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# MOTHER INDIA

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APRIL 2022

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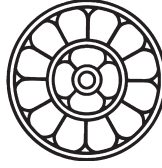
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# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

APRIL 2022

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM  
PONDICHERRY  
INDIA



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



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# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXXV

No. 4

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## CONTENTS

### *Sri Aurobindo*

‘A FIRE SHALL COME OUT OF THE INFINITUDES . . .’	...	7
THE PRINCIPLE OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA	...	8
THE GURU	...	13
SELF	...	17
THE HISTORICAL METHOD	...	18

### *The Mother*

‘ACCOMPLISH THY WORK OF TRANSFIGURATION’	...	23
CORRESPONDENCE WITH DILIP KUMAR ROY	...	24
ASPECTS AND GLIMPSES	...	33

### *Amal Kiran (K.D.Sethna)*

“WAVE-BREAK” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO	...	57
--	-----	----

### *Marguerite*

GOLDEN MEMORIES OF SWARNAPRABHA — II	...	59
--------------------------------------	-----	----

### *Gautam Malaker*

“LIFE OF PREPARATION AT BARODA” —		
SRI AUROBINDO, THE PERFECT GENTLEMAN (Part 24)	...	63
Section 3: A Quiet and Humble Disposition		



## ‘A FIRE SHALL COME OUT OF THE INFINITUDES . . .’

Even now great thoughts are here that walk alone:  
Armed they have come with the infallible word  
In an investiture of intuitive light  
That is a sanction from the eyes of God;  
Announcers of a distant Truth they flame  
Arriving from the rim of eternity.  
A fire shall come out of the infinitudes,  
A greater Gnosis shall regard the world  
Crossing out of some far omniscience  
On lustrous seas from the still rapt Alone  
To illumine the deep heart of self and things.  
A timeless knowledge it shall bring to Mind,  
Its aim to life, to Ignorance its close.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, Bk. II, Canto X, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 258)





## THE PRINCIPLE OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA

The principle of Yoga is the turning of one or of all powers of our human existence into a means of reaching divine Being. In an ordinary Yoga one main power of being or one group of its powers is made the means, vehicle, path. In a synthetic Yoga all powers will be combined and included in the transmuting instrumentation.

In Hathayoga the instrument is the body and life. All the power of the body is stilled, collected, purified, heightened, concentrated to its utmost limits or beyond any limits by Asana and other physical processes; the power of the life too is similarly purified, heightened, concentrated by Asana and Pranayama. This concentration of powers is then directed towards that physical centre in which the divine consciousness sits concealed in the human body. The power of Life, Nature-power, coiled up with all its secret forces asleep in the lowest nervous plexus of the earth-being, — for only so much escapes into waking action in our normal operations as is sufficient for the limited uses of human life, — rises awakened through centre after centre and awakens, too, in its ascent and passage the forces of each successive nodus of our being, the nervous life, the heart of emotion and ordinary mentality, the speech, sight, will, the higher knowledge, till through and above the brain it meets with and it becomes one with the divine consciousness.

In Rajayoga the chosen instrument is the mind. Our ordinary mentality is first disciplined, purified and directed towards the divine Being, then by a summary process of Asana and Pranayama the physical force of our being is stilled and concentrated, the life-force released into a rhythmic movement capable of cessation and concentrated into a higher power of its upward action, the mind, supported and strengthened by this greater action and concentration of the body and life upon which it rests, is itself purified of all its unrest and emotion and its habitual thought-waves, liberated from distraction and dispersion, given its highest force of concentration, gathered up into a trance of absorption. Two objects, the one temporal, the other eternal, are gained by this discipline. Mind-power develops in another concentrated action abnormal capacities of knowledge, effective will, deep light of reception, powerful light of thought-radiation which are altogether beyond the narrow range of our normal mentality; it arrives at the Yogic or occult powers around which there has been woven so much quite dispensable and yet perhaps salutary mystery. But the one final end and the one all-important gain is that the mind, stilled and cast into a concentrated trance, can lose itself in the divine consciousness and the soul be made free to unite with the divine Being.

The triple way takes for its chosen instruments the three main powers of the mental soul-life of the human being. Knowledge selects the reason and the mental vision and it makes them by purification, concentration and a certain discipline of a



God-directed seeking its means for the greatest knowledge and the greatest vision of all, God-knowledge and God-vision. Its aim is to see, know and be the Divine. Works, action selects for its instrument the will of the doer of works; it makes life an offering of sacrifice to the Godhead and by purification, concentration and a certain discipline of subjection to the divine Will a means for contact and increasing unity of the soul of man with the divine Master of the universe. Devotion selects the emotional and aesthetic powers of the soul and by turning them all Godward in a perfect purity, intensity, infinite passion of seeking makes them a means of God-possession in one or many relations of unity with the Divine Being. All aim in their own way at a union or unity of the human soul with the supreme Spirit.

Each Yoga in its process has the character of the instrument it uses; thus the Hathayogic process is psycho-physical, the Rajayogic mental and psychic, the way of knowledge is spiritual and cognitive, the way of devotion spiritual, emotional and aesthetic, the way of works spiritual and dynamic by action. Each is guided in the ways of its own characteristic power. But all power is in the end one, all power is really soul-power. In the ordinary process of life, body and mind this truth is quite obscured by the dispersed, dividing and distributive action of Nature which is the normal condition of all our functionings, although even there it is in the end evident; for all material energy contains hidden the vital, mental, psychic, spiritual energy and in the end it must release these forms of the one Shakti, the vital energy conceals and liberates into action all the other forms, the mental supporting itself on the life and body and their powers and functionings contains undeveloped or only partially developed the psychic and the spiritual power of the being. But when by Yoga any of these powers is taken up from the dispersed and distributive action, raised to its highest degree, concentrated, it becomes manifest soul-power and reveals the essential unity. Therefore the Hathayogic process has too its pure psychic and spiritual result, the Rajayogic arrives by psychic means at a spiritual consummation. The triple way may appear to be altogether mental and spiritual in its way of seeking and its objectives, but it can be attended by results more characteristic of the other paths, which offer themselves in a spontaneous and involuntary flowering, and for the same reason, because soul-power is all-power and where it reaches its height in one direction its other possibilities also begin to show themselves in fact or in incipient potentiality. This unity at once suggests the possibility of a synthetic Yoga.

Tantric discipline is in its nature a synthesis. It has seized on the large universal truth that there are two poles of being whose essential unity is the secret of existence, Brahman and Shakti, Spirit and Nature, and that Nature is power of the spirit or rather is spirit as power. To raise nature in man into manifest power of spirit is its method and it is the whole nature that it gathers up for the spiritual conversion. It includes in its system of instrumentation the forceful Hathayogic process and especially the opening up of the nervous centres and the passage through them of the awakened Shakti on her way to her union with the Brahman, the subtler stress of

the Rajayogic purification, meditation and concentration, the leverage of will-force, the motive power of devotion, the key of knowledge. But it does not stop short with an effective assembling of the different powers of these specific Yogas. In two directions it enlarges by its synthetic turn the province of the Yogic method. First, it lays its hand firmly on many of the main springs of human quality, desire, action and it subjects them to an intensive discipline with the soul's mastery of its motives as a first aim and their elevation to a diviner spiritual level as its final utility. Again, it includes in its objects of Yoga not only liberation,<sup>1</sup> which is the one all-mastering preoccupation of the specific systems, but a cosmic enjoyment<sup>2</sup> of the power of the Spirit, which the others may take incidentally on the way, in part, casually, but avoid making a motive or object. It is a bolder and larger system.

In the method of synthesis which we have been following, another clue of principle has been pursued which is derived from another view of the possibilities of Yoga. This starts from the method of Vedanta to arrive at the aim of the Tantra. In the Tantric method Shakti is all-important, becomes the key to the finding of spirit; in this synthesis spirit, soul is all-important, becomes the secret of the taking up of Shakti. The Tantric method starts from the bottom and grades the ladder of ascent upwards to the summit; therefore its initial stress is upon the action of the awakened Shakti in the nervous system of the body and its centres; the opening of the six lotuses is the opening up of the ranges of the power of Spirit. Our synthesis takes man as a spirit in mind much more than a spirit in body and assumes in him the capacity to begin on that level, to spiritualise his being by the power of the soul in mind opening itself directly to a higher spiritual force and being and to perfect by that higher force so possessed and brought into action the whole of his nature. For that reason our initial stress has fallen upon the utilisation of the powers of soul in mind and the turning of the triple key of knowledge, works and love in the locks of the spirit; the Hathayogic methods can be dispensed with, — though there is no objection to their partial use, — the Rajayogic will only enter in as an informal element. To arrive by the shortest way at the largest development of spiritual power and being and divinise by it a liberated nature in the whole range of human living is our inspiring motive.

The principle in view is a self-surrender, a giving up of the human being into the being, consciousness, power, delight of the Divine, a union or communion at all the points of meeting in the soul of man, the mental being, by which the Divine himself, directly and without veil master and possessor of the instrument, shall by the light of his presence and guidance perfect the human being in all the forces of the Nature for a divine living. Here we arrive at a farther enlargement of the objects of the Yoga. The common initial purpose of all Yoga is the liberation of the soul of man from its present natural ignorance and limitation, its release into spiritual being,

1. Mukti.
2. Bhukti.

its union with the highest self and Divinity. But ordinarily this is made not only the initial but the whole and final object: enjoyment of spiritual being there is, but either in a dissolution of the human and individual into the silence of self-being or on a higher plane in another existence. The Tantric system makes liberation the final, but not the only aim; it takes on its way a full perfection and enjoyment of the spiritual power, light and joy in the human existence, and even it has a glimpse of a supreme experience in which liberation and cosmic action and enjoyment are unified in a final overcoming of all oppositions and dissonances. It is this wider view of our spiritual potentialities from which we begin, but we add another stress which brings in a completer significance. We regard the spirit in man not as solely an individual being travelling to a transcendent unity with the Divine, but as a universal being capable of oneness with the Divine in all souls and all Nature and we give this extended view its entire practical consequence. The human soul's individual liberation and enjoyment of union with the Divine in spiritual being, consciousness and delight must always be the first object of the Yoga; its free enjoyment of the cosmic unity of the Divine becomes a second object; but out of that a third appears, the effectuation of the meaning of the divine unity with all beings by a sympathy and participation in the spiritual purpose of the Divine in humanity. The individual Yoga then turns from its separateness and becomes a part of the collective Yoga of the divine Nature in the human race. The liberated individual being, united with the Divine in self and spirit, becomes in his natural being a self-perfecting instrument for the perfect outflowing of the Divine in humanity.

