, understanding through love. Sri Aurobindo says that it is not intuition, for intuition belongs to the intellect — at least in its expression, the expression of intuition is intellectual. While this is a kind of direct knowledge almost by identity, which comes from love.

And “the inner oracle”?

The oracle? That is the power of divination, of foresight, of understanding symbols, and that is in the psychic being. Prophets, for example, do not prophesy with the mind, it is through a *direct* contact, beyond emotions and sentiments. Sri Aurobindo even says that the Vedas, particularly, were not written with the mind and through the head. The form of the hymn welled up spontaneously from the psychic being, along with the words.

Mother, if someone has the psychic contact, does that mean that he has this power?

More or less, yes. The more perfect the contact, the greater the power.

It also depends on the outer possibilities of the being. But I have already explained that to you several times, I have already told you that when one enters into contact with one’s psychic, certain faculties develop spontaneously. For instance, there are people with no intellectual education who suddenly get quite a remarkable power of expression, which comes in this way, spontaneously, through the inner contact with the psychic being.

Sri Aurobindo speaks here of “secular refrigeration”.

What!

He writes: “It is indeed by the religio-ethical sense that the law of universal goodwill or universal compassion or of love and service to the neighbour, the Vedantic, the Buddhistic, the Christian ideal, was created; only by a sort of secular refrigeration extinguishing the fervour of the religious element in it could the humanitarian ideal disengage itself and become the highest plane of a secular system of mental and moral ethics.” Ibid., p. 152

Yes, this is the materialistic and purely physical thought which freezes and congeals the emotions, takes away all the warmth of the soul, all the fervour, all the ardour of the feelings and the religious consciousness, and makes you coldly reasonable.

Mother, if the heart can be the means of a more direct knowledge, what is the role of the intellect as an intermediary of knowledge?

As an intermediary, did you say?

For the true role of the mind is the formation and organisation of action. The mind has a formative and organising power, and it is that which puts the different elements of inspiration in order, for action, for organising action. And if it would only confine itself to that role, receiving inspirations — whether from above or from the mystic centre of the soul — and simply formulating the plan of action — in broad outline or in minute detail, for the smallest things of life or the great terrestrial organisations — it would amply fulfil its function.

It is not an instrument of knowledge.

But it can use knowledge for action, to organise action. It is an instrument of organisation and formation, very powerful and very capable when it is well developed.

One can feel this very clearly when one wants to organise one’s life, for instance — to put the different elements in their place in one’s existence. There is a certain intellectual faculty which immediately puts each thing in its place and makes a plan and organises. And it is not a knowledge that comes from the mind, it is a knowledge which comes, as I said, from the mystic depths of the soul or from a higher consciousness; and the mind concentrates it in the physical world and organises it to give a basis of action to the higher consciousness.

One has this experience very clearly when one wants to organise one’s life.

Then, there is another use. When one is in contact with one’s reason, with the rational centre of the intellect, the pure reason, it is a powerful control over all vital impulses. All that comes from the vital world can be very firmly controlled by it and

used in a disciplined and organised action. But it must be at the service of something else — not work for its own satisfaction.

These are the two uses of the mind: it is a controlling force, an instrument of control, and it is a power of organisation. That is its true place.

Sweet Mother, can one realise the Divine through love alone?

Oh! yes, my child, certainly. It is even the most direct way.

One can realise the Divine, that is to say, identify oneself with the Divine, become fully conscious of the Divine and be an instrument of the Divine. But naturally, one does not realise the integral yoga, for it is only along one line. But from the point of view of identification with the Divine it is even the most direct path.

But without mental development one won't be able to express the Divine?

One cannot express Him intellectually, but one can express Him in action, one can express Him in feelings, one can express Him in life.

(Silence)

Sweet Mother, sometimes when one feels depressed it lasts quite a long time; but when one feels a special kind of joy, it does not last.

Yes, that is very true.

Then what should one do to make it last longer?

But it is not the same part of the being that has the depression and the joy.

If you are speaking of pleasure, the pleasure of the vital is something very fleeting, and I think that in life — in life as it is at present — there are more occasions for displeasure than for pleasure. Pleasure in itself is extremely fleeting, for if the same vibration of pleasure is prolonged a little, it becomes unpleasant or even repulsive — exactly the same vibration.

Pleasure in itself is something very fugitive. But if you are speaking of joy, that is something altogether different, it is a kind of warmth and illumination in the heart, you see — one may feel joy in the mind also, but it is a kind of warmth and beatific illumination occurring somewhere. That is a quality which is not yet fully developed and one is rarely in the psychological state that's needed to have it. And that is why it is fugitive. Otherwise joy is constantly there in the truth of the being, in the reality of the being, in your true Self, in your soul, in your psychic being, joy

is constantly there.

It has nothing to do with pleasure: it is a kind of inner delight.

But one is rarely in a state to feel it, unless one has become fully conscious of one's psychic being. That is why when it comes it is fugitive, for the psychological condition necessary to perceive it is not often there. On the other hand, one is almost constantly in an ordinary vital state where the least unpleasant thing very spontaneously and easily brings you depression — depression if you are a weak person, revolt if you are a strong one. Every desire which is not satisfied, every impulse which meets an obstacle, every unpleasant contact with outside things, very easily and very spontaneously creates depression or revolt, for that is the normal state of things — normal in life as it is today. While joy is an exceptional state.

And so, pleasure, pleasure which is simply a pleasing sensation — if it lasts, not only does it lose its edge, but it ends up by becoming unpleasant; one can't bear it long. So, quite naturally it comes and goes. That is to say, the very thing that gives you pleasure — exactly the same vibration — after a short while, doesn't give it to you any longer. And if it persists, it becomes unpleasant for you. That is why you can't have pleasure for a long time.

The only thing which can be lasting is joy, if one enters into contact with the truth of the being which holds this joy permanently.

Mother, in the heart there is a double action: the action of vital impulse and that of pure emotion. What makes this mixture possible?

How does this mixture come about?

For both have their seat in the heart, don't they?

Not in the same place.

It is not our physical heart, you understand. It is this centre here (*Mother points to the middle of the chest*). But there are various depths. The more you come to the surface, the more is it mixed, naturally, with vital impulses and even purely physical reactions, purely physical sensations. The deeper you go, the less the mixture. And if you go deep enough, you find the feeling absolutely pure, behind. It is a question of depth.

One throws oneself out all the time; all the time one lives, as it were, outside oneself, in such a superficial sensation that it is almost as though one were outside oneself. As soon as one wants even to observe oneself a little, control oneself a little, simply know what is happening, one is always obliged to draw back or pull towards oneself, to pull inwards something which is constantly like that, on the surface. And it is this surface thing which meets all external contacts, puts you in touch with similar vibrations coming from others. That happens almost outside you.

That is the constant dispersal of the ordinary consciousness.

For instance, take a movement, an inspiration coming from the psychic depths of the being — for it comes even to those who are not conscious of their psychic — a kind of inspiration coming from the depths; well, in order to make itself perceptible it has to come to the surface. And as it comes to the surface, it gets mixed with all sorts of things which have nothing to do with it but which want to make use of it. As, for instance, all the desires and passions of the vital which, as soon as a force from the depths rises to the surface, catch hold of it for their own satisfaction. Or else people who live in the mind and want to understand and evaluate their experience, to judge it: then it is the mind that seizes upon this inspiration or this force which rises to the surface, for its own benefit, for its own satisfaction — and it becomes mixed, and that spoils everything. And this happens constantly; constantly surface movements creep into the inspiration from the depths and deform it, veil it, defile it, ruin it completely, deforming it to such an extent that it is no longer recognisable.

Why do these external impulses, when they come in contact with the inspiration rising from within, spoil everything, instead of being transformed?

Ah! excuse me, it is a reciprocal movement. And it depends on the proportion. The inspiration from within acts, of course. It is not that it is completely absorbed and destroyed, it isn't that. Necessarily, it acts but it becomes mixed, it loses its purity and original power. But all the same something remains, and the result depends on the proportion of the forces, and this proportion is very different depending on the individual.

There comes a time when one deliberately calls the deep inner inspiration and surrenders to it, when it can enter almost completely pure and make you act in accordance with the Divine Will.

The mixture is not unavoidable; it is only what usually happens. And the proportion is very different according to the individual. With some, when the psychic within takes a decision and sends out a force, it is quite visible, it is visibly a psychic inspiration. One can at times see a sort of shadow pass which comes from the mind or the vital; but these are interventions of no importance which cannot at all change the nature of the psychic inspiration, if one does not let them have the upper hand.

None of these things is irremediable, for otherwise there would be no hope of progress.

[At the end of the previous talk, Mother commented that the students and sadhaks were "not very rich in questions". Thereafter, they began to send her written questions, which one of them read aloud:]

*It is said: "Follow your soul and not your mind which leaps at appearances."
How to practise this in everyday life?*

Why, what is the problem? What is the difficulty?

*How to put this advice into practice, this recommendation to follow one's soul
and not one's mind?*

This is a purely individual matter.

The first condition is to receive inspirations from the soul — exactly what we were just speaking about — for if one does not receive them, how can one follow one's soul? The first condition is to be a little conscious of one's soul and receive its inspirations. Then, naturally, it goes without saying that one must obey them instead of obeying the reasoning intellect.

But how to do it? By what method? . . . This is something purely personal. Each one must find his own method. The principle is there; if one wants to apply it, for each one the method is different. It all depends on the extent to which one is conscious of the inspirations from the soul, on the degree of identity one has with it.

So one can't give the same remedy for everybody.

Is that all?

*"The more you give, the more you receive," it is said. Does this apply to
physical energy? Should one undertake physical work which seems beyond
one's capacity? And what should be one's attitude while doing this kind of
work?*

If one did not spend, one would never receive. The great force a child has for growth, for development is that he spends without stint.

Naturally, when one spends, one must recuperate and must have the time that is needed to recuperate; but what a child cannot do one day, he can do the next. So if you never go beyond the limit you have reached, you will never progress. It is quite obvious that people who practise physical culture, for example, if they make progress, it is just because they gradually exceed, go beyond what they could do.

It is all a matter of balance. And the period of receptivity should be in proportion to the period of expenditure.

But if one confines oneself to what one can do at a given moment . . . First of all it is impossible, for if one doesn't progress, one falls back. Therefore, one must *always* make a little effort to do a little more than before. Then one is on the upward path. If one is afraid of doing too much, one is sure to go down again and lose one's capacities.

One must always try a little more, a little better than one did the day before or

the previous moment. Only, the more one increases one's effort, the more should one increase one's capacity of receptivity and the opportunities to receive. For instance, from the purely physical point of view, if one wants to develop one's muscles, a progressive effort must be made by them, that is to say, a greater and greater effort, but at the same time one must do what is needed: massage, hydrotherapy, etc. to increase at the same time their capacity to receive.

And rest. A rest which is not a falling into the unconscious — which generally tires you more than it refreshes — but a conscious rest, a concentration in which one opens oneself and absorbs the forces which come, the universal forces.

The limits of the body's possibilities are so elastic! People who undergo a methodical and scientific training, rational, systematic, arrive at absolutely startling results. They demand things from their bodies which, naturally, without training it would be quite impossible to do. And certainly, they must gradually go beyond what they could do, not only from the point of view of perfection, but also from the point of view of strength. If they have that fear of doing more than they are able, of overdoing things, they will never progress. Only, at the same time one must do what is necessary for recuperating. That is the whole principle of physical culture. And one sees things which for an ignorant and untrained man are absolutely miraculous, performed by bodies which have been methodically trained.

What should be done to remember the Mother constantly? Should one repeat Her name, remember Her physical form or think or feel that She is the Divine? Is gratitude for the Divine a form of remembrance?

All this is good. And many other things are good. And it depends on what each one can do.

It is a little too personal a question, isn't it?

It depends on each one, it is the same thing. If one generalises, it makes no sense any longer. To remember, you must not forget, that's all!

Can there be a collective form of discipline which is self-imposed?

But very often it happens that people form groups and make rules for themselves. That is a discipline which is self-imposed. It constantly happens. All societies, secret or other, and all initiation groups have always done things like that: they make rules which they impose upon themselves and usually follow very strictly. And there are even terrible penalties and quite disastrous consequences when, after having taken the oath, one wants to leave the discipline. This happens constantly in the world.

One could discuss the effectiveness, that would be another thing. But in any case, the question is not "whether one can do it" — it does happen, it is something which has been happening since the most ancient times. Always man has tried to

form groups in one way or another and impose laws on these groups. And if it is a mystic group, they are mystic laws.

Perhaps they are imposed on those who want to enter the group; then they are not self-imposed, are they?

But one enters the group freely, and therefore one accepts them. Usually, in those groups the first thing they do is to tell you, “These are the laws, the rules of the group, do you accept them or not?” If you don’t accept them, you don’t enter; if you accept them, it is you who impose them on yourself. You are not forced into a group like that! It is not like being subject, for example, to the atavism of the family in which you are born. That is imposed from outside. You are born in a family and are subject to the atavism, the laws of a rigid family atavism, which is imposed from outside. For, almost universally, the permission of the one who is brought into the world or his acceptance is never asked: you are brought here by force, the environment is imposed on you by force, the laws of the atavism of the milieu by force, and indeed you do what you can with them — the best you can, let us hope! But when it is a group of friends or a society, unless you have no personal will and are carried away by someone else whom you obey, it is you yourself who decide whether you accept these laws or not.

It is obvious that the question becomes a little more subtle when it is a matter of religion, for that is a part of the imposition on the child before he is born. If he is born in a religion, that religion is imposed upon him. Obviously, according to the true rules, there is an age when, supposedly, after having been instructed in the religion in which you are born, you choose to be in it or not. But very few people have the capacity for individual choice. It is the custom of the family or the environment in which they live, and they follow it blindly, for it is more comfortable than reacting; one is born into it and one is almost forced to follow that religion. One must have a very considerable strength and independence of character to come out of it, for usually you have to break through with much commotion and that has serious repercussions on your life.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1956, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 8, pp. 187-98)

‘THE TRUE WAY TO UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES’

There is one tradition which says that Ravana died deliberately, that it was deliberately he chose the role of the Asura and that he died willingly in order to shorten his “stay” outside the Divine. He dissolved into Rama when he died, saying that thus he had succeeded sooner in uniting with him definitively. Which version is this? Is it orthodox or not?

(Nolini) *Everything is orthodox!*

It is orthodox. The idea (it is an idea, isn't it?) is that the Asuras have chosen to be Asuras because they will be dissolved by the Divine and thus return more quickly, unite more swiftly with the divine essence than the gods or sages who take a big round of labour before being able to return to the Divine. The Asuras, on the other hand, having chosen to be very wicked, will be destroyed much more quickly, they will return much faster. It's one way of looking at it!

