

# MOTHER INDIA

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JANUARY 2022

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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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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXXV

No. 1

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## **‘O SOUL, IT IS TOO EARLY TO REJOICE!’**

A stillness absolute, incommunicable,  
Meets the sheer self-discovery of the soul;  
A wall of stillness shuts it from the world,  
A gulf of stillness swallows up the sense  
And makes unreal all that mind has known,  
All that the labouring senses still would weave  
Prolonging an imaged unreality.  
Self’s vast spiritual silence occupies Space;  
Only the Inconceivable is left,  
Only the Nameless without space and time:  
Abolished is the burdening need of life:  
Thought falls from us, we cease from joy and grief;  
The ego is dead; we are freed from being and care,  
We have done with birth and death and work and fate.  
O soul, it is too early to rejoice!  
Thou hast reached the boundless silence of the Self,  
Thou hast leaped into a glad divine abyss;  
But where hast thou thrown Self’s mission and Self’s power?  
On what dead bank on the Eternal’s road?  
One was within thee who was self and world,  
What hast thou done for his purpose in the stars?  
Escape brings not the victory and the crown!  
Something thou cam’st to do from the Unknown,  
But nothing is finished and the world goes on  
Because only half God’s cosmic work is done.  
Only the everlasting No has neared  
And stared into thy eyes and killed thy heart:  
But where is the Lover’s everlasting Yes,  
And immortality in the secret heart,  
The voice that chants to the creator Fire,  
The symbolled OM, the great assenting Word,  
The bridge between the rapture and the calm,  
The passion and the beauty of the Bride,  
The chamber where the glorious enemies kiss,  
The smile that saves, the golden peak of things?  
This too is Truth at the mystic fount of Life.

‘O SOUL, IT IS TOO EARLY TO REJOICE!’

A black veil has been lifted; we have seen  
The mighty shadow of the omniscient Lord;  
But who has lifted up the veil of light  
And who has seen the body of the King?  
The mystery of God’s birth and acts remains  
Leaving unbroken the last chapter’s seal,  
Unsolved the riddle of the unfinished Play;  
The cosmic Player laughs within his mask,  
And still the last inviolate secret hides  
Behind the human glory of a Form,  
Behind the gold eidolon of a Name.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, pp. 310-11)





## THE HOPE OF THE RACE IN THIS CRISIS

The one thing that man sees above the intellect is the spirit, and therefore the developed intellect of the race, if it is at all to go forward, must open now to an understanding and seeing spirituality, other than the rather obscure religionism of the past which belonged to the lower levels of the life and the emotion and which has had its bounds broken and its narrownesses condemned by the free light of intellectual thought: this will be rather an illumined self-knowledge and God-knowledge and a world-knowledge too which transmuted in that greater light will spiritualise the whole view and motive of our existence. That is the one development to which an accomplished intellectualism can open and by exceeding itself find its own right consummation. The alternative is a continual ringing of changes in the spinnings of the intellectual circle which leads nowhere or else a collapse to the lower levels which may bring human civilisation down with a run to a new corrupted and intellectualised barbarism. This is a catastrophe which has happened before in the world's history, and it was brought about ostensibly by outward events and causes, but arose essentially from an inability of the intellect of man to find its way out of itself and out of the vital formula in which its strainings and questionings can only exhaust itself and life into a full illumination of the spirit and an enlightened application of the saving spiritual principle to mind and life and action. The possibility of such a catastrophe is by no means absent from the present human situation. On the one hand the straining of the intellect to its limits of elasticity has brought in a recoil to a straining for unbridled vital, emotional and sensational experience and a morbid disorder in the economy of the nature and on the other there have come in, perhaps as a result, perturbations of the earth system that threaten to break up the mould of civilisation, and the problem of the race is whether a new and greater mould can be created instead a collapse and decadence intervene and a recommencing of the circle. The hope of the race in this crisis lies in the fidelity of its intellect to the larger perceptions it now has of the greater self of humanity, the turning of its will to the inception of delivering forms of thought, art and social endeavour which arise from those perceptions and the raising of the intellectual mind to the intuitive supra-intellectual spiritual consciousness which can alone give the basis for a spiritualised life of the race and the realisation of its diviner potentialities. The meaning of spirituality is a new and greater inner life of man founded in the consciousness of his true, his inmost, highest and largest self and spirit by which he receives the whole of existence as a progressive manifestation of the self in the universe and his own life as a field of a possible transformation in which its divine sense will be found, its potentialities highly evolved, the now imperfect forms changed into an image of the divine perfection, and an effort not only to see but to live out these greater possibilities of his being. And this consciousness

of his true self and spirit must bring with it a consciousness too of the oneness of the individual and the race and a harmonious unity of the life of man with the spirit in Nature and the spirit of the universe.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(The Future Poetry, CWSA, Vol. 26, pp. 269-70)*



**‘THOU ART THE SOVEREIGN RULER  
OF OUR DESTINIES . . .’**

**July 19, 1914**

O Lord, Thou art the omnipotent Master of Thy own manifestation; grant to these instruments that they may escape from frames too narrow, from limits too fixed and mediocre. All the riches of human possibility are needed to translate even one atom of Thy infinite Force. . . . Open the doors that are closed, make the sealed fountains spring forth, that the floods of Thy eloquence and Thy beauty may overspread the world. Let there be amplitude and majesty, nobility and grace, charm and grandeur, variety and strength: for it is the will of the Lord to manifest.

O my sweet Master, Thou art the sovereign Ruler of our destinies; Thou art the omnipotent Master of Thy own manifestation.

Thine is all this world, Thine all these creatures and all these atoms. Transfigure them, illumine.

THE MOTHER

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 1, p. 206)*



## A CONVERSATION OF 19 NOVEMBER 1969

This morning about eight o'clock, I could have said many things. . . . Because there came a day when many problems had cropped up as a consequence of something that had happened, then this morning (towards the end of the night), I had the experience that was the explanation. And for two hours I lived in an absolutely clear perception (not a thought: a clear perception) of the why and how of creation. It was so luminous, so clear; it was irrefutable. It lasted at least for four or five hours and then it petered out; gradually the experience diminished in intensity and clarity. . . . I had just seen many people, then . . . it is difficult to explain now. But all had become so limpid; all the contrary theories, everything was at the bottom (*Mother looks from above*), and all the explanations, all that Sri Aurobindo had said and also some things that Théon had said were seen as a consequence of the experience: each thing in its place and absolutely clear. At that time I could have said it, but now it will be a little difficult.

Is it not so? In spite of what one has read and all the theories and explanations, something was left (how to say it?) difficult to “explain” (it is not “explaining”: that is quite trivial). For example, suffering and the will to inflict suffering, that side of the Manifestation. There has been, of course, as though a prevision of the original identity of hatred and love, because the thing was going to the extremes, but as for all the rest it was difficult. Today it is so luminously simple, yes, it is that, so obvious! . . . (*Mother looks at a note which she had written.*) Words are nothing. And then I had scribbled with a pencil that wrote badly. . . . I don't know if you can see the words. To me they represented something very exact: now they are nothing but words. (*The disciple reads:*)

*Stability and change*  
*Inertia and transformation . . .*

Yes, in the Lord they were evidently identical principles. And it was particularly that, the simplicity of this identity. And now they are nothing but words.

*Stability and change*  
*Inertia and transformation*  
*Eternity and progress*

---

*Unity = . . . (The disciple is not able to make out the words.)*

It was not I who wrote it, that is to say, not the ordinary consciousness, and the pencil . . . I do not know any more what I have put down. (*Mother tries to read the words, but in vain.*) It was the vision of the creation — the vision, the understanding, the how, the why, the whither, everything was there, the whole of it together, and clear, clear, clear. . . . I tell you, I was in the midst of a golden glory — luminous, dazzling.

Well, the earth was there as the centre representing the creation, and then there was the identity of the inertia of the stone, of what is most inert, and then . . . (*Mother tries once more to read the words.*)

I do not know if it will come.

(*Mother goes into a long concentration.*)

One might say like that . . . for the convenience of expression, I would say: the “Supreme” and the “creation”. In the Supreme, it is a unity that contains all the possibilities perfectly unified, without any differentiation; in creation, it is, so to say, the projection of all that makes up this unity by dividing the opposites, that is to say, by separating them (it is that which has been seized by someone who said that creation is separation): for example, night and day, black and white, good and evil, etc., etc. — all that, but it is our explanation. The whole of it, all together is a perfect unity, immutable and . . . indissoluble. Creation means separation of all that constitutes this unity — one might call it the division of consciousness. The division of consciousness starts from the unity conscious of its unity, in order to arrive at the unity conscious of its multiplicity *in the unity*. And then it is this path which, because of its fragments, is translated for us by space and time. For us, such as we are, it is possible for each point of this consciousness to be conscious of itself *and* conscious of the original Unity. And that is the work which is being done; that is to say, each infinitesimal element of this consciousness, while keeping this state of consciousness, is in the process of rediscovering the state of the total original consciousness — and the result is the original Consciousness conscious of its unity *and* conscious of the whole play, conscious of the innumerable elements of this Unity. This for us is translated into the sense of time: moving from the Inconscient up to this state of Consciousness. And the Inconscient is the projection of the first Unity (if one can say it; all these words are altogether senseless), of the essential unity which is only conscious of its unity — yes, that is the Inconscient. And this Inconscient becomes more and more conscious in beings who are conscious of their infinitesimal existence and *at the same time*, through what we call progress or evolution or transformation, become conscious of the original Unity. And that, as it was seen, explains everything.

Words are nothing.

Everything, everything from the most material to the most ethereal, *everything* finds its place there — clear, clear, clear, a vision.

And evil, what we call evil, has its *indispensable* place in the whole. It will not

be felt as evil the moment one becomes conscious of That — necessarily. Evil is this infinitesimal element looking at its infinitesimal consciousness; but as consciousness is essentially one, it resumes, regains the Consciousness of the Unity — the two together. It is that, yes, *it is that* which has to be realised. It is this wonderful thing, of this I had the vision at that moment. . . . And for the beginnings (are they the beginnings?), what is called in English the outskirts, what is farthest from the central realisation, that becomes the multiplicity of things, and the multiplicity also of sensations, of feelings, of all . . . the multiplicity of consciousness. It is this act of separation that has created, that is creating the world constantly and that is creating everything at the same time: suffering, happiness, everything, everything that is created through this . . . what might be called “diffusion”; but it is absurd, it is not a diffusion — we ourselves live in the sense of space, so we speak of diffusion and concentration, but it is nothing of the sort.

And I understood why Théon used to say that we were living at the time of “Equilibrium”; that is to say, it is through the equilibrium of all these innumerable points of consciousness and of all these opposites that the central Consciousness is rediscovered. And all that is said is stupid — at the same time as I say this, I see to what degree it is stupid. But one cannot do otherwise. It is something . . . something *so concrete*, so true, yes, so ab-so-lu-te-ly . . . *that*.

As long as I was living that, it was . . . But perhaps I could not have said it at that time. That (*Mother points to the note*), I was obliged to take up some paper and jot it down, and in such a way that I do not know any more what I jotted down. . . . The first thing written was this:

*Stability and change*

It was the idea of the original Stability (one could say), which is translated in the Manifestation by inertia. And the growth is translated by change. Then came:

*Inertia and transformation*

But it is gone, the sense is gone — the words had a sense.

*Eternity and progress*

They were the opposites (these three things).

Then there was a gap (*Mother draws a line under the triple opposition*), and once again a Pressure, and then I wrote this:

*Unity = . . . (three illegible words follow)*

And that was a much more true expression of the experience, but it is illegible — I think it was illegible deliberately. One must have the experience to be able to read it.

*(The disciple tries to read the words:)* It seems to me that there is a word “rest”?

Ah! It must be that. Rest and . . .

*(Mother goes into concentration.)*

Is it not “power”?

Ah! Yes, “Power and rest combined”.

Yes, that is it.

It was not I who chose the words, so they must have a special force — when I say “I”, I mean the consciousness that is there (*gesture above the head*); it is not that consciousness; it was something that was pressing down that compelled me to write. (*Mother recopies her note:*)

*Stability and change  
Inertia and transformation  
Eternity and progress*

---

*Unity = power and rest combined.*

The idea is that the two combined restored that state of consciousness which wanted to express itself.

It was on the universal scale — not on the individual scale.

I put a line between the two to mean that they had not come together.

*But already, often, when you speak of this supramental experience, you say that it is a staggering movement and at the same time it is as though completely immobile. You have said it often.*

But you know, most often I do not remember what I have once said.

*You say: the vibration is so rapid that it is imperceptible, it is as though coagulated and immobile.*

Yes. But this was really a Glory in which I lived for hours together this morning.

And then all, all, all notions, all of them, even the most intellectual, all became as . . . as though childishness. It was so obvious that one had the feeling: there is no need to speak of it!

All human reactions, even the highest, the purest, the noblest, appeared *so* childish! . . . There is a sentence written by Sri Aurobindo somewhere that was coming all the while to me. One day, I do not remember where, he had written something, a rather long sentence in which there was this: “And when I feel jealous, I know that the old man is still there.” It is now perhaps more than thirty years since I read it — yes, almost thirty years — and I remember, when I read “jealous”, I said to myself: How can Sri Aurobindo be jealous? And so after thirty years I have understood what he meant by being “jealous” — it is not at all what men call “jealous”, it was altogether another state of consciousness. I saw it clearly. And this morning it came back to me: “And when I feel jealous, I know that the old man is still there.” To be “jealous” for him did not mean what we call “jealous”. . . . It is this infinitesimal particle that we call the individual, this particle of infinitesimal consciousness which places itself at the centre, which is the centre of the perception, and which consequently perceives things coming like that (*gesture towards oneself*) or going like that (*gesture outward*) and all that does not come to it gives it a kind of perception that Sri Aurobindo called “jealous”: the perception that things are going towards diffusion, instead of coming in towards centralisation; it was that which he called “jealous”. So he said: When I feel jealous (this was what he meant to say), I know that the old man is still there; that is to say, this infinitesimal particle of consciousness can *still* be at the centre of itself; it is the centre of action, the centre of perception, the centre of sensation. . . .

(Silence)

Yes, I could notice — it is the time when I do all my physical work — I could notice that the whole work could be done without any alteration in the consciousness. It was not that which altered my consciousness; what veiled my consciousness was seeing people: it is when I began to be here and to do what I have been doing every day: projecting the divine Consciousness upon people. But it came back . . . (how can one say it?) on the borders; that is to say, instead of *being* within, I began to perceive it, when you asked me. But that feeling is no longer there — there was nothing *but that* any more! That alone was there, and everything, everything has changed — appearance, meaning, etc.

That must be the supramental consciousness: I believe that this is the supramental consciousness.

*But one could conceive very well that for a consciousness wide and quick enough, if I may say so, capable of seeing not merely a bit of the path, but the whole path at the same time . . .*



Yes, yes.

*The whole would be a moving perfection.*

Yes.

*Evil is simply holding one's vision on one small angle; then one says, "It is evil", but if one sees the entire path . . . In a total consciousness, obviously there is no evil.*

There are no contraries. No *contraries* — not even contradictions; I say: no contraries. It is that Unity, it is *living* in that Unity. And that cannot be translated by thoughts or words. I am telling you, it is . . . a vastness without limits and a light . . . a light without movement, and at the same time an ease . . . an ease not recognised as such. Now I am convinced that it is that, the supramental consciousness.

And necessarily, necessarily that must change the appearances gradually.

*(Long silence)*

There are no words that can explain the magnificence of the Grace, how the whole is combined so that all may go as quickly as possible. And individuals are miserable to the extent to which they are not conscious of it and take a false position in regard to what is happening to them.