This outflowing has its two terms; first, comes the growth out of the separative human ego into the unity of the spirit, then the possession of the divine nature in its proper and its higher forms and no longer in the inferior forms of the mental being which are a mutilated translation and not the authentic text of the original script of divine Nature in the cosmic individual. In other words, a perfection has to be aimed at which amounts to the elevation of the mental into the full spiritual and supramental nature. Therefore this integral Yoga of knowledge, love and works has to be extended into a Yoga of spiritual and gnostic self-perfection. As gnostic knowledge, will and ananda are a direct instrumentation of spirit and can only be won by growing into the spirit, into divine being, this growth has to be the first aim of our Yoga. The mental being has to enlarge itself into the oneness of the Divine before the Divine will perfect in the soul of the individual its gnostic outflowing. That is the reason why the triple way of knowledge, works and love becomes the key-note of the whole Yoga, for that is the direct means for the soul in mind to rise to its highest intensities where it passes upward into the divine oneness. That too is the reason why the Yoga must be integral. For if immergence in the Infinite or some close union with the Divine were all our aim, an integral Yoga would be superfluous, except for such greater satisfaction of the being of man as we may get by a self-lifting of the whole of it towards its Source. But it would not be needed for the essential aim,

since by any single power of the soul-nature we can meet with the Divine; each at its height rises up into the infinite and absolute, each therefore offers a sufficient way of arrival, for all the hundred separate paths meet in the Eternal. But the gnostic being is a complete enjoyment and possession of the whole divine and spiritual nature; and it is a complete lifting of the whole nature of man into its power of a divine and spiritual existence. Integrality becomes then an essential condition of this Yoga.

At the same time we have seen that each of the three ways at its height, if it is pursued with a certain largeness, can take into itself the powers of the others and lead to their fulfilment. It is therefore sufficient to start by one of them and find the point at which it meets the other at first parallel lines of advance and melts into them by its own widenings. At the same time a more difficult, complex, wholly powerful process would be to start, as it were, on three lines together, on a triple wheel of soul-power. But the consideration of this possibility must be postponed till we have seen what are the conditions and means of the Yoga of self-perfection. For we shall see that this also need not be postponed entirely, but a certain preparation of it is part of and a certain initiation into it proceeds by the growth of the divine works, love and knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(The Synthesis of Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 24, pp. 609-15)*



# THE GURU

## The Guru and the Divine

It is not usual to use the word Guru in the supramental yoga, here everything comes from the Divine himself. But if anybody wants it he can use it for the time being.

*November 1929*

\*

The relation of Guru and disciple is only one of many relations which one can have with the Divine, and in this Yoga which aims at a supramental realisation, it is not usual to give it this name; rather, the Divine is regarded as the Source, the living Sun of Light and Knowledge and Consciousness and spiritual realisation and all that one receives is felt as coming from there and the whole being remoulded by the Divine Hand. This is a greater and more intimate relation than that of the human Guru and disciple, which is more of a limited mental ideal. Nevertheless, if the mind still needs the more familiar mental conception, it can be kept so long as it is needed; only do not let the soul be bound by it and do not let it limit the inflow of other relations with the Divine and larger forms of experience.

*12 December 1929*

\*

*Those who consciously carry in them ideas about becoming equal in status with the Divine or with their guru may be detained long, if not in the larger planes, at least in the Overmind, so long as the ego is there.*

They cannot get beyond unless they lose it. Even in these planes it prevents them from getting the full consciousness and knowledge. For in the Overmind cosmic consciousness too ego is absent, though the true Person may be there.

*27 April 1935*

## Surrender to the Guru

*Surrender to the Divine and surrender to the Guru are said to be two different things. Is it really so?*

No. In surrendering to the Guru, it is to the Divine in him that one surrenders — if it were only to a human entity it would be ineffective. But it is the consciousness of the Divine Presence that makes the Guru a real Guru, so that even if the disciple surrenders to him thinking of the human being to whom he surrenders, that Presence would still make it effective.

*Does surrender to the formless Divine leave the being subject to the gunas and ego to a certain extent?*

Yes — because only the static part would be free in formlessness, the active Nature would be still in the play of the gunas. Many think they are free from the ego because they get the sense of the formless Existence, they do not see that the egoistic element remains in their action just as before.

*Is not surrender to the Divine in form — as the Guru — higher than the surrender to the formless Divine?*

It is more dynamic.

*What makes the surrender to the Guru so grand and glorious as to be called the surrender beyond all surrenders?*

Because through it you surrender not only to the impersonal but to the personal, not only to the Divine in yourself but to the Divine outside you; you get a chance for the surpassing of ego not only by retreat into the Self where ego does not exist, but in the personal nature where it is the ruler. It is the sign of the will to complete surrender to the total Divine, *samagram̄ mām, mānuṣīm̄ tanum āśritam*. Of course it must be a genuine spiritual surrender for all this to be true.

*If absolute surrender to the Guru leaves one helpless like a puppet in the hands of forces — what good is it? I think what is harmful is to surrender only to the Divine in the Guru and not to the Divine in one's Self. It is this one-sided surrender which is harmful.*

What is harmful is to surrender to something in yourself which flatters your ego and which you call the Divine. It is that which makes you a puppet in the hands of Forces.

20 November 1933

### **Need of the Guru's Help**

*An old man of sixty began practising Yoga by reading your books. Eventually*

*he developed signs of insanity. His son describes his condition and asks for advice. I am sending his letter.*

As for the letter, I suppose you will have to tell the writer that his father committed a mistake when he took up Yoga without a Guru — for the mental idea about a Guru cannot take the place of the actual living influence. This Yoga especially, as I have written in my books, needs the help of the Guru and cannot be done without it. The condition into which his father got was a breakdown, not a state of siddhi. He passed out of the normal mental consciousness into a contact with some intermediate zone of consciousness (not the spiritual) where one can be subjected to all sorts of voices, suggestions, ideas, so-called aspirations which are not genuine. I have warned against the dangers of this intermediate zone in one of my books. The sadhak can avoid entering into this zone — if he enters, he has to look with indifference on all these things and observe them without lending any credence, by so doing he can safely pass into the true spiritual light. If he takes them all as true or real without discrimination, he is likely to land himself in a great mental confusion and, if there is in addition a lesion or weakness of the brain — the latter is quite possible in one who has been subject to apoplexy — it may have serious consequences and even lead to a disturbance of the reason. If there is ambition, or other motive of the kind mixed up in the spiritual seeking, it may lead to a fall in the Yoga and the growth of an exaggerated egoism or megalomania — of this there are several symptoms in the utterances of his father during the crisis. In fact one cannot or ought not to plunge into the experiences of this sadhana without a fairly long period of preparation and purification (unless one has already a great spiritual strength and elevation). Sri Aurobindo himself does not care to accept many into his path and rejects many more than he accepts. It would be well if he can get his father to pursue the sadhana no farther — for what he is doing is not really Sri Aurobindo's Yoga but something he has constructed in his own mind and once there has been an upset of this kind the wisest course is discontinuance.

*21 April 1937*

### **A Reluctant Guru**

*I have prayed a lot today. Some comfort to dwell on that, though Krishnaprem advocates the Upanishadic attitude — “Awake! Arise!” — and not to trust too much to Divine Grace.*

Krishnaprem's objection to Grace would be valid if the religionists mattered, but in spiritual things they don't. Their action naturally is to make a formula and dry shell of everything, not Grace alone. Even “Awake, Arise” leads to the swelled head or the formula — can't be avoided when Mr. Everyman deals with things divine. I had



the same kind of violent objection to Gurugiri, but you see I was obliged by the irony of things or rather by the inexorable truth behind them to become a Guru and preach the Guruvada. Such is Fate.

*16 January 1936*

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Letters on Himself and the Ashram, CWSA, Vol. 35, pp. 395-98)*



## SELF

He said, "I am egoless, spiritual, free,"  
Then swore because his dinner was not ready.  
I asked him why. He said, "It is not me,  
But the belly's hungry god who gets unsteady."

I asked him why. He said, "It is his play.  
I am unmoved within, desireless, pure.  
I care not what may happen day by day."  
I questioned him, "Are you so very sure?"

He answered, "I can understand your doubt.  
But to be free is all. It does not matter  
How you may kick and howl and rage and shout,  
Making a row over your daily platter.

To be aware of self is liberty.  
Self I have got and, having self, am free."

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 620)*



## THE HISTORICAL METHOD

Of Kalidasa, the man who thus represents one of the greatest periods in our civilisation and typifies so many sides and facets of it in his writing, we know if possible even less than of Valmekie and Vyasa. It is probable but not certain that he was a native of Malwa born not in the capital Ujjaini, but in one of those villages of which he speaks in the Cloud-Messenger and that he afterwards resorted to the capital and wrote under the patronage of the great Vicramaditya who founded the era of the Malavas in the middle of the first century before Christ. Of his attainments, his creed, his character we may gather something from his poetry, but external facts we have none. There is indeed a mass of apocryphal anecdotes about him couching a number of witticisms & ingenuities mostly ribald, but these may be safely discredited. Valmekie, Vyasa and Kalidasa, our three greatest names, are to us, outside their poetical creation, names merely and nothing more.