(Questions and Answers 1953, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 5, pp. 327-28)

*

You know the story of the Ramayana. What did Ravana choose? You know that? Very well, this is what is called choosing to disappear: that is to say, he has no longer any individuality.

What happened to Ravana after his death we are not told.

We are not told? To me it has been told. It is said that Ravana chose to disappear into the Supreme, and that he was completely dissolved in Him, that is, he lost his individuality, he was no longer a separate being, he returned to the Origin, he was dissolved in the Supreme. And even before doing it, he had chosen to play that part, his part as a hostile being, because the road is much shorter than for those who are devotees and obey. One goes much more rapidly, for, one day, the Divine decides that it is enough, and he just destroys them. He cannot go out of the Divine, for all is divine! He may lose his individuality, that is, may be fused, dissolved into the Supreme.

Besides, nothing disappears, it is the form which disappears but the constituent elements continue. Everything is eternal, for everything is the Divine, and nothing can go out of the Divine, for everything is divine. But the forms disappear. And it is

through this identification with the form that the impression of death comes; but the constituent elements are eternal, for all is eternal. It is the form which disappears.

So, some of those beings prefer to be just completely dissolved and to disappear totally like that, into the infinite, the oneness (that is, they lose their personal consciousness, they have no longer any personal consciousness, they exist no longer as a personal consciousness), they prefer that, rather than having a personal consciousness which gives itself to the Divine and becomes by this very fact consciously and personally immortal. They like dissolution and personal disappearance better than conversion, that is, self-giving.

Why?

Through pride, I suppose. It is always pride. Fundamentally, from the very beginning it is pride — but almost all the religions have said it. It is pride, that is, a sort of consciousness of one’s power and one’s importance.

(Questions and Answers 1953, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 5, pp. 378-79)

*

I am receiving continuously, almost daily, the aphorisms of Sri Aurobindo, which I had forgotten completely. There were very interesting things. . . . Some of them give me the feeling that they are a kind of transcription (one might say “intellectual”, but it is not that, it is a mentalised higher mind, that is to say, it is accessible to thought) of the experience of the supramental consciousness that I had, in which this difference of good and evil and all that, appears as childishness, and Sri Aurobindo expresses it in the aphorisms in a way accessible to the intellect. Only . . . those who understand do not understand well! because they understand in the old way.

Do you remember these aphorisms? . . . There is one where he says: “If I cannot be Rama, then I would be Ravana . . .” and he explains why. It is in that series.

(Notes on the Way, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 11, p. 210)

*

222 – The saint and the angel are not the only divinities; admire also the Titan and the Giant.

223 – The old writings call the Titans the elder gods. So they still are; nor is any god entirely divine unless there is hidden in him also a Titan.

224 – If I cannot be Rama, then I would be Ravana; for he is the dark side of Vishnu.

This means that sweetness without strength and goodness without power are incomplete and cannot totally express the Divine.

I could say in keeping with the kind of image used by Sri Aurobindo, that the charity and generosity of a converted Asura are infinitely more effective than those of an innocent angel.

(On Thoughts and Aphorisms, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 10, p. 280)

*

509 – Has thy effort succeeded, O thou Titan? Dost thou sit, like Ravana and Hiranyakashipou, served by the gods and the world's master? But that which thy soul was really hunting after, has escaped from thee.

510 – Ravana's mind thought it was hungering after universal sovereignty and victory over Rama; but the aim his soul kept its vision fixed upon all the time was to get back to its heaven as soon as possible and be again God's menial. Therefore, as the shortest way, it hurled itself against God in a furious clasp of enmity.

511 – The greatest of joys is to be, like Narada, the slave of God; the worst of Hells being abandoned of God, to be the world's master. That which seems nearest to the ignorant conception of God, is the farthest from him.

512 – God's servant is something; God's slave is greater.

Sri Aurobindo gives us the true way to understand the Scriptures, which thus become universal symbols.

(On Thoughts and Aphorisms, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 10, p. 353)

THE MOTHER

“TRYST” —
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

Another poem. Is the second verse too much like a lesson preached to the ignoramus addressed in the first?¹

Fall shut, vain eyes, for you have never seen Him:
Your gaudy eagerness serves but to screen Him.
Forget your revel, O insatiate ears:
You have not heard the Heart of the universe.
Lips, guard all breath — awaiting on your own
Stillness the silent kiss of the Unknown . . .

flows
Life ~~throws~~² a river foaming ferryless
Between the myriad marge of outwardness
And the eternal Lover's loneliness
Of unseen bank — until a soul-tense mood
Winters the hurrying wave to a frozen sheet
Of trance to bear³ across the ~~impeccable~~⁴ Feet!
bring all-beautiful

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

It is a very fine poem.

But the two “to”s in the last lines are awkward. It seems to me the first “to” (in the penultimate line) can with advantage be omitted and a comma substituted for it.

1. No.
2. *Sri Aurobindo crossed out “throws”.*
3. *Sri Aurobindo crossed out “bring”.*
4. *Sri Aurobindo crossed out “impeccable”.*

25 August 1934

TRYST

Fall shut, vain eyes, for you have never seen Him:
 Your gaudy eagerness serves but to screen Him.
 Forget your revel, O insatiate ears:
 You have not heard the Heart of the universe.
 Lips, guard all breath — awaiting on your own
 Stillness the silent kiss of the Unknown. . . .

Life flows a river foaming ferryless
 Between the myriad marge of outwardness
 And the eternal Lover's loneliness
 Of unseen bank — until a soul-tense mood
 Winters the hurrying wave, a frozen sheet
 Of trance to bear across the all-beautiful Feet.

AMAL KIRAN
 (K. D. SETHNA)

I don't think it would be advisable not to read at all. It is a relaxation of the tension of sadhana which can be at the same time useful to the mind. It is only when there is the spontaneous flow of sadhana all day without strain that reading is no longer needed.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga – IV, CWSA, Vol. 31, p. 62)

JOHN ALBERT CHADWICK: THE LIFE OF ARJAVA

(Continued from the issue of October 2021)

Lucknow (1927 – 1929)

In 1927, Arjava assumed his teaching position in Lucknow University. “He seems to have been highly successful as a teacher, and to have won the respect and affection of his students and his colleagues during the two years for which he held the post.”¹ With his brilliant mind and sensitive demeanour, this was inevitable. It was also meaningless — in terms of what he wished to achieve by having cut himself “away from his moorings in spite of the opposition of his friends and relations. . . .”² He would tell Dilip, who understood the immense courage that this had demanded of his fragile friend, “I came here to learn — not to teach.”³

Lucknow would bring Ronald Nixon (who later became known as Krishna-prem) to Arjava’s side. Nixon was a fellow Englishman, a kindred soul. He was just a year older than Arjava. He had also served in World War I, and had studied at Cambridge, where he read English. He, of course, had also ended up as a lecturer in Lucknow on a spiritual quest.⁴ In Nixon’s touching tribute to Arjava, upon the latter’s passing, he pointed to the “utter irrelevance”⁵ of their positions as university lecturers for they had entered India to acquire its spiritual wisdom, not to sell to it philosophies of the West. They were seekers, as Nixon put it, of the “hidden treasure for which most men have no eyes.” He pointed to a conversation they once had. This must have been soon after Arjava’s arrival in India. It took place away from the University, suggesting the men were close enough to take a vacation together. “Chadwick and I sat together on the banks of the Ganges at Benares talking far into the night of dreams that lay close to our hearts, dreams that had brought us two together as they had brought us both to India.”⁶

1. C. D. Broad in *Mind*, Vol. 49, No. 193 (Jan., 1940), pp. 129-31.

2. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (6th Ed), p. 305.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 308.

4. As an aside, at this stage, mention may also be made of another intriguing Englishman who bore striking similarities with Arjava. Major Alan Chadwick (apparently no relation of Arjava) was, like Arjava, the son of a vicar, served in the war, went to Oxbridge, and even had a mother called Madeline (there was a slight variation to the spelling adopted by Arjava’s parent). He also ended up in India seeking spiritual answers, finding his fulfilment in Ramana Maharshi’s Ashram in 1935. Hence, in the 1930s, two unrelated Chadwicks, both utterly disillusioned with the West, settled in Ashrams within 60 miles of each other.

5. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*, p. 71.

6. *Ibid.*

Such dreams, of course, could never have been satisfied with a career in academia that could have been pursued in England. It was only a question of when the path from Lucknow would be revealed to Arjava. It was fortuitous for him that he knew Nixon and Dhurjati Prasad Mukherji, Lucknow's Professor of Economy and Social Science. Both of these men were close friends of Sri Aurobindo's disciple, Dilip. It is not clear which of them had the honour of having introduced Arjava to Dilip,⁷ but one of them did. So it was that, armed with a letter of introduction, Arjava made his way to Pondicherry.

On 23 December 1928⁸ Arjava stepped, for the first time, through the gates of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. He only stayed a day. The fleeting visit was enough to draw him back on 6 May 1929. This time he stayed three days. We can surmise he met Dilip on both occasions but it appears as if it was the second visit upon which the momentous meeting with the Mother took place. By that stage, Arjava was feeling an immense disillusionment with India. Whatever optimism he had felt on the banks of the Ganges next to Krishnaprem had flowed away long ago. He had sailed halfway around the world towards the Infinite, but the Infinite had not, he felt, taken a single step towards him. As early as January 1928, having completed just over a year at Lucknow, he would say, ". . . I do not feel inclined to stay on at this post after April 1929. After that date, I may take 12 to 18 months of leisure for studying and writing before taking a post in a British university . . . at present my plans are quite undecided."⁹ Indeed, a key feature of his time at Lucknow was the extent to which he maintained contact with his former colleagues and continued the philosophical development of arguments he had commenced in Cambridge. His leaving Cambridge may have caused quizzical glances, but the doors to Trinity College were not closed to him. Its hierarchy understood that a star does not stop shining just because it moves across the sky.

In February 1929, three months before he met Mother, he had already planned his return trip to England. And yet, still something in him must have known that India had more to give, for there he was, in May 1929, having navigated the long journey south from Lucknow to Pondicherry, standing in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, waiting for the Mother.

Arjava's first meeting with the Mother was brief. Deep pathos weighed the few words he said to her. He told the Mother, "I find life devoid of meaning and am persuaded that only spiritual wisdom can fill the void." Dilip, as witness to the

7. In *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem* (p. 69) Dilip says Krishnaprem gave the letter of introduction. In *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* he says it was Mukherji (p. 308).

8. The dates of Arjava's visits and stays at the Ashram have been taken from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives. They record Arjava as having visited twice, in December 1928 and May 1929, before eventually settling in the Ashram for good in November 1929. Dilip Kumar Roy appears to only recall one visit taking place before Arjava took up residence.

9. Letter dated 16 January 1928 to Professor G. E. Moore.

meeting, wondered how an intellectual could respond to the simple message that Mother gave to him: “Sincerity you have. Only you must learn to accept that you can get the response you want in proportion to your trust in the Divine.”¹⁰ His perplexity must have deepened when Arjava told him subsequently that the brief encounter was the most overwhelming of his life. Arjava had not read a word of Sri Aurobindo’s or the Mother’s at this stage¹¹ but that was not necessary: it was the heart, not the mind, that the Mother had overwhelmed.

When Arjava left the Ashram after that fateful visit to the Mother, he needed time to reflect. It is not clear whether, by this stage, he had already resigned from his post in Lucknow, but he sailed to England to wait for clarity to descend. Would he alter his plans of seeking an academic post in England? We know he spent time with Professor Moore’s family in Wales. We also know that a post at Trinity College just so happened to be opening again for a philosophy lecturer. Arjava would have been a serious candidate, despite his acknowledgement of “considerable doubt” as to whether he would have been appointed again. Arjava backed out in the end in favour of an Austrian who had served against the British army in the war. It would have been “deplorable,” he said, “to miss such a favourable moment for promoting international good feeling.”¹² This noble sentiment was fostered in a wish for worldwide amity that had also formed part of the Rosicrucian order he joined as an undergraduate. The post went to a man “considered by some to be the greatest philosopher of the 20th century, Ludwig Wittgenstein.”¹³

After a few months of rumination in England, Arjava wrote to Dilip. Would Mother accept him, he asked. “Only you must learn to accept that you can get the response you want in proportion to your trust in the Divine.” Perhaps Mother’s remark to Arjava had provided the kindling to ignite such trust in him. Arjava got the response he wanted. He sailed back to India and on 29 November 1929 he joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram: Arjava had come home.

The Sri Aurobindo Ashram (November 1929 – May 1939)

*You must learn that you have no more brothers, sister, father, mother, except Sri Aurobindo and myself, and you must feel free and unconcerned whatever happens to them. We are your whole family, your protection, your all in all.*¹⁴

— The Mother.

10. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (6th Ed), p. 312.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 309.

12. Letter dated 10 February 1931 to G. E. Moore.

13. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wittgenstein/>

14. *Champaklal Speaks*, p. 369.

Mother wrote these striking words to Champaklal. To live them requires a singularity of focus and straightforwardness towards the guru that brooks no deviation. Only Sri Aurobindo can say if this is what he saw the potential for in Arjava when he gave him his name. Certainly, the shy intellectual carried with him an “innate greatness.” It led him to cling steadfastly to his gurus to the exclusion of all else. Dilip, his closest, and perhaps only meaningful, friend in the Ashram would say that he only truly recognised this in Arjava as death approached him. This was when Arjava had told him emphatically, “I would die in India where my guru is” rather than return to England for medical help.¹⁵ He also told him, “Do not think that the English as a race baulk at emotion, Dilip. Quite the contrary. We are a race with a rich background of profound emotion, the stuff poets are made of. But we are shy.”¹⁶ This is an excellent insight into his own character, for he was truly a man of deep emotions — and painfully shy. His utter abhorrence at the First World War, constraints on personal liberty and at western imperialism — particularly when Indian interests were at stake, were notable signposts of the deep emotions within his heart, as was the spiritual longing that had taken him to India and refused him a backward glance at the family he never saw again.

“We are your whole family, your protection, your all in all.” The Mother’s words became a truth for Arjava. His father died on 9 February 1931. Nominally, he was now the head of the Chadwick family as the eldest son. He did not return to Scotland to grieve with his mother. Indeed, the following day, and quite separately, he wrote to G. E. Moore to say, “for the past year or more I have reflected rather carefully upon the various alternatives so that my decision to remain here is quite deliberate and final.” Four years later, on 6 December 1935, Professor J. S. Mackenzie died. This was the man who had opened his home to him in Cambridge and helped him to get his footing in India. Professor Mackenzie’s wife, who had treated him like a son,¹⁷ was in England. As it was with his biological mother, so it was with the surrogate one who took him in at Cambridge. Arjava’s feet did not leave the Ashram. That was his home. “The gates of false glamour have closed behind; There is no return”¹⁸ he would say in a 1935 poem, ‘New Country’, that beautifully captured the ache of relinquishing a dream that one has outgrown. Mother and Sri Aurobindo had become his “whole family.” Without ostentation, as he retreated further into the reclusive temperament that he became known by, he lived that truth.