*But what is difficult to think is that at each moment it must be . . . it is the perfection.*

Yes, that is it.

*At each instant, it is the perfection.*

At *each* instant. There is no other thing . . . When I was there, there was no other thing. And yet, as I have told you, it was the time when I was physically extremely busy — all the work was being done, without disturbing *anything*; on the contrary, I believe I was doing things much better than usual . . . I do not know how to explain. It was not, as it were, a thing "added": it was quite natural.

Life as it is can be lived in that consciousness — but it is then lived quite well! . . . Nothing needs to be changed, what is to be changed changes itself quite naturally.

I am going to give you an example. For a few days, I had some difficulty with . . . I will not name him; pressure had to be put on him to correct some of his movements. Today he was conscious of it in quite a different way from the usual, and in

the end he said that he was on the way to change (that is true), and all that not only without a word, but without any movement of the consciousness for putting pressure. There you are. That is a proof. . . . All is done automatically, as an *imposition* of the Truth without any necessity of intervention: simply to remain in the true consciousness, that is all, that is sufficient.

But then, in spite of everything, the body kept just a little consciousness of its needs all the while (although it was not busy with itself; I was always saying: It is not busy with itself, it is not interested). But that is what Sri Aurobindo used to say: I feel I am still the old man. I understood that this morning, for it was no longer there. Well, this sort of a very quiet perception of what is still not all right — a pain here, a difficulty there — very calm, very indifferent, but it is *perceived* (without its taking any importance), and even that gone, wholly swept away! . . . I hope it won't come back. It is really . . . this, I understand, it is a transformation. One is conscious in a golden vastness — my child, it is wonderful — luminous, golden, peaceful, eternal, all-powerful.

And how it is coming. . . . No word is there to express it indeed, this wonder regarding the Grace. . . . The Grace, the Grace is a thing that surpasses all comprehension, with its clear-seeing kindliness. . . . Naturally the body had the experience. Something had happened that I will not tell you and it had the true reaction; it had not the old reaction, it had the true reaction — it smiled, with the Smile of the supreme Lord — it smiled. That was there for a whole day and a half. And it was this difficulty which enabled the body to make the last progress, enabled it to live in this Consciousness: if all had been harmonious, things could have lasted still for years — it is wonderful, wonderful!

And how stupid men are! When the Grace has come to them, they push it away, saying, "Oh! What horror!" . . . That I have known for a long time, but my experience is . . . dazzling.

*Yes, each thing is perfectly, wonderfully what it ought to be at every moment.*

Quite so.

*But it is our vision that is not attuned.*

Yes, it is our separated consciousness.

The whole has been brought with lightning rapidity towards the consciousness that will be the Consciousness of the point and of the all, at the same time.

*(Long silence)*

*(Mother finishes recopying her note.)* There, now I am writing today's date.

*It is the 19<sup>th</sup>.*

19 November 1969, supramental consciousness.

*(Silence)*

The first descent of the supramental force was a 29, and this is a 19 . . . The 9 is something to note there. . . . So many things there are which we do not know!

*(Silence)*

I have already had the experience, partially, that when one is in this state of inner harmony and no part of the attention is turned towards the body, the body works perfectly well. It is this . . . “self-concentration” which upsets everything. And this I have observed many times, many times. . . . In reality one does *make* oneself ill. It is the narrowness of consciousness, the division. If you let it work, there is . . . everywhere there is a Consciousness and a Grace that do everything so that all may go well, and it is because of this imbecility that all goes wrong — it is strange! The ego-centric imbecility, it is that which Sri Aurobindo calls “the old man”.

It is truly interesting.

THE MOTHER

*(Notes on the Way, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 11, pp. 197-207)*



## “TWO BIRDS” & “EACH NIGHT” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

What do you think of this poem? It seems rather like stuff of the higher mind — except, perhaps, stanza 4. Your estimate, please, of it and of that stanza in particular?

### TWO BIRDS<sup>1</sup>

A small bird crimson-hued  
Among great realms of green  
Fed on their multitudinous fruit —  
But in his dark eye flamed more keen

A hunger as from joy to joy  
He moved the poignance of his beak,  
And ever in his heart he wailed  
“Where hangs the marvellous fruit I seek?”

Then suddenly above his head  
A searching gaze of grief he turned:  
Lo there upon the topmost bough  
A pride of golden plumage burned!

Lost in a dream no hunger broke,  
This calm bird — aureoled, immense —  
Sat motionless: all fruit he found  
Within his own magnificence.

The watchful ravener below  
Felt his time-tortured passion cease,  
And flying upward knew himself  
One with that bird of golden peace.

1. Notes in *The Secret Splendour – Collected Poems of K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran)*: “The jacket-picture and the frontispiece illustrate the poem ‘Two Birds’ appearing on p. 131.” “. . . ‘Two Birds’ after a parable from the Upanishads [p. 67]”

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

It is very felicitous in expression and taking. The fourth stanza is from the Intuitive, the rest not from the higher mind — for there a high-uplifted thought is the usual characteristic — but probably from some realm of the inner Mind where thought and vision are involved in each other — that kind of fusion gives the easy felicity that is found here. All the same there is a touch of the higher Mind perhaps in the 2<sup>nd</sup> lines of the second and the last stanza.

26 September 1936

*(Amal’s query inserted after Sri Aurobindo’s comment:)*

What’s after “and” in the opening sentence above? “taking”? What would that mean?

Sri Aurobindo’s answer:

I think Shakespeare wrote somewhere “daffodils that come before the swallow dares and take the winds of March with beauty.” Charm or beauty that takes the mind like that, is taking.

\*

Sri Aurobindo —

Really it was a surprise: awf’ly kind of you . . . What do you think of this poem? Too thin? But from where has the inspiration tried to come?

Dream not with gaze hung low  
By love  
That earthward calls — but know  
The silver<sup>1</sup> spaces move

eye<sup>2</sup>  
Within your eyes when sleep  
Brings gloom:  
Then will your hush grow deep  
As heaven’s lofty room.

And in this chamber strange  
Of blue  
A Love unmarred by change  
Shall ever tryst with you.

of<sup>3</sup>  
So, build Her each calm night  
A swoon  
That bears on outer sight  
a<sup>4</sup>  
The padlock of the moon.

(Amal’s questions:)

1. argent?
4. Is “a” more suggestive? Would “some” have any sense?

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

2. (“eye” *crossed out*)
3. (“of” *crossed out*)
4. Neither “a” nor “some” will do.

To repeat the phrase that puzzled you, it is very taking. The inspiration is I think from the same place. This is not thinness — an easy and luminous simplicity that is at the same time very felicitous.

28 September 1936

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[Version from *The Secret Splendour* —  
*Collected Poems of K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran)*, 1993 Ed., p. 132:]

### EACH NIGHT

Dream not with gaze hung low  
By love  
That earthward calls — but know  
The silver spaces move

Within your eyes when sleep  
Brings gloom:  
Then will your hush grow deep  
As heaven’s lofty room

And in this chamber strange  
With blue  
A Love unmarred by change  
Shall ever tryst with you.

So, build Her each calm night  
A swoon  
That bears on outer sight  
The padlock of the moon.

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

*Two birds, beautiful of wing, close companions, cling to one common tree: of the two one eats the sweet fruit of the tree, the other eats not but watches his fellow.*

*The soul is the bird that sits immersed on the one common tree; but because he is not lord he is bewildered and has sorrow. But when he sees that other who is the Lord and beloved, he knows that all is His greatness and his sorrow passes away from him.*

*(Mundaka Upanishad, Chapter 3, Section 1, verses 1, 2)*

Sri Aurobindo's translation

*(Kena and Other Upanishads, CWSA, Vol. 18, p. 142)*

## ‘VICTORY TO HIM, OUR LORD, SRI AUROBINDO’

जयतु स भगवान् नः पूर्णभागोऽरविन्दो  
जयतु धवलशोभा लोकधात्री मिराम्बा ।  
जयतु लसतु भूमावेतयोः पूर्णयोगो  
जयतु तदनुगामी भाग्यवान् भ्रातृवर्गः ॥

Victory to Him, our Lord Sri Aurobindo, of entire parts! Victory to the Sustainer of the worlds, the Mother Mira of white radiance! To their Integral Yoga all victory — may it manifest fully on earth! Victory too to its following, the fortunate spiritual brotherhood!

T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

[English rendering by M. P. Pandit]

(*Prayers*, Published by M. P. Pandit, 1956, pp. 22-23)



## WHERE IS MOTHER INDIA?

### THE DIVISION OF THE COUNTRY MUST GO

*[Navajata (K. R. Poddar) was born on 3 January 1922. He was instrumental in the launching of Mother India. He was also its Managing Editor.*

*The article below is reproduced from the April 2, 1949 issue of the journal.]*

While we are busy grappling with the problem of fixing a national Anthem for India, let us pause for a moment and ask ourselves, “Where is the Mother India to which we bow in ‘Vande Mataram’, where are the vast stretches of the Punjab and Bengal whose praise we sing in ‘Jana Gana Mana’? Which map of Mother India flashes before our eyes as with head erect and chest forward we stand attention to the tunes of ‘Vande Mataram’? Is it the India with her beautiful ancient expanse from the snow-capped Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from the North-West Frontier to Chittagong, or is it the India cut up mercilessly, profusely bleeding, shorn of her two shoulders and her very crown, Kashmir — tossed about by people who, blinded by self-interest, are oblivious to the miseries of the Mother and her Children, their own blood-brothers?”

#### **Why persist in a Past Folly?**

No doubt, division was acquiesced in as an unavoidable evil. But must it be perpetual? Is not the act of right thinking, the act of detecting one’s blunder, individual or collective, the duty of every living being? Indeed the exercise of this duty is the fundamental cause of social and individual progress. Partition has brought in its wake precisely the tragedies it sought to avoid. The nightmare of the last eighteen months compel reconsideration of our attitude. Pakistan stands today as a gaunt monument to the achievements of negative propaganda, nuisance value and mean opportunism on the one side and the failures of a helpless display of complacency towards mischief on the other. The way in which popular support was created for the demand of Pakistan is a most lucid instance of the extent to which sentimental fanaticism could be exploited. Masses were fed on false propaganda of “Islam in Danger”. Passions were roused, the seeds of hatred sown and hearts were stirred to draw blood out of the very Mother who created us. But the dope (hope?) of “Pakistan” — the panacea for all the miseries of the Muslims — has already been (?) fully exposed in the eyes of Indian Muslims, and partially of the Pakistani Muslims.

How long shall we go on viewing this disfigured picture of Mother India and be

doing nothing? How long shall we — Hindus, Muslims, Parsees, Christians — all of us — submit ourselves to these self-motivated calls of Jihad? Where has the brotherly spirit of Bengal of “Bang-Bhang” days gone? Is it not high time that some of us opened our mouths and said, “For humanity’s sake, stop this nonsense. We have had enough of this cruel exploitation and beguiling. We will not see Mother India shorn of her limbs by misguided people and sit passively. We of all religions in India pledge ourselves to restore to Her what is Hers — Oneness. If sincerity and determination could take people to oneness with God, it can certainly take them to oneness between themselves. If division could come, it could also go. The light which led us to freedom, the light which Sri Aurobindo saw half a century ago when he preached that nationalism could not die because it was a religion we had from God, will also lead us to Unity. No more shall we sit idle congratulating ourselves on this misfortune and disgrace and vivisection. I remember what my old friend Sir Liaquat Hyat Khan told me one evening as we sat chatting at the C.C.I. Said that shrewd statesman and noble-hearted aristocrat, “In dividing India, a mistake has been committed and the earlier we retrace our steps, the better.” And I could see the inner misery on that usually quiet face as he added, “how can I come to hate my Hindu friends with whom I have played and shared my happiness and sorrows since my childhood?”

### **How Reunion Can Be Achieved**

But how can this reunion be achieved? By Truth. By a clear and honest perception of common interests. By an unsparing denouncement of false and deceitful propaganda whether of Churchillians or Pakistanis. By bringing the right thinking people together who will be prepared to show in their true colours the really anti-Islamic creators of Pakistan, and how these creators brought untold misery — not only to the India they cut up, but also to the masses in their newly created Pakistan, just to get cheap power into their hands.

An association must be formed to educate the masses towards the ideal and necessity of one India. Let an all-out effort be made to win the goodwill of the masses — especially Muslims. But let this goodwill effort not be a weak cowardly appeasement, but a strong expression of India’s soul and self. Let us not even think in terms of Hindus and Muslims. Let everyone have equal opportunities — neither special safeguards for one nor special restrictions for another. In these safeguards for minorities, these wicked ghosts of British Diplomacy of “Divide and Rule”, lie the venomous sources of Division. Let us remove hatred by strong clear-cut honest actions, founded on deep inner conviction and heart-searching. Let there be no retaliation on innocents. You cannot cut your innocent neighbour’s throat for a wrong done elsewhere. Nothing could be more cowardly. Let us prove to the world that India is different. She has always been different. Today that great battler Asoka’s pillar is our state emblem. Asoka changed after one Kalinga: let us change after so

many Kalingas. Let us keep the honour and life of innocents safe. Let us find our true tradition and stick to it. Let us not harm anyone, but also not tolerate harm, even for the sake of securing future goodwill and cordial relations. Hindus and Muslims lived together in the past. They fought shoulder to shoulder in 1857 and in all recent movements. Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Parsee blood has flown in one stream for the honour of the Tricolour. And we are confident that if India takes a correct and strong stand as she has already started taking — all will really come under one flag.

### **A Call to the Readers**

“Mother India” pledges itself to work actively and incessantly for the oneness of India; with this end in view it intends to bring together on a common platform, for concerted action, all those who think in this way. All our brethren who are ready to work for this ideal will find the columns of “Mother India” open to them to express themselves and so are requested to write down their ideas and programmes for achieving this natural ideal of One India.

Let us keep on saying: “Division of India is misconceived and misguided. India’s soul is one and indivisible. The division must go and will go.”

K. R. PODDAR

\* \* \*

### **Addendum**

*[Here is an extract from an article by the first Editor of Mother India, K. D. Sethna (who received the name ‘Amal Kiran’ from Sri Aurobindo) which appeared in the February 1983 issue of the journal. — Ed. Note]*

Navajata passed away on the morning of 19 January at the age of 61. The name he bore signifies “One who is new-born”. It was given to Keshav Dev Poddar by the Mother when he decided to put himself and all who were of the same mind as he and his family — which meant the whole of it — at her feet.

His had been a life of manifold activity in business. When hardly in his mid-twenties, he was made the head of a corporation of investors with the power to sign at a pinch a cheque of two crores. From the midst of such responsibilities, which carried also dangers, he came to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for permanent settlement in the peaceful atmosphere of the Mother’s presence. It was for him not a change from work to rest: it was the beginning of still more expansive work than before but one which took shape against a background of self-dedication to the mighty cause of the Mother. This new poise evoked from her the deeply suggestive name with which

she blessed him. And in its wake he proved again and again a source of plenty to the Ashram life.

Not that his devotion to her started only when he became an inmate of the Ashram. He had been visiting it ever since he was a boy. His father Ramnarayan used to bring him along year after year and he has known numerous darshans of Sri Aurobindo.

Before Sri Aurobindo left his body, Navajata had already conceived the idea of a journal which would look at all world-problems from the height of the Master's vision. Both the Master and the Mother approved of the idea and, when he proposed the name of K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran) for editor, they concurred. On 21 February 1949, a birthday of the Mother, the journal was launched as a fortnightly under the caption *Mother India*. In 1952, this review of Culture, which Sri Aurobindo once called "my paper", turned into a monthly.