This is an exceedingly fortunate circumstance. The natural man within us rebels indeed against such a void; who Kalidasa was, what was his personal as distinguished from his poetic individuality, what manner of man was the great King whose patronage he enjoyed, who were his friends, who his rivals and how he dealt with either or both, whether or not he was a lover of wine & women in practice as well as in imagination, under what special surroundings he wrote and who were the minds by whom he was most influenced, all this the natural man clamours to know; and yet all these are things we are very fortunate not to know. The historical method is certainly an attractive one and it leads to some distinct advantages, for it decidedly aids those who are not gifted with fine insight and literary discrimination, to understand certain sides of a poet's work more clearly and intelligently. But while it increases our knowledge of the workings of the human mind it does not in the end assist or improve our critical appreciation of poetry; it helps to an understanding of the man and of those aspects of his poetry which concern his personal individuality but it obstructs our clear and accurate impression of the work and its value. The supporters of the historical method put the cart before the horse and placing themselves between the shafts do a great deal of useless though heroic labour in dragging both. They insist on directing that attention to the poet which should be directed to the poem. After assimilating a man's literary work and realising its value first to ourselves and then in relation to the eternal nature and scope of poetry, we may and indeed must, — for if not consciously aimed at, it must have been insensibly formed in the mind, — attempt to realise to ourselves an idea of his poetic individuality from the data he himself has provided for us; and the idea so formed will be the individuality of the man so far as we can assimilate him, the only part of him therefore that is of real value to us. The individuality of Shakespeare as expressed in his recorded actions

& his relations to his contemporaries is a matter of history and has nothing to do with appreciation of his poetry. It may interest me as a study of human character & intellect but I have no concern with it when I am reading Hamlet or even when I am reading the Sonnets; on the contrary it may often come between me and the genuine revelation of the poet in his work, for actions seldom reveal more than the outer, bodily and sensational man while his word takes us within to the mind and the reason, the receiving and the selecting parts of him which are his truer self. It may matter to the pedant or the gossip within me whether the sonnets were written to William Herbert or to Henry Wriothesley or to William Himself, whether the dark woman whom Shakespeare loved against his better judgment was Mary Fitton or someone else or nobody at all, whether the language is that of hyperbolic compliment to a patron or that of an actual passionate affection; but to the lover of poetry in me these things do not matter at all. It may be a historical fact that Shakespeare when he sat down to write these poems intended to use the affected language of conventional and fulsome flattery; if so, it does not exalt our idea of his character; but after all it was only the bodily and sensational case of that huge spirit which so intended, — the food-sheath and the life-sheath of him, to use Hindu phraseology; but the mind, the soul which was the real Shakespeare felt, as he wrote, every phase of the passion he was expressing to the very utmost, felt precisely those exultations, chills of jealousy and disappointment, noble affections, dark and unholy fires, and because he felt them, he was able so to express them that the world still listens and is moved. The passion was there in the soul of the man, — whether as a potential force or an experience from a past life, matters very little, — and it forms therefore part of his poetic individuality. But if we allow the alleged historical fact to interfere between us and this individuality, the feelings with which we ought to read the Sonnets, admiration, delight, sympathy, rapt interest in a soul struggling through passion towards self-realisation, will be disturbed by other feelings of disgust and nausea or at the best pity for a man who with such a soul within him, prostituted its powers to the interests of his mere bodily covering. Both our realisation of the true Shakespeare & our enjoyment of his poetry will thus be cruelly and uselessly marred. This is the essential defect which vitiates the theory of the man and his milieu. The man in Dr Johnson expressed himself in his conversation and therefore his own works are far less important to us than Boswell's record of his daily talk; the man in Byron expresses himself in his letters as well as his poetry and both have therefore to be read. It is only the most sensational and therefore the lowest natures that express themselves mainly by their actions. In the case of great poets with whom expression is an instrument that answers spontaneously and accurately to the touch of the soul, it is in their work that we shall find them, the whole of them and not only that meagre part which struggled out brokenly and imperfectly in the shape of action. It is really this difference that makes the great figures of epic poetry so much less intimately and thoroughly known to us than the great figures of drama. Kalidasa was

both an epic poet and a dramatist, yet Sheva and Parvatie are merely grand paintings while Dushyanta, Shacountala, Sharngarava, Priyumvada & Anasuya, Pururavus and Urvasie and Chitraleqha, Dharinie and Iravatie and Agnimitra are living beings who are our friends, whom we know. The difference arises from the importance of speech in self-revelation and the comparative inadequacy of acts, except as a corroboration or a check. The only epics which have creations equal to dramatic creation in their nearness to us are the Mahabharata and the Ramayan; and the art-form of those far more closely resembles the methods of the modern novel than those of epic poetry as it is understood in Europe; they combine, that is to say, the dramatic method with the epic and introduce a minuteness of observant detail with which European poets would have shrunk from tempting the patience of the sensational and soon-wearied West.

The importance of the milieu to criticism has likewise been immensely exaggerated. It is important as literary history, but history is not criticism; a man may have a very wide and curious knowledge of literary history and yet be a very poor critic and the danger of the present times lies in the immense multiplication of literary historians with their ass's load of facts and theories and opinions and tendencies and the comparative rarity of really illuminating critics. I do not say that these things are not in a measure necessary but they are always the scaffolding and not the pile. The tendency of the historical method beginning with and insisting on the poet rather than the poem is to infer from him as a "man" the meaning & value of his poetry, — a vicious process for it concentrates the energies on the subordinate and adds the essential as an appendix. It has been said that in a rightly constituted mind the knowledge of the man and his milieu will help to a just appreciation of his poetry; but this knowledge in its nature rather distorts our judgment than helps it, for instead of giving an honest account to ourselves of the impression naturally made by the poem on us, we are irresistibly led to cut & carve that impression so as to make it square with our knowledge and the theories, more or less erroneous & ephemeral, we deduce from that knowledge. We proceed from the milieu to the poem, instead of arguing from the poem to the milieu. Yet the latter is the only fair method, for it is not the whole of the milieu that affects the man nor every part of it that affects him equally; the extent to which it affects him and the distribution of its various influences can only be judged from the poem itself.

The milieu of Shakespeare or of Homer or of Kalidasa so far as it is important to an appreciation of their poetry, can be gathered from their poetry itself, and a knowledge of the history of the times would only litter the mind with facts which are of no real value as they mislead and embarrass the judgment instead of assisting it. This is at least the case with all poets who represent their age in some or most of its phases and with those who do not do this, the milieu is of very small importance. We know from literary history that Marlowe and Kyd and other writers exercised no little influence on Shakespeare in his young and callow days; and it may be said

in passing that all poets of the first order & even many of the second are profoundly influenced by the inferior and sometimes almost worthless work which was in vogue at the time of their early efforts, but they have the high secret of mental alchemy which can convert not merely inferior metal but even refuse into gold. It is only poets of a one-sided or minor genius who can afford to be aggressively original. Now as literary history, as psychology, as part of the knowledge of intellectual origins this is a highly important and noteworthy fact. But in the task of criticism what do we gain by it? We have simply brought the phantoms of Marlowe & Kyd between ourselves and what we are assimilating and so disturbed & blurred the true picture of it that was falling on our souls; and if we know our business, the first thing we shall do is to banish those intruding shadows and bring ourselves once more face to face with Shakespeare.

The historical method leads besides to much confusion and is sometimes a veil for a bastard impressionism and sometimes a source of literary insincerity or at the best anaemic catholicity. As often as not a critic studies, say, the Elizabethan age because he has a previous sympathy with the scattered grandeurs, the hasty and vehement inequalities, the profuse mixture of flawed stones, noble gems and imitation jewellery with which that school overwhelms us. In that case the profession with which he starts is insincere, for he professes to base his appreciation on study, whereas his study begins from, continues with and ends in appreciation. Often on the contrary he studies as a duty and praises in order to elevate his study; because he has perused all and understood all, he must sympathise with all, or where is the proof of his having understood? Perfect intelligence of a man's character and work implies a certain measure of sympathy and liking; antipathy has only half sight and indifference is blind. Hence much false criticism misleading the public intelligence and causing a confusion in critical weights & measures, a depreciation of the literary currency from which in the case of the frank impressionist we are safe. In mere truth the historical method is useful only with inferior writers who not having had full powers of expression are more interesting than their work; but even here it has led to that excessive and often absurd laudation of numberless small names in literature, many of them "discoveries", which is the curse of latter day criticism. The historical method is in fact the cloven foot of science attempting to insinuate itself into the fair garden of Poetry. By this I mean no disrespect to Science. The devil is a gentleman, & Shakespeare himself has guaranteed his respectability; but he is more than that, he is a highly useful and even indispensable personage. So also is Science not only a respectable branch of intellectual activity, — when it does not indulge its highly civilised propensity for cutting up live animals, — but it is also a useful and indispensable branch. But the devil had no business in Paradise and Science has no business in the sphere of Poetry. The work of Science is to collect facts and generalize from them; the smallest and meanest thing is as important to it as the highest, the weed no less than the flower and the bug that crawls & stinks no less than

man who is a little lower than the angels. By introducing this method into criticism, we are overloading ourselves with facts and stifling the literary field with the host of all the mediocrities more or less “historically” important but at any rate deadly dull & uninspiring, who at one time or another had the misfortune to take themselves for literary geniuses. And just as scientific history tends to lose individual genius in movements, so the historical method tends to lose the individual poem in tendencies. The result is that modern poets instead of holding up before them as their ideal the expression of the great universal feelings and thoughts which sway humanity, tend more and more to express tendencies, problems, realisms, romanticisms, mysticisms and all the other local & ephemeral aberrations with which poetry has no business whatever. It is the sign of a decadent & morbid age which is pushing itself by the mass of its own undigested learning into Alexandrianism and scholasticism, cutting itself off from the fountainheads of creation and wilfully preparing its own decline and sterility. The age of which Callimachus & Apollonius of Rhodes were the Simonides & the Homer and the age of which Tennyson is the Shakespeare & Rudyard Kipling the Milton present an ominous resemblance.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Early Cultural Writings, CWSA, Vol. 1, pp. 168-74)*





## ‘ACCOMPLISH THY WORK OF TRANSFIGURATION’

July 22, 1914

Thou art all love, O Lord, and Thy love shines resplendently in the depths of every thought and every heart. Accomplish Thy work of transfiguration: illumine us. Open the still closed doors, widen the horizon, establish strength, unify our beings and make us participate in Thy divine beatitude that we may be able to make all men share in it. Grant that we may conquer the last obstacles, inner and outer, overcome the final difficulties. An ardent and sincere prayer has never risen in vain to Thee; always in Thy munificence Thou answerest every call and Thy mercy is infinite.