15 Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (6th Ed), p. 305.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

17. Broad tells us, “... Mrs. Mackenzie admirably fulfilled this office [as a mother] while Chadwick was in Cambridge.” C. D. Broad in *Mind*, Vol. 49, No. 193 (Jan., 1940), pp. 129-31.

18. ‘New Country’, 28 December 1935.

It is a shame that his reserved temperament prevented him from sharing his feelings with all but a narrow band of people, Dilip and Ronald Nixon being the only two who come easily to mind. Compartmentalising himself, no one except his gurus really knew the complex whole of Arjava. People knew different constituent parts, the soldier, the scholar, the sadhak. The intense beauty of their combined effect, however, was for his gurus alone to appreciate. Mother and Sri Aurobindo held his soul. We can see his reverence for them in his 1936 poems, 'To Mother', and 'Red Lotus (Sri Aurobindo's Consciousness)'. To everyone else he was an enigma. He retreated from the few, like Dilip, that had known him, leaving them to know nothing except that he wrote poetry and meditated. Unobtrusively, until deep into his time in the Ashram, he maintained contact with his eminent former colleagues from Trinity College. They discussed philosophy but Arjava yielded nothing, from what we can tell, regarding his daily life, the fact that he wrote poetry, wore a dhoti and was known by an Indian name given by Sri Aurobindo. From Arjava's correspondence with Professor G. E. Moore, a man who possibly spent more time at Trinity with Arjava than his mother had in his entire youth, we know the hobbies of the Professor's children, the fact that one of them had his appendix removed, and where his family spent their holidays. It was the usual type of information that friends share. From Arjava's end there was no reciprocation in kind, no proffering of information regarding his Indian life, his health, or his family in England — and yet we know Arjava maintained contact with them until the end.¹⁹ A friendship based on the purity of intellectual discourse alone, "thinking for the sake of thinking," seems to have been the consequence.²⁰ That said, Moore was clearly curious. On several occasions information regarding the Ashram was sought. But it was as if Arjava's place of sacredness was not to be shared, not to satisfy mere intellectual curiosity. All he would blandly say was that "the life here . . . for learning yoga is extremely pleasant and interesting. I must describe it more fully in a later letter."²¹ That later letter never came.

Part of his reticence about sharing of himself with others was undoubtedly due to his shyness. It could be extreme. An incident comes to mind of Arjava visiting the family home of the Pintos with Mona Pinto making cucumber sandwiches for him and a companion. His shyness was such that he averted his eyes and face from the lady whilst raising the bread to his lips. "He would turn a little . . . because he

19. Dilip was clear that Arjava had told him that he maintained correspondence with his family. Jayantilal would say that upon Arjava's death, his mother's address was located amongst his personal belongings (now lost) and a telegram was sent to inform her of her son's death. We also know that Arjava left some money to his mother in England in his will.

20. We recall Sri Aurobindo's comment of 14 December 1939, "That was Arjava's great complaint, that people here want always something practical from philosophy. They don't want to think for the sake of thinking:" See A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo* (4th Ed.), p. 713.

21. Letter to G. E. Moore of 5 May 1930.

was so shy about eating in front of her. He was a very shy, gentle, man.”²² At the expense of his self-consciousness, we cannot help but delight in the quaint image of the English (Mona Pinto was also English, hailing from London) eating cucumber sandwiches in the tropics.



(Professor G. E. Moore)

If shyness was one aspect of his emotional makeup, one wonders if a belief in the precariousness of joy and life was not another. He lived through what he had described as “an insane war”, fought another sapping one to keep his health, and had lost a close friend while young. One could forgive his reluctance to get too attached to “an extremely pleasant” place like the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and wear his love for it on his sleeve, particularly if he thought the time he had allocated there was brief. This brings us to the wistful tone of much of his poetry. One poem in particular, from 13 February 1938, comes to mind.

22. This anecdote was recounted by Gauri Pinto who had it passed down to her by Ambu.

THE SINGLE PRAYER

On tiptoe dimly I now take my way
 Through the sweet-scented forests of a world
 I cannot claim, in which I have no say,
 — From which even now I may in thought be hurled.

I will not break one twig lest sap should bleed,
 Nor brush the leaves that quiver and shrink and fold;
 Not one dream-petal from the future deed
 By my dream-roving shall be earthward rolled.

I'd step too lightly for the sleeping dew
 To feel an alien presence and depart.
 — Grant that the dawn-clear joy may tremble through,
 Limn the soft-splendoured wideness of his heart.

What does it say about Arjava if he felt the need to tiptoe through the “sweet-scented forests of a world” lest his “alien presence” leaves a trace? It is not an imaginative leap to see this idyllic world as a symbol for the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in which he reclusively sheltered for his final years. Nor is it irrelevant to mention that when his final departure from its gates came to pass, it did indeed feel as if he had stepped “too lightly for the sleeping dew” to notice his silent departure.

To most, the formal exterior was all that was visible of Arjava. “Stiff but polite” said Nirodbaran. “Dry as Dust” said Nolini Kanta Gupta. As time went on, similar epithets would no doubt have attached to Arjava as he peeled away from people, preferring the solitude of the room from which he meditated and worked at the craft of his poetry under Sri Aurobindo’s patient guidance. As for the poetry itself, Amal Kiran gave an excellent evaluation of it when he said “[it] may be a little baffling at first, but for those who can absorb its strange atmosphere there awaits a reward often of a beauty which takes one’s breath away by its magic spells or by its grave amplitudes of spirituality.”²³

The seclusion was not immediate. Nor was it total. As he arrived at the Ashram, he stayed with Dilip for some time. In some respects, it was a meeting of opposites, the ebullient singer and public personality residing with the withdrawn expert on mathematical philosophy. In other respects, the two were kindred souls. There was only two years difference between the men and there would have been some overlap of the times they spent at Cambridge where Dilip had studied mathematics (so perhaps mathematical philosophy wasn’t such an alien field for him after all). And,

23. Amal Kiran, ‘The Inspiration and Art of John A. Chadwick’

of course, both men were utterly enchanted by Sri Aurobindo and his writings. Dilip would say that Arjava came to adore Sri Aurobindo. There was an obvious delight for Arjava in reading the affectionate humour Sri Aurobindo poured into his letters to Dilip: “But I do like this, you know,” he would say, “your cracking jokes with Gurudev!”²⁴ In turn, Dilip would find a warm welcome in the “stiff but polite” Englishman that he grew to love. He would come to describe how they both attempted in concert to get Sri Aurobindo to disclose further details on the progress he had made with *Savitri* only to receive the guru’s reply that he had “no time to dally with the muses.”

“‘It’s the supramental,’ Chadwick used to whisper to me [Dilip] in a mock solemn tone.” “And how Chadwick laughed! His English sense of humour and his mischievous chuckle always refreshed me after I had my fill of the sombre faces around me. It was thus that our affection grew. . . .”²⁵

Another regular visitor to the Ashram around this time would say that during their visits they would drive with Arjava to see “some of the surrounding tanks (village water reservoirs) . . . [and] throw lotus plants into the bare tanks. . . .” The visitor left us with a gorgeous image: “If you see some tanks around Pondicherry with lotus blooms in them, you have Arjava to thank for this.”²⁶

Plants were clearly a source of comfort to Arjava. There was a time when he would visit the home of Mona and Udar Pinto and do a little gentle gardening for them. Perhaps he even taught a local boy the basics of plant care. His companion at the Pintos was another relatively recent joiner to the Ashram, Ambu. A Gujarati man with no interest in academic pursuits, Ambu was a hathayogi par excellence. He stressed “the value of doing your sadhana quietly instead of ‘broadcasting your ignorance’ by publishing stupid articles. Ambu knew all the top Ashram writers of the day, but their learned ponderings left him cold.”²⁷

For a time at least, Arjava was close to Ambu, responding to his innocent nature and purposefully eschewing, it seemed, Ashram intellectuals. It was if he was taking his mind back to his undergraduate days before his bout of Infantile Paralysis, when his delicate mind delighted in botany and was beguiled by Japanese gardens and bonsai trees. There are precious few traces of these light moments in Arjava’s recorded history, leaving us to forlornly hope that there is an undiscovered book of them somewhere. We cannot help but want that for him.

Dilip’s and Arjava’s delight in each other’s company as housemates was brief. Not long after his arrival, Arjava asked the Mother for alternative living arrangements. To this, the Mother agreed. This pained Dilip whose affection for Arjava was obvious.

24. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (6th Ed), p. 298.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 299.

26. Shyam Kumari, *How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, Volume II, p. 126.

27. *Mother India*, December 2017, ‘Ambu, The Mother’s Baby’, by Bob Zwicker, p. 39.

He sought clarification of his housemate's motives from Sri Aurobindo and was assured that Arjava had not left on account of any friction with him. His "inner need for quiet and solitude" were the sole driving forces for Arjava's new housing arrangements. This was in March 1931.²⁸ Dilip's upset may have been assuaged by the belief that his friend was still close by but things had changed between him and Arjava, and, it appears, between Arjava and the world around him.

Arjava still went daily to receive the Mother's blessings. Dilip would see him and the greetings they exchanged were cordial but aloof. Dilip said "he looked more distant. I used to feel a little pain at his deepening retirement."²⁹ This was an understatement. Two years later, Dilip was still smarting at the loss of friendship. He lamented to Sri Aurobindo, blaming him for the fact that Arjava had slipped from his life. Sri Aurobindo replied, ". . . I am utterly at a loss to imagine how I can be responsible for your becoming a stranger to Arjava . . . I greatly regretted your getting estranged from Arjava, for Arjava's sake as well as your own."³⁰ Despite his regret at events, not even the guru was able to turn back the clock on the relationship between his two disciples. By 1936 Arjava's reclusive temperament was sufficiently established for Sri Aurobindo to refer to him, with soft humour, as "the monk".³¹

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Throughout his time in the Ashram, indeed throughout his life, Arjava's health suffered. An affectionate sketch by Amal Kiran captured him with his walking stick. It is a poignant image: this was a man in his 30s. He should have been in the prime of his life.

Arjava once told Dilip that he was not going to live long.³² He entered the Ashram with the heavy shadow of ill health pressing down on him. His concern was sufficient for him to obtain a medical check up in England before leaving for Pondicherry. The doctor had confirmed, Arjava said, that "residence in a hot climate will not injure my health."³³ That was good news. He had not enjoyed good health since his childhood. Rheumatism and Infantile Paralysis were just two of his former afflictions. Indigestion and "chronic liver trouble"³⁴ came to accompany them. It is unclear whether the liver trouble was a reference to what would now be termed chronic liver disease, an ailment characterised by the gradual destruction of liver tissue over time. Ultimately, the Ashram doctor who came to treat him was clueless

28. Sri Aurobindo to Dilip (Vol 1), letter of 7 March 1931, p. 60.

29. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (6th Ed), p. 317.

30. Sri Aurobindo to Dilip (Vol 1), letter of April 1933, pp. 319-20.

31. Sri Aurobindo to Dilip (Vol 3), letter of 7 September 1936, p. 161.

32. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (6th Ed), p. 315.

33. Letter to G. E. Moore of 31 October 1929.

34. Nirodbaran, *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, p. 91.

as to the core diagnosis and remedy that could assist his patient. The Mother brought in other doctors to examine Arjava. They were equally clueless. In the meantime, his health deteriorated.



An impression of Arjava

Arjava met Dilip towards the end. In typical understatement, he told him, “I haven’t been keeping good health lately, Dilip.” His family in England knew this. He was still close enough to them to apprise them of his worsening condition. No doubt their concern would have been exacerbated by knowledge of his medical history in Europe. They urged his return to England: “. . . they are writing letter after letter” he said before changing to the safe topic of poetry. Dilip’s concern for Arjava was touching as the latter remarked to him that “life is not very jolly.” He wanted to believe that it could be. The parting between the two men was poignant. Arjava held out the hope that life could be jolly one day “because I came to know them — him and Mother.”³⁵

It is not clear whether this was their final conversation. Arjava withdrew from Dilip, as indeed his spirit withdrew gently from life itself. The decline in his health progressed. In his final months, he was suffering from fever, jaundice, and abscesses on his body (suggesting that his body was almost perpetually in a prone position).

35. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (6th Ed), p. 317.

Other doctors cited different maladies to add to the mix.³⁶ Jayantilal Parekh, who helped attend him in his final months, recalled how the Mother had identified a German doctor with good medical facilities in Bangalore to which Arjava could be sent for quality care³⁷ and the elusive cure that had evaded his reach. Paradoxically, the Mother's concern must have caused anguish to Arjava. He had always been resolute in his desire to finish his days by his gurus: "Whatever is to happen must happen here," he had said to Dilip.³⁸ Jayantilal was equally clear, "he didn't want to go out [of the Ashram]."³⁹ And yet, here was his guru suggesting a course at odds with that cherished wish.

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo were keen to obtain the best help possible for their sadhak, even if that meant he needed to endure the unpredictable consequences of being away from them. Sri Aurobindo insisted that the Ashram doctor prepare a meticulous medical history and read it out to him. It did not go to Bangalore until he was satisfied that it was good enough to send. We cannot help but go back to the Mother's edict regarding the need for the sadhak⁴⁰ to accept her and Sri Aurobindo as their whole family. Sri Aurobindo's intense concentration on Arjava's welfare, his provision of spiritual and practical help (to the extent of personally ensuring that the medical notes to be sent met his exacting standards), reveal that familial love was amply reciprocated by him to those who were capable of cultivating a sense of true belonging to him and the Mother.

Arjava, of course, deferred to the wishes of his gurus. He was taken by train to Bangalore with Jayantilal by his side. Towards the end, his body was limp. Jayantilal said he was "practically unconscious." "I'm alright now." These were the final words from his lips, spoken on the train as he permitted Jayantilal to rest from his vigil over him.⁴¹ A typical English reserve, a desire not to create a fuss, accompanied him to the end.

Arjava just about survived the journey, but not for long. His final breaths were drawn at Bowring Hospital⁴² while Sri Aurobindo sat in Pondicherry asking "why is there no news of him?"⁴³ The reason became plain enough when Jayantilal sent a telegram back to the Ashram confirming that Arjava had passed away at approxi-

36. See A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo* (4th Ed), 6 May 1939, p. 706.

37. 'Two Interviews with Jayantilal Parekh', *Mother India*, February 2005, pp. 190-91.

38. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (6th Ed), p. 315.

39. 'Two Interviews with Jayantilal Parekh', *Mother India*, February 2005, p. 190.

40. The specific comment was directed to Champaklal.

41. *Mother India*, February 2005, p. 191.