Navajata's next venture was the founding of the Sri Aurobindo Society. With the Mother's full assent it was intended both to bring extensive financial help to the Ashram and to propagate the teaching of Sri Aurobindo throughout the world. [ . . . ]

The most far-reaching experiment with which Navajata was linked arose out of the functioning of the Sri Aurobindo Society. In a long talk of the Mother published several years back in *Mother India*, it was disclosed by her that from her early life she had wanted to establish an international city for World Unity on a spiritual basis, but that this scheme had remained unactualised for want of material support. She recounts how she mentioned it to Navajata and he at once came forward to bring the support needed. The Mother accepted his offer, for she knew that nobody in her circle could match the genius he possessed for bringing financial aid. Thus "Auroville, the City of Dawn", took birth on 28 February 1968 with a ceremony attended by representatives of a score of nations. [ . . . ]

Every eminent worker in any field is bound to meet with criticism in one respect or another — criticism at times valid and at times illegitimate. But in this world of difficulties and of human ignorance aspiring towards divine knowledge we have to rise above natural shortcomings and look at the shining positive achievements the Mother has brought into view through one in whom she achieved the profound fact of being "new-born".

AMAL KIRAN

## ON ARJAVA

. . . To come now to Chadwick. His temperament accorded in many ways with mine, and he always helped me by correcting my English poems which he liked very much, he said. His deep mastery of the technique of English poetry left a lasting impression on my mind eager to possess English prosody. He too in his turn wanted to profit by what little I could tell him about our music which he came gradually to love, so much so that one day after hearing a few hymns to Krishna which I sang for him he wrote, in his poem, 'Musician':

Splendour beyond conceiving  
wave against wave  
of swirling light uprear their sinuous crests  
and are thrust forward in a seething foam  
of melody  
within the listening coves  
and over the untrod sandways  
of the heart!

Once a friend of mine, Madame Miller, visited the Ashram. She was a Viennese and a famous opera-singer and we sang together a song of Chopin: 'In mir klingt ein Lied.' Then she sang a number of solos. Chadwick was intoxicated and immediately after the music wrote a lovely poem and dedicated it to her:

Subdued the light at the gray evenhush,  
As the shadowy helmets of night's vague host  
Make dim the East and the North and the South.  
Spendthrift day keeps but a dwindling heap of gold  
Low on the westward margins of the sky.  
Spirit with wings of light and darkness  
Sail through the fast-closing gates of the West  
And bear me out of the world;  
The world that is frozen music (but the performers were faulty).  
Haply the high-flashing fountains of song  
Play still in Supernal Eden  
And the air is a diamond undimmed by Time's misadventures.  
The unchanging light of the One, enmeshed in the murmuring spray,  
Builds all the colours of the soul.  
And the speechless telling of mysteries  
Leaves them in the song-hidden heart of Light.

And how he loved to talk of Sri Aurobindo. He was sick, he used to tell me, of the European civilisation and had definitely turned his back on its message of science and materialist rationalism even though his mind was grounded in the scientific and mathematical philosophy of the West. Nevertheless he wrote to Sri Aurobindo such humble letters almost petitioning him to shed light on his super-brilliant and yet avid, famished mind. Few people know how deep was his reverence for Sri Aurobindo's achievements in poetry even in the 'thirties when we used to hear breath-taking rumours of *Savitri* still in deep purdah. Chadwick and I once reminded him of it in concert but Sri Aurobindo only wrote back that he wanted to revise it thoroughly but had "no time to dally with the Muses". "It's the Supramental," Chadwick used to whisper to me in a mock-solemn tone. And I used generally to retort something irreverent about the Supramental looking very much like leaving us in the lurch, at which he would chuckle in glee. And then, becoming grave like a tomb: "But I ought to repent if not tremble, Dilip, since *we* believe in blasphemy, if *you* don't." Then more seriously: "But I do like this, you know, your cracking jokes with Gurudev!"

Often I showed him Gurudev's repartees. A sample:

I had written after a talk with Chadwick about the Christian conception of the sheep (parishioners) and the Shepherd (the pastor, I believe): "Well, Guru, since Chadwick has driven me to the wall (how can I cope with him in argument?) I will try henceforth to bleat faith and humility like a trembling lamb and not roar doubts like a dying lion."

To which Gurudev answered: "Good, especially because one must be the lamb of God before being His lion."

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 through levity, music, poetry and day to day struggles with our egos. "But it's all *maya*, Chadwick," I often told him, specially when he felt gloomy about the deplorable state of the world to which "we also were contributing", as Chadwick used to remark. But that was just why he worshipped Sri Aurobindo to whom he had dedicated an exquisite poem. I loved it and read it out to my friends and posted copies of it to our enemies, because the tribute here was from a brilliant Englishman and not a lack-lustre Indian:

### RED LOTUS

(Sri Aurobindo's Consciousness)

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

O Puissant heart amidst whose raptured shring  
 A nameless Love is garbed in Name's disguise,  
 Last metronome to mortal things assigning  
 A fadeless rhythm wrung from Dawn's echoing skies.<sup>1</sup>

“A nameless Love is garbed in Name's disguise” — the line came to me in a haunting strain in those days for a twofold reason: first because he weaved with the magic of his rhythm and psychic emotion, vigilantly controlled by his English austerity, an aura round Sri Aurobindo which was as real in its beauty as it was opulent in its mystic implications and secondly, because he expressed with his exquisite diction an adoration which was even more potent for its rich suggestiveness than for its immediate content of meaning. Every time I read his poems I realised anew as it were what he had meant when he had once said to me, half-apologetically: “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. What I mean is that while you, Bengalis, sail exultantly on the crest of your emotion — we, English, don't like to be caught expressing our feelings too vividly. If you do not understand that, you miss something very important about our inner make-up.”

But there was something else which was borne home to me through his poems which I must attempt to describe as it opened to me a new vista, so to speak, especially when he recited them with his delicately-cadenced inflexion: I got rich glimpses through his authentic English pronunciation — with its accent, caesura and intonation — of something akin to a revelation about the capacity of melody inherent in English poetry. To explain this I shall have to go back a little.

It so happened that at the time Sri Aurobindo was graciously experimenting, at my request, with some Bengali poems of mine and giving me, day after marvellous day, exquisite English counterparts to the samples I sent up. The poems he composed showed an astonishing correspondence, in lilt and accent, with the samples I sent him of our Bengali bases. (I was just then experimenting in the converse direction — which he encouraged and enjoyed to the full: I was trying to transcribe English bases with their modulations and stresses into Bengali.) In the course of such researches I once claimed that Bengali was richer in melody and variety of metrical structures if not in suggestiveness and substance. Whereupon he, after warning me that my “estimate was marred by the personal or national habit” and conceding that “the English language is not naturally melodious like the Italian and Bengali — no language with a Teutonic base can be”, he added that “it is capable of remarkable harmonic effects and also it can by a skilful handling be made to give out the most beautiful melodies.” (CWSA 27: 142)

1. I have quoted only two out of the four verses he wrote. See his *Poems*, p. 177.



I was still a little unconvinced about this, naturally — as I was to realise later — because I had hitherto to neither made a serious study of English verse nor developed an ear for what Sri Aurobindo meant when he wrote to me that, unlike Bengali and Italian, “English is difficult and has to be struggled with in order to produce its best effects, but out of that very difficulty has arisen an astonishing plasticity, depth and manifold subtlety of rhythm.” This was borne home to me by Chadwick’s poems and, incidentally, made me realise how inept my remarks had been. For I remember that in the beginning I could not vividly feel the beauty of his poems, but as I was in those days writing English poems myself under his, Sethna’s and Gurudev’s tuition, I was thrilled to discover one fine morning that I had grown richly alive to the lovely melodic effects he wove in many of his poems — so suddenly that I was reminded of a letter of Sri Aurobindo’s in which he consoled me for my inability to be similarly receptive to painting.

“Don’t be desperate,” he wrote in a colloquial style,

about your incapacity as a connoisseur of painting. I was worse in this respect, knew something about sculpture, but blind to painting. Suddenly one day in the Alipur jail, while meditating saw some “pictures” on the wall of the cell and lo and behold, the artistic eye in me opened and I knew all about painting except of course the more material side of the technique. I don’t always know how to express though, because I lack the knowledge of the proper expressions, but that does not stand in the way of a keen and understanding appreciation. So, there you are. All things are possible. (CWSA 35: 264)

I labour this point because Chadwick himself achieved a somewhat similar feat in poetry — “struggling and striving to listen with the inner ear” — till one day something opened in him, as he told me once, and he went on producing, one after another, his lovely lyrics which delighted everybody, as e.g. when he wrote his poems on Laelia on which Sri Aurobindo bestowed superlative praise:

For the moon-pale feet of Laelia the still night sheddeth dew,  
 Or at noon in the white-rose garden — doomed with a trance of blue —  
 Blossoms with jade-white petals before her feet are shed  
 And fall from the dreaming rose-trees, with never a leaf of red.

Your name is fading music upon my worship’s mouth;  
 It spills in langorous fragrance from lilies of the South;  
 It is the odorous night-flower wherewith your locks are bound, —  
 Or the moon-pale soul of roses caught in a mesh of sound.<sup>2</sup>

2. I have quoted only two verses to economise space, as well as because to quote long poems in prose is undesirable. But lovers of melody in English poetry must read his poems on Laelia and Moon inspired by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.



I experienced something akin to ecstasy when he used to recite:

“Your name is fading music upon my worship’s mouth;”

as it made me realise in a new way what Sri Aurobindo termed “psychic inspiration” in a letter to me in 1931 when I tried to translate Shelley’s famous lines:

I can give not what men call love,  
 But wilt thou accept not  
 The worship the heart lifts above  
 And the heavens reject not:  
 The desire of the moth for the star,  
 Of the night for the morrow, —  
 The devotion to something afar  
 From the sphere of our sorrow?

I must quote his letter in full as it will partly explain why he bestowed such lavish praise on Chadwick’s poems.

Shelley. Good poetry, but as a translation vulnerable in the head and the tail. In the head, because it seems to me that your *সে ধন* and *তা বলি* lays or may itself open to the construction that human love is a rich and precious thing which the poet unfortunately does not possess and it is only because of this deplorable poverty that he offers the psychic devotion, less warm and rich and desirable: but still in its own way rare and valuable! I exaggerate perhaps, but, still, if it is at all open to a meaning of this kind, then it says the very reverse of Shelley’s intended significance. For in English “what men call love” is strongly depreciatory, and can only mean something inferior, something that is poor and not rich, not truly love. Shelley says, in substance, “Human vital love is a poor inferior thing, a counterfeit of true love, which *I* cannot offer to *you*. But there is a greater thing, a true psychic love, all worship and devotion, which men do not readily value, being led away by the vital glamour, but which the heavens do not reject, though it is offered from something so far below them, so maimed and ignorant and sorrow-vexed as the human consciousness which is to the divine consciousness as the moth to the star, as the night to the day. And will not you accept this from me, you who in your nature are kin to the heavens, you who seem to me to have something of the divine nature, to be something bright and happy and pure, far above the ‘sphere of our sorrow’?” Of course all that is not said, but only suggested — but it is obviously the spirit of the poem. As to the tail, I doubt whether your last line brings out the sense of “something afar from the sphere of our sorrow”. If I make these criticisms at all, it is not

because your version is not good, but because you have accustomed me to find in you a power of rendering the spirit and sense of your original while turning it into fine poetry in its new tongue which I would not expect or exact from any other translator. (CWSA 27: 202-03)

Much as I would like to, I cannot enlarge further on Chadwick's poetry for exigencies of space as also for the fact that I must not, in focussing too much light on his poetic achievements, lay myself open to the charge of throwing into the shade a much more important aspect of his personality, namely, his spiritual aspiration which made him leave his country, family and even his English habits and cleave unwaveringly to the lead given by Gurudev — even when he knew that his days were numbered. But before that I must speak of another side to his nature which made him love Sri Aurobindo: his love of liberty which made him abhor all forms of dogmatism, fanaticism, and collective tyranny which the devotees of dictatorship worship the world over. He used to emphasise often with a subdued accent of rapturous admiration Sri Aurobindo's "oceanic tolerance and catholicity of spirit" which made him write in his *Synthesis of Yoga*:

The sadhaka of the integral Yoga will make use of all these aids according to his nature; but it is necessary that he should shun their limitations and cast from himself that exclusive tendency of egoistic mind which cries, "My God, my Incarnation, my Prophet, my Guru," and opposes it to all other realisation in a sectarian or a fanatical spirit. All sectarianism, all fanaticism must be shunned; for it is inconsistent with the integrity of the divine realisation.

On the contrary, the sadhaka of the integral Yoga will not be satisfied until he has included all other names and forms of Deity in his own conception, seen his own Ishta Devata in all others, unified all Avatars in the unity of Him who descends in the Avatar, welded the truth in all teachings into the harmony of the Eternal Wisdom. (CWSA 23: 66)

"I realise, Dilip," he used to tell me now and then, "how hard it must be for you to be fair to us, Englishmen, the more because we have been far from fair to you. But believe me, the real Englishman abhors nothing so much as an inroad into personal liberty. Russell is an instance in point. I consider him great — in spite of his obvious limitations — because he typifies in him two great traits of the English character at its best: love of fairness and love of individual freedom. That is why I feel often a trifle sad when some of you talk as though there were little to choose between the Nazi or Russian tyranny and the British. Don't misunderstand me. I cannot, as you know, possibly approve of our imperialists who talk of the empire and Rule Britannia. But I tell you that if the British were capable of responding to the philosophy of Marx and totalitarianism, the world today would soon cease to be a fit place for

any man who calls himself civilised.” How prophetic he had been was amply attested within a few years when, after the fall of Dunkirk, England stood alone for a whole year against the triple alliance of Germany, Japan and Italy while Russia stood by, having made that infamous pact with Hitler. But in those days (before 1939) — with Hitler still in the offing — we ignored him, the more because we disliked the British tyranny so much and knew of Hitler so little. No wonder many of us could not fully respond to Chadwick’s justified abhorrence of totalitarian imperialism. I remember also how I loathed the British imperialism with all my heart. So once or twice there was a strain between us when it was I who was to blame in that I was intolerant and so failed to realise fully the innate greatness of his nature which had made him cut away from his moorings in spite of the opposition of his friends and relations, and the deep discomfort he stood up to in choosing to stay with those who so often lost sight of his noble nature because of the veil of his shy refinement and British reserve. I must confess I truly realised this only after his death in 1938. I was not, at the time, in Pondicherry; when I returned I was told how resolutely he had refused to return to England for better medical treatment. “I would die in India where my Guru is,” he said and he did, not wavering once from his vow even when he was desperately ill.

When I look back in retrospect, I see that I have come to love the British primarily because of three men: Bertrand Russell, Krishnaprem (alias Ronald Nixon) and Chadwick. Of these Chadwick was distinctive in a peculiar way. For while Russell remained British and Krishnaprem became out and out a Hindu, only Chadwick combined in him the rich, aristocratic refinement of the British at its loftiest with a rich responsiveness to an Indian outlook on life and on the Guru which his love of individuality must have found not a little difficult to undersign. How strongly this love had taken root was expressed in his poem entitled ‘Totalitarian’ which made me fully alive, for the first time, to the infernal horror it symbolised. That what he had seen in 1936 (when it was composed) proved to be literally true subsequently, during the dark days of the Hitlerian hell-regime, must testify to the authentic power of vision that had lain latent in his nature, a power which opened in him under the aegis of Sri Aurobindo. With this much by way of introduction I shall now give the poem:

Night was closing on the traveller  
 When he came  
 To the empty eerie courtyard  
 With no name.  
 Loud he called; no echo answered;  
 Nothing stirred:  
 But a crescent moon swung wanly,  
 White as curd.  
 When he flashed his single sword-blade  
 Through the gloom,

None resisted — till he frantic,  
 Filled with doom,  
 Hurl'd his weapon through the gloaming,  
 Took no aim;  
 Saw his likenesses around him  
 Do the same:  
 Viewed a thousand swordless figures  
 Like his own —  
 Then first knew in that cold starlight  
 Hell, alone.