O divine Master, let Thy light fall into this chaos and bring forth from it a new world. Accomplish what is now in preparation and create a new humanity which may be the perfect expression of Thy new and sublime Law.

Nothing will stop our impetus; nothing will tire our effort; and, resting upon Thee all our hopes and all our activities, strong in our complete surrender to Thy Supreme Will, we shall march on to the conquest of Thy integral manifestation with the calm certitude of victory over all that would oppose it.

Hail to Thee, Master of the world, who triumphest over all darkness.

THE MOTHER

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 1, p. 208)*



## CORRESPONDENCE WITH DILIP KUMAR ROY

*Born on 22 January 1897 the Bengali disciple Dilip Kumar Roy joined the Ashram on 22 November 1928 at the age of thirty-one. When he came, he was already a renowned singer; the Mother left him free to sing and write during his thirty-three-year stay in the Ashram. He left the Ashram in 1951 and started an Ashram of his own in Pune, where he lived until his passing on 6 January 1980 at the age of eighty-two.*

*The Mother's letters to Dilip cover the period from 1931 to 1951.*

Dilip,

For God's sake come back to your common sense.

I never said that I would see you no more. Sri Aurobindo asked you only to be patient, and as for the "silent expressionless love" he is not conscious of having written to you anything of the kind.

Now, about my "grudging" smile — I will tell you what I said to Sri Aurobindo when I met him today at 1.30. Relating what happened in the morning at pranam, I told him, concerning you: "There is a letter of Dilip to you and I do not know what he writes, but I can assure you that when he (Dilip) came to me this morning, I gave him a good, long blessing and my best smile."

You can understand that I felt somewhat astonished when I heard that my *best* smile was a *grudging* one. Are you quite sure that you did not look in your head at what you imagined would be, instead of looking at my face? . . .

Your going away is quite out of question. I want you to remain here because I know that it is here — and here only — that you can and will be happy.

Why do you ask for my love? Is it not long since you have it already?

*17 November 1931*

\*

Dilip,

Why do you speak of "the ultimate human disappearance of the Mother"? I have — I assure you — not the least intention of disappearing or vanishing, humanly or otherwise, and those who care to see me with their physical eyes can feel quite at ease on this point.

If you permit, I would advise you never to listen to what sadhaks say — especially *advanced* sadhaks.

*29 December 1931*

\*

Dilip,

I have felt and been moved by the sincerity of your letter.

Do not be too sorry. In a way what has happened was for the best since it has led you to take a firm and decisive resolution which must help you greatly to get rid of this trouble. Be sure of all the help I can give you.

I will call you again as soon as this flood of departing people has diminished a little. Meanwhile, “bon courage!”

18 August 1932

\*

Dilip,

Without waiting for Sri Aurobindo, I answer your letter at once, because truly I cannot make out what is the matter.

. . . *Nobody is displeased* with you, neither Sri Aurobindo nor myself; we did not dream of it a single moment. Before you wrote yesterday, I had repeated to Sri Aurobindo what I told you in the morning and when he read your letter he saw that you had not understood me, so, in his answer, he explained what I meant. Did you read his letter? If so, it must have been very hastily. Please read it again carefully, quietly, several times if necessary, and you will see that you have no ground to think that we are displeased and to despair, but on the contrary good reasons of being full of life and joy, as all I wanted to convey to you is that *you know the Divine* and have His Presence in His Ananda form, in spite of your thinking to the contrary.

So, I expect you to cheer up at once and to write informing me that the clouds have dispersed and the sun is shining bright once more.

21 September 1932

\*

Dilip,

You can be reassured — it is quite certain that Sri Aurobindo cannot make such a mistake! As he says that you are sure to succeed it means that you will succeed and become quite a good yogi after all.

Don't let troubles and difficulties depress you. The greater the difficulties, the greater the victory hereafter. Why did you not come for the pranam? You are mistaken: I did miss you, I said to you again and again: “Dilip, come, come.” If you had looked within you would have heard my voice.

1 November 1932

\*

Dilip,

I am very sorry you did not come yourself with the money, as I would have had an opportunity to tell you that your impression of this morning was mere imagination and a bad one too. I can assure you that I have been at pranam time *exactly* as I am every day, but I noticed sadness and dissatisfaction in *your* eyes, so it must be the very expression of your own eyes which you saw reflected in mine, — but it was not *mine*.

You ought to drop altogether and once for all this idea that I get displeased — it sounds to me so strange! If I would get thus displeased in the presence of the human weaknesses, I would certainly not be fit to do the work I am doing and my coming upon earth would have no meaning.

Do give up once for all this idea of defeat and this gloom which is so contrary to the inner truth of your being. I want you to pick yourself up and be perfectly cheerful and confident for your coming birthday.

I hope to see you entirely yourself again this evening from the roof and tomorrow at pranam and to have a happy and intimate talk with you on Monday.

14 January 1933

\*

Dilip, (I almost feel inclined to add: big child!)

You are quite mistaken. I enjoyed your music *very much*; indeed it was quite beautiful. But as I am to see you tomorrow, I was keeping the subject for then — as I have some rather interesting details to give which I think will please you, but would be somewhat too long to write. I can also explain better these things orally, give them with the voice a life that the pen can't give. But I never expected that you would take such a short silence for a sign of indifference — as this was extremely far from my consciousness.

Till tomorrow then, *joyfully*.

P.S. I leave it to Sri Aurobindo to answer for himself — but meanwhile I can tell you that he praised your music very much.

20 March 1933

\*

Dilip,

Why didn't you come yourself with the money? I would have seen you for a few minutes and told you something interesting and helpful as an answer to your letter of this morning. For in speaking it would have been better than anything I could write. At pranam time I felt that you were still depressed and thought that I would try

to pour on you some of the Divine forces. I was looking at you for such a long time and it was Divine love that I was pouring in you with a strong will that you should become conscious of the Divine Presence in you and see all your sorrows turn into Ananda. I saw to my great joy that you were *very receptive* to all these Divine forces and absorbing them without resistance as they were pouring down! . . .

When I read your letter and saw that you thought you had received only some human kindness it struck me that it was only a misunderstanding of the mind, almost a question of vocabulary that was standing in the way, and if you could see this all or most of your doubts would disappear for ever and with them your painful difficulties. For what I was pouring in you was not merely human kindness — though surely it contained all that human kindness can be at its best — but Mahalakshmi's love, Mahasaraswati's care, Maheshwari's embracing and enveloping light. Do not think of Divine Love as something cold or impersonal or distantly high — it is something as warm and close and tender as any feeling can possibly be. It does not abolish whatever is pure and sweet in human love, but intensifies and sublimates it to its highest. It is this love that the Divine has to give and that you must open yourself to receive. I think if you realise this, it will be easier for you to pierce through the mental veil and receive what you are longing to receive.

7 September 1933

\*

Dilip,

I am sorry you spoke to V instead of speaking to C as I had suggested. C said and repeated that there is *no true objection at all* to your going back to the Trésor from this very day if you like. It seems that there had been already a discussion on the subject between C and V, *before you came to me*, C saying that you could very well move in and V making all sorts of objections.

This quarrel is most regrettable; I have never given authority to V to decide when you can or cannot go back to your rooms, and when I have said that you can go I do not see how anybody can say a word to the contrary.

I agree with you that too much money has been spent on that house, and it is C's opinion also. He was telling me that very thing not later than yesterday; but you will allow me not to follow your reasoning about princes. A house is made nice not for the sake of its occupants but for its own sake, and those who are to live in it have no reason to feel shy or uncomfortable about it.

So, I hope you will brush aside this unpleasant happening and take all measures to move tomorrow to the Trésor as you told me you would do.

19 December 1933

\*

Dilip,

What a beautiful bedcover you have sent me this morning! It is magnificent and has given me twice the pleasure, especially because it is the first time you are giving me a personal present.

You may be sure that I am very appreciative of it; I see it as an excellent omen for our relations in the coming year, starting on the 22nd of this month.

18 January 1935

\*

Dilip,

After reading your letter now, just a word to tell you that you are mistaken. I actually missed your presence at pranam and am sorry you did not come.

If you had listened inwardly you would have heard me calling you.

17 April 1935

\*

Dilip,

I am sending you the translation of “Mahakali”; it was a very interesting thing to do.

Regarding the song of the boy Krishna, I was not really worried — but now you have reassured me altogether.

With our blessings

19 November 1935

\*

*(Regarding Dilip's singing at the Government House, Pondicherry)*

Dilip,

Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!

It was magnificent and our guests were *enchanted*. Your Mahakali has been a triumph.

30 November 1935

\*

Dilip,

Just a word to tell you that I am *very touched* by your decision and I will take this opportunity to rest as you are asking me to do.

You may be sure that my force is affectionately with you and will always be there in your effort towards the spiritual heights.

P.S. I would ask you not show this small note to anyone since I would rather not reveal my feelings.

*27 December 1935*

\*

Dilip,

I just opened your letter and read: “Today Mother at pranam was very cold” and stopped there rather amused.