42. Here we should say that it is certain that Arjava did indeed die in Bangalore and not in Vellore. The Death Register, a published probate list and the obituary penned by C. D. Broad all point to this fact. We should also add that Nirodbaran, in *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* said Arjava died on the train – not in the hospital (p. 93). Jayantilal, who accompanied Arjava to the hospital was clear that he died in the hospital (*Mother India*, February 2005, p. 191).

43. 'Two Interviews with Jayantilal Parekh', *Mother India*, February 2005, p. 191.

mately 5 a.m. that morning. It was 5 May 1939, a Friday.

His death was a “treacherous blow” for the Ashram doctor who at least had the good fortune of sitting before Sri Aurobindo to recover his reeling composure.⁴⁴ Perhaps it was equally treacherous for other Ashramites who had to then concede that there was no pact between death and the Ashram. It could, indeed, also visit the Master’s sons. This is not to say that Arjava’s reclusiveness had left the Ashram devoid of those of who knew him well enough to feel his loss on a more intimate level. More than once, Dilip quoted Krishnaprem’s lines about the personal sadness felt by those who knew Arjava,⁴⁵ no doubt because of the sorrow that had pressed on his own heart. Mona Pinto was also very upset when she received the news. She wondered if, with her family’s connections to members of the medical community, something more could not have been done to have changed events.⁴⁶ That, however, was not meant to be. Arjava left the Ashram as he had entered it, with quiet, almost impenetrable, self-effacement that only his gurus could penetrate. Hardly anyone knew how sick he was.

There was a tragic inevitability to events. Before Arjava had even set foot on the train, Sri Aurobindo had confirmed that his disciple “was disgusted with his ailing body”.⁴⁷ His body’s suffering was such that he wanted to discard it. We take solace then in the fact that Arjava’s final wish was granted. We may also recall one of his verses.

O winged soul;
But we with fettered feet and soiled with clay
Gaze through bewildered tears
At that quintessenced goal,
Craving one prized petal-touch may light on our dismay.⁴⁸

The verse needs to be rewritten now, the pathos rejected: in the end Arjava’s fetters were broken, the time for bewildered tears concluded. The following day, on 6 May 1939, there was a brief discussion about Arjava before Sri Aurobindo. We learn that a “post mortem examination revealed pericarditis, six ounces of water in the right side of the heart.”⁴⁹ Nothing, however, was satisfactory or definitive about the conflicting views the doctors had provided and the conversation was brief. No doubt Sri Aurobindo was aware that his disciple had been buried earlier that day.

44. Nirodbaran, *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, p. 93.

45. For example, see *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (6th Ed) p. 319, and *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*, p. 72.

46. As recounted to the author by Gauri Pinto.

47. Nirodbaran, *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, p. 92.

48. ‘The Flower of Light’ (1936) by Arjava.

49. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo* (4th Ed), 6 May 1939, p. 706. To this, we should add that a recently discovered Register of Burials says acute septicemia was the cause of Arjava’s death.

Nothing more was said. The “quintessenced goal” of Arjava’s life had held him in his consciousness until his last breath, and then beyond that. What more could be said?

Arjava’s body was laid to rest in one of the plethora of Christian cemeteries in Bangalore. Time has concealed the details of which one. One day, perhaps even soon, it will yield that information.⁵⁰ Maybe then a flower could be laid upon Arjava’s grave. It would be a modest token of appreciation for his showing us what it means to accept the Mother and Sri Aurobindo as “your all in all,” a thank you for simply being.



(Arjava: 1899 – 1939)

BALVINDER BANGA

(Concluded)

50. It is possible that we may be able to definitively identify the location of Arjava’s grave soon. The British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA) thinks it likely that Arjava was buried in Bangalore’s Hosur Road Cemetery No 1 (1872-1944, closed). Archival material relating to burials there is limited but other documentation has now been located, namely a Register of Burials, that supports BACSA’s initial view that Arjava was, indeed, laid to rest in Hosur Road Cemetery.

THE MASTER

(Continued from the issue of October 2021)

EVOLUTION

“Master, what is evolution?”

“Evolution is truth expressing itself in a larger, vaster, more integral manner. It is a process of unfolding and manifesting. A movement from simple to complex, from ignorance to knowledge, from darkness to light, from nonbeing to Being, from chaos to harmony, from inconscient and unconsciousness to the supreme consciousness, from imperfection to perfection, from perfection to higher more integral perfection.”

“Master, this is too abstract for me, I don’t understand.”

“You know that life started with a single-cell organism, like the amoeba, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Here you are a walking, talking, thinking, multi-cellular living organism. Isn’t this an evolution?” The Master looked at him, like a mathematics teacher looking at his pupil, with an expression that says, “Isn’t it so simple?”

“I concede, Gurudev, but can you explain a bit more. What is simple? What is this simplicity and complexity?”

“Simplicity, my son, is nothingness.” The Master had a look of amusement.

“Ah, not so simple,” the disciple thought, and then braced himself to challenge his Master. “Master, but nothingness is nothing. In nothingness there is neither simplicity nor complexity.”

“Well, then simplicity is a dot, a smooth well-rounded dot.” The smile on Master’s face was more radiant.

The disciple looked at the Master, obviously the Master was enjoying this mind game. He could as well have said simplicity is a cube or a square or whatever. The disciple sat pondering, talking to himself. “If simplicity was a dot, smooth, even, uncomplicated dot then . . . What did he just say, uncomplicated? That which is not complicated or complex is obviously simple.” A smile started appearing on his lips like a gentle ripple. “But how big should this dot be to be really simple? Well it should be visible at least,” he argued. “But, why? What is not visible to me is visible to, say, an ant. Well let us assume that the dot is as small as an electron,” he reasoned with himself, playing safe. “But what if there are many dots even on an electron? Well then it may be even tinier than an electron. And what if there are dots even on these femto-femto sized dots?” A voice inside his head laughed at him.

“Well then it should be even tinier than that, this dot,” he answered. “If you go on going backwards like this where does it leave you?” the voice asked. “Well, you reach,” he hesitated, “you reach, nothingness.” Laughter exploded in his head. He looked up at his Master, the smile on the Master’s face was still the same.

The disciple took a deep breath and said, “All right, simplicity is a dot. Then what is complexity?”

“Complexity is multiple simplicities.” Again that look of benign simplicity displayed itself on the Master’s face.

“Simplicity is a dot and complexity is multiple simplicities? Aren’t they opposites? Aren’t you playing games? or is it some sort of a riddle?” His voice betrayed disbelief.

“Suppose you put a dot next to a dot and keep on doing it in the same direction, what will you get?”

“A straight line, Master.”

“And if you put the same dots such that they are just at constant variance, an angle, what will you get?”

“A curved line, a circle, a spiral.” He answered.

“And if you join these straight lines?”

“Well, maybe a triangle, a square, a rectangle.”

“Can you create any more designs out of these curved and straight lines?”

“Oh, there are infinite possibilities.”

“Can you simply describe them to me?” the Master asked.

Red lights started flashing in his mind, it’s a trap.

“How can I, Master? The more and more you use them, the more and more intricate they become. You get so many millions of patterns, few simple but most quite complicated.”

The Master chuckled and looked at him with a ‘can-you-not-see?’ look.

“Now I understand, Master, that the same simplicity when combined with itself, multiplies itself, rearranges itself in endless patterns of expression, it becomes complexity.”

He sat down thinking, but who decides what is simple and what is complex? He understood that simplicity and complexity existed side by side. Slowly he looked up and then gathering his thoughts asked, “Master, what is the difference between simplicity and complexity? Who draws the dividing line between simplicity and complexity?”

“No one,” the Master responded.

“How can that be?”

“Well, think.”

“I do understand somewhat, but can you not make it clear?” he pleaded.

“When you are a small child, you learn to add and subtract and start solving the sums. You find at that time that the sums are difficult and complex. When you

grow and learn more, the same sums appear simple.”

“So what was complex to me becomes simple as I grow,” he finished.

“Yes, the dividing line therefore depends upon the individual. On a scale of extreme simplicity to highest complexity it depends where one stands. Most complex problems, which baffle humanity may look simple to some evolved minds. And most simple things may look complex to an unevolved mind,” the Master continued.

The disciple absorbed this. He was lost in thought. So in evolution this simplicity grows into intricate complexity. And yet at the very heart of all complexity is this simplicity always there, simply there, obvious and yet hidden by its very simplicity. Maybe it started like that. Out of nothingness, a simple infinitesimally small luminous dot appeared and just expanded, or multiplied or arranged itself to form this very complex universe. That simplicity, THAT which began, was always there and is and will be there in all that expresses itself, manifests itself. So indeed THAT, which he was used to call the Divine was this dot — this all-pervading simplicity, which was also the same infinite expression of itself. Indeed from nothingness to the infinity all was nothing but THAT — the Divine! He looked at the Master with renewed awe.

“Master, THAT — the Divine is the simplicity which contains all the complexities. Am I right?”

“Well, you may put it like that. It is one of the many ways one can speak of the Divine,” replied the Master with a twinkle.

He sat, munching on all that had just transpired. Evolution is this movement from simple to complex, where the simplicity expresses itself in infinite patterns to form infinite complexities and these complex things themselves rearrange, organise to form higher and more integral complexities. The whole creation is in a process of evolution, expressing itself, unfolding itself in a higher complex and integral manifestation. He became indrawn, his body became still, his eyes closed, his breath became slow and shallow, his mind became absorbed and silent. In this mode of intense concentration and silence, he saw a tiny dot, luminous and pulsating. Slowly the throbbing dot started growing in size and luminosity and engulfed him. Now he was a part of the dot. He was the dot. And then the dot expanded further, no, it exploded. He was stretched, expanding at a speed, a speed greater than light, greater than thought, a speed achieved only by . . . he searched for the answer. And he heard the answer, well sort of, because there was no sound, only awareness. A speed achieved only by the consciousness. He was the expanding, exploding, universe creating dot, moving at the speed of consciousness. But the consciousness was hidden, silent, involved.

He looked at the Master who was looking past him, through him. Then he realised that his Master was a living example of this all embracing consciousness. He wanted to touch the Master’s feet. Funny, he thought, but where are the Master’s feet? He searched. Suddenly his Master was no longer in the form he always saw.

Instead he felt the presence of his Master everywhere, vast — limitless presence. Then, even that too dissolved, now he was the Master himself and the disciple too. He was the Presence, all embracing, all loving, all powerful, all knowing, creating, supporting and dissolving the manifestations. Everything that existed formed his body and yet he was beyond all that which existed. His Being throbbed with joy, a delight much beyond all that he had ever felt. The joy that was ever present, innate. The whole universe was throbbing with that joy. He remained in this blissful state for a long time. Slowly he became aware that he was a witness in the very heart of THAT. Now he realised that THAT, the Brahman pervaded everything. The evolution was nothing but this ever manifesting perfection, harmony, light, truth, knowledge, love, power of the Divine. And the whole universe gradually becomes more and more conscious of the Divine manifesting in its infinite form.

He sat there in silent contemplation, absorbed.

VASTNESS AND INFINITY

“Master, what is vastness and what is infinity?” he asked.

“Vastness is the reflection and the essence of infinity. Vastness cannot be defined, but it can be understood, felt, perceived,” the Master replied.

“Like one feels when one looks at the ocean and the sky?” he asked.

“Yes, but just so,” the Master said, “it is a mere reflection of the true vastness.”

“Master, I want to know, understand, feel the vastness, the infinity,” he pleaded.

The Master looked at him with a smile, the sweetness of which penetrated to his core and his heart jumped with joy. “You must aspire for it,” the Master replied softly.

The disciple looked at him and repeated, “I aspire for it, Lord, make me vast, show me your infinity.” With one-pointed resolution he sat, closed his eyes and prayed, again and again, “Lord make me vast, show me your infinity.” He lost all his outer consciousness, there only remained an intense aspiration repeating itself. He lost the sense of time and space. Suddenly he found himself growing, not his body but his consciousness started growing. He found himself becoming bigger. He filled the room, then grew bigger and bigger than the room, the house, the streets. He was stretching himself from one end to the other end of the city. “Make me vast,” he urged. He grew beyond the city, the rivers and lakes that looked like small streams and ponds. He kept on repeating, “Make me vast.”

Suddenly he found himself greater than the earth, which looked like a small globe humming with life. His heart grew tender and he embraced his beloved mother earth. Then he gathered himself and looked across; to his astonishment, he was growing still, as he passed by the large Jupiter and the rings of Saturn with millions of asteroids circling it.

He kept on growing and suddenly he found that he was looking at the tiny solar system lost in the maze of heavenly bodies. The sun looked small, working with dignity, keeping its flock together. He turned his gaze at last to a bigger spectacle. He was on the edge of the Milky Way. The spiral galaxy was full of so many stars, nebulae, planets. He gazed at them with awe.

He moved around, or was it that just by his will he could be instantaneously anywhere? He examined the nebulae, the stars, the galaxies. He watched with awe a dance of twin stars. He saw a group of stars as if they were having a chat. He heard the celestial sounds, he heard them talk. He saw the birth of the stars, their childhood, their youth and the decline.

Suddenly, he was drawn to a beautiful star, he stretched out 'his hand' — funny, from where did his hand appear? he thought. He stretched out to hold the star in his hand. "Hmm, be gentle, I am working on it," he heard a very sweet and gentle voice. Surprised, he pulled his hand away and looked around. What he saw took his breath away. There was a Being, vast, of a transparent bluish white or golden hue, a sort of eternal vibrations, which could change the colours, the appearance, the atmosphere — in fact, anything, just by the change of vibrations. It was more of a presence, a reality beyond all realities, sweetness beyond all sweetness, love beyond all love, light beyond all that was luminous. The Being was transparent and yet visible — to him. He observed with fascination. The Being was as if playing with the little star, moulding it, working on it. And the star seemed to like it, nay, love it. Now and then the bursts of joy from the star spread far and wide. The Being looked at him a bit amused. There was sweetness, love, tenderness and a friendly twinkle, as if asking, "Do you like it?" The disciple was overwhelmed. He nodded. His being flowed to the presence with gratitude. There was a chuckle and a laughter and the whole universe participated in this joyous banter. The Being guided his gaze to another spot. A galaxy seemed to be wooing another galaxy. A galaxy! He held his breath, so to say. The galaxy was as if dancing around another galaxy, calling it, asking it to join for a dance. He let out a laugh. He peered closely at them. "You might disturb them," came a gentle voice. He withdrew. He wanted to be with the Being. He aspired, "I want to be with you, always."

"But you are," the Being replied.

"I want to go with you wherever you go," he pleaded.