Sri Aurobindo was deeply impressed by this poem and considered it as, among other things, strikingly original. On learning this, Sethna invited his comment on it drawing his attention to Walter de la Mare's poem, 'The Listeners', to which it seemed to bear some affinity:

De la Mare's poem has a delicate beauty throughout and a sort of daintily fanciful suggestion of the occult world. I do not know if there is anything more. The weakness of it is that it reads like a thing imagined — the images and details are those that might be written of a haunted house on earth which has got possessed by some occult presences. Arjava must no doubt have taken his starting point from a reminiscence of this poem, but there is nothing else common with De la Mare — his poem is an extraordinarily energetic and powerful vision of an occult world and every phrase is intimately evocative of the beyond as a thing vividly seem and strongly lived — it is not on earth, this courtyard and this crescent moon, we are at once in an unearthly world and in a place somewhere in the soul of man and all the details, sparing, with a powerful economy of phrase and image and brevity of movement but revelatory in each touch as opposed to the dim moonlight suggestiveness supported by a profusion of detail and long elaborating development in De la Mare — of course that has its value also — make us entirely feel ourselves there. I therefore maintain my description "original" not only for the latter part of the poem but for the opening also. It is not an echo, it is an independent creation. Indeed the difference of the two poems comes out most strongly in these very lines.

. . . the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,  
 That goes down to the empty hall,  
  
 . . . the dark turf,  
 'Neath the starred and leafy sky

are a description of things on earth made occult only by the presence of the phantom listeners. But

. . . the empty eerie courtyard  
With no name

or

. . . the crescent moon swung wanly,  
White as curd

are not earthly, they belong to a terrible elsewhere, while the later part of the poem carries the elsewhere into a province of the soul. That is the distinction and makes the perfect successfulness of Arjava's poem. (*CWSA* 27: 487-88)

But I must come now to his deepest aspiration which impelled him to turn to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and made him "on wings of faith mount up toward the solar fire" as he put it in his poem entitled 'Wings'.

I put the name of the Mother first as in his case (unlike my own) it was she who gripped him first. It came about like this.

One morning as I was experimenting with a new metre in Bengali — it was in 1930 I think — I was told by someone that an Englishman, one Professor Chadwick from Lucknow, wanted to see me.

He came with a letter of introduction from my old friend, Professor D. P. Mukherji. There was something striking in his face which drew me at once to him, the more as he looked rather delicate and walked with a limp.

Before I give the substance of our conversation, I must remind the reader that I am concerned with giving but the gist of what passed between us as I cannot possibly remember all that we talked about on that day.

"I came to India," he said, "in quest of a spiritual wisdom in which she is rich and of which Europe is definitely bankrupt today."

"And then?"

"Well, I am going back — home."

"But you are still a professor in Lucknow, I understand?"

"Yes," he smiled, "but I am going to resign directly. Because . . ." he added, "I came here to learn — not to teach."

I was reminded at once of Krishnaprem whose name I mentioned.

"I know him," he nodded, "and he has got something, I felt. But not I."

"Have you read anything of Sri Aurobindo?" I asked, after a pause.

"Not yet," he answered almost apologetically, "though I have bought some of his books here. But," he added after a pause, "it is not books I thirst for. I want

something more — concrete and living.”

He spoke hesitantly and blushed every now and then.

“I quite understand,” I said blandly — “But Sri Aurobindo does not write books for the pastime of word-spinning. He throws out rich clues to the concrete. Here, at least, I speak from experience, not book-lore.”

“I am afraid you have misunderstood me a little,” he flustered again, “I didn’t exactly want to convey that — but never mind. The point is: I *am* disappointed. My fault I suppose. But then,” he smiled shyly, “I am perhaps too English to the core and therefore a little opaque, inevitably, to what you in India call the light of the spirit.”

It was my turn to feel embarrassed now.

“I didn’t mean it as a reproach,” I pleaded. “But perhaps you have also misunderstood me a little. I wish you had come here when Sri Aurobindo could be seen. For to see him is to cease to be ‘opaque’. For he is built of the stuff light is made of and it is a light that speaks.”

“I wish so too,” he said ruefully. “For I have heard so much about the radiance that resides in him. But it is not to be. I am sailing soon.”

“And you won’t come back?”

He shook his head. “Not likely. Why should I, since no light has spoken to *me*, so far?”

A silence fell.

“Would you care to see the Mother?” I suggested at a venture, for something to say.

He gave me a quick look.

“The Mother? Who is she?”

In those days (in the ’thirties) the Mother was very little known outside. So I chased away an upsurge, a feeling of disappointment. Besides, he looked so sincere and ingenuous — almost guileless! I told him a good deal about her and her sweet personality. But I ended with a friendly note of warning.

“But you see, hers is a personality that grows on one,” I hazarded diffidently. “For I know several persons on whom she had made very little impression at the start — but who, with time, have come to worship the very ground she treads.” No sooner had I made the last remark than I rued my impulsiveness.

“I thank you very much for telling me,” he said. “And you may be sure I would like to see her very much. But the point is would *she* care to see me?”

“Well, I can at least ask her,” I answered. “Only — ”

He fixed me with a steady scrutiny.

“I will be frank with you,” I said with an awkward smile, “though Mother says I am often a wee bit too frank with the wrong kind. But as you are different — ”

“Oh, thank you,” he laughed. “I hope I won’t let you down.”

That decided me. For though normally he looked rather taciturn, his face changed entirely when he laughed. It cleared up the atmosphere instantly.

“It seems unlikely,” I said returning his laughter. “But listen, it’s like this. I came here only the other day, so to say, and know very little about Yoga and its occult wisdom and perhaps understand even less the ways of Sri Aurobindo and Mother. For instance I have seen Mother take certain decisions but her reasons have, as often as not, left me guessing. Naturally I am drawn to her — otherwise I would not be able to stay here even a month, not to mention a year — but my acceptance of her being hedged about with uncertainties I do not know how far she tallies in reality with my mental picture of her. But I hold her in high esteem for all that, and therefore must make one request to you: in case you are disappointed with her, please keep it to yourself as otherwise you would be hurting the feelings of us all who owe her loyalty because she is, in effect, as much our Guru as Sri Aurobindo, if you know what I mean.”

He gave me a patient hearing and looked grave.

“I understand,” he said with his characteristic refined nod of the head, “and you may be sure that I shall not only approach her with humility but give her all the respect that is her due.”

“I am much relieved,” I answered, cheerfully now. “You must let me tell you something else. I said just now that I know very little about Mother and Sri Aurobindo. But this I do know that they are made of a very different stuff from that of most men I have met. To give just one instance. I have met many Gurus. These invite eminent disciples, generally speaking. But not Mother and Sri Aurobindo.<sup>3</sup> In fact he has given us to understand that we are not to persuade anybody even to see them, far less to accept them.” And, I went on to add a little hesitantly, “I have a feeling that they are none-too-eager to invite the merely curious or the complacent intellectuals who want to have easy interviews to be able to air their opinions on things utterly beyond their ken.”

He took in the sting in the tail unflinchingly. Then he lowered his eyes shyly as was his wont and smiled as it were to himself. Then suddenly he lifted his eyes to mine. His face was flushed again.

“You have put it well,” he said, laughing once more. “Perhaps a little too well, if you will pardon me for saying so. But,” he added a trifle ironically, “though I can’t deny my past and so must be labelled an ‘intellectual’ as you put it — believe me, I didn’t come here to stay where I am. For I came here to win a passport, if I could, to your time-old wisdom of the spirit — and that as a seeker, not a critic.”

I was impressed by the note of transcendent sincerity in his delicately-cadenced voice and strikingly-intellectual physiognomy. Besides, his face looked so emaciated and pale that it touched a chord in my heart.

3. “Well-known or unknown has absolutely no importance from the spiritual point of view. It is simply the propagandist spirit; . . . as if we were a party or a church or religion seeking adherents or proselytes. One man who earnestly pursues Yoga is of more value than a thousand well-known men.” (CWSA 35: 631) This he wrote subsequently in a letter, in 1934.



I went straight to the Mother. She gave him an appointment the next morning in our library down-stairs.

He was shy — to the point of being tongue-tied and did not ask many questions. The few he did ask I do not remember. I only remember Mother putting to him some questions on her own.

“I understand from Dilip that you want spiritual wisdom,” she began in her characteristic manner — simple and direct yet sympathetic and interested.

He flushed — almost fidgeted — under her calm scrutiny. “That’s right.”

“Why?” she asked.

He looked at her, reddened once more, then answered in a low voice:

“Because I find life void of meaning and am persuaded that only spiritual wisdom can fill the void.”

“I understand,” Mother answered in a kind tone. “And then?”

He lifted his eyes to hers just for a split second.

“I came to India to find it. But — I didn’t find it.”

Mother smiled, then said:

“One receives in the measure of one’s receptivity.”

He winced. A little after, he queried:

“How is one to grow in receptivity?”

“By sincerity and trust. Sincerity in one’s seeking and trust in the Divine Grace.”

Then after a pause: “Sincerity you have. Only you must learn to accept that you can get the response you want in proportion to your trust in Grace.”

She spoke with such an utter simplicity that my heart misgave me. How could an intellectual of his type respond to such a simple call, I wondered! Surely it was not for this he had “crossed the seven seas”, to put it in the words of Krishnaprem.

I went to see him at the station that evening. Just before the train left he made a remark which I shall never forget.

“Why did you feel so diffident about her? I have never been so *overwhelmed* by anyone as I was by her this morning.”

His stress on the word “overwhelmed” I found overwhelming! Why, Mother had hardly had a real talk with him!

And yet that one brief interview changed the whole course of his life. A few months afterwards he wrote to me a letter, from England, asking me very simply if Mother would accept him. She did and he came a month later and stayed with me for some time. Then he wanted more solitude. Mother gave him a flat where he lived in an almost cloistered seclusion, day after lonely day, writing poetry and meditating. Occasionally he visited me to help me in my English poetry or else to listen to my music which he loved passionately.

One morning he called on me and showed me a letter he had just received from Gurudev. And he read it out to me in great delight:



If your purpose is to acquire not only metrical skill but the sense and the power of rhythm, to study the poets may do something, but not all. There are two factors in poetic rhythm, — there is the technique (the variation of movement without spoiling the fundamental structure of the metre, right management of vowel and consonantal assonances and dissonances, the masterful combination of the musical element of stress with the less obvious element of quantity, etc.), and there is the secret soul of rhythm which uses but exceeds these things. The first you can learn, if you read with your ear always in a *tapasyā* of vigilant attention to these constituents, but without the second what you achieve may be technically faultless and even skilful but poetically a dead letter. This soul of rhythm can only be found by listening in to what is behind the music of words and sound and things. You can get something of it by listening for that subtler element in great poetry, but mostly it must either grow or suddenly open in yourself. This sudden opening can come if the Power within wishes to express itself in that way. I have seen more than once a sudden flowering of capacities in every kind of activity come by the opening of consciousness, so that one who laboured long without the least success to express himself in rhythm becomes a master of poetic language and cadences in a day. Poetry is a question of the right concentrated silence or seeking somewhere in the mind with the right openness to the Word that is trying to express itself — for the Word is there ready to descend in those inner planes where all artistic forms take birth, but it is the transmitting mind that must change and become a perfect channel and not an obstacle. (CWSA 27: 124)

I congratulated him.

“So that is how you have so suddenly blossomed into a poet, have you? — because something suddenly opened in yourself?”

“Well, I have been turning out verses,” he laughed, flushing. “But to be a poet — it’s not nearly so easy, you know. I have to concentrate hard to produce a single poem.”

“Yes, Nirod told me about your British doggedness once, I think.”

“I mean to persevere,” he answered, “the more as Sri Aurobindo has been kind enough to encourage me.”

“He always does,” I agreed. “He has taken no end of trouble for me; has even translated some of my Bengali poems into English, fancy that!”

A few days later he met me in the Ashram and told me that he had again a present to make to me: another letter from Gurudev.

I invited him to tea in great joy.

“I have got something which will delight you, Dilip,” he said, as I handed him his cup. “For he has paid the Christian back in his own coin, if you know what I mean.”

(We had had a somewhat hot debate, a few days before this, on Christianity versus Hinduism.)

His humility always moved me — the more as I was myself very sensitive and never could smile if and when Gurudev or the Mother frowned. Then he read it out to me:

It is difficult for the ordinary Christian to be of a piece, because the teachings of Christ are on quite another plane from the consciousness of the intellectual and vital man trained by the education and society of Europe — the latter, even as a minister or priest, has never been called upon to practise what he preached in entire earnest. But it is difficult for the human nature anywhere to think, feel and act from one centre of true faith, belief or vision. The average Hindu considers the spiritual life the highest, reveres the Sannyasi, is moved by the Bhakta; but if one of the family circle leaves the world for spiritual life, what tears, arguments, remonstrances, lamentations! It is almost worse than if he had died a natural death. It is not conscious mental insincerity — they will argue like Pandits and go to Shastra to prove you in the wrong; it is unconsciousness, a vital insincerity which they are not aware of and which uses the reasoning mind as an accomplice.

That is why we insist so much on sincerity in the Yoga — and that means to have all the being consciously turned towards the one Truth, the one Divine. But that for human nature is one of the most difficult of tasks, much more difficult than a rigid asceticism or a fervent piety. Religion itself does not give this complete harmonised sincerity — it is only the psychic being and the one-souled spiritual aspiration that can give it. (CWSA 29: 53-54)

“How beautifully he writes, Dilip!” Chadwick remarked. “How crystal clear! Not a trace of haziness any where. No abracadabra, wanting to show off and yet how luminous — shedding light without heat — like his eyes!”

He talked like that. Never effusive but always conveying luminously something he deeply felt.

He told me once that he was not going to live long. I don't know still the nature of his last ailment, but his health had been undermined by shell-shock and he had always been exceedingly nervous by temperament. Also he suffered much and long whenever there was a friction between him and others. And every time this happened he retired into a deeper seclusion till in the end he became almost a recluse. I met him indeed in the Ashram where we went daily to have the Mother's blessings. But though he always greeted me cordially, he looked more and more distant. I used to feel a little pain at his deepening retirement, but when I read his poems which he sent me from time to time, I felt amply compensated. He had indeed blossomed out into a fine poet! Also he showed me some of the letters that had passed between him and Sri

Aurobindo relating to English metres. I was overjoyed as these helped me materially besides making me realise how much he had profited by Gurudev's craftsmanship and mastery over the intricacies of the English metre. He used to go into ecstasies over his new experiments in quantitative metres!

But I am afraid I am tending to grow "prolix" — an epithet he often used by way of disapproval. So I must now come to the end of my story.

When his health deteriorated, I felt a little anxious and one day when he came at my request to read out to me some of his latest poems — it was for the last time — I asked him why he looked so pale and emaciated.

"I haven't been keeping good health lately, Dilip," he said simply. "But it's no use worrying. And then I never had your robust health, you know. What energy you have! I envy you!"

"Never mind about my energy," I deprecated. "But why don't you go back home for a change?"

"No. Whatever is to happen must happen *here*. I will *not* go back to my people though they are writing letter after letter. No, Dilip, let's talk of something more worth while. What have you been writing of late?"

"I have been translating some poems. Here is one from a Hindi song of Abul Hafiz Jalandhari.<sup>4</sup> Sri Aurobindo has given it special praise."

He read it and suggested just one or two minor changes; then said: "You have now learnt to handle our iambics, Dilip. Congratulations."

"But wait a minute — where are your poems?"