No, I was not very cold — I had a cold which is not quite the same, and I was struggling with it. I thought you were aware of it. Anyhow, now that you know . . .

*20 January 1937*

\*

Dilip,

I was with you in thought at the time of the music. I hope you are all right now as a beginning not of a few months but of many years of non-depression — depression of the consciousness is worse than dispersion of consciousness, so do be energetic to throw it away when it comes.

Blessings

*25 November 1937*

\*

Dilip,

It was a very good prayer and I received it at the time, a good part of it in the very words you had used. I’m also glad to know that you felt something of my answer; it shows that the inner connection is growing and that is a very encouraging sign.

Blessings

*26 November 1937*

\*



Dilip,

All right — you can have the old friend Baron (I am glad he is here for a time) and also “le Directeur de l’Instruction Publique” and his wife.

Blessings on you and the music!

*4 December 1937*

\*

Dilip,

That is all right. I approve your answer about going in March. I hope that you will succeed in all the objects which you have enumerated. You will receive our full help for that.

Indeed you have much progressed both as to the grumbling and in other directions. Yes, one does change and the complete change is sure.

What you said to S about N’s death was quite the right thing.

Our love and blessings

*8 December 1937*

\*

*(On 24 November 1938 Sri Aurobindo fell in his room and fractured his right leg. For the next three years, he stopped almost all his correspondence with disciples. During this period the Mother answered Dilip’s letters on Sri Aurobindo’s behalf as well as her own.)*

Dilip,

I have communicated your letter to Sri Aurobindo. He asks me to say that he is afraid it is not possible; until the doctors declare the knee cured only those who are necessary for attendance and service are admitted. If this rule were not kept there would be many demands on Him and likelihood of pressure and fatigue. So for the present at least it is not possible to say yes.

He sends you his blessings and along with them are mine.

*1 December 1938*

\*

Dilip

I am very sorry but in the present circumstances it is impossible for me to see anybody as I must be always free to go to Sri Aurobindo if at any time my presence is required.

As for M I have no objection to her staying alone with you. But it is quite impossible to give a room to S in the Ashram. In view of what happened to him last time it should be clear that for himself also it would be most risky and undesirable.

Blessings

3 December 1938

\*

Dilip

I don't know what has been reported to you. I simply meant that if M sees that you are supporting E in her resolutions to remain here she is likely to yield more easily. I certainly do not want you to quarrel with M, only to use your influence to persuade her.

I read your letter *privately* to Sri Aurobindo.

Blessings

3 December 1938

\*

Dear Dilip,

When you came to the staircase after meditation, I could not tell you anything because there were too many people around. But I wanted to express to you our deep and warm sympathy and also our appreciation of your attitude in this painful affair.

Our blessings are always with you as well as all our affection.

5 December 1938

\*

Dilip,

You say that I don't love you, this is not at all true — but it is inevitable in the present circumstances that my time and attention should be concentrated on Sri Aurobindo and this is a thing which all those who reverence him must surely find quite natural. Neither you nor others should allow yourselves to think or even feel unconsciously that this preoccupation is due to want of love.

Sri Aurobindo asks me to add that it is not at all a fact that we feel your presence a burden or that you are unable to do this sadhana. You should not allow any temporary difficulty to affect you with this feeling or lead you to a hasty decision of this kind. You have already made much inner progress and you have only to stand firm for a greater progress in the future.

Sri Aurobindo sends you his love and blessings to which I join mine.

P.S. I read your letters to Sri Aurobindo alone and never show them to anybody.

15 December 1938

\*

Dilip,

You may be sure that we shall not dismiss you rudely or otherwise. I am sorry you still feel the push to go, but I think you will not find it in you either to leave us permanently or to leave the yoga.

Our love and blessings

16 December 1938

\*

Dilip,

Of course it was only an untrue dream. I never thought for a moment of asking you for more money after all you have given with a generosity and loyalty I fully appreciate.

As for the departure, it is difficult for me to say anything. It goes without saying that we will be very sorry if you go. But how to stop you if you are so unhappy here?

About the suicide, you are aware that we do not approve of it because we know that it is no solution for the difficulties, on the contrary it is bound to increase them and to throw the departed being into a very miserable condition.

I would so much like that instead of thinking of death you would pray for the removal of the last obstacles and the descent of an all-illuminating peace and joy.

Sri Aurobindo asks me to express his great regret at your decision and the necessity you feel to go. He asks you not to make it as a final decision but to keep the door open in yourself for return and happy emergence from your difficulty.

In all circumstances his love and affection will remain with you. You know that it is the same with me.

20 January 1939

*(To be continued)*

THE MOTHER

*(New Correspondences of the Mother, pp. 201-12)*

## ASPECTS AND GLIMPSES<sup>1</sup>

### The whole programme

[*Mother reads the text of 7 May 1912:*]

*“The general aim to be attained is the advent of a progressing universal harmony.”*

This is the Supermind.

I did not know Sri Aurobindo at that time and he had not written anything yet.

*“. . . To become the perfect representatives on earth of the first manifestation of the Unthinkable in his three modes, his seven attributes and twelve qualities . . . ”*

*What do you call the “three modes, seven attributes and twelve qualities”?*

I no longer remember. The three formed modes — love, light and life — which correspond to Sachchidananda. The seven attributes . . . I have a list somewhere. There is an old tradition which says that the world was created seven times, that is, the first six times it returned into the Creator. This is the idea of *pralaya*. It is said that this happened six times and that we are now the seventh creation, and that this is the last one. It is the one which will persist, and it is the “creation of Equilibrium”. All these creations I have also noted down somewhere, it is written down. I no longer know their order. There are six creations, one after another, created in accordance with this special mode, found imperfect and withdrawn into the Origin, recreated and withdrawn into the Origin — six times thus. And it is a progressive order. When one knows that order, one understands the principle of each creation. Well, this tradition said that the principle of our latest creation, at present, is the principle of Equilibrium, and that this is the last. That means the world will not go back again into *pralaya*, and there will be a perpetual progress. And this is the creation of Equilibrium.

Consequently, now, there is no longer anything good or bad: there is what is in equilibrium and what is not in equilibrium. There is imbalance and balance. That’s all. And what I have said there was based upon that.

The twelve qualities — that is something else still. That too is noted somewhere.

1. In this compilation the references are given thus:  
M = *Collected Works of the Mother*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition  
C = Conversation with a disciple and the date  
S = *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*

In order that the world may continue, it must realise a perfect equilibrium of all its elements by means of these twelve qualities, all present there. And then it will be a world which, whilst progressing indefinitely, will constantly be in harmony, and hence will not be open to destruction.

*“ . . . To give to the world once again, under a new form adapted to the present state of its mentality, the eternal word. This will be the synthesis of all human knowledge . . . ”*

*You speak here of “the eternal word”?*

I am using “word” in the sense of truth. There is an eternal Truth which is eternally true, but which finds expression in definite forms, and these definite forms are changing, fluctuating; they may become distorted; and to have the truth one must always go back to the source, which is . . . it may be called the eternal word, that is, the creative Word. It is a truth which is eternal, which manifests itself through all possible words and ideas. I use “word” in a literary sense — it is what is called elsewhere the creative Word. It is the origin of all speech and all thought.

*I did not understand “the aim to be achieved”.*

The aim to be achieved? What have I said? It is the harmonisation of the earth, I think, isn't it?

*“In regard to the earth, the means of achieving this aim is the realisation of human unity by the awakening in all and the manifestation by all of the inner Divinity who is one.*

*In other words: to create unity by establishing the kingdom of God which is in all.*

*Hence, the most useful work to be done is:*

*1) For everyone individually the becoming aware in oneself of the divine Presence and one's identification with it.”*

Yes, you do not understand? I have said it fifty thousand times already, haven't I? . . . Ah, you understand now? (*Laughter*)

*“2) The individualisation of states of being which have so far never been conscious in man and, consequently, putting the earth into touch with one or several sources of universal force which are yet sealed to it.”*

“The individualisation of states of being which have so far never been conscious in

man”, that is to say, there are superposed states of consciousness, and there are new regions which have never yet been manifested on earth, and which Sri Aurobindo called supramental. It is that, this was the same idea. That is, one must go into the depths or the heights of creation which have never been manifested upon earth, and become conscious of that, and manifest it on earth. Sri Aurobindo called it the Supermind. I simply say these are states of being which were never yet conscious in man (that is, that man has so far never been aware of them). One must get identified with them, then bring them into the outer consciousness, and manifest them in action. And then, I add (exactly what I foresaw — I did not know that Sri Aurobindo would do it, but still I foresaw that this had to be done):

*“3) To speak to the world, under a new form adapted to the present state of its mentality, the eternal word.”*

That is, the supreme Truth, Harmony. It was the whole programme of what Sri Aurobindo has done, and the method of doing the work on earth, and I had foreseen this in 1912. I met Sri Aurobindo for the first time in 1914, that is, two years later, and I had already made the whole programme.

*“4) Collectively, to found the ideal society in a place suited to the flowering of the new race, that of ‘the Sons of God’.”*

*Where did you decide to found the Ashram?*

Where did I decide to do it? . . . I never decided anything at all! I had simply said that it had to be done. I did not have the least idea, except that I had a great desire to come to India. But still, I did not even know if it corresponded to something. I had decided nothing at all. Simply, I had seen that state, what had to be done.

(M5:351-55)

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## **Identical vibration**

*Do you mean that different people can see different things under the same circumstances? The phenomenon isn't objective?*

Oh, it depends entirely upon the plane in which you find yourself! No, five different people will see five different things. Only when one is in marvellous accord, in an identical vibration, as happened to me with Sri Aurobindo. . . . But that never took the form of little stories!

Whenever there was a special force descending, or an opening, or a supramental manifestation, we would know it at the same time, in the same manner. And we didn't even need to talk about it; we would sometimes exchange a word or two concerning the consequences, the practical effects on the work, but that's all. I never had this with anyone except Sri Aurobindo.