"Go?" the Being asked, "but One never goes." The disciple was quiet for a moment, "How come?" he asked. "One is always there," came a sweet reply. His gaze was directed to a nebula. He went to see there, stars and galaxies were being born, and what he saw astonished him. The Being was there with each galaxy and each star and each planet, even the asteroids and comets and even the smallest celestial body had the presence of the Being. The force, the light, the will, the love, the delight, the grace emanating from the Being pervaded and held everything. He wanted to know whether the Being was present in the smaller things. He saw and

wanted to see inside an asteroid, the Being was there and there was a sweet amused smile on the face of the Being. He took a spoonful of dust and the Being was there working on the dust, yes, the dust. He willed to see inside a molecule, an atom, the subatomic particles and the Being was there. He went beyond the subatomic particles, and the Being was there. In the heart of everything, the Being was there. "Satisfied?" he heard a chuckle. "How could the same Being be so vast as to touch the infinity and yet be so tiny that it is in the nothingness?" he asked himself. "How is that possible?" he asked. Suddenly he became aware that he had not seen the entire Being but only felt the presence. He yearned to see the entire Being. "I want to see you," he asked. "The only way to see me entirely is to be Me," he received the answer. "How do I do that?" he asked. "Forget yourself and be what you are," came the answer.

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, this very instant." He got the answer.

Instantly he started expanding, with a strange perception. The galaxies and stars and nebulae, were all rushing inside him. As if he was containing all of them. All were throbbing within him, swirling, expanding, exploding, imploding, colliding. New formations and decays and destructions were happening inside him at multiple points within him. He was looking within himself. Everything was inside him. The time and space was within him. All that was created, being created or to be created was within him. All emerged from him and dissolved into him. He was into the tiniest of existence and he was beyond existence. The vastness was he, the infinity was he. The light, the delight, the consciousness, the existence, the love was he. He was THAT.

His being was filled with the supreme delight, "I am thou, O Supreme," he cried.

"You are indeed me, and I am you," — he heard the beautiful voice that reverberated throughout the universe.

After a long while he opened his eyes. He saw the sweetest smile on his Master's lips, greeting him. "How long was I . . ."

"Out?" the Master finished his sentence, "or in?" teasing him. The disciple nodded, imploring him.

"May be for a moment, may be for hours, or . . . may be for eternity, infinity." The Master smiled. In that smile he saw the veil lifted and he saw the Being. A small tear of gratitude gently rolled down his cheek. He sat there in silence, silence filled with infinite gratitude. His mind became boundless, a point of awareness, of delight of existence in the Supreme Being, one with the Being.

WITHIN

"Master, I want to see you again," he begged.

"What?" — a playful smile appeared on the Master's lips.

"The Being, working on the stars," he replied.

“That you can always see,” the Master replied.

“How?” he beseeched.

“By going within,” the Master replied cryptically.

He bowed at the Master’s feet, sat down and closed his eyes. Then he stilled his mind, the thoughts ceased to bother him. He gathered his awareness and focused it like a pointed beam of light inwards to the centre. He dived deep, deep, very deep within with intense one-pointed concentration, with only one aspiration, that is, to meet the Being seated within himself. He found himself floating into luminous timelessness. There was the Presence, concrete, sweet, real. He willed to see the face of his beloved, that sweet smile, that Divine unearthly sweetness, and as if in the answer, he felt a response, as if the Being was waiting for him. Funny, for the Being there was always now and there was no separation. And he realised that it was he who was aware of the separation and waiting and not the Being. He felt happiness, joy, an indescribable bliss. He realised all his words were superfluous and the Being knew everything. “I want to feel that oneness again,” he willed. And at once he started expanding. His sense of I disappeared, there existed only THAT. In that moment the little I had annulled itself and only THAT alone was there. Thou art THAT — *tat tvam asi*, — it came to him. I am THAT. — *Soham*.

Finding Himself:

This creation is Self finding, a game he devised to know himself.

I WANT TO SEE THAT AND HOW THE SUPREME HIDES

The disciple looked at the Master, who seemed to be absorbed gazing into eternity.

He waited till he could catch the Master’s attention. After a while the Master came out of trance and gave the disciple a most heart-warming smile.

The disciple looked at the Master, absorbing the radiance that emanated from this beautiful face, then breaking the silence he asked softly, hesitatingly, “Master, can I see HIM or HER or THAT, the one whom we call God, Ishwar, Bhagwan, Allah, the Supreme?”

The Master enjoyed his discomfiture.

With a mischievous smile he asked the disciple, “So what is IT? HE, SHE or THAT?”

“I don’t know Master,” he admitted candidly, “But can I . . .” He left the request hanging, beseeching the Master’s grace.

The Master’s face turned soft, sweet and glowed. He asked, “Do you want to see, know, understand, perceive, be?”

“Yes, Master,” he pleaded. The disciple awaited eagerly, for the mystery was about to be revealed; his Master who knew all, and would now reveal this most sacred of all Truths.

He looked in the Master's eyes. They were not eyes anymore, but deep pools of light. The light into which he could enter. He entered and found himself in a place. There were houses and a large square. He sat down on something like a wide open staircase. And suddenly his eyes were drawn to a group of children playing a football match in the square. He heard laughter and screams of delight. So many children were happily running after a ball, trying to control, to kick. He got involved. Suddenly he realised that amongst the children there was a Being, a Person, a dynamic, dazzling player. There was something supremely sweet about this Being. Just then he heard a little boy screaming, "To me, to me" and another one, "Here, here." And a little girl screamed at the top of her voice, "No, to me, please, to me." The ball was mysteriously always coming back to the Being and everyone shouted to get the Being's attention. The Being had long beautiful, silky hair and such a lovely face.

"Kick there," the little girl screamed at the Person. And He kicked and the ball went into the goal post. And there was a loud noise from the crowd, "Goal!" "Not there, there," she pointed in the opposite direction, stomping her foot. He looked at her with a sweet innocent smile, which said, "Oh, there?" And she stomped her feet, "Yes, there." The game continued and the disciple saw that He was scoring the goals for both sides. It was hilarious. And every time He seemed to pretend His innocence. And nobody seemed to mind. Just playing with Him was their greatest delight. Again the disciple heard the little girl ask Him, "Give it to me, I want to kick." He gently pushed the ball to her and she kicked, the ball moved a little and everybody burst out laughing. The little girl giggled and laughed and kicked again, again the ball moved a little. "Kick it there," she asked Him. He kicked, the ball went past her and veered off and went to the opposite goal post. "Goal!" everyone roared. And, then, there were shouts and laughter and screams, "We won, we won, we won!" For a moment there was a look of — 'but I told you to kick it there' — on the little girl's face and then she suddenly burst into laughter, ran towards Him and flung herself without a care. He caught her in midair and embraced her. The disciple felt as if He was embracing the whole world. The little girl quickly climbed up and perched herself on His shoulder. The children ran towards Him and started dancing around Him. All were enjoying the victory. There were no losers!!

After some time, a boy came and asked the little girl to come with him. She climbed down, kissed Him, waved and went with the boy.

The Being now turned and looked at the disciple and started walking towards him. There was such grace, such sweetness. The disciple remembered an old *shloka*, *madhurādhīpate akhīlam madhuram* — everything is sweet of the master of sweetness, the walk, the speech, the laughter, the smile, the eyes, the face, the hands, everything is nothing but an ocean of sweetness.

He came and sat next to the disciple. His gaze was as if asking the disciple — "So, you want to see me?" There was a gentle bemused smile on that world-

enchancing handsome face. The disciple was lost looking at Him, His sweetness inundating him. After a while he became aware, for a moment he did not know what to do. The Being appeared to him like a friend, an intimate friend. A friend in whom you can trust, give yourself entirely to, a friend who will be your friend not only for this life but for eternity. Before the question started formulating in the disciple's mind, the Being said, "So you want to know? to see the Supreme?" The disciple nodded with that revived burning thirst. "What do you think? How does the Divine look?" There was this sweet gentle smile. And then the disciple saw, a face appeared in front of him, the way he had imagined God, the Divine should be. He was delighted, but the face changed and changed and changed again and again and again, and every time the disciple felt he was seeing the Divine, the Supreme. There were faces and appearances he knew or had seen somewhere in arts, sculptures, paintings, sacred books, and there were others he had never known or seen or imagined. But the constant feeling that he was seeing the God Almighty, the Supreme, never left him. After seeing, as if, millions of faces and forms, he realised that suddenly even the staircase on which he was sitting, the square, the people, the buildings, the trees and animals and birds and ants and objects all were appearing the same. Everywhere he looked he could feel that sweet presence looking and smiling at him. He could almost hear a pure delightful laughter of a child, as if the Divine was looking at him with amusement, implying, "You see, I have a million places to hide from you. It is so easy." And after a while slowly he came out of this unique vision and saw the same familiar face of the Being looking at him with that sweet all-enchancing smile.

And then he saw, he truly saw, the Being disappearing and becoming one with all that was around. And he heard, "I am always there, in front of you, around you, within you, but I can always hide from men in a million ways because men have a fixed idea of what I should be." And there was again this sweet little laughter which spread and reverberated throughout all that was around.

Slowly the disciple came around, his Master was sitting there exactly, as if he had not moved, with his two luminous eyes and world-enchancing smile.

"So?" the Master looked at him.

"Master, he hides in a million ways because we want to see him only in a particular way, a form or a name. So he hides, he easily hides from us all, though he is ever present, because we refuse to see him. The nameless is He and the formless is He and also all the names and forms are only HE," he repeated as if to emphasise.

"Hmm, so God is He?" the master mischievously prodded.

"Master, It is He and She and THAT, and above all human norms and understanding and limitations. THAT is All, in All, above ALL. It is our ignorance and our preferences that blind us from seeing THAT in All. Master, grant me this boon that I may never forget this." He fell prostrate at the feet of his Master, the Divine Presence in front of him.

SURRENDER

“Master, I don’t know how to surrender, please teach me how to surrender,” he prayed.

The Master looked at him and smiled. “But, you know it,” he said, “you are quite good at it, one must say!” the Master teased him.

The ego was about to jump on a pedestal, but something inside him warned him. He knew his Master well. He looked at the Master’s enigmatic smile, brushed his ego aside and sat pondering. After awhile he prayed, “Master, please explain.”

“Isn’t it obvious?” the Master seemed to enjoy his lost — ‘I don’t understand’ — look.

He begged, “Please, explain Master.” The sweet smile broadened. “But you have been surrendering all the time to your impulses, likes, dislikes, preferences, prejudices, greed, wants and needs, ambitions, emotions . . . quite easily, spontaneously!” The Master’s voice was soft and yet illuminating.

The disciple stopped. The answer was obvious and yet he was so oblivious. He realised that we surrender to small things, impulses, emotions, needs, greed, preferences and even to our ignorance all the time. And our ego, our senses, our intellect conspire to justify all that. The falsehood, ignorance, ego, sensual pleasures, emotions, greed, lust, anger, jealousy, hatred, desires, ambitions, name, fame and so many things we surrender to, yet seemingly perceiving that we are in control of our lives, our minds, our hearts, our actions, our thoughts, our sentiments. This happens so ‘naturally’ that we do not even recognise it. We are not even conscious of it. So how do we change it?

“Master, then what is true surrender?” he asked.

“All surrenders bring you some experiences in life. These experiences are your collective repository, which remain embedded in your subconscious and as a collective *samskar* that one carries from life to life. One starts changing when the self in a being awakens to the higher reality and there is a fire of aspiration that starts burning within to know and to be THAT Supreme Reality. There is then the push from deep within and a conscious effort to be aware of all these distracting pitfalls and obstacles that take away from one’s time and energy and therefore one withdraws one’s consent to be a slave of all these. Instead, one becomes aware, vigilant and rejects all those impulses, desires, wants, greed, emotions of human lust, jealousy, anger, hatred, ego, attraction, preferences, likes and dislikes. Instead one makes a conscious effort calling for the Divine Grace and Light to help in one’s endeavour to remain turned to and open exclusively, completely, consciously, constantly, joyously, freely, unconditionally, unreservedly, irresistibly and irrevocably to One Supreme Reality with all of one’s being, one’s heart, one’s mind, one’s soul and psychic being, one’s very cells and molecules and atoms, one’s thoughts, words, actions, emotions and sentiments, with a sense of complete humility, intense love

and bhakti, with utmost sincerity and trust and faith with an aspiration blazing like a sun to be what the Divine wants one to be!”

“Isn’t that impossible, this surrender?” he asked.

“It is difficult indeed, not impossible,” the Master replied. “What is necessary is an aspiration, a turning to and opening exclusively to the higher Light and Truth with sincerity, with simplicity, with joy. Slowly one develops an awareness, a distance, a detachment from that which pulls one down. Choosing and clinging to that highest Truth and Light makes surrender that much more easier, natural — सहज. Sincerity, humility, constant aspiration, calm and consistent determination, infinite patience and perseverance, focusing on the goal — the Higher Light rather than wallowing in past failures are key to incremental success. Surrender grows incrementally, till a point where nothing else matters except the Divine Will. And then one surrenders completely, joyously, willingly, consciously, with humility and devotion, with trust and faith, and a constant gratitude for the Divine’s Grace that works within and without and brings the transformation of one’s nature and one’s being. This is the Divine Play and the purpose. The journey is the adventure. Failures and obstacles and distractions, pull of the lower nature is part of the Lila, the Divine Play. The work of those forces that are hostile to one’s progress and evolution is to make the progress and evolution most perfect, wholesome, integral, with no corners of darkness, no part remaining obscure and untouched by the transforming light.”

The disciple sat silent, reflecting on the secret, the purpose of life and the key that was revealed. His whole being was filled with tremendous love and gratitude for the Master. He wanted to lay prostrate at his Master’s feet in humility. But then the sweet all-embracing smile of the Master enveloped him. He saw and felt that the Master is his friend, his brother, his sister, his mother, his father, his Lord, his source of wisdom and knowledge, his wealth, his treasure, his universe, his everything. He was at once a child playing in the lap of the Mother, a devotee and a disciple, a friend . . . everywhere he felt the Presence. He immersed himself in it. His surface consciousness, his impulsive mind and heart and emotions, his ego had to be transformed. The journey of surrender, purification and transformation began. He knew at that moment that only the Divine Grace and his own constant efforts to turn exclusively to the Supreme would bring in the necessary purification and transformation. Everything that he called his had to be offered at the feet of the Supreme. At every moment he had to be vigilant against the lower impulses and pulls, and regardless of his falls and tumbles he had to make this one goal his mission of all the lives to come. “Let thy will be done, Oh Lord,” he prayed.

But his being was aware that there are large parts in him which do not consent to this surrender, this aspiration. They want to remain obscure, obstinate, unchanged and in darkness. It is this struggle, this battle, — that is the real challenge. He looked to the Master for help and braced himself for the journey, from ignorance and darkness to light, from non-being to being, from death to immortality, from the little ‘i’ to this

all-embracing Oneness. He prayed, "Please never forsake me, Master, if i go astray, if i am stuck, if i turn away from you due to the impact of adverse forces, turn me again and again and again to you, till my surrender is complete and final, till this 'i' does not exist anymore but dissolves in Thee. Thou alone art. And that this being becomes completely transparent, egoless, desireless, an extension of Thee, O Supreme."