"Well, here are two I wrote last month."

And he read them out beautifully. I shall give only the closing verse of each:

O hearts that are empty of giving,  
Lips that lie famished for song,  
How you hiddenly hunger for living  
And dream to the star-born throng.

And then:

O running of Light in the Silence,  
O silvery morning star,  
May the Dawn be the wordless answer  
Of a beauty no loss can mar.<sup>5</sup>

4. The poem is entitled 'Pledge' in my book *Eyes of Light*.

5. *Poems* by Arjava, pp. 285-86.

“Beautiful,” I said, “though a trifle sad.”

“But life is not very jolly, Dilip — it never has been.”

“But it *shall* be.”

“I’d like to believe that,” he said after a pause, “and only because . . .” he looked at me and added: “because I came to know them — him and the Mother.”

After his passing away in 1938 his poems were sent to Krishnaprem. I feel there can be no more fitting epitaph to the great departed than his beautiful Foreword:

It must be now twelve years since 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 together as they had brought us both to India. Of his past I knew little save that it included a fellowship at, I think, Trinity College Cambridge, and that a distinguished Cambridge philosopher entertained great hopes from his brilliant abilities in mathematical philosophy of the specifically ‘Cambridge’ sort. Somewhere between the chinks of his academic career I surmised an initiation into the Kabalistic tradition and there was that in his eyes which showed unmistakably that it was not for the sake of a professorship in a provincial university that he had left his friends at Cambridge and crossed the seven seas.

Once more we met in a university bungalow at Lucknow, a background that I think we both found to be an utter irrelevance, and then we departed, I to the North and he to the South where he had found his Guru in Sri Aurobindo. There, in the Ashram in Pondicherry, he lived for the last ten years, shedding at the feet of his Guru the burden of all that the world counts valuable in order to find the hidden treasure for which most men have no eyes.

Of his life and *sāadhanā* there under the name of Arjava it is not for me to speak. That it brought about a profound psychic transformation in his nature is clear from the fact that he, whose language had hitherto been limited to the arid propositions of intellectual philosophy, became a poet and, with the aid of poetry, entered the inner worlds of which, till then, he had but dreamed.

Traditionalists and those who take a narrow view of *sāadhanā* will perhaps wonder what poetry has to do with Yoga. The truth is that the reintegration of the psyche that is brought about in *sāadhanā* has the effect of releasing unsuspected powers that were lying latent in the heart of the *sādhaka*, as indeed, they are in the hearts of all. We read in books of Yoga that “by meditating on Her who shines in the Root Lotus with the lustre of ten million Suns, a man becomes a Lord of Speech and . . . pure of heart, by his deep and musical words, serves the greatest of Gods.” The truth of such words, nowadays too often assumed to be mere empty praise, is witnessed to by these poems left behind by Arjava when, at what seems to us the early age of forty, the Sovereign Dweller in his heart decided to withdraw to inner worlds.

The mere literary critic will admire the delicate dream-like beauty of these poems, but, unless his insight is more than merely literary, he will go no deeper, for they deal with the mysteries of the inner life and only he who can read their symbols will be able to penetrate to their heart. For Arjava, as is shown in the poem entitled 'Correspondences', Nature was a shrine in which each form seen in the flickering firelight of the senses was a shadow of realities that lay within, shining in the magical light of the secret Moon which was the Master-light of all his seeing the central image of so many of his poems.

In the midst of our personal sadness at his early departure let us remember that this path is one which leads through many worlds and that, as Sri Krishna said, *nehābhikrama nāśo'sti*, for him who treads it there can be no loss of effort.

DILIP KUMAR ROY

(*Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1952, pp. 105-34.)

Note: *The CWSA edition has been used for the quotations from Sri Aurobindo — Eds.*

*If there were not different sources of inspiration, every poet would write the same thing and in the same way as every other, which would be deplorable. Each draws from a different realm and therefore a different kind and manner of inspiration — except of course those who make a school and all write on the same lines.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

(*Letters on Poetry and Art*, CWSA, Vol. 27, p.14)

## AN INTERVENTION

It is 9 a.m. Claude and I are almost at the top of the Pointe Isabelle in the French Alps, with crampons and backpack, roped-up for safety. Most mountaineers walk roped-up, yet casually forget that no one is strong enough to hold on with just his bare hands when someone is in the midst of a fall. But we are on a ridge and so if one falls on one side, the other just needs to rush to the opposite side of the ridge and jump as far down as he can. Hopefully, when the rope tightens, the shock will not be so strong as to lift him off his side.

We started our climb at 6 a.m. in order to be back before lunch to avoid avalanches. My mood is a bit gloomy on account of some troubles at home which this incredible landscape just didn't seem to have the power to erase from my mind.

The day is grey and the snow is ice-hard, so the trek is difficult. We decide to stop 160m short of the top at 3600m. It is too narrow to make a pause, so we start on our way back down. I concentrate on my steps, descending backwards on all fours. Claude, who is above, makes fun of me: "You should walk upright! Look at me." I don't look, but I hear a scream. Oh, my God! He is falling! I look to the side of the ridge opposite to where the cry comes from. It's a 400m vertical cliff. If I jump, will the rope break? But I don't have the guts to make the jump!

A second later, I am catapulted into thin air by the elastic effect of the rope, very fast, maybe 80 km/h. I vaguely notice that I am ahead of Claude, headfirst on my belly, each bump on the ice becoming increasingly painful. I can see the ground 800m down. The fall will last for at least a minute; there is no way I can stop it. It is obvious that I will lose consciousness after four more bumps and die.

"Stupid rope," flashes through my mind. Then, "But it's the code of mountain comradeship. Roped together, we accept the consequences." This lasted about six seconds and the last thought was: "It's not yogic to die on a grey day with grey thoughts. Something is not right!"

Then I feel a terrible shock which cuts my breath off; for thirty seconds I am suffocating. I look around. Claude is there, three metres to my right, on the same slab of rubble uncovered by snow. His forehead is bleeding. "Am I dead? Claude, are you all right? Dead or not, we have one hour of adrenaline to get back. Pick yourself up, be very careful and let's climb our way back onto the track."

"My specs! Oh dear." I look around, find one lens, then the second, clip them onto the frame and upwards we start to rejoin the downward track, trembling from the shock but fearless and, for me, with determination and a calm yogic speed, for I know time isn't on our side. Obviously, I am receiving help from within; each step is a word of my mantra. After one hour we are near the mountain hut we had left in

the morning. Claude, who is leaving behind him a trail of blood, says: "I can go no further, I feel faint." At that very moment, two mountaineers cross our path: "Good Lord! What has happened to you? We'll call emergency at once." Within fifteen minutes we are in the helicopter, the rescue team quite happy to find real customers who are actually in need of them.

We spend the next few hours in the hospital for a check-up: a broken rib for me, stitches on the forehead for Claude. The doctor can't believe that we are so unharmed after such a dramatic fall. And not a single item of our equipment is missing. We then rent a room and collapse into bed.

The next morning, I can't get up. I'm a bundle of sore muscles. I wonder again: "Am I dead?" And then: "What kind of miracle is this? Who intervened in what should surely have been a fatal accident?" Only then do I remember what had happened when I prayed to the Mother for protection before leaving my home for the Alps, something I'm in the habit of doing. As I sat and prayed, after a minute or so I was going to get up, but I heard an inner voice saying: "Stay a little longer!" I was happy that Mother was there listening to my prayers. "Certainly, Mother, I'll stay." And again the voice spoke: "Now you can go!"

There is no doubt that Mother had foreseen the accident and she had arranged everything so that we would not be hurt. An immense flow of gratitude poured out to Her, and I cried for hours in my hotel bed with a burning heart.

But still, how could she do it? I calculated that, due to the elasticity of the rope, a 15cm shift of my initial position before the fall would have been sufficient to miss the rubble slab. Furthermore, how could we, both Claude and I, crash-land on the same spot at the same time with enough angle from the slope to come to a stop and not slide off? No Newtonian laws of mechanics could justify the low probability of occurrence of this event! When I ask Mother how she did it, I sort of feel her acknowledging smile saying: "Yes, yes!"

Being a scientist, I have had to struggle with faith's irrationalisms for many years.

First, to accept that God exists as a person.

Then, that occult planes can be investigated without losing one's rational mind.

Then, that the Mother is constantly present and accessible and never too busy elsewhere.

I thank you, dear Udar, for your living example of such faith.

And, lastly, to accept the impossible. Parasharji taught me that the process is always, "Quiet, wait, give it a chance, accept the possibility."

Nevertheless, I ask: "Mother, how did you do it? Will I ever know?"

I conclude my experience with a question: "Will anyone who practises Sri Aurobindo's yoga benefit from my relating this intervention, which changed my life?"

*The New Testament* insists on Christ as a magician to prove his divine origin. In his book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Yogananda also stresses the value of miracles.

This, to me, is the old way because then faith becomes a creed and one repeats what one has heard.

On the other hand, maybe it helps us to know that Sri Aurobindo's yoga can be a joy at every instant with an unflinching protection in everything we do, even the impossible.

OLIVIER

*... You must not expect a sudden collective miracle. I have not come here to accomplish miracles, but to show, lead the way, help, on the road to a great inner change of our human nature, — the outer change in the world is only possible if and when that inner transmutation is effected and extends itself.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(Autobiographical Notes, CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 231)*

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*The supernatural is that the nature of which we have not attained or do not yet know, or the means of which we have not yet conquered. The common taste for miracles is the sign that man's ascent is not yet finished.*

\*

*It is rationality and prudence to distrust the supernatural; but to believe in it, is also a sort of wisdom.*

\*

*Great saints have performed miracles; greater saints have railed at them; the greatest have both railed at them and performed them.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(Essays Divine and Human, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 432)*



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

(Part 22)

(Continued from the issue of December 2021)

## SECTION 2: SIMPLICITY AND AUSTERITY

Sri Aurobindo’s aim and goal in life during his days in Baroda and Bengal was concentrated on securing India’s independence. The seeds of this unwavering resolve go back to his childhood in England. He notes:

At the age of eleven Sri Aurobindo had already received strongly the impression that a period of general upheaval and great revolutionary changes was coming in the world and he himself was destined to play a part in it. His attention was now drawn to India and this feeling was soon canalised into the idea of the liberation of his own country. But the “firm decision” took full shape only towards the end of another four years. It had already been made when he went to Cambridge and as a member and for some time secretary of the Indian Majlis at Cambridge he delivered many revolutionary speeches . . .<sup>1</sup>

On his return to India in 1893 Sri Aurobindo was asked to contribute some political articles for the *Indu Prakash*. The editor introduced the writer as “a gentleman of great literary talents”, and was certain that the readers would be so affected by these insightful articles that it “will set them thinking and steel their patriotic souls.”<sup>2</sup> The first two articles were so fierce, intense and revolutionary that “they made a sensation and frightened” the Congress leaders. As there was a danger of being prosecuted for sedition, Sri Aurobindo was dissuaded for writing with such fiery vigour.<sup>3</sup> In 1905 Sri Aurobindo revealed to Mrinalini Devi that he was born with a power and God had sent him on earth to save his country and its people. “The seed began to sprout when I was fourteen; by the time I was eighteen the roots of the resolution had grown firm and unshakable,”<sup>4</sup> he added.

After the *Bande Mataram Sedition Case* in September 1907 Sri Aurobindo notes that he “became the recognised leader of Nationalism in Bengal”.<sup>5</sup> Since Sri

1. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 32.

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 1167.

3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 68.

4. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 82.

5. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 59.

Aurobindo was so immersed in nationalist politics and revolutionary activities, Charu Chandra Dutt, a fellow revolutionary, wondered why Sri Aurobindo married and even asked him: “Chief, you knew that you were going to plunge into the vortex of revolutionary politics. Why did you marry?” He adds:

In his now famous letters to his wife, Aurobindo made his relation with her perfectly clear. I did not know of these letters to his wife till they actually appeared in print. . . . Aurobindo married, be it noted, in April 1901. And in 1903, he initiated his Bhavani Mandir movement, and pushed it vigorously.<sup>6</sup>

After his marriage to Mrinalini Bose on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1901 in Calcutta they first visited Deogarh to meet Sri Aurobindo’s family. Subsequently, Sarojini accompanied them to Nainital where they stayed from 28<sup>th</sup> May to end June following which they all returned to Baroda. Mrinalini Devi stayed with Sri Aurobindo for some months and this is the only record of them staying together at Baroda. On 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1902, he wrote to her stating that he had made some arrangements for their stay when she returned to Baroda. However, due to water scarcity caused by a failed monsoon, he wrote on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1902: “Do not be too much disappointed by the delay in coming to Baroda; it cannot be avoided.”<sup>7</sup> The following years Mrinalini Devi stayed in Shillong with her father with short stays in Calcutta and with Sri Aurobindo’s family at Deoghar. From end February to mid-June 1906 Sri Aurobindo visited Bengal on privilege leave but was unable to meet Mrinalini Devi. He wrote to his father-in-law regretting his inability to visit and stay with them at Shillong since he was unable to free himself from his hectic political work schedule. He also mentions that he is not temperamentally suited to domesticity:

I am afraid I shall never be good for much in the way of domestic virtues. I have tried, very ineffectively, to do some part of my duty as a son, a brother and a husband, but there is something too strong in me which forces me to subordinate everything else to it.<sup>8</sup>

After his return to Baroda in mid-June 1906 Sri Aurobindo was granted a year’s unpaid leave on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1906, and immediately returned to Calcutta. On the insistence of Subodh Chandra Mullick, he stayed as a guest in his mansion at 12, Wellington Square, until around September 1907. In the interim period Sri Aurobindo was shifted, due to a dangerous attack of fever, to Bhupal Chandra Bose’s Calcutta house sometime in end October 1906. He stayed there till mid-December 1906, where Mrinalini Devi nursed him. Subsequently the only time she stayed with Sri Aurobindo

6. Charu Chandra Dutt, ‘My Friend and My Master’, *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, Eight Number, pp. 137-38.

7. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 146.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

was at 23, Scott’s Lane, for two months. Girish Bose, a close friend of Mrinalini Devi’s father who had established the Bangabasi College on Scott’s Lane in 1887, possibly helped in finding this house.<sup>9</sup> Just days prior to Mrinalini Devi joining Sri Aurobindo, he wrote to her from 23, Scott’s Lane on 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1908:

I have not written to you for a long time. If you do not, out of your own goodness, pardon me for this eternal fault of mine, then I am helpless. What is in the marrow cannot be got rid of in a day. I may have to spend this whole life trying to correct this fault.