There have been times when I did things for people and they sensed exactly what I had done. It has happened. It is rather rare, but still it has happened.

But I see more and more that the realm where my experience is situated is . . . . Well, it only worked with Sri Aurobindo!

(C - 17.6.1961)

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### **“India is free”**

*Mother, you told us one day that all that happens to us has been decided in advance. What does that mean?*

This is but a way of speaking. This happens because to express a thing I can't be saying all the words at the same time, can I? I am obliged to say them one after another. Otherwise, if all the words were spoken at the same time, it would make a big noise and nobody would understand anything! Well, when you try to explain the universe, you do as you would when you speak. You say one thing after another, but to tell the truth, you must say everything at one go. Now, how can that be done? . . . Indeed, since you repeat it to me, it is very likely that I must have said that somewhere. . . . I must have said the contrary also! But if you put it in this way, that everything that happens has been decided in advance, then with the consciousness of time that you have now, it is as if you said: yesterday it was decided what would happen today; and this year it is decided what will happen next year. It is in this way that the thing is translated in your consciousness — naturally, because it is thus that we see, think, understand and above all speak and express ourselves. But it is not like that.

There are people who have perceived this unreality so strongly that they have felt there was no reason why they could not go back instead of going forward, for backward, forward, the present, everything that we express in this way exists all at the same time. It is on different levels. If I tell you: “What is happening to you had been decided in advance”, I could also say: “What is happening here, has already happened elsewhere”, that would be equally true, and equally false, because it is impossible to express this in words.

I am going to give you an example which perhaps will make you understand. I do not remember exactly when it happened; it must have been some time in the

year 1920 probably (perhaps earlier, perhaps in 1914-1915, but I don't think so, it was some time in the year 1920). One day — every day I used to meditate with Sri Aurobindo: he used to sit on one side of a table and I on the other, on the veranda — and one day in this way, in meditation, I entered (how to put it? . . .), I went up very high, entered very deep or came out of myself (well, whatever one may say does not express what happened, these are merely ways of speaking), I reached a place or a state of consciousness from which I told Sri Aurobindo just casually and quite simply: “India is free.” It was in 1920. Then he put to me a question: “How?” And I answered him: “Without any fight, without a battle, without a revolution. The English themselves will leave, for the condition of the world will be such that they won't be able to do anything else except go away.”

It was *done*. I spoke in the future when he asked me the question, but there where I had seen, I said, India *is* free, it was a fact. Now, India was not free at that time: it was 1920. Yet it was there, it had been done. And it happened in 1947. That is to say, from the external physical point of view I saw it twenty-seven years in advance. But it had been done.

*Could you see Pakistan?*

No, for the freedom could have come about without Pakistan. Indeed, if they had listened to Sri Aurobindo there would have been no Pakistan.

Well, externally it seems to take time, but in fact it is like that.

(M5:187-88)

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### **Transformation of the body**

. . . When the union is perfect, there is no longer any difference.

*Is this the end of self-progress?*

There is never any end to progress — never any end, you can never put a full stop there.

*Can that happen before the transformation of the body?*

Before the transformation of the body? . . . This is a phenomenon of consciousness. For instance, the physical consciousness may have this experience even for years before the cells change. There is a great difference between the physical consciousness (the body consciousness) and the material body. This takes a long time, because it is a thing that has never been done. That state, as I have already told you, is a commonly known state which has been realised by some people, the most advanced,



the highest among the mystics; but the transformation of the body has never been done by anyone.

And it takes a terribly long time. Sri Aurobindo said — one day I asked him: “How long will it take to transform the body?” He did not hesitate, he said: “Oh! something like three hundred years.”

*Three hundred years from when?*

Three hundred years from the time one has the consciousness I was just speaking about. (*Laughter*)

No, the conclusion, what you must succeed in doing, is to be able to prolong life at will: not to leave the body until one wants to.

So, if one has resolved to transform the body, well, one must wait with all the necessary patience — three hundred years, five hundred years, a thousand years, it does not matter — the time needed for the change. As for me, I see that three hundred years is a minimum. To tell you the truth, with the experience I have of things, I think it is truly a minimum.

(M5:57-58)

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### **Disease of the ordinary human intellect**

It is a disease of the ordinary human intellect — which comes, moreover, from separation, division — to make a thing always *either this or that*. If you choose this, you turn your back on that; if you choose that, you turn your back on this.

It is an impoverishment. One must know how to take up everything, combine everything, synthesise everything. And then one has an integral realisation.

(M9:95)

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### **A king without a kingdom**

*Why is there ill-will?*

My child, it is as though you asked me why there is inconscience, ignorance, darkness in the nature! It is the why of the world you are asking me! Why is the world like this and not otherwise? . . . There are people who have written volumes on the subject. And each one explains it in his own way and that changes nothing, in fact. You may ask me: Why is there ill-will? Why is there ignorance? Why is there stupidity?

Why is there wickedness? Why is there all the evil? Why is the world not a very charming place? . . . All the philosophers explain it to you, each in his own way. The materialists explain it in their way, the scientists explain it in their way, but nobody in all that can find the means of getting out of it! and after all, the one thing that's truly important is . . . it would be precisely (you ask me: Why is there ill-will?) to find the way so that there may no longer be any ill-will. That would be worth the trouble. If you tell me: Why is there suffering, why is there misery? . . . What can that do to you, this why, unless it be a means of finding a remedy? But I don't believe it would, for (we have said that here) if you seek for the why, you will find within yourself simply all sorts of explanations which will be more or less useless and will lead you nowhere.

The fact is that it *is* so, isn't it? and the second fact is that one doesn't want it thus, and the third is to find the means that it may no longer exist. That is our problem. The world is not as we think it ought to be. There are lots of things in the world which we do not approve of. Well, there are people who like what they call "knowledge" very much and begin to inquire why it is like that. In a way this is very well, but as I said, it would be much more important to find out what to do so that it may be otherwise. This is exactly the problem the Buddha put to himself. He sat under a tree, it is said, until he found the solution. But his solution is not very good, for when you tell me: "The world is bad", well, his solution is: "Do away with the world." — "For whose benefit?" as Sri Aurobindo has written somewhere. Then the world will no longer be bad, for it will not exist! But what is the use of its no longer being bad, since it will not exist? It is very simple logic. It is like those who want the whole world to return to its Origin; and so Sri Aurobindo answers: "You will be the all-powerful master of something that no longer exists, an emperor without an empire or a king without a kingdom", that's all. . . . It is one solution. But there are other better ones. I believe we have found better ones.

Some say that ill-will comes from ignorance (that was exactly what the Buddha claimed) and that if ignorance disappeared there would no longer be any ill-will. There are others who say that ill-will comes from division, separation, that if the universe were not cut off from its Origin there would be no ill-will. Others still say that it is ill-will which is the cause of everything, of separation and ignorance; and so there arises the problem: Whence does it come, this ill-will? If it were at the origin of everything, it was then *in* the origin of everything. And there we are altogether at a loss, my children! We could speculate upon this for years, we shall never get out of it. And so those who push it so far finish by telling you: Ill-will doesn't exist, it is an illusion. And that's simply because they stop midway in their reasoning, for if they went a little farther they might say: Perhaps it is a human invention, this ill-will. . . . That is possible!

(M5:145-46)

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## The problem

“Is it impossible to live a truth in material consciousness? Is it really impossible? An absolute, I mean an absolute truth — not something entirely subjective and relative, each one living his own truth in his own manner. Will one person always be like this and the other like that and the third like something else? So that only by putting all the pieces together do we actually amount to anything — and yet to what? Is it completely impossible for absolute truth to manifest in the present state of Matter?” This is the problem that has seized me.

Why? Probably because I was ready to face it. But it has been posed so intensely . . . It was so intense that it was painful.

It reinforces what the old Schools have always taught — but Sri Aurobindo rejected it! Sri Aurobindo told us precisely that the Truth could be lived *in* material life . . . Of course, there must be a change of consciousness, but I thought . . .

(C - 27.3.1961)

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## Insistence upon action without the light by which to act

All this insistence upon action is absurd if one has not the light by which to act. Yoga must include life and not exclude it does not mean that we are bound to accept life as it is with all its stumbling ignorance and misery and the obscure confusion of human will and reason and impulse and instinct which it expresses. The advocates of action think that by human intellect and energy making an always new rush everything can be put right; the present state of the world after a development of the intellect and a stupendous output of energy for which there is no historical parallel is a signal proof of the illusion under which they labour. Yoga takes the stand that it is only by a change of consciousness that the true basis of life can be discovered; from within outward is indeed the rule. But within does not mean some quarter inch behind the surface. One must go deep and find the soul, the self, the Divine Reality within us and only then can life become a true expression of what we can be instead of a blind and always repeated confused blur of the inadequate and imperfect thing we were. The choice is between remaining in the old jumble and groping about in the hope of stumbling on some discovery or standing back and seeking the Light within till we discover and can build the godhead within and without us.

(S28:444)

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## From the other hemisphere

In my view, all these old Scriptures and ancient traditions have a graduated content (*gesture showing different levels of understanding*), and according to the needs of the epoch and the people, one symbol or another was drawn upon. But a time comes when one goes beyond these things and sees them from what Sri Aurobindo calls ‘the other hemisphere,’ where one realises that they are only modes of expression to put one in contact — a kind of bridge or link between the lower way of seeing and the higher way of knowing.

(C - 11.3.1961)

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## Hatha Yoga

. . . For example, at the beginning of *The Yoga of Self-Perfection*, Sri Aurobindo reviews other yogas, beginning with Hatha Yoga. I had just translated this when I remembered Sri Aurobindo saying that Hatha Yoga was very effective but that it amounted to spending your whole life training your body, which is an enormous time and effort spent on something not essentially very interesting.

(C - 19.5.1961)

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## Agni

I go on reading the Vedas and I see quite well how beautiful it is and how effective it must have been for those people, what a power for realisation these hymns must have had! But for me. . . .