He saw his Master smiling as if saying, "So be it."

SUPERMIND

I am sitting in front of The Mother's photo reading *Savitri*.

I go into meditation thinking about the supermind.

There is this unbroken infinite sea of consciousness, luminous. Then an uninterrupted, undistorted light comes down from it. But then there are as if different layers and these have some filters, with openings that cut out light in shapes as it comes through. But it happens at many levels, each one cutting the previous shape of light into its own shape of openings or cutouts. This ultimately reaches the mind where it gets further cut out into different shapes according to mental understandings, preferences, likes, dislikes, ignorance, knowledge. Ultimately what comes out is cutouts of the truth, the light, in different shapes, which has nothing whatsoever to do with the original efflorescence of light. It is as if fragmented, partly lost or blocked and deformed. It contains an aspect of truth but not the whole truth. Indeed somebody must again collect all the different aspects and pieces of this originally unbroken light, from all levels and put them in proper places in a harmonious relationship to recreate the whole, as if fitting a jigsaw puzzle. But that requires someone who has that highest knowledge and vision, that alone can integrate all.

Then I am as if in a classroom, someone like a professor is explaining this on a blackboard, that turns into 3-D. And we can see a rectangular frame hanging in the air and there are these pieces, fitted like tiles to each other within this frame and they have openings in them. As he explains, he says we must remove these pieces for the light to come unfiltered, unhindered. So as we see these pieces start to disappear one by one, and there is wider and wider opening. These pieces represent likes, dislikes, preferences, prejudices, ignorance, knowledge, desires and such things. As they are removed, larger and larger openings for light come into view. At last all the pieces are removed. And then some student, a girl, says, "Now all are removed," as if it is finished. She means the light will now flow unrestricted. But then the professor says, "There is one more thing to do." And he is as if peeling it off, the luminous border of the rectangle comes off like a ribbon. As if someone was

removing it from one corner going all around. And there is nothing, no border, nothing and then the light flows in its vast totality. The mind is completely silent and receives it in totality without any interference. The mind is full of light, like a blazing sun sitting in the place of the brain. And there is such sweetness and benevolence.

Then this mind looks down, as if from a Himalayan height. There are so many human minds looking up to it, asking for light. This luminous mind full of sun looks at them, with a sense of sweet benevolence and amusement. It tells the human minds, “But first you must unfold, open up, there is so much to give.” And some minds open up, a little. “Remove all from it, the knowledge, the ignorance, the wants, the desires, the likes, dislikes, preferences, prejudices,” it says. “Make it empty and take all the light that you want. You must be like a spotless, smooth mirror, to reflect without distortion or holding back.”

(An Experience of 25.09.2020)

This was the sequence in which it was explained to me.

(Concluded)

KALPESH GAJIWALA

Help men, but do not pauperise them of their energy; lead and instruct men, but see that their initiative and originality remain intact; take others into thyself, but give them in return the full godhead of their nature. He who can do this is the leader and the guru.

Sri Aurobindo

(Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 208)

“LIFE OF PREPARATION AT BARODA” — SRI AUROBINDO, THE PERFECT GENTLEMAN

(Part 20)

(Continued from the issue of October 2021)

SECTION 2: SIMPLICITY AND AUSTERITY

Concerning his Yoga, Sri Aurobindo writes that he “started his sadhana at Baroda in 1904 on his own account after learning from a friend the ordinary formula of Pranayama.”¹ Sri Aurobindo’s tenacious resolve to undertake the yogic path is apparent when he writes:

He started Yoga by himself without a Guru, getting the rule from a friend, a disciple of Brahmananda of [Ganganath]²; it was confined at first to the assiduous practice of Pranayama (at one time for 6 hours or more a day).³

Sri Aurobindo’s intense practice of pranayama was also noticed by his cousin, Sukumar Mitra, during a visit to Calcutta: “Every morning he did *Pranamaya*, that is, some kind of Yoga. . . . In the morning he spent two to three hours on *Pranayama*.”⁴

Sri Aurobindo told his attendants how he started the practice of Yoga:

It was Deshpande who wanted me to do Yoga. But when I came to know it would mean withdrawal from the world I didn’t want to do it as I wanted to do political work. Then I took to Pranayama.⁵

It was then believed by many that Yoga could not be done without pranayama. However, Sri Aurobindo found that the benefits of pranayama were limited. He told his disciples:

I first began on my own with Pranayama, drawing the breath into my head. This gave me good health, lightness and an increased power of thinking. Side

1. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 91.

2. *MS Ganga Math*.

3. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 110.

4. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, January 2016, p. 38.

5. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 2, 2013, pp. 953.

by side certain experiences also came. But not many nor important ones. I began to see things in the subtle.⁶

Indeed, Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple: “I said clearly that the pranayam brought me nothing of any kind of spiritual realisation.”⁷ In a conversation with his attendants Sri Aurobindo elaborated about his experiences with pranayama:

I began Pranayama around 1905. Devdhar was a disciple of Brahmananda and I took instructions from him. I practised it at Khaserao Jadhav’s house in Baroda. The results were remarkable: I used to see some visions — luminous patterns, figures, etc. Secondly, I felt a sort of electric power round my head. Thirdly, I began to have a very rapid flow of poetry. My powers of writing poetry were nearly dried up, but after the practice of Pranayama they revived with a great vigour. And I could write both prose and poetry with a tremendous speed. That flow has never ceased since then. If I have not written much afterwards it is because I had something else to do. But the moment I want to write, it is there. Fourthly, my health improved — I grew stout and strong and the skin became smooth and fair and there was a flow of sweetness in the saliva. I used to feel a certain aura round the head. There were plenty of mosquitoes there but they did not come to me. I used to sit more and more in Pranayama but there were no more results.⁸

As regards the sweetness of his saliva he said that “the Yogis say some sort of Amrita, that is, nectar, flows down from the top of the brain that can make one immortal.”⁹

Sri Aurobindo has also remarked about another experience during his Baroda days:

I had myself a remarkable experience of the psychic sight. I was at Baroda, my psychic sight was not fully developed and I was trying to develop it by dwelling upon the after-image and also by attending to the interval between wakefulness and sleep. Then I saw this round circle of light and when I began *prāṇāyāma* it became very much intensified.¹⁰

Finally, Sri Aurobindo came to a halt or a dead end with pranayama. He writes:

6. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 315.

7. CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 237.

8. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 613.

9. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 104.

10. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 467.

After four years of *prāṇāyāma* and other practices on my own, with no other result than an increased health and energy, some psycho-physical phenomena, a great outflow of poetic creation, a limited power of subtle sight (luminous patterns and figures etc.) mostly with the waking eye, I had a complete arrest and was at a loss.¹¹

On the issue of pranayama, Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple:

No use doing asanas and pranayam. It is not necessary to burn with passion. What is needed is a patient increasing of the power of concentration and steady aspiration so that the silence you speak of may fix in the heart and spread to the other members. Then the physical mind and subconscious can be cleared and quieted.¹²

Despite some benefits there is also the downside and dangers of pranayama. In a conversation in 1925 Sri Aurobindo told his disciples:

In Hatha Yoga you are all right so long as you continue the practice. As soon as you leave it off you are liable to attacks.

In Rajayoga also you have to continue Pranayama once you begin it. My own experience is that when I was practising Pranayama at Baroda I had excellent health. But when I went to Bengal and left Pranayama, I was attacked by all sorts of illnesses which nearly carried me off.¹³

And in December 1940 Sri Aurobindo reaffirmed to his attendants: “I took to Pranayama. But it didn’t carry me far and I came to a point beyond which I couldn’t proceed further. I gave it up and fell dangerously ill! I was on the point of death.”¹⁴

To a disciple Sri Aurobindo advised that “it is not safe to do Pranayam without guidance by one who is expert in Rajayoga or Hathayoga. Pranayam is not a part of the sadhana here.”¹⁵

While narrating the circumstances regarding Bipin Chandra Pal’s resignation as editor from *Bande Mataram*, Sri Aurobindo refers to his own grave illness:

Hemprasad Ghose and Shyamsundar Chakrabarti joined the editorial staff but they could not get on with Bepin Babu and were supported by the Mullicks.

11. CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 239.

12. *Ibid.*, Vol. 29, p. 439.

13. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 192.

14. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 953.

15. CWSA, Vol. 29, p. 440.

Finally Bepin Pal had to retire, I don't remember whether in November or December, probably the latter. I was myself very ill, almost to death, in my father-in-law's house in [Mott's]¹⁶ Lane and did not know what was going on.¹⁷

During this serious illness Sri Aurobindo stayed at the Calcutta house of his father-in-law, Bhupal Chandra Bose, where Mrinalini Devi devotedly nursed him. On 4th November, 1906, he had a very high fever and could not write his editorial for the *Bande Mataram*. He recovered partially at the end of November, but had a relapse in December. On 11th December he went to his late grandfather Rajnarayan Bose's place in Deogarh for a change. Whilst still ailing and weak, Sri Aurobindo returned to Calcutta just in time to attend the annual session of the Congress, which was to commence on 26th December, 1906. Thereafter he returned to Deogarh to convalesce.¹⁸

Incidentally, Hemendra Prasad Ghose, an associate of Sri Aurobindo at *Bande Mataram*, had sketchily made notes in his dairy during Sri Aurobindo's near fatal illness:

4th Nov'06: Babu Aurobindo Ghose is ill — suffering from high fever.

5th Nov'06: Aurobindo Babu is laid up.

6th Nov'06: Went to see Babu Aurobindo Ghose. He is still very unwell.

8th Nov'06: Babu Aurobindo Ghose is still unwell.

9th Nov'06: Babu Aurobindo Ghose is still ill.

11th Nov'06: Went to see Babu Aurobindo Ghose who has recovered but is still very weak.

12th Nov'06: Babu Aurobindo Ghose is a bit better. We wished he would soon be able to work again.

27th Nov'06: Sj. Aurobindo Ghose is much better; but he [has] not resumed writing articles for the paper.

29th Nov'06: Babu Aurobindo Ghose is better and hopes to be able to resume work from next week.

5th Dec'06: Sj. Aurobindo Ghose who was a bit better and was beginning to write again for the *Bande Mataram* has again fallen ill. It is a great *calamity* coming as it does in the very middle of the busy season.

16. *MS Serpentine*.

17. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 79.

18. See A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 91; See Hemendra Prasad Ghose, 'Reminiscences of Aurobindo Ghose', *Orient Illustrated Weekly*, 27 February 1949; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

12th Dec’06: Through mistake the name of Babu Aurobindo Ghose was printed as Editor *Bande Mataram* in the paper. He has taken objection to it.¹⁹

15th Dec’06: Sj. Aurobindo Ghose will be going to Deogarh for change tomorrow.

16th Dec’06: Sj. Aurobindo Ghose left for Deogarh.

25th Dec’06: Sj. Aurobindo Ghose has come back from Deogarh.

6th Jan’07: Srijut Aurobindo Ghose will be going to Deogarh for a change — leaving the editorial charge of *Bande Mataram* to Sj. Shyamsundar Chakraborty and myself.

10th Jan’07: Sri Aurobindo Ghose is going back to Deogarh where he proposes to remain for a month. So in the meantime Sj. Shyamsundar Chakravarty and myself shall have to do the work of editing *Bande Mataram*.

8th Mar’07: I am glad to hear that Sj. Aurobindo Ghose is much better.

15th Mar’07: After an age Sj. Aurobindo Ghose has sent an article — on the Comilla Affair. It is a masterpiece. In it he has exposed the falsehood of the Government version of the Comilla Affair in which the Hindoos have been insulted, assaulted and what not by the lawless Mahomedans instigated to rowdyism by the Nawab of Dacca.

5th Apr’07: Sj. Aurobindo Ghose is expected to come back very soon.

7th Apr’07: Sj. Aurobindo Ghose is expected tomorrow. Then we hope to get some relief.

9th Apr’07: Sj. Aurobindo Ghose has come back.²⁰

Apropos this period, Sri Aurobindo has noted that “he was convalescing from a dangerous attack of fever.”²¹

Later in an article published in 1949, Hemendra Prasad Ghose writes about Sri Aurobindo’s illness:

Towards the end of 1906, Aurobindo fell ill and, therefore, left for Deoghar on the 16th December, to return just before the Congress met in Calcutta, to take his part in organising the New Party. The success of the New Party was marvellous. Aurobindo was still weak and ailing. But he could not leave for Deoghar again before the middle of January, 1907. He returned on the 8th

19. Sri Aurobindo notes that Bipin Chandra Pal’s departure from the journal “was effected behind Sri Aurobindo’s back when he was convalescing from a dangerous attack of fever” and he “would not have consented to this departure, for he regarded the qualities of Pal as a great asset to the *Bande Mataram* . . . His name was even announced without his consent in *Bande Mataram* as editor but for one day only, as he immediately put a stop to it since he was still formally in the Baroda service and in no way eager to have his name brought forward in public.” (CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 55)

20. Diary notes of Hemendra Prasad Ghose; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

21. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 55.

April, and at once busied himself with the *Bande Mataram*. The first of his brilliant articles explaining the Doctrine of Passive Resistance was published on the 9th. The sonorous sesquipedalian flowed from his pen as easily and copiously as clear cut cameos and sparkling periods. And the arguments were cogent and clear.²²

About this historic Congress conference in Calcutta that took place from 26th to 29th December, 1906, Sri Aurobindo has noted:

. . . it was Sri Aurobindo who in 1906 persuaded this group [*Extremist party*] in Bengal to take [a] public position as a party, proclaim Tilak as their leader and enter into a contest with the Moderate leaders for the control of the Congress and of public opinion and action in the country. The first great public clash between the two parties took place in the sessions of the Congress at Calcutta [*December 1906*] where Sri Aurobindo was present but still working behind the scenes . . .²³

Sri Aurobindo’s presence, although quiet and unobtrusive, was very significant at the Calcutta Congress. Despite being weak and convalescing he mustered up remarkable energy, an illustration of his inner strength. It was mainly due to his efforts in the reception committee and the working committee that the main resolution demanding Swaraj and others like Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education were drafted. Tilak gave Sri Aurobindo full and active support to pass the resolutions. Among the other Nationalist leaders were Lajpatrai, Kharpade and Khare. The Moderate leaders, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Surendranath Banerjee, Gokhale, were opposed to the resolution. Dadadhai Naoroji, the president, was undecided in the beginning but when he found that there was a strong support to the resolution from Bengal and from other parts of India, he accepted it and got it endorsed by all. It was for the first time that a resolution of independence as the goal of the Congress was passed, a great achievement since in those days Indians never imagined independence to be possible.²⁴ Sri Aurobindo has noted:

Sri Aurobindo was present at the Congress in 1904 and again in 1906 and took a part in the counsels of the extremist party and in the formation of its fourfold programme — “Swaraj, swadeshi, boycott, national education” — which the

22. Hemendra Prasad Ghose, ‘Reminiscences of Aurobindo Ghose’, *Orient Illustrated Weekly*, 27 February 1949; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

23. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 76.