I was to come on the eight of January, but I could not come; this did not happen of my own accord. I had to go where the Lord led me. This time I did not go for my own work, I had gone for His work. The state of my mind has at present undergone a change; about that I would not reveal in this letter. Come here, then I will tell you what I have to say. . . . henceforward I am no longer subject to my own will: I must go like a puppet wherever the Divine takes me; I must do like a puppet whatever He makes me do. At present it may be hard to grasp the meaning of these words. But it is necessary to tell you about it lest my activities cause you regret and sorrow. You may think that I am neglecting you and doing my work. But do not think so. So far I have been guilty of many wrongs against you and it is but natural that you were discontented on that account; but henceforth I have no freedom of my own, you will have to understand that all that I do depends not on my will but is done according to the command of the Divine.<sup>10</sup>

On 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1908, Sri Aurobindo again wrote to Mrinalini Devi. Soon after she, and later Sailen Bose, joined Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini and Abinash Bhattacharya at Scott’s Lane whilst Barin relocated to Muraripukur Garden, where Sri Aurobindo’s family owned a hectare of land. It was at Scott’s Lane that Bal Gangadhar Tilak came to meet Sri Aurobindo. Also Vishnu Bhaskar Lele visited Sri Aurobindo and stayed at Scott’s lane with him.<sup>11</sup> On 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1908, Sri Aurobindo and Mrinalini Devi, along with Sarojini, Abinash and Sailen shifted to 48, Grey Street and subsequently on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 1908, he was arrested from this house in the Alipore Bomb Case. “About this period,” he noted, “Sri Aurobindo had decided to take up charge of a Bengali daily, *Nava Shakti*, and had moved from his rented house in Scott’s Lane, where he had been living with his wife and sister, to rooms in the office of this newspaper, and there, before he could begin this new venture, early one morning while he was still sleeping, the police charged up the stairs, revolver in

9. Sunanya Panda, ‘The House on Scott Lane in Calcutta’, *Golden Chain*, August 2008, p. 10.

10. Sri Aurobindo, *Bengali Writings*, 1991, published by Madanlal Himatsingka, pp. 356.

11. See Abinash Bhattacharya, ‘Sri Aurobindo’, *Mother India*, July 2012, pp. 530, 533.

hand, and arrested him.”<sup>12</sup>

It was in Scott’s Lane that Abinash Bhattacharya got concerned that Sri Aurobindo was getting more immersed in Yoga than Swadeshi politics. When he expressed his angst Sri Aurobindo sweetly replied:

To form a group of naked ascetics is not my intention. We have thirty-three lakhs of such ascetics in India. I want “*grihastha sannyasis*” — men leading the full life in the world who when the need arises will renounce everything at the call of duty.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, Sri Aurobindo was a Yogi who did not renounce the world. Alluding to his Baroda days Sri Aurobindo said that “a Yoga which required me to give up the world was not for me. I had to liberate my country.”<sup>14</sup> He has noted: “Sri Aurobindo never even dreamed of taking Sannyas or of entering into any established order of Sannyasis.”<sup>15</sup> At Scott’s Lane Abinash Bhattacharya was devising ways for Sri Aurobindo to concentrate less on his sadhana and more on politics; he continues:

I was constantly thinking about how to get rid of Lele Maharaj. It would be unthinkable for me to slight someone who was Aurobindo-babu’s guide in the practice of yoga.

One day I saw that Lele Maharaj had begun to give lectures on Yoga to *Baudi* too. I was even more crushed, and told her: “Now even you have joined in, *Baudi*.”

“What am I to do, brother? I do not want to hold him back. I’ll do all I can do to follow after him.”<sup>16</sup>

Mrinalini Devi revered Sri Aurobindo and dedicatedly followed his path. She considered her husband to be her only God.<sup>17</sup> Mrinalini Devi also told her cousin that she followed Sri Aurobindo’s advice on sadhana.<sup>18</sup>

Quite early in their marriage Sri Aurobindo was trying to initiate Mrinalini Devi on the yogic path. In a letter dated 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1905, he writes:

I think you have understood by now that the man with whose fate yours has been linked is a man of a very unusual character. Mine is not the same field of

12. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

13. Abinash Bhattacharya, ‘Sri Aurobindo’, *Mother India*, July 2012, p. 532.

14. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 423.

15. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 93.

16. Abinash Bhattacharya, ‘Sri Aurobindo’, *Mother India*, July 2012, p. 532.

17. See Nirodbaran, *Mrinalini Devi*, 1997, p. 12.

18. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, November 2012, p. 889 (Shailendra Basu, *Sri Aurobindo Sahadharmini Mrinalini Devi Smritikatha* - translated from Bengali).

action, the same purpose in life, the same mental attitude as that of the people of today in this country. I am in every respect different from them and out of the ordinary. Perhaps you know what ordinary men say of an extraordinary view, an extraordinary endeavour, an extraordinary ambition. To them it is madness; only, if the madman is successful in his work then he is called no longer a madman, but a great genius. But how many are successful in their life's endeavour? Among a thousand men, there are five or six who are out of the ordinary and out of the five or six one perhaps successful. . . .

The founders of the Hindu religion understood this very well. They loved extraordinary characters, extraordinary endeavours, extraordinary ambitions. Madman or genius, they respected the extraordinary man. But all this means a terrible plight for the wife . . . Will you also dismiss your husband as a madman on the strength of what other people think? A madman is bound to run after his mad ways. You cannot hold him back; his nature is stronger than yours. Will you then do nothing but sit in a corner and weep? Or, will you run along with him . . . For all your education in a Brahmo school, you are still a woman from a Hindu home. The blood of Hindu ancestors flows in your veins. I have no doubt you will choose the latter course.<sup>19</sup>

That Sri Aurobindo was a guide to Mrinalini is quite apparent in the letter for he writes:

You have one defect in your nature. You are much too simple. You listen to anything anyone might say. Thus your mind is for ever restless, your intelligence cannot develop, you cannot concentrate on any work. This has to be corrected. You must acquire knowledge by listening to one person only. You must have a single aim and accomplish your work with a resolute mind. You must ignore the calumny and ridicule of others and hold fast to your devotion.<sup>20</sup>

Sri Aurobindo then encourages Mrinalini Devi to follow his path of seeking God:

My second madness has only recently seized me. It is this: by whatever means I must have the direct vision of God. . . . However arduous this path is, I have made up my mind to follow it. The Hindu religion declares that the way lies in one's own body, in one's own mind. It has laid down the rules for following the way, and I have begun to observe them. Within a month I have realised that what the Hindu religion says is not false. I am experiencing in myself the signs of which it speaks. Now I want to take you along this way. You will not be able to keep step with me for you do not have the requisite knowledge. But there is

19. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, pp. 79-81.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

nothing to prevent you from following behind me. All can attain perfection on this path, but to enter it depends on one’s own will. Nobody can drag you on to it. If you consent to this, I shall write more about it.

Now I ask you, what are you going to do in this connection? The wife is the *shakti*, the strength of her husband. . . . You will say, “What can an ordinary woman like me do in these great matters? I have no strength of mind, no intelligence, I am afraid to think about these things.” But there is an easy way out. Take refuge in God. Enter once the path of God-realisation; He will soon make good your deficiencies. Fear gradually leaves one who takes refuge in God. And if you can put your trust in me, if you can listen to me alone and not to all and sundry, I can give you my own strength; that will not diminish my strength but increase it. We say that the wife is the husband’s *shakti*, his strength. This means that the husband’s strength is redoubled when he sees his own image in his wife and hears an echo of his own high aspirations in her.

. . . follow after me. We have come to this world to do God’s work; let us begin it. . . .

This is the secret of mine I wanted to tell you. Do not divulge it to anybody. Ponder calmly over these matters. There is nothing to be frightened of, but there is much to think about. To start with, you need do nothing but meditate on the Divine each day for half an hour, expressing to Him an ardent desire in the form of a prayer. The mind will get prepared gradually. This is the prayer you are to make to Him: “May I not be an obstacle in the path of my husband’s life, his aim, his endeavour to realise God. May I always be his helper and his instrument.” Will you do this?<sup>21</sup>

Going back in time prior to his marriage, Sri Aurobindo slept on a coarse hard bed. Once, Rajaram N. Patkar queried him about it. He replied: “My boy, don’t you know that I am a Brahmachari? Our shastras enjoin that a Brahmachari should not use a soft bed, which may induce him to sleep.”<sup>22</sup> Dinendra Kumar Roy, who lived with Sri Aurobindo from 1898 to 1900, has also mentioned that Sri Aurobindo slept on a hard bed since he was unaccustomed to sleep on soft, thick mattresses.<sup>23</sup> Commenting on Sri Aurobindo’s marriage, Dinendra Kumar Roy writes: “But we are incapable of understanding why Aurobindo, whose nature has always been akin to that of a sannyasin and opposed to any kind of bondage, should marry at all.”<sup>24</sup> Upendranath Banerjee, a fellow revolutionary worker, explains why Sri Aurobindo married: “Sri Aurobindo was urged by his relatives to start a family life but that

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 81-84.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

23. See Dinendra Kumar Roy, *With Aurobindo in Baroda*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 2006, p. 17 (Dinendra Kumar Roy, *Aurobindo Prasanga* – Translated from Bengali by Maurice Shukla).

24. Dinendra Kumar Roy, ‘Reminiscences of the Days of Yore’, (translated from Bengali article *Sekaler Smriti*); papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

was not quite in his temperament.”<sup>25</sup> Rajaram N. Patkar, too, gives a similar reason: “Aravind Babu went to his native place on three months’ leave. During that interval his life took a different turn. Though much against his wishes, he had to yield to the insistent pressure from his relatives and he got married to a young and educated girl named Mrinalini coming from a respectable family.”<sup>26</sup>

When, after the marriage, Sri Aurobindo returned to Baroda with Mrinalini Devi in July 1901, with Sarojini in tow, Rajaram N. Patkar observed:

It appeared to everyone of us that there will be a change in the life of Aravind Babu, after his marriage. But we were falsified in our conjectures. Except for a short time, mostly evening time, which he used to pass in the company of the members of his family, there was no change in his former daily routine. I would notice that he seemed to be more at ease when left to himself, than in the company of his relations and friends which was a mere formality to him.<sup>27</sup>

Referring to the same period, G. H. Gokhale, a student of Sri Aurobindo, noted: “Mr. Ghosh seemed to practise ‘Yoga’ even then.”<sup>28</sup> Soon after, Barin came unannounced to stay with Sri Aurobindo. He was given a downstairs room in Khaserao Jadhav’s mansion. The family gatherings happened daily in his room at noon. He observed that Sri Aurobindo came “with his far-off detached look” whilst Mrinalini appeared with her “shy half-veiled face.”<sup>29</sup>

After Mrinalini returned to her father’s house in Shillong, Sri Aurobindo corresponded with her but over time his letters came at irregular intervals. On 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1905, he ends a letter stating: “I am well, you should not give way to anxiety even if you do not hear from me.”<sup>30</sup> Soon after, Mrinalini Devi bitterly complained about seldom receiving letters from him. Sometime in December 1905, Sri Aurobindo replied:

I have received your letter. I was sorry to read it. I wrote you a letter from Bombay in which I expressed my intention to go to Bengal. In addition I spoke about many other important matters. . . . Now I realise that you did not receive that letter. Either it was not posted or it was lost in the post office. In any case it is unfortunate that you get impatient so quickly. For I say again, you are not the wife of an ordinary worldly man. You must have a great deal of patience and strength. A time may come when you will be without news of me not for a month, or a

25. Upendranath Banerjee, *Aurobindo Prasanga*; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives (translated from Bengali).

26. Reminiscences of Rajaram N. Patkar dated 30 September 1956; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Reminiscences of G. H. Gokhale; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

29. See *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., p. 11.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 67.



month and a half but for as much as six months. So you will have to learn a little patience; otherwise there will be endless sorrow for you in the future.<sup>31</sup>

Sri Aurobindo took leave from early March 1906 to the second week of June 1906. On 2<sup>nd</sup> March, the day he was departing Baroda for Calcutta, he wrote to Mrinalini Devi that he would be fully absorbed in his political work during this time. Besides, he needed a secluded place for three hours daily to follow his spiritual practices.

I will try to go to Assam as you ask. But once I set foot in Calcutta everyone catches hold of me. I will have a thousand things to do. I won't get time to visit my relatives. If I do go to Assam I will only be able to stay three or four days. Bari can very well bring you. . . . I'll fix things up when I get to Calcutta.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, Sri Aurobindo was unable to meet Mrinalini Devi, as is evident in a letter, dated 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1906, to his father-in-law:

I could not come over to Shillong in May, because my stay in Eastern Bengal was unexpectedly long. . . . I return to Baroda today. I have asked for leave from the 12<sup>th</sup>, but I do not know whether it will be sanctioned so soon. In any case I shall be back by the end of the month. If you are anxious to send Mrinalini down, I have no objection whatever. I have no doubt my aunt will gladly put her up until I can return from Baroda and make my arrangements.<sup>33</sup>

After returning to Calcutta from Baroda in end June 1906, Sri Aurobindo stayed with Subodh Chandra Mullick as an honoured guest. Charu Chandra narrates of an incident that occurred in Subodh Chandra Mullick's house, sometime in September 1907:

One afternoon, subsequent to Rabindranath's visit to Aurobindo . . . Bhupal Babu, Aurobindo's father-in-law, came to see us in the Wellington Square house. The Chief had not as yet returned from his college. Bhupal Babu said to us, "Charu, Subodh, I have come to ask Aurobindo to come and dine with me this evening. My daughter, Mrinalini, has come to Calcutta to meet him, if possible. So I would like Aurobindo to stay the night in our house and return to you tomorrow morning. Do send him along." We were all tremendously excited over this invitation. When Aurobindo came home about 5 p.m., he could see that something out of the common had occurred. We gave out a loud yell on

31. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

33. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 147.



seeing him and all spoke together. He laughed and said, “One at a time, please.” Then I said, “My dear fellow, this sort of gala occasion comes but once in a blue moon! Aurobindo is going to visit his spouse this evening.” He said with a suppressed smile, “Yes! go on.” It was Subodh’s turn to speak. He said, “Bhupal Babu came to invite you. You are to dine with him this evening and spend the night in his house. It appears Mrs. Ghose has come down to Calcutta expressly for the purpose of congratulating her lord on his acquittal [in the *Bande Mataram Sedition Case*].” Aurobindo said merely, “I see.” Then my wife started, “There is nothing to see. Please get ready quickly and put on the clothes I have laid out for you. They have all been properly pleated and crinkled by Subodh’s bearer.” No reply from the other side; nothing but a shy twinkle in the eye. My wife, encouraged by the twinkle, went on, “And look here, Ghose Sahib, Subodh’s wife and I are weaving two beautiful garlands of Jasmine — one for you and one for our Didi. I shall instruct you about them, later on.” The poor philosopher quietly capitulated. He had not a chance of speaking. After tea, he was hustled into the dressing room for being valeted by Subodh’s bearer. He did not protest. After all, who was going to listen to him that evening, our great Chief though he was. When he came out, he looked gorgeous in his fine dress, but there was also a simple shy smile on his face. We had all been waiting to greet him. Lilavati stepped forward with the two garlands and said, “One of these you are going to put round Didi’s neck and the other she is going to put round yours. Please don’t forget.” The Chief with a tender smile replied. “It shall be done, Lilavati.” As he was getting into the carriage Subodh called out, “And please don’t come back till tomorrow morning.” Turning to the Durwan he ordered. “Lock the gate at 10 p.m. Ghose Saheb is not coming back tonight.”

Next morning, quite early, a servant came upstairs and said to Subodh, “Ghose Saheb wants to know, sir, if you are all coming down to tea.” “Ghose Saheb? When did he come back?” “He returned about 11 p.m.” We all trooped downstairs. There he sat in his arm-chair, quietly smiling to himself. We fired a volley of questions at him. He replied calmly, “Well, I had a superb dinner and returned here at about 11 p.m. Lilavati, your instructions regarding the garlands were carried out to the letter.” Lilavati asked plaintively, “But why did you come away so soon.” The Chief’s reply was, “I explained things to her and she allowed me to come away.” I suppose these explanations were later embodied in the famous letters.<sup>34</sup>

Soon after, in a letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1907, Sri Aurobindo categorically reiterates to Mrinalini Devi that he cannot deviate even for a moment from his political work and she needs to reconcile to live apart:

34. Charu Chandra Dutt, ‘My Friend and My Master’, *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, Eight Number, pp. 137-38.

At present I have not got a moment to spare; the burden of writing is on me, the burden of works regarding the Congress is on me, and also that of settling the affairs of *Bande Mataram*. I can hardly cope with the work. Besides I have my own work to do which I cannot neglect.