Yet for a time I was in contact with all these gods and all these things, and they had an entirely concrete reality for me; but now . . . I read and I understand, but I cannot live it. And I don’t know why. It still hasn’t triggered the experience. You see, experience for me — the constant, total and permanent Experience — is . . . that there is nothing other than the Supreme — only the Supreme — that the Supreme alone exists. So when they speak of Agni or Varuna or Indra . . . it doesn’t strike a chord. However, what the Vedas succeed in doing very well is to give you the perception of your infirmity and ineptitude, of the dismal state we are in now; it succeeds wonderfully in doing that!

Yesterday, this ardor of the Flame was there — burning all to offer all. It was absolutely concrete, an intensity of vibrations; I could see the vibrations — all the movements of obscurity and ignorance were cast into that. And I recall a time when

I was translating these hymns to Agni with Sri Aurobindo, and Agni was real for me. Well, yesterday it wasn't that, it wasn't the god Agni, it was a *state of being*. It was a state of the Supreme, and as such, it was intimate, clear, intense, vibrant and living.  
(C - 18.4.1961)

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### **No question of a teaching or a revelation**

*Many people say that the teaching of Sri Aurobindo is a new religion. Would you say that it is a religion?*

People who say that are fools who don't even know what they are talking about. You only have to read all that Sri Aurobindo has written to know that it is impossible to base a religion on his works, because he presents each problem, each question in all its aspects, showing the truth contained in each way of seeing things, and he explains that in order to attain the Truth you must realise a synthesis which goes beyond all mental notions and emerge into a transcendence beyond thought.

So the second part of your question is meaningless. Besides, if you had read what was published in the last *Bulletin*, you could not have asked this question.

I repeat that when we speak of Sri Aurobindo there can be no question of a teaching nor even of a revelation, but of an action from the Supreme; no religion can be founded on that.

But men are so foolish that they can change anything into a religion, so great is their need of a fixed framework for their narrow thought and limited action. They do not feel secure unless they can assert this is true and that is not; but such an assertion becomes impossible for anyone who has read and understood what Sri Aurobindo has written. Religion and Yoga do not belong to the same plane of being and spiritual life can exist in all its purity only when it is free from all mental dogma.

(M10:95-96)

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### **Three conceptions of the world**

#### *1. Buddhist and Shankarite:*

The world is an illusion, a field of ignorance and suffering due to ignorance. The one thing to do is to get out of it as soon as possible and to disappear into the original Non-Existence or Non-Manifestation.

#### *2. The Vedantic as very commonly understood:*

The world is essentially divine, for the Divine is omnipresent there. But its

exterior expression is distorted, obscure, ignorant, perverted. The one thing to do is to become conscious of the inner Divine and remain fixed in that consciousness without troubling about the world; for this external world cannot change and will always be in its natural state of unconsciousness and ignorance.

### 3. *Sri Aurobindo's view:*

The world as it is, is not the divine creation it is meant to be, but an obscure and perverted expression of it. It is not the expression of the divine consciousness and will, but this is what it is meant to become; it has been created to develop into a perfect manifestation of the Divine under all His forms and aspects — Light and Knowledge, Power, Love and Beauty.

This is our conception of it and the aim we follow.

(M14:33)

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### **Sri Aurobindo's sadhana starts where the others end**

The usual sadhanas have for aim the union with the Supreme Consciousness (Sat-chit-ananda). And those who reach there are satisfied with their own liberation and leave the world to its unhappy plight. On the contrary, Sri Aurobindo's sadhana starts where the others end. Once the union with the Supreme is realised one must bring down that realisation to the exterior world and change the conditions of life upon the earth until a total transformation is accomplished. In accordance with this aim, the sadhaks of the integral yoga do not retire from the world to lead a life of contemplation and meditation. Each one must devote at least one third of his time to a useful work. All activities are represented in the Ashram and each one chooses the work most congenial to his nature, but must do it in a spirit of service and unselfishness, keeping always in view the transformation.

(M14:33-34)

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### **Key to the effort**

I believe that is one of the things Sri Aurobindo is going to explain: why it is necessary to give to the physical, external being, its full development, the capacity of controlling matter directly; then you put at the disposal of the Spirit an instrument capable of manifesting it, otherwise . . . Yes, I knew several people who in their ordinary state could not write three lines without making a mistake, not only spelling mistakes but mistakes of language, that is, who could not express one thought clearly — well, in their moments of spiritual inspiration, they used to write very beautiful

things, but all the same these very beautiful things were not so beautiful as the works of the greatest writers. These things seemed remarkable in comparison with what they could do in their ordinary state; it was true, their present possibilities were used to the maximum, it was something that gave a value to what otherwise would have had none at all. But supposing you take a real genius — a musician or artist or writer of genius — who has fully mastered his instrument, who can use it to produce works that express the utmost human possibility, if you add to this a spiritual consciousness, the supramental force, then you will have something truly divine.

And this is precisely the key to the effort Sri Aurobindo wanted us to make.

And your body, if you draw from it all the possibilities it holds, if you educate it by the normal, well-known, scientific methods, if you make this instrument into something as perfect as possible, then, when the supramental truth manifests in that body, it will become *immediately* — without centuries of preparation — a marvellous instrument for the expression of the Spirit.

That is why Sri Aurobindo used to repeat and has always said: You must work from both ends, not let go of one for the other. And certainly, if you want to have a divine consciousness, you must not give up spiritual aspiration; but if you want to become an integral divine being on earth, take good care not to let go of the other end, and make your body the best possible instrument.

It is a disease of the ordinary human intellect — which comes, moreover, from separation, division — to make a thing always *either this or that*. If you choose this, you turn your back on that; if you choose that, you turn your back on this. It is an impoverishment. One must know how to take up everything, combine everything, synthesise everything. And then one has an integral realisation.

(M9:94-95)

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### **First step on the path**

. . . so many initiates and sages have been attracted by the solution of the void, of Nirvana, for this is obviously a very radical way of escaping from the consequences of an ignorant manifestation. Only, the solution of changing this manifestation into a true, truly divine reality is a far superior solution. And this is what we want to attempt now, with a certitude of succeeding one day or another, for, in spite of everything, despite everything, what is true is eternally true, and what is true in essence must necessarily become true in the realisation, one day or another. Sri Aurobindo told us that we had taken the first step on the path and that the time had come to accomplish the work, therefore one has only to set out. That's all.

(M9:12)

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## Always the Mother

Be wide in me, O Varuna; be mighty in me, O Indra; O Sun, be very bright and luminous; O Moon, be full of charm and sweetness. Be fierce and terrible, O Rudra; be impetuous and swift, O Maruts; be strong and bold, O Aryama; be voluptuous and pleasurable, O Bhaga; be tender and kind and loving and passionate, O Mitra. Be bright and revealing, O Dawn; O Night, be solemn and pregnant. O Life, be full, ready and buoyant; O Death, lead my steps from mansion to mansion. Harmonise all these, O Brahmanaspati. Let me not be subject to these gods, O Kali.

Sri Aurobindo

He invokes all these Vedic gods and tells each one to take possession of him; and *then* he tells Kali to free him from their influence! It is very amusing! . . .

(*silence*)

For Sri Aurobindo, the important thing was always the Mother. As he explained it, the Mother has several aspects, and certain aspects are still unmanifest. So if he has represented the Mother by Kali in particular, I believe it's in relation to all those gods. Because, as he wrote in *The Mother*, the aspects to be manifested depend upon the time, the need, the thing to be done. And he always said that unless one understands and profoundly feels the aspect of Kali, one can never really participate in the Work in the world — he felt that a sort of timid weakness makes people recoil before this terrible aspect.

(C - 11.2.1961)

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## Sri Aurobindo came to say something new

*Mother, you have said<sup>1</sup> there are many intermediary planes between the mental and the supramental, and that if an ordinary man came in contact with one of these intermediate planes, he would be dazzled. Why then, since man is in such an undeveloped condition, do we speak of the descent of the supramental plane,*

1. "Men are too easily inclined to believe that they have climbed into regions quite divine when they have only gone above the average level. There are many stages between the ordinary human mind and the Supermind, many grades and many intervening planes. If an ordinary man were to get into direct contact even with one of these intermediate planes, he would be dazzled and blinded, would be crushed under the weight of the sense of immensity or would lose his balance; and yet it is not the Supermind."

*Questions and Answers 1929 – 1931 (23 June 1929)*



*instead of the descent of the intermediate planes?*

For a very simple reason, because till now the whole physical, material world, the whole earth (let us take the earth) has been ruled by forces and the consciousness that come from what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind. Even what men call God is a force, a power coming from the Overmind and the whole universe was under the rule of the Overmind. To get there one has to pass through many intermediate planes and very few people can reach there without getting dazzled. But what Sri Aurobindo said is that now the time for the “rule” of the Overmind is coming to its end and is going to be replaced by the rule of the Supermind. All who have had spiritual experiences and have discovered the Divine and become united with Him, know what it is, the Overmind. But what Sri Aurobindo says is that beyond the Overmind there is something and that it is now the turn of this something to come and rule the earth, to manifest upon earth and rule the earth. Therefore, there is no need to speak of the Overmind, for many people have spoken about it already and have had the experience of it; whereas this is something new that is going to manifest itself in a new way and nobody has been aware of it before. That is why. The old accounts — there’s no lack of people who have experienced these things or described them, or of books written on the subject. There is no need to repeat once more what others have said. Sri Aurobindo came to say something new. And it is precisely because people are unable to come out of the experiences they have known and heard being spoken of, that they try to identify this Force which Sri Aurobindo called supramental with their experience of the intermediary worlds including the Overmind. For they cannot conceive that there could be something else. . . . Sri Aurobindo always said that his Yoga began where the former Yogas ended, that to be able to realise his Yoga it was necessary first of all to have reached the extreme limit of what the older Yogas had realised, that is to say, the perception of the Divine, the union, the identification with the Divine. But that Divine, Sri Aurobindo says, is the Divine of the Overmind which is already something quite unthinkable, in comparison with the human consciousness, because even to reach there one must pass through several planes and in these planes one feels dazzled.