24. See A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 91.

Moderate leaders after a severe tussle behind the scenes were obliged to incorporate in the resolutions of 1906.²⁵

Tilak and Sri Aurobindo had a high regard for each other, their friendship dating back to 1901 when they met at Baroda. Tilak was highly impressed by Sri Aurobindo’s stirring articles in the *Indu Prakash*. Tilak’s biographers G. P. Pradhan and A. K. Bhagwat wrote in their book *Lokmanya Tilak*:

As a leader, however, it was his responsibility to see that all efforts for achieving freedom were carried on in the correct manner, and he therefore gave advice to the leaders of the revolutionary wing. He did not want the decision of the opportune moment to be entrusted to a less mature person who would be swayed by sentiments and affected by some passing phases in politics. He thought that only Aurobindo and himself could take such a momentous decision.²⁶

In his Uttarpara speech Sri Aurobindo named Tilak as “One who always sat by my side and was associated in my work”.²⁷

Eminent historian Dr. R. C. Majumdar has noted that

. . . to Aurobindo is due the chief credit for this triumphal emergence of the Extremist Party, and the virtual extinction of the Moderate Party which was to follow.²⁸

And on the Swadeshi movement historian Tara Chand wrote:

In all these cases the main object of the leaders was to give a popular and mass character to the movement as Aurobindo Ghose and Tilak desired. Although their success was modest they laid the foundation on which Gandhiji built his mass activity.²⁹

Besides being aware of Yoga-power and harnessing it as a political leader, Sri Aurobindo was also aware of supernatural phenomena. Sometime in 1905 Barin started calling spirits through automatic writing. Sri Aurobindo normally joined these séances. Nolini Kanta Gupta mentions that during their sittings in the

25. CWSA, Vol. 36, pp. 78-79.

26. Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1st Ed., p. 207.

27. CWSA, Vol. 8, p. 3.

28. Manoj Das, *Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the Twentieth Century*, 2nd Ed., p. 20.

29. Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. 3, 1972, p. 333.

Karmayogin office in 1909, Sri Aurobindo, through automatic speech, was a good medium to call spirits or beings. He used to vocalise several voices, each of a different character and tone. The voice would announce who it was and speak about interesting subjects like education, literature, etc. Spirits of Bankimchandra, Danton and others came to deliver these speeches.³⁰

Dr. Radha Kumud Mukherjee mentions that one day Sri Aurobindo told him that he felt somewhat possessed by a spirit which was very anxious to seize the pen of Sri Aurobindo. It wrote a highly inflammatory article, penned through Sri Aurobindo's hand, condemning British rule. The article was slightly toned down so as to keep it within the bounds of law and appeared next morning in the *Bande Mataram*.³¹

About seances Sri Aurobindo has said:

These things, as far as they are not communications from the subconscious mind, are communications of lower forces, even vital-physical ones. I remember one instance. In Calcutta I went to attend a sitting. The spirit violently objected to my presence and said that it was painful to him. In another instance the spirit was asked to prove his presence by eating a *sandesh* which was there. Somebody took hold of the *sandesh* and asked the spirit to take it from him by force. His hand got so twisted that he cried out in pain. Evidently something was there apart from the communication of his subconscious mind.³²

Sri Aurobindo has also spoken of the physical body materialising after death:

I believe, there is always a difference between a material body and a materialised body. This kind of materialising commonly takes place immediately after a man dies. You find that he visits either a relation or a friend. If the fact of his death is not known or if the man is not known to be living far away, people mistake it for an actual physical presence.

There are many authentic cases of this kind. My poetic brother Manmohan's friend, Stephen Philips said that his mother visited him after her death. Manmohan told me the story, ascribing the experience to telepathic communication of the form. But I think it is not mere communication of form or cast by the mind only. There is the vital-physical part which materialises.³³

30. See Nolini Kanta Gupta, *Reminiscences*, 1st Ed., 2015, p. 42.

31. See Dr. Radha Kumud Mukherjee, 'Some Reminiscences of Sri Aurobindo', *Mother India*, December 1963, p. 21.

32. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 2, 2013, p. 860.

33. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 632.

On automatic writing Sri Aurobindo has written:

The writing was done as an experiment as well as an amusement and nothing else. I may mention here the circumstances under which it was first taken up. Barin had done some very extraordinary automatic writing at Baroda in a very brilliant and beautiful English style and remarkable for certain predictions which came true and statements of fact which also proved to be true although unknown to the persons concerned or anyone else present: there was notably a symbolic anticipation of Lord Curzon's subsequent unexpected departure from India and, again, of the first suppression of the national movement and the greatness of Tilak's attitude amidst the storm; this prediction was given in Tilak's own presence when he visited Sri Aurobindo at Baroda and happened to enter just when the writing was in progress. Sri Aurobindo was very much struck and interested and he decided to find out by practising this kind of writing himself what there was behind it. This is what he was doing in Calcutta. But the results did not satisfy him and after a few further attempts at Pondicherry he dropped these experiments altogether. . . . His final conclusion was that though there are sometimes phenomena which point to the intervention of beings of another plane not always or often of a high order the mass of such writings comes from a dramatising element in the subconscious mind; sometimes a brilliant vein in the subliminal is struck and then predictions of the future and statements of things [unknown] in the present and past come up, but otherwise these writings have not a great value. . . . The writings came haphazard without any spirit mentor such as some mediums claim to have.³⁴

As late as 1920, Sri Aurobindo did some automatic writing. Nolini Kanta Gupta writes: “The writings that came through his hand in those days were frightfully interesting. I remember somebody came and began to give an analysis of the character of each one of us. But, when it came to Mirra's turn, she said firmly: ‘No, nothing about me, please.’ And the hand abruptly stopped writing.”³⁵

Besides supernatural experiences, Sri Aurobindo had several supraphysical experiences since his arrival in India, including those at Bombay and Srinagar.³⁶ He had also seen the power of prayer. He has referred to an incident that occurred to his cousin whilst he was in Baroda:

As for prayer, no hard and fast rule can be laid down. Some prayers are answered, all are not. An example? The eldest daughter of my Mesho, K. K. Mitra, editor of *Sanjibani*, not by any means a romantic, occult, supraphysical

34. CWSA, Vol. 36, pp. 95-96.

35. Nolini Kanta Gupta, *Reminiscences*, 1st Ed., 2015, p. 75.

36. See CWSA, Vol. 35, pp. 233-34.

or even imaginative person, was abandoned by the doctors after using every resource, all medicines stopped as useless. The father said “There is only God now, let us pray.” He did, and from that moment the girl began to recover, typhoid fever and all its symptoms fled, death also. I know any number of cases like that.³⁷

Another incident that Sri Aurobindo narrated was about Govindrao M. Jadhav, son of his close Baroda friend, Madhavrao Jadhav:

And then there is what happened to Madhavrao’s son. He was dying; the doctors had given up hope. Madhavrao wired to them to stop all medicines and pray to God. They did it and the son was cured. I know this as a fact. Madhavrao himself showed me the telegram.³⁸

Later during his solitary confinement in Alipore jail Sri Aurobindo noted: “I also realised the extraordinary power and efficacy of prayer.”³⁹ Furthermore, at Alipore jail Sri Aurobindo had some extraordinary supraphysical or supernatural experiences. Many in the jail found him very strange and mystical. Upendranath Banerjee writes:

He was supposed to take no food . . . One day, I found his hair shining with oil. This was extraordinary and confounding, as we were not allowed oil. So, I made bold to ask him, “Do you have [for your bath] oil for your hair?” He stunned me with the reply, “I don’t bathe.” “But your hair looks shiny.” “It does. But you see I am passing through some physical changes as I develop spiritually. My hair draws fat from my body.”

I had noticed similar cases before, but would never understand them. Later, I saw more wonders of this sort in Arabinda. Once I was sitting in the prisoners’ dock when I chanced to look at him. I saw his eyes set like glass-balls. I had heard that the total suspension of the diverse functions of the mind, and its concentration on a single thing might produce a physical result of that kind. I at once called the attention of some boys to it. None dared approach him; and at last Sachin sidled up to him and asked, “What have you gained by your spiritual practices?” Arabinda put his hands on Sachin’s shoulders and answered, “Why, my boy, the thing I looked for.”

37. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

38. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 339.

39. Sri Aurobindo, *Tales of Prison Life*, 2014, p. 44.

Then we shook off our timidity and collected round him for an account of his strange experiences.⁴⁰

Sudhir Kumar Sarkar too saw an aura of mystique around Sri Aurobindo. He writes:

His black hair glistened always as if oil was dripping from it. . . . His nails grew to half an inch, his hair and beard grew longer and longer. Our hair never had that oily sheen of his. I ventured to ask him: “Do the European warders bring you oil in secret?” He neither smiled nor answered, as if he had not heard me.⁴¹

At night the jail warders would tell the revolutionaries, “Arvind remains standing the whole night, his bedding folded in the corner.”⁴² Curiously, the warders did not disturb Sri Aurobindo. They did not press him to lie down nor did they call on him in the night, a practice they did with the other revolutionaries to ensure none escaped.

Sri Aurobindo later narrated to his attendants certain physical phenomena that occurred to him at Alipore jail:

At one time I thought that physical Siddhi, spiritual power over matter, was impossible. But in the Alipore Jail I found once after my meditation that my body had taken a position which was physically impossible: it was actually raised some inches above the ground; there was what is known as levitation. Then again, I practised for a time raising my hands and keeping them suspended in the air without any muscular control. Once in that condition I fell asleep. The warder saw me in that posture and reported that I was dead. The authorities came and found me quite alive. I told them the warder was a fool.⁴³

Sudhir Kumar Sarkar relates how every morning in jail Sri Aurobindo could remain in meditation in uncomfortable or inconvenient physical postures:

Every morning after taking his bath Sri Aurobindo selected a corner in the hall as his living space. There, with his head on the floor and feet in the air, he spent hour after hour. One day the Governor of Bengal, Mr. Baker, came to see our ward. Sri Aurobindo was then suspended in that pose with his feet

40. Shyam Kumari, *Beautiful Vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, 2003, pp. 10-11 (Upendranath Banerjee, *Nirbashiter Atma Katha* – translated from Bengali).

41. Mona Sarkar, *A Spirit Indomitable*, 1989, p. 101.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, pp. 13-14.

upwards. Baker remained standing there for about half an hour without uttering anything. When Sri Aurobindo did not respond in any manner, he left, thinking the posture to be another instance of the occult and unintelligible performances of Indian mystics. We were filled with apprehension: “Now”, we thought, “we are finished. The Governor surely came to speak with him. He must have felt that he was being ignored. Obviously they will shoot us now. Perhaps a little conversation would have softened him.”⁴⁴

Incidentally, Sri Aurobindo once told his attendants:

That reminds me of a compliment given to my eyes by Sir Edward Baker, Governor of Bengal. He visited me in Alipore Jail and told Charu Dutt, “Have you seen Aurobindo Ghose’s eyes?”

“Yes, what about them?” asked Charu.

“He has the eyes of a madman!”

Charu took great pains to convince him that I was not at all mad but a Karmayogi!⁴⁵

About another incident at Alipore jail, Sri Aurobindo writes:

As for divine rapture, a knock on head or foot or elsewhere *can* be received with the physical Ananda of pain or pain + Ananda or pure physical Ananda — for I have often, quite involuntarily, made the experiment myself and passed with honours. It began, by the way, as far back as in Alipur jail when I got bitten in my cell by some very red and ferocious looking warrior ants and found to my surprise that pain and pleasure are conventions of our senses. But I do not expect that unusual reaction from others.⁴⁶

Let us now examine how Sri Aurobindo blended his Yoga with his hectic activity in the political field. He has noted that “he had inner experiences, from the time he stepped on to the shores of India, but did not associate them at that time with Yoga”, and “he refused to take it up because it seemed to him a retreat from life.”⁴⁷ India’s independence was foremost on Sri Aurobindo’s mind and when he learnt of the existence of Yoga-power he wanted to acquire it, not for personal salvation, but as a means to free his country. In 1926 Sri Aurobindo told his disciples how he embarked on the path of Yoga:

44. Mona Sarkar, *A Spirit Indomitable*, 1989, pp. 99-100.

45. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 95.

46. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, p. 263.

47. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 39.

No. I had no knowledge. I did not know what God was. It was two years before I met Lele that I began Yoga seriously. Deshpande at that time was doing Hatha Yoga, Asanas and other such practices and, as he had a great proselytising tendency, he wanted to convert me to his view. But I thought that a Yoga which required me to give up the world was not for me. I had to liberate my country. I took to it seriously when I learnt that the same Tapasya which one does to get away from the world can be turned to action. I learnt that Yoga gives power, and I thought: Why should I not get power and use it to liberate my country? . . .

It was the time of the country first, humanity afterwards and the rest nowhere. . . . mine was a side-door entry into the spiritual life.⁴⁸

And in 1940 he had told his attendants:

At Baroda, Deshpande tried to convert me to yoga, but I had the usual ideas about it — that one has to go to the forest and give up everything. But I was interested in the freedom of the country. I had always thought that the great men of the world could not have been after a chimera and if there was such a Power why not use it for the freedom of the country?⁴⁹

Sri Aurobindo’s resolve in securing India’s freedom goes back to his youth. He writes that he “had already in England decided to devote his life to the service of his country and its liberation.⁵⁰ In the *Bande Mataram* he wrote that “spiritual freedom in political servitude is a sheer impossibility. . . . By our political freedom we shall once more recover our spiritual freedom.”⁵¹ For spreading spirituality in the world Sri Aurobindo believed that it was necessary that India first gain its freedom.⁵² In a conversation in 1920 Sri Aurobindo said: “India must want freedom because of herself, because of her own Spirit,”⁵³ and in 1926 he remarked: “Patriotism is true when it takes count of the spiritual possibilities of the country and develops them.”⁵⁴

To practise Yoga in the midst of political activity is a herculean task, the turmoil and unrest of politics can easily interfere with the inward movement and inner quietness needed in sadhana. Chittaranjan Das had told Sri Aurobindo that a political leader has to constantly resort to telling falsehoods.⁵⁵ Sri Aurobindo, however,

48. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 423.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 612.

50. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 67.

51. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 876.

52. See *Talks by Nirodbaran*, Edited by Ranganath R. and Sudha, 2012, p. 82.

53. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 25.