Would you listen to a request of mine? I am passing through very anxious times, the pressure from all sides is enough to drive one mad. If you too get restless now, it would only add to my anxiety and worry; a letter of encouragement and comfort from you would give me much strength, and I can overcome all fears and dangers with a cheerful heart. I know, it is hard for you to live alone at Deoghar, but if you make your mind firm and rest on faith, then the feeling of sorrow cannot dominate your mind. This suffering is your inevitable lot, since you have married me. At intervals there is bound to be separation, because unlike ordinary Bengalis, I am unable to make the happiness of family and of the relations the main aim of my life. In these circumstances, what is my *dharma* is also your *dharma*; and unless you consider the success of my mission as your happiness, there is no way out.<sup>35</sup>

A fragmentary undated draft of a letter addressed to Mrinalini Devi gives an indication of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual state and his need for solitude:

Mrinalini,

I received a letter from you some time ago. I have not answered it. For some time I have been in a *jadavat* [inert yogic] state and all kinds of work and writing have been impossible. Today some impulsion has come and I can answer your letter.<sup>36</sup>

Another undated letter draft addressed to Mrinalini Devi gives us a glimpse of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual state during his stay in Bengal:

I have not written you a long letter for a long time. I believe there may soon be a great change in our life. If so, if that happens we will be free from all want. We wait on the will of the Mother. Within me as well the final transformation is taking place. The Mother's inspiration has become very compact. Once this transformation is complete, the descent stable, our separation cannot continue any more. For the day of the *yogasiddhi* is coming near. After that will be the flow of the entire body. Tomorrow or the day after a sign will manifest itself. After that I will be able to see you.<sup>37</sup>

35. Sri Aurobindo, *Bengali Writings*, 1991, published by Madanlal Himatsingka, p. 357.

36. *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., p. 73.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

It should be noted that Sri Aurobindo generally wrote to Mrinalini Devi in Bengali, so most of the above letters have been translated into English.

At the time of Sri Aurobindo’s arrest on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1908, in the Alipore Conspiracy Case, Mrinalini Devi received a great shock. She was taken by her friend Sudhira Devi to Maa Sarada Devi who consoled her by stating “your husband is completely sheltered in the Divine.” She then added, “But he will never be a family man. Not for him is the world of puny self.”<sup>38</sup>

The English Judge, C. P. Beachcroft, studied all the letters between Sri Aurobindo and Mrinalini Devi. At the end of Alipore Bomb Trial, even he remarked:

The result of the letters taken together is to show that he was a man of strong religious convictions and that he wanted his wife to share those convictions.<sup>39</sup>

Once, Nirodbaran, quoting a Bengali biographer of Confucius, asked Sri Aurobindo, with a touch of indiscretion, the reason *Dharmagurus* like Buddha and him marry; Sri Aurobindo bluntly replied that it is better not to “be a sententious ass and pronounce on what one does not understand.”<sup>40</sup> Taking advantage of Sri Aurobindo’s liberalness, Nirodbaran persisted: “If married life is an obstacle to spirituality, then they might as well not marry”; Sri Aurobindo’s rejoinder was:

No doubt. But then when they marry, there is not an omniscient ass like this biographer to tell them that they were going to be *dharma guru* or *dharma pagal* or in any way concerned with any other *dharma* than the biographer’s.

Nirodbaran persevered: “So according to this biographer, all of you, except Christ, showed a lack of wisdom by marrying!” Sri Aurobindo’s riposte reads:

Well, if the biographer of Confucius can be such an unmitigated ass, Confucius can be allowed to be unwise once or twice, I suppose.<sup>41</sup>

“I touch upon a delicate subject, but it is a puzzle,” continued Nirodbaran. Sri Aurobindo responded:

Why delicate? and why a puzzle? Do you think that Buddha or Confucius or myself were born with a prevision that they or I would take to the spiritual life? So long as one is in the ordinary consciousness, one lives the ordinary life —

38. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, November 2012, p. 890.

39. Manoj Das, *Sri Aurobindo – Life and Times of the Mahayogi*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 2020, p. 541.

40. Nirodbaran’s *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2001, p. 575.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 576.

when the awakening and the new consciousness come, one leaves it — nothing puzzling in that.<sup>42</sup>

Nirodbaran, however, has himself remarked: “Actually Sri Aurobindo was a born Yogi,”<sup>43</sup> and we noted earlier that Sri Aurobindo, from his late childhood, had a strong impression that he was to play an important role in the impending revolutionary changes coming to the world. Once, Sri Aurobindo was asked, “Didn’t you begin Yoga later on in Gujarat?” He laconically replied:

Yes. But this began in London, sprouted the moment I set foot on Apollo Bunder, touching Indian soil, flowered one day in the first year of my stay in Baroda, at the moment when there threatened to be an accident to my carriage. Precise enough?<sup>44</sup>

During Sri Aurobindo’s incarceration in Alipore jail, Mrinalini Devi made a few visits with her father to see him. Ila Sen, who in her childhood stayed a few houses away from Mrinalini’s bungalow in Shillong and used to address her as Minoo-di, recalled how people saw her calm poise and graciousness during this difficult period. She also speaks of her sweet, simple and helpful nature. During this time she would wear a simple saree and changed her diet to vegetarian. She had a meditation room which Ila Sen described:

On the wall were arranged a few pictures of great saints. On one side hung a small picture of Vivekananda and on another, resting on a wooden shelf was a picture of Sri Aurobindo. Every day Minoo-di stayed closed in this room, in silent worship for a long time. If I went in soon after her “Puja” I noticed fresh flowers beautifully arranged at Sri Aurobindo’s feet with incense still burning at the side.

Ila Sen adds:

From far and near many people came to see Minoo-di, to pay homage at her feet as to a mother. If she knew beforehand she never came out to meet them. But sometimes, when she was walking in the garden, unknown people just stepped in and without caring for any introduction simply bowed down at her feet — it must have been in remembrance of Sri Aurobindo . . .<sup>45</sup>

42. *Ibid.*

43. Nirodbaran, *Sri Aurobindo for All Ages*, 1994, p. 47.

44. CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 233.

45. Website: <http://overmanfoundation.org/sri-aurobindos-wife-mrinalini-devi-a-reminiscence-by-ila-sen/10> March 2021.

After Sri Aurobindo was acquitted in the Alipore Bomb Case, Mrinalini’s sister gives an account:

When Sri Aurobindo was released, we were all very happy. We came to Calcutta and lived in a rented house. Mrinalini went to live with Sri Aurobindo at his aunt’s place. We gave a feast in our house to celebrate his release and all were in a gay mood. Things appeared to change for the better and my sister found peace after long days of trial and tribulation, but for one year only.<sup>46</sup>

However, Sri Aurobindo has clarified that Mrinalini Devi did not live with him after his acquittal. He writes:

It is not a fact that Sri Aurobindo’s wife Mrinalini Devi was residing at S. K. Mitra’s house in College Square; Sri Aurobindo himself lived there constantly between the Alipore trial and his departure to French India. But she lived always with the family of Girish Bose, principal of Bangabasi College.<sup>47</sup>

In his reminiscences about Mrinalini Devi, her father, Bhupal Chandra Bose (1861-1937), wrote:

I. Her father and mother both belong to the Jessore district. . . . Mrinalini’s father, Bhupal Chandra Basu (born 1861) — the writer of this short note — graduated from the Calcutta University (1881) and received an agricultural training as a State scholar at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, in England, and after his return to India, served for two years as a teacher in the Bangabasi School and College of which he was a joint founder with his lifelong friend Srijiut Girish Chandra Bose, entered Government service in 1888 and after serving as an Agricultural Officer for 28 years in Bengal and Assam, retired in 1916 and settled down at Ranchi soon after his retirement.

II. During service his headquarters were for a year (1888-89) at Ranchi, then in Calcutta (1889-97) and finally for nineteen years at Shillong (1897-1916), and Mrinalini spent portions of her life at all these places. This note would be incomplete without a special mention of the very intimate and affectionate relations which have existed ever since the year 1883 between her father and his family on the one hand and S. K. Girish Chandra Bose and his family on the other. So much so that to most of their acquaintances Mrinalini’s father is known as a younger brother of the latter. Mrinalini spent considerable periods of her life under her uncle Girish Babu’s roof and was regarded as a daughter of

46. Nirodbaran, *Mrinalini Devi*, 1997, p. 15.

47. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 96.

his house. It was Girish Chandra who looked after her education while she was a boarder at the Brahma Girls' School in Calcutta. It was he who negotiated her marriage and did everything in connection with that ceremony and it was under his roof that Mrinalini passed away in December 1918. . . .

III. Mrinalini spent her early childhood in Calcutta. She was at first educated under a private teacher, and soon after her father's transfer to Shillong, she was sent down to Calcutta and lived as a boarder for nearly three years at the Brahma Girls' School until the time of her marriage in April 1901. She evinced no exceptional abilities or tendencies at this age, indeed at no stage of her life. There was nothing remarkable about her short school career. She however contracted two notable friendships during this time. One of the two was Miss Swarnalata Das, M.A., eldest daughter of a very intimate friend of her father Sj. Raj Mohan Das, a distinguished Officer of the Assam Police, who after his retirement, devoted his heart and soul to the work of uplifting the depressed classes in East Bengal, and is now living a retired life at Dacca. Swarnalata was several years her senior in age and acted towards her as an elder sister during her school life. After graduating in Calcutta, Swarnalata was sent to England for higher training in the art of teaching and after her return worked as a senior teacher of the Brahma Girls' School, of which she acted for a time as the Lady Superintendent. She was cut off in the prime of life leaving behind a memory which for purity and sweetness cannot be excelled. Mrinalini's second friend was Miss Sudhira Bose, a classmate of hers with whom she lived in closest intimacy till the day of her death. Sudhira was a younger sister of late Devabrata Bose, an associate of Sri Aurobindo in the Alipore Bomb Case, who after his acquittal at the trial, turned a Sannyasin and joined the Ramakrishna Mission. Miss Sudhira too joined the same Mission and worked as a teacher of the Sister Nivedita School, of which, after Sister Christine left for America shortly before the war, she became the head. Sudhira too was not destined to live long. She fell a victim to a sad railway accident at Benares in December 1920, thus surviving her friend by exactly two years.

Mrinalini, though she was surrounded by Brahma friends and was a boarder in a Brahma School never evinced any special interest in the Brahma movement nor in any of the social reforms associated with that movement. The whole religious bent of the later years of her life was in the direction of the Hindu revival movement inspired by Paramhansa Ramakrishna and his great disciple Swami Vivekananda.

IV. There was no relationship, nor even acquaintance between the Boses and the Ghose family, except that Mrinalini's father once came in contact with Sri Aurobindo's father, Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose, while he was stationed as Civil Surgeon at Khulna. It must have been about the year 1890 when Sri Aurobindo was preparing himself in England for the I.C.S. examination.

Sri Aurobindo first met Mrinalini at the house of her uncle S. J. Girish Chandra Bose in Calcutta in the course of his search for a mate to share his life, and chose her at first sight as his destined wife. Their marriage took place shortly afterwards in April 1901. It is not possible for the writer or for anybody else to say what psychical affinity existed between the two, but certain it is that as soon as he saw the girl, he made up his mind to marry her. The customary negotiations were carried on by Girish Babu on the bride's side. . . .

V. The writer knows next to nothing about the married life of the couple at Baroda. After Sri Aurobindo came to Bengal and during the stormy years that followed, Mrinalini had little or no opportunity of living a householder's life in the quiet company of her husband. Her life during this period was one of continuous strain and suffering which she bore with the utmost patience and quietude. She spent the greater period of the time either with Sri Aurobindo's maternal relatives at Deoghar or with her parents at Shillong. She was present with her husband at the time of his arrest at 48, Grey Street in May 1908 and received a frightful mental shock of which the writer and others saw a most painful evidence in the delirium of her last illness ten years later.

The writer is unable to say from his own knowledge how far Mrinalini agreed with and helped her husband in his public activities, but he can say this much for certain that she never stood in the way of his work. She never evinced any aspiration for public work.

VI. . . . The writer has never seen any of Mrinalini's letters to her husband and is therefore unable to say whether they contained anything noteworthy.

VII. The writer cannot throw any light on the mutual relations between Mrinalini and her husband, except that they were characterised by a sincere though quiet affection on the side of the husband and a never questioning obedience from the wife. One can gather much in this respect from Sri Aurobindo's published letters. After Sri Aurobindo left Bengal, the two never met again, but all who knew her could see how deeply she was attached to her husband and how she longed to join him at Pondicherry. The fates however decreed it otherwise.

During the first 3 or 4 years of his exile, Sri Aurobindo lulled her with the hope that some day (which we thought could not be very distant) he would return to Bengal. His letters to his wife as well as to the writer were few and far between, but they gave ample grounds for such a hope. At last Sri Aurobindo ceased to write at all, possibly because of his exclusive preoccupation with Yoga, but to the last day of her life Mrinalini never ceased to hope.

VIII. There was no issue of the marriage. During Sri Aurobindo's trial at Alipore which lasted a full twelve months Mrinalini lived with her parents at Shillong or with her uncle Girish Babu in Calcutta. She paid several visits to her husband at Alipore Central Jail in the company of her father. She never



evinced any visible agitation during those exciting times, but kept quiet and firm throughout.

IX. . . . Sri Aurobindo never called his wife to Pondicherry for Sadhana. They never met again. Her father made a serious attempt after his retirement from Government service in 1916 to take her to Pondicherry but the attitude of Government at the time prevented him from realising this wish.

These long years of separation (1910-18) she spent with her parents at Shillong and Ranchi, paying occasional visits to Calcutta. She devoted these years almost exclusively to meditation and the reading of religious literature which consisted for the most part of the writings of Swami Vivekananda and the teachings of his Great Master.

The writer believes she perused all the published writings of the Swami and all the publications of the Udbodhan Office. Of these she has left behind an almost complete collection.

Mrinalini often visited Sri Ma (widow of Paramhansa Dev) at the Udbodhan Office in Bagbazar, who treated her with great affection, calling her Bau-Ma (the normal Bengali appellation for daughter-in-law) in consideration of the fact that the Holy Mother regarded Sri Aurobindo as her son.

Mrinalini desired at one time to receive *dīksha* from one of the Sannyasins of the Ramakrishna Mission. Her father wrote to Sri Aurobindo for the necessary permission but the latter in reply advised her not to receive initiation from any one else and he assured her that he would send her all the spiritual help she needed. She was content therefore to remain without any outward initiation.

X. Mrinalini passed away in Calcutta in the 32<sup>nd</sup> year of her life on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 1918, a victim of the fell scourge of influenza which swept over India in that dreaded year.

There was nothing notable about her death. In fact but for the fate which united her for a part of her short life to one of the most remarkable and forceful personalities of the age, her life had nothing extraordinary about it.

Nothing happens in the world without serving some purpose of the Divine Mother, and no doubt she came and lived to fulfil a Divine purpose which we may guess but can never know.

For sometime before she passed away, she had been selling her ornaments and giving away the proceeds in charity and what remained unsold, she left with her friend Miss Sudhira Bose, at the time Lady Superintendent of the Sister Nivedita School. Soon after her death Sudhira sold off the ornaments and the whole of the proceeds, some two thousand rupees was, with Sri Aurobindo's permission, made over to the Ramakrishna Mission and constituted into an endowment named after Mrinalini, out of the interest of which a girl student is maintained at the Sister Nivedita School.