54. V. Chidanandam, ‘Sri Aurobindo at Evening Talk’, *Mother India*, May 1972, p. 238.

55. See CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 24.

managed to circumvent this. Through his deep love for his country, coupled with his strong will, he integrated Yoga with politics. Let us explore how he synthesised the two. He writes:

There was no conflict or wavering between Yoga and politics; when he started Yoga, he carried on both without any idea of opposition between them.⁵⁶

Sri Aurobindo got concrete results from his yogic practice and applied it to his political activity. He told his disciples: “All the energy that I have I owe to Yoga. I was very incapable before. Even the energy that I put forth in politics came from Yoga.”⁵⁷ In another instance he said: “If the seed is not put in the right soil, it does not produce the tree. But the soil is only one factor. All energy I got from Yoga.”⁵⁸

In 1905, Sri Aurobindo wrote ‘Bhawani Mandir,’ a revolutionary piece that was an inspiration and driving force to innumerable revolutionaries. It was issued as a pamphlet and generated interest; a Marathi translation was published in Tilak’s newspaper *Kesari*.⁵⁹ Sri Aurobindo writes:

Bhawani Mandir was written by Sri Aurobindo but it was more Barin’s idea than his. It was not meant to train people for assassination but for revolutionary preparation of the country. The idea was soon dropped as far as Sri Aurobindo was concerned, but something of the kind was attempted by Barin in the Maniktala Garden . . .⁶⁰

Many years later, the Rowlatt Committee’s Report (1917) pointed out that ‘Bhawani Mandir’ “really contains the germs of the Hindu revolutionary movement in Bengal”.⁶¹

About ‘Bhawani Mandir’ Sri Aurobindo has further noted:

There is a similarity to the *Ananda Math* in that both envisage spiritual life and politics together. The temple of Bhawani was to be there for initiating men for complete consecration to the service of Mother India. It was for preparing political Sannyasins. But this scheme did not get materialised. Sri Aurobindo took to politics and Barin to revolution.⁶²

56. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 110.

57. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 352.

58. V. Chidanandam, ‘Sri Aurobindo at Evening Talk’, *Mother India*, February, 1972, p. 21.

59. See Website: https://aurobindo.ru/workings/sa/37_06_07/part_01_e.htm/4 May 2021.

60. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 74.

61 See K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5th Ed., 2006, p. 200.

62. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 114.

In those days Barin did automatic writing. Once, “a spirit purporting to be that of Ramakrishna came and simply said, ‘Build a temple.’ At that time we were planning to build a temple for political Sannyasis and call it Bhawani Mandir. We thought he meant that, but later I understood it as ‘Make a temple within,’” said Sri Aurobindo.⁶³ Barin had gone to the Vindhya mountains to select a site for the Bhawani Mandir. About this trip Sri Aurobindo remarked:

I first knew about yogic cure from a Naga Sannyasi. Barin had mountain fever when he was wandering in the Amarkantak hills. The Sannyasi took a cup of water, cut it into four by making two crosses with a knife and asked Barin to drink it, saying, “He won’t have fever tomorrow.” And the fever left him.⁶⁴

This incident reaffirmed Sri Aurobindo’s faith in Yoga-power. He writes:

He met the Naga Sannyasi in the course of his search, but did not accept him as Guru, though he was confirmed by him in a belief in Yoga-power when he saw him cure Barin in almost a moment of a violent and clinging hill-fever by merely cutting through a glassful of water cross-wise with a knife while he repeated a silent mantra. Barin drank and was cured.⁶⁵

Sri Aurobindo was seeking a power to dynamise his political and revolutionary activities. He notes that he “had some connection with a member of the governing body of the Naga Sannyasis who gave him a mantra of Kali (or rather a stotra) and conducted certain Kriyas and a Vedic Yajna, but all this was for political success in his mission and not for Yoga.”⁶⁶ And to his attendants he said:

I came into contact with a Naga Sannyasi. I told him I wanted to get power for revolutionary activities. He gave me a violent Mantra of Kali with “Jahi, Jahi” to repeat. I did so, but as I had expected, it came to nothing.⁶⁷

Sri Aurobindo has also mentioned taking a Shakti Mantra from Mohanpuri who performed a certain Yajna. This was for a political purpose and not for Yoga.⁶⁸

Due to shouldering immense political responsibilities, Sri Aurobindo had to give up his pranayama sometime in mid-1906. He told his disciples:

63. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 108.

64. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 113.

65. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 110.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

67. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 107.

68. See A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, p. 114.

Then I had to give it up when I took to politics. I wanted to resume my Sadhana but did not know how to begin again. I wanted spiritual experience and political action together. I would not take up a method that required me to give up action and life.⁶⁹

Later he told his attendants: “There was at that time a break in my sadhana because the pressure of work was too much. The sadhana was renewed after my contact with Lele.”⁷⁰ Leaving aside this break, Sri Aurobindo did intense tapasya even in the midst of political activity. He told his attendants: “I was doing Yoga even during my political activity. Solitude is only a temporary period in sadhana.”⁷¹ He writes:

The Yoga was going on in him all the time even during all his outward action but he was not withdrawn into himself or “dazed” as some of his friends thought. If he did not reply to questions or suggestions it was because he did not wish to and took refuge in silence.⁷²

Sri Aurobindo embarked on the path of sadhana in 1904 to acquire yogic-force in order to give a boost to his political activities. This unshakable resolve was evident even four years later when he met Lele in January 1908 in the hope of getting some guidance in Yoga. Sri Aurobindo writes, “I told him that I wanted to do Yoga but for work, for action, not for Sannyasa and Nirvana”.⁷³ Elsewhere he notes that he told Lele that he “wanted to do Yoga in order to get a new inner Yogic consciousness for life and action, not for leaving life.”⁷⁴ About his experience of Nirvana with Lele Sri Aurobindo writes:

I had no least idea about it before, no aspiration towards it, in fact my aspiration was towards just the opposite, spiritual power to help the world and do my work in it . . .⁷⁵

Later, referring to a period in 1909, after Sri Aurobindo’s release from Alipore jail, his cousin sister, Basanti Mitra, writes of an incident where it became apparent that Sri Aurobindo had developed significant Yoga-power:

During the period he was staying in our house, father had been deported. One of those days we were having a discussion about the swadeshi movement. He

69. *Ibid.*, p. 315.

70. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 504.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 452.

72. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 111.

73. *Ibid.*, Vol. 27, p. 716.

74. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 245.

75. *Ibid.*, Vol. 29, p. 453.

said: “Look I’ll free the country with yoga-force and then we’ll all stay together in a big house.” At that time I could not even dream that he would spend the next forty years in meditation and in union with the Supreme Being, and India would break loose her chains of hundreds of years of slavery and become free.⁷⁶

In Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo explained to a disciple the nature of a calm still mind and its ability to act powerfully:

. . . in the calm mind, it is the substance of the mental being that is still, so still that nothing disturbs it. If thoughts or activities come, they do not rise at all out of the mind, but they come from outside and cross the mind as a flight of birds crosses the sky in a windless air. It passes, disturbs nothing, leaving no trace. Even if a thousand images or the most violent events pass across it, the calm stillness remains as if the very texture of the mind were a substance of eternal and indestructible peace. A mind that has achieved this calmness can begin to act, even intensely and powerfully, but it will keep its fundamental stillness — originating nothing from itself but receiving from Above and giving it a mental form without adding anything of its own, calmly, dispassionately, though with the joy of the Truth and the happy power and light of its passage.⁷⁷

In 1909 a prestigious monthly review published an article on Sri Aurobindo by the eminent professor of English, Jitendralal Bandopadhyay. An excerpt reads:

Intensely spiritual by nature, he holds that man’s mission in the world, the task which he has been set to accomplish, is to realise God, to fulfil him in our outer appointments. This realisation can be effected only by fulfilling ourselves in our individual life, in the family, in the community, in the nation and lastly in humanity at large. . . .

Observe also that this creed [Swadeshism] of Aravinda is not merely political, behind it there is a comprehensive world-philosophy, a philosophy which leads us back to the dimmest days of Indian antiquity, to the time of Upanishads.⁷⁸

Amongst his multitude of admirers was Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, who writes: “A mixture of spirituality and politics had given him a halo of mysticism.”⁷⁹

76. Basanti Chakravarty (née Mitra), ‘Our Aurodada’, *Srinwantu*, April/August, 1984, p. 86.

77. *CWSA*, Vol. 29, p. 145.

78. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, June 2016, p. 450.

79. Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, p. 376.

In 1926 a disciple asked Sri Aurobindo if yogic life is compatible with political work. He replied:

At the beginning it is compatible — I myself practised Yoga while I was doing political work. But politics as it is being carried on nowadays is too low to be consistent with Yogic life.⁸⁰

The same year a disciple remarked that most of the present political leaders lack spirituality. Sri Aurobindo’s reply emphasised the importance of spirituality:

I cannot say anything about individuals. But the central thing in Hinduism is spirituality and there cannot be any big movement without any spirituality behind it.⁸¹

In a discussion in October 1925 Sri Aurobindo spoke about Integral Yoga, action and politics:

His idea that all action is incompatible with this Yoga is not correct. Generally, it is found that all Rajasic activity does not go well with this Yoga; for instance, political work.

The reasons for abstaining from political activity are:

1. Being Rajasic in its nature, it does not allow that quiet and knowledge on the basis of which the work should really proceed. All action requires a certain inner formation, an inner detached being. The formation of this inner being requires one to dive into the depth of the being, get to the true Being and then prepare the true Being to come to the surface. It is then that one acquires a poise — an inner poise — and can act from there. Political work by Rajasic activity which draws the being outwards prevents this inner formation.

2. The political field, together with certain other fields, is the stronghold of the Asuric forces. They have their eye on this Yoga, and they would try to hamper the Sadhana by every means. By taking to the political field you get into a plane where these forces hold the field. These Asuric forces try to lead away the sadhak from the path by increasing Kama and Krodha, and such other Rajasic impulses. They may throw him permanently into the sea of Rajasic activity.⁸²

In another conversation with his disciples on 10th August 1926, Sri Aurobindo clarified the nexus between Integral Yoga, action and politics:

80. *Sri Aurobindo’s Talks of 1926*, recorded by Anilbaran Roy, 1st Ed., 2020, p. 32.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

82. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Ed., 2007, pp. 136-37.

Action is compatible with the first stage of this Yoga; but the purpose of this action is to come in contact with the light above. Instead of acting in the way men ordinarily do, one seeks to dwell in the higher consciousness and to execute with faith (*śraddhā*) and concentrated will (*niṣṭhā*) any action for which the call comes from within — this is possible in the first stage of the Yoga.

After that, in the intermediate stage, special stress has to be laid on the inner change. At this stage, it is not advisable to undertake any action that may hamper the inward-oriented sadhana. It is not possible to effectuate the inner transformation while being engaged in any activity that demands the total absorption of the mind and the heart. Political activity is not compatible with this stage, and this is so for two reasons. Firstly, it will not do to engage in political activity half-heartedly; those who have been acting for the liberation of India necessarily have to pour all their heart and mind into that activity; in that case, how can they concentrate on sadhana? Secondly, political activity belongs to the lower plane of consciousness; in the field of politics, one has to remain in contact with forces which do not allow a sadhak to rise upward — they keep him tied down below.

When as a result of the practice of Yoga, the inner change has been effected and the sadhak has been established in the higher consciousness and the higher light, then there is no harm in doing any action from there. . . . The Yogi turns his transformed nature into an instrument of the divine Shakti and the divine will gets infallibly effectuated through him. Behind this action reign an immutable peace, a true vision and a divine delight.⁸³

Sri Aurobindo, in a conversation with his disciples, revealed another aspect that gives a clue to his political activities:

In the course of my yogic evolution, I came to know some of the personalities in my past lives. The elements of character I had in those previous personalities are still working in this life. My capacities and incapacities come from these personalities. My active work in the political field and my Yogic work came from different personalities in my past. But there are other aspects in my character which have not been derived from past personalities — they have been derived by association with other personalities.⁸⁴

(To be continued)

GAUTAM MALAKER

83. *Sri Aurobindo's Talks of 1926*, recorded by Anilbaran Roy, 1st Ed. 2020, pp. 131-32.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

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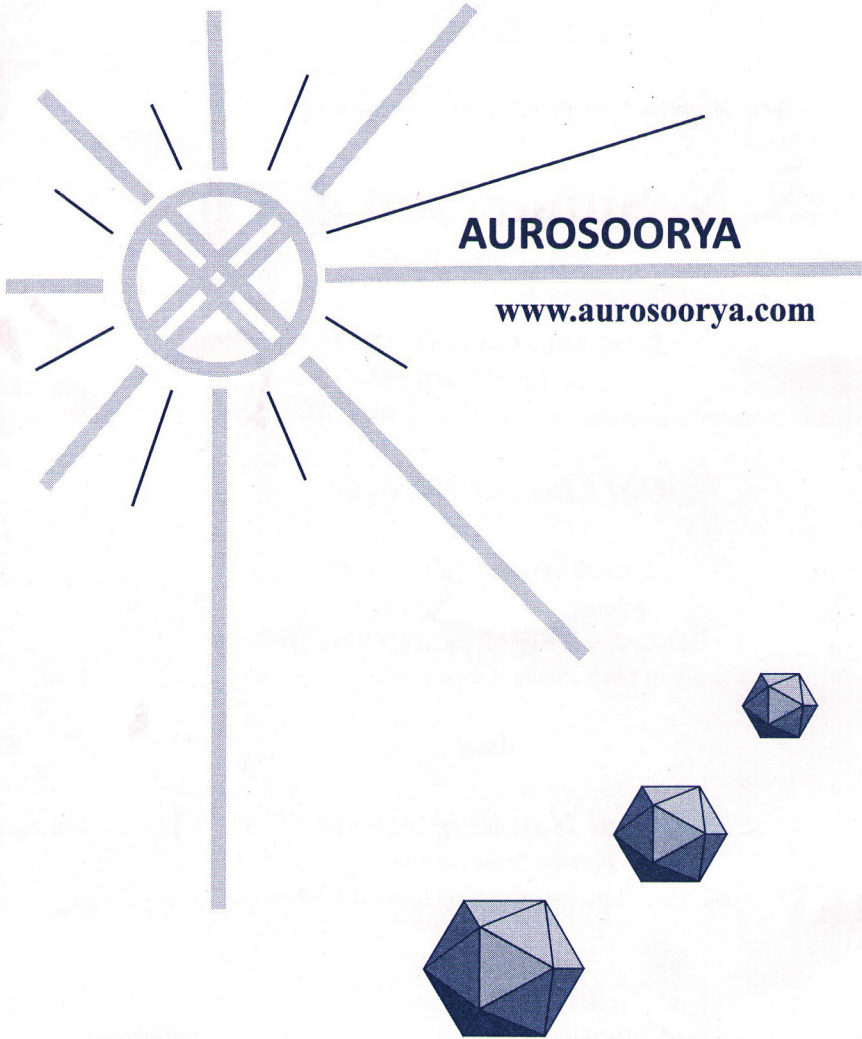
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