XI. *Mrinalini in the Mother* — the writer would rather say nothing about



this. If the facts relating to the descent of Mrinalini’s spirit in the Mother which the writer heard from the Mother herself are to be published, it is proper that the Mother’s permission be taken by the publisher and she be approached for an authentic and first hand account of the incident. The writer is greatly afraid that he might be guilty of grave mistakes if he were to narrate it from his own memory.<sup>48</sup>

Bhupal Chandra Bose’s remark that Mrinalini Devi “received a frightful mental shock” at the time of Sri Aurobindo’s arrest has been corroborated by Mrinalini herself. With tearful eyes and a voice choked with emotion she narrated this incident to her young cousin:

One night we were in deep sleep. Suddenly in the early morning there were loud knocks at the door. I got up quickly and opened the door to see a sergeant,<sup>49</sup> pointing a pistol at me and asking me to show where Sri Aurobindo was. He was sleeping. Dumbfounded I pointed towards him. The entire house was filled with a posse of the police. I was then asked to move to the next room. Sri Aurobindo was sleeping on a rug spread on a floor. I heard the police telling him: “Are you Mr. Ghosh? An educated person like you sleeping on such a bed and leading such a dirty life? It is most shameful.” To which he retorted, “What is shameful to you is a thing of honour to us. For us Hindus, such a life is a symbol of renunciation as well as an ideal.” The sergeant could only give him a hard stare. At last he broke open my box and with gusto caught hold of some letters written to me by Mr. Ghosh. . . .

What happened next is beyond a woman’s delicate nature to describe. The sergeant asked Mr. Ghosh to follow him; he wouldn’t allow him even to use the bathroom. Mr. Ghosh asked, “Where have I to go?” “To Lalbazar”, he replied. Then they tied a rope around his waist. Seeing this I lost all control and felt like falling upon them and snatching him away from the police’s clutch, but checked myself somehow. I tried to call God, but couldn’t, as I had lost faith in Him. If he was present, I thought, how could He allow such savage treatment to a guiltless soul? But all my prayer was of no avail. The police took him away to the van. What happened next I didn’t know. When I regained my senses, I found myself in the house of Mr. K. K. Mitra, a relative of Mr. Ghosh.<sup>50</sup>

The cousin then adds:

48. Report of Bhupal Chandra Basu dated 26 August 1931; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

49. It was actually the Police Superintendent.

50. Nirodbaran, *Mrinalini Devi*, 1997, pp. 11-12.

Since then a period of intense darkness descended upon Mrinalini’s life. Aimless and bewildered she didn’t know what to do, where to go. One day she was talking to me about this critical phase, “I couldn’t call even God. How could I? I had no other God except my husband. I had seen God’s manifestation in him alone. When he spoke I felt as if a distant bodiless sound was coming out of his mouth. When he looked at me, I felt as if two dreamy eyes were pouring their effulgent rays on my body. When such an unearthly person was snatched away from my world, I felt that death alone was my resort without him. But still death did not come. At that moment Sudhira came and clasped me.” Henceforth Mrinalini began to frequent the Ramakrishna Ashram, escorted by Sudhira.

Sri Aurobindo was in that epoch the undisputed leader in the mind of the people. Mrinalini recounts: “So when we visited the girls’ school of the Ramakrishna Mission all the girls came out to see me. You don’t know what an embarrassing situation I had to face. The girls began to offer me pranams. I heard whispers that Aurobindo’s wife had come to bless them. After coming out I asked Sudhira, “Knowing everything why have you brought me here?” She replied smiling, “Dear sister, you are a fire hidden under ashes. How will you conceal yourself?”<sup>51</sup>

On the evening of 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1910, Sri Aurobindo, on being informed about an impending arrest warrant, received an *adesh* to go to Chandernagore. Mrinalini Devi was living elsewhere in Calcutta. She and her family knew nothing about his whereabouts. Naturally they were extremely anxious. Only after he had reached Pondicherry, they got the news of his whereabouts. Mrinalini was then taken back to Shillong by her father.<sup>52</sup> Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry to pursue an intensive yoga; there was a physical separation of eight years before Sri Aurobindo called Mrinalini Devi to Pondicherry. Mrinalini’s brother, Dr. Sisir Kumar Bose, a medical practitioner in Ranchi, has recorded that “she always bore the separation well and with satisfaction, as she realised that, although she was high in the estimation of her husband, she would not be helping him in his way of life by insisting on his continuous company.”<sup>53</sup>

Mrinalini Devi’s comportment during the separation is recorded by her younger sister:

Letters from Sri Aurobindo arrived at long intervals addressed to her as Mrs. Ghosh. That would revive her spirit for a few days. But never did she seek sympathy or open her heart to anyone except her mother and Sudhira. My cousin

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

53. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2006, p. 67.

[Saurin Bose] who had gone to Pondicherry wrote to us that Sri Aurobindo was plunged deep in yoga. Sri Aurobindo asked Mrinalini to follow the same path. She began the practice according to the directions given by Sri Aurobindo. We hoped for a long time that he would return to Bengal when the political situation had eased. But it was a vain hope, for it was feared that he would be arrested as soon as he set his foot on Indian soil. My father tried hard to take Mrinalini to Pondicherry, but the Government refused permission.<sup>54</sup>

Another account of the separation is given by a young cousin of Mrinalini Devi:

During these last 8 years, occasional letters from Sri Aurobindo were her only solace and support. . . . Mrinalini would wander about in the garden in her leisure time. One day I asked her, “Didi, you seem to love flowers best of all!” She replied, “You know, your Gurudev was like a flower. I used to smell the fragrance of flowers in his presence. [The Mother also has said that a lotus-fragrance used to emanate from Sri Aurobindo’s body.] . . . You know, in your Gurudev’s heart is a heavenly city many times more beautiful than this outer beauty.” . . .

She had a strong attraction for the English language and wanted to improve her knowledge of it. With this object she began to coach me which was a great blessing indeed to me. . . . One day I asked her, “Didi, tell me why you are taking so much trouble to teach me English. What do you gain by it?” A bit irked, she replied, “Leave those wise talks. Tell me, aren’t you profiting by it and am I not gaining too? Do you know that your Gurudev’s mother tongue is English?” . . . Then she told me the whole story of his life and added, “If I have to follow him, I must have a good knowledge of English. . . .”

In 1918 Mrinalini came to Calcutta probably from Ranchi for some eye trouble and stayed with Girish Bose. When Sourin, Nolini Gupta and others were going to Bengal sometime earlier, Sourin asked Sri Aurobindo, “I shall meet Mrinalini. What shall I tell her?” Sri Aurobindo replied, “I shall be glad if you can manage to bring her here.” Life was hard at that time, with great financial difficulties, but in spite of everything Sri Aurobindo wanted Mrinalini to join him. When somebody told Sri Aurobindo about the difficulty, he answered, “Eat less food.”<sup>55</sup>

About the last days of Mrinalini Devi her sister writes:

54. Nirodbaran, *Mrinalini Devi*, 1997, pp. 17-18.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

At last arrived the year 1918, December. She received the call from Sri Aurobindo saying, “My sadhana is over. I have achieved my object, *siddhi*. I have a lot of work to do for the world. You can come now and be my companion in this work.” This naturally made Mrinalini and all others extremely happy.

Now our father thought of taking my sister to Pondicherry. The Government gave permission. So they arrived in Calcutta via Ranchi. But Mrinalini Devi fell a victim to the scourge of influenza which was raging everywhere. After a week’s illness she passed away on 17 December at the age of 32. The mental agony that she had kept suppressed for years exploded during the illness in her delirium, particularly the frightful nightmarish scene of Sri Aurobindo’s arrest.<sup>56</sup>

That evening Mrinalini’s mother visited Sri Sarada Maa who told her that she just saw a vision where Mrinalini was a goddess whose soul had departed since she had completed her karma in this life.<sup>57</sup> When the telegram about Mrinalini’s death reached Sri Aurobindo, Saurin Bose witnessed tears in his eyes. Sri Aurobindo told him that Mrinalini’s soul had come to him soon after her death. Also a photo of Mrinalini Devi that was on the mantel-piece is said to have fallen.<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, Sri Aurobindo not only kept a photo of Mrinalini Devi but also placed it prominently. Later he asked his father-in-law to send two or three of her books, preferably if her name was written in them. In the same letter he wrote:

God has seen good to lay upon me the one sorrow that could still touch me to the centre. . . . The physical tie between us is, as you say, severed; but the tie of affection subsists for me. Where I have once loved, I do not cease from loving. Besides she who was the cause of it, still is near though not visible to our physical vision.<sup>59</sup>

After Mrinalini Devi’s death her father and sister kept contact with Sri Aurobindo.<sup>60</sup> When Bhupal Chandra Bose sought help in 1925 to cure one of his family members from a serious illness, Sri Aurobindo sent a message that he will do his best to help him.<sup>61</sup> Later, in the early 1930s, Bhupal Chandra Bose came to Pondicherry as a guest of the Ashram. He came for darshan on four occasions and the dates of his stay in the Ashram were from 19<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> February 1930, 21<sup>st</sup> November to 19<sup>th</sup> December 1930, 11<sup>th</sup> August to 26<sup>th</sup> November 1933 and 8<sup>th</sup> August to 27<sup>th</sup>

56. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

59. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 148.

60. See Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, p. 128.

61. See A.B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 177.

October 1934. He maintained a diary where several of Sri Aurobindo’s poems and letters to various disciples on sadhana have been transcribed.<sup>62</sup> On his last visit he wrote to Sri Aurobindo on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1934 and received a reply the same day. A short extract of the question and Sri Aurobindo’s full answer reads as follows:

*I dreamed that I was at the Pranam ceremony this morning and at the time of making the usual obeisance to the Mother I offered her some flowers which she took in her hands. At that time she broke her customary silence and spoke to me some words of advice and encouragement, the purport of which was that I should stay here until a certain event which was to come after a few days (she mentioned the event but I do not remember what it was), about when I might return home and that even though I would not be living in the Asram, the progress of my sadhana would be assured.*

There is indeed something preparing to descend and the dream was probably a suggestion to you to stay so as to receive its touch after which your sadhana could proceed at home without difficulty, as there would be Something else within you doing the sadhana with your constant assent as the one necessity. The only difficulty in the way of health is a certain obscurity in the body consciousness itself which makes it consent readily to habitual touches of the force that makes for illness; otherwise if the body consciousness as well as the mind and vital were open any illness that came would immediately be dissipated. Keep a quiet and steady will for the opening of the consciousness and the union and do not allow depression or any idea of frustration. Keep also a concentrated call in the heart. With those two things the result is sure.<sup>63</sup>

Reportedly, Promode Kumar Sen, author of *Sri Aurobindo: Jeebon O Jog*, had met Bhupal Chandra Bose at his residence in Ranchi in 1936. On being asked about Sri Aurobindo, Bhupal Bose remarked: “Yes, he was my son-in-law, but now he is my Guru.”<sup>64</sup>

Mrinalini had preserved all of her letters from Sri Aurobindo in a small box, except those which were confiscated at the time of his arrest in the Alipore Bomb Case and were later presented in the trial by the prosecution. As per her wishes the box with the letters were submerged in the Ganges after her death. Thus these priceless letters were lost to us.<sup>65</sup>

Nirodbaran writes of a curious analysis:

62. Sourced from Sri Aurobindo Archives.

63. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, p. 328; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

64. Website: <http://overmanfoundation.org/two-unpublished-letters-of-sri-aurobindo/12> May 2021.

65. See Nirodbaran, *Mrinalini Devi*, 1997, p. 21.

There is another episode which was related by Mrinalini Devi’s cousin. It seems that during Sri Aurobindo’s tenure as the editor of *Karmayogin* and *Dharma*, he used to analyse the characters of his co-workers and find out what resemblance they bore to the characters of the *Mahabharata*. One day he was supposed to have said that at the end of the Dwapara Yuga he had been born as Sri Krishna’s grandson Aniruddha and Mrinalini as his wife Usha (the daughter of a Titan king). One can’t vouch for the truth of the story since it involves a chronological anomaly, but it is not impossible according to occult science. Sri Aurobindo’s composition of a long poem in Bengali, “The Abduction of Usha”, lends some credence to the account. If true it suggests that Mrinalini’s relation with Sri Aurobindo goes back many lives.<sup>66</sup>

As per the *Bhagavata Purana* Aniruddha and Usha married. And incidentally, when Mrinalini Devi was taken for initiation, Sarada Maa is reported to have exclaimed: “My child! I know her well enough, they are Aniruddha and Usha of Dwapara Yuga; who is there to initiate them!”<sup>67</sup>

(To be continued)

GAUTAM MALAKER

66. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

67. See Barindra Kumar Ghose, *Agniyug* (translated from Bengali); papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

*There is one kind of faith demanded as indispensable by the integral Yoga and that may be described as faith in God and the Shakti, faith in the presence and power of the Divine in us and the world, a faith that all in the world is the working of one divine Shakti, that all the steps of the Yoga, its strivings and sufferings and failures as well as its successes and satisfactions and victories are utilities and necessities of her workings and that by a firm and strong dependence on and a total self-surrender to the Divine and to his Shakti in us we can attain to oneness and freedom and victory and perfection.*

Sri Aurobindo

(*The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 24, p. 771)



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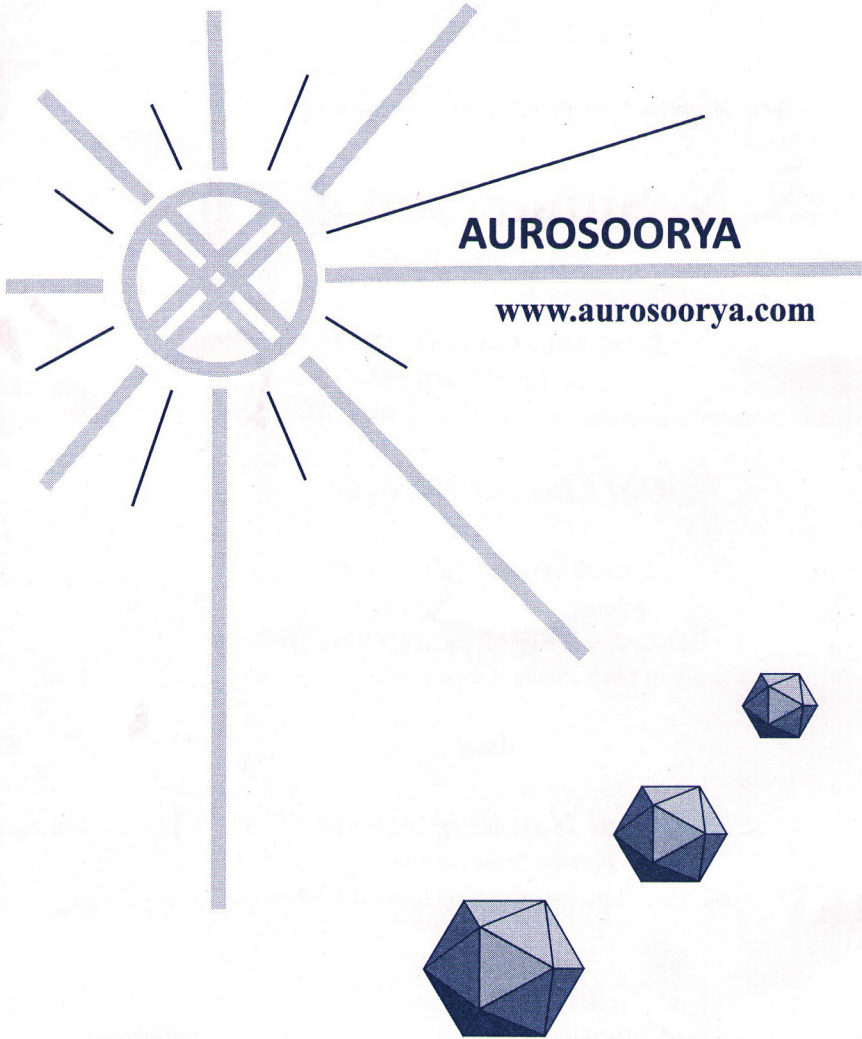
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