There are beings of the vital, if they appeared to men, or to say things more exactly, whenever they have appeared to men, men have taken them for the supreme God — these vital entities! If you like, we shall call that a disguise but it is a very successful disguise, because those who saw it were thoroughly convinced that they had seen the supreme Godhead. And yet, they were but beings of the vital. And these entities of the Overmind, these overmental gods are mighty entities in comparison with our humanity. When human beings come in relation with them, they become truly bewildered.

There is however a kind of Grace which makes it possible for us to profit by the experience of others. It is something similar to the way of teaching the sciences.

If each scientist had to do all over again all the experiments of the past in order to arrive at a new discovery, go over all that the others had found, he would have to spend his whole life doing that and there would be no time left to make his new discovery! Now one doesn't need to do all that: one opens a book and sees the results and starting from there can proceed further. Well, Sri Aurobindo wanted to do the same thing. He tells you where you can find the results of what others before him have found — the experiments they made and their results — and where you stand: historically where you stand in the spiritual history of the world. And then he takes you from there, and after the basis has been firmly laid for you, he makes you climb higher up the mountain.

(M5:282-84)

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### **Formidable action**

Oh, yesterday or the day before, I had the occasion to write a sentence about Sri Aurobindo. It was in English and went something like this: In the world's history, what Sri Aurobindo represents is not a teaching nor even a revelation, but a decisive *action* direct from the Supreme.

(*silence*)

I tell you this because just now as we were speaking about the book and you were saying it would come all at once in a single flow, I saw a kind of globe, like a sun — a sun shedding a twinkling dust of incandescent light (the sun was moving forward and this dust came twinkling in front of it), like this (*gesture*). It came towards you, then made a circle around you as if to say, 'Here is the formation.' It was magnificent! There was a creative warmth in it, a warmth like the sun's — a power of Truth. And here again, I was given the same impression: that what Sri Aurobindo has come to bring is not a teaching, not even a revelation, but a *formidable* action coming direct from the Supreme.

It is something pouring over the world.

(C - 18.2.1961)

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### **A dreadful muddle**

I have brought you the exact text of that sentence on Sri Aurobindo I told you about the other day. It was in reply to a letter . . .

You know this mental habit (which people take for mental superiority!) of lumping everything together on the same level: all the teachings, all the prophets, all the sects, all the religions. You know the habit: “We are not prejudiced, we have no preferences — it’s all the *same thing*.” A dreadful muddle!

It’s one of the biggest mental difficulties of this age.

Anyway, in reply to this nonsense, I have said: “Your error, to be precise, is that you go to the Theosophical Society, for example, with the same opening as to the Christian religion or to the Buddhist doctrine or with which you read one of Sri Aurobindo’s books — and as a result, you are plunged into a confusion and a muddle and you don’t understand anything about anything.”

And then the reply came to me very strongly; something took hold of me and I was, so to say, obliged to write: *What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world’s history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme.*<sup>1</sup>

It’s not from me. It came from there (*gesture upwards*). But it pleased me.

(C - 28.2.1961)

1. Mother added: And I am just trying to fulfil that action.

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## The Supreme Will

*. . . you seem to be saying that the ideas which govern or underlie our progress are more or less false moral ideas; so what should underlie our progress? What would make us say: this is good or not good, useful or not useful for progress?*

That’s just it — none of it is necessary!

Now I know that it’s not necessary at all — not at all. Simply the aspiration must be constantly like this (*gesture of a rising flame*). Aspiration — that is, knowing what you want, wanting it. But it cannot be given a definite form; Sri Aurobindo has used certain words, we use other words, others use still other words, and all this means nothing — they are simply words. But there is something beyond all words, and that . . . for me, the simplest thing (the simplest to express) is, ‘The Supreme’s Will.’

And it’s ‘The Supreme’s Will’ *for the earth* — which is quite a special thing. I am in a universal consciousness at the moment and the earth seems to me to be a very tiny thing, like this (*Mother sketches a tiny ball in the air*) in the process of being transformed. But this is from the standpoint of the Work, it’s another matter.

But for those who are here, we can say, “It is what the Supreme Lord is preparing for the earth.” He sent Sri Aurobindo to prepare it; Sri Aurobindo called

it ‘the supramental realisation,’ and to facilitate communication we can use the same words. Well, this movement (*gesture of a rising flame*) towards That must be constant — constant, total. All the rest is none of our business, and the less we meddle with it mentally, the better. But *that*, that Flame, is indispensable. And when it goes out, light it again; when it falters, rekindle it — all the time, all the time, *all the time* — when sleeping, walking, reading, moving around, speaking . . . all the time.

The rest doesn’t matter, one can do anything (it depends on people and their ways of thinking). You can just ask people like X, they will tell you: “You can do anything at all — it doesn’t matter in the least. Only you mustn’t feel it’s you doing it, that’s all. You have to feel that Nature does it.” But I don’t much approve of this system.

The important thing is the flame.

(*silence*)

Actually, in these scenes from the subconscious presented during the night, there were things I had believed ill-omened in my life — yet suddenly I saw the vibration of this aspiration arising, with such a power and intensity *even there*. “Oh,” I said, “how mistaken we are!”

And this aspiration depends neither on the state of health nor. . . . It’s absolutely independent of all circumstances — I have felt this aspiration in the cells of my body at the very moment when things were at their most disorganised, when, from an ordinary medical standpoint, the illness was serious. The cells *themselves* aspire. And this aspiration has to be everywhere.

When one is in this state, there is no need to worry — nothing else matters (*Mother bursts into laughter*).

(C - 18.4.1961)

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## Gold mine

What have you reread?

*Essays on the Gita.*

Oh, what a treasure that is — a gold mine!

(C - 18.2.1961)

\*

## Quite simple

Understanding *The Synthesis of Yoga* is quite simple: I have only to be silent for a moment, and Sri Aurobindo is here. It's not this body's understanding: HE is here!  
(C - 7.1.1961)

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## *Savitri*

. . . But all of that is wonderfully, accurately expressed and *explained* in *Savitri*. Only you must know how to read it! The entire last part, from the moment she goes to seek Satyavan in the realm of Death (which affords an occasion to explain this), the whole description of what happens there, right up to the end, where every possible offer is made to tempt her, everything she must refuse to continue her terrestrial labour . . . it is my experience *exactly*.

Savitri is really a condensation, a concentration of the universal Mother — the eternal universal Mother, Mother of all universes from all eternity — in an earthly personality for the Earth's salvation. And Satyavan is the soul of the Earth, the Earth's *jiva*. So when the Lord says, "he whom you love and whom you have chosen", it means the earth. All the details are there! When she comes back down, when Death has yielded at last, when all has been settled and the Supreme tells her, "Go, go with him, the one you have chosen", how does Sri Aurobindo describe it? He says that she very carefully takes the *soul* of Satyavan into her arms, like a little child, to pass through all the realms and come back down to earth. Everything is there! He hasn't forgotten a single detail to make it easy to understand — for someone who knows how to understand. And it is when Savitri reaches the earth that Satyavan regains his full human stature.

(C - 22.1.1961)

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## Keen precision

*Something is inevitably lost in translating; we translate, we lose something.*

Not something — a great deal. A great deal.

The more I see these texts, the more. . . . At first I had the impression of a certain nebulous quality in the English text, and that precisely this quality could be used to introduce the spirit of another language. Now I see that this nebulousness was in my head! It was not in what he wrote.

*Yes, I see what you mean — there's a sense in the way it is put.*

Every word, *mon petit*! Every word and the *position* of the word in the sentence — even the position of an adverb has a fundamental importance for the meaning. All the finesse, all the profound wisdom evaporates in translation, and finally we express only platitudes by comparison — platitudes. They are not platitudes compared to ordinary intellect, but they are platitudes compared to the kind of keen *precision* with which Sri Aurobindo discerns things.

(C - 19.5.1961)

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### **Structure of English and French**

*(After the work, Mother begins speaking of her translation of The Synthesis of Yoga.)*

A few days ago I had an experience related to this. For some time I had been unable to work because I was unwell and my eyes were very tired. And two or three days ago, when I resumed the translation, I suddenly realised that I was seeing it quite differently! Something had happened during those days (how to put it?) . . . the position of the translation work in relation to the text was different. My last sentence was all I had with me, because I file my papers as I go along, so I went back to it along with the corresponding English sentence. “Oh, look!” I said, “That’s how it goes!” And I made all the corrections quite spontaneously. The position really seemed different.

It’s not yet perfect, it’s still being worked on, but when I read it over, I saw that I had truly gone beyond the stage where one tries to find a correspondence with what one reads, an appropriate expression sufficiently close to the original text (that’s the state I was in before). Now it’s not like that anymore! The translation seems to come spontaneously: that is English, this is French — sometimes very different, sometimes very close. It was rather interesting, for you know that Sri Aurobindo was strongly drawn to the structure of the French language (he used to say that it created a far better, far clearer and far more forceful English than the Saxon structure), and often, while writing in English, he quite spontaneously used the French syntax. When it’s like that, the translation adapts naturally — you get the impression that it was almost written in French. But when the structure is Saxon, what used to happen is that a French equivalent would come to me; but now it’s almost as if something were directing: “That is English, this is French.”

(C - 31.1.1961)

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### **Subtleties of French**

Sri Aurobindo told me he had been French in a previous life and that French flowed back to him like a spontaneous memory — he understood all the subtleties of French.

(C - 4.7.1961)

\*

### **An exact description**

You know, *Savitri* is an exact description — not literature, not poetry (although the form is very poetical) — an exact description, step by step, paragraph by paragraph, page by page; as I read, I relived it all. Besides, many of my own experiences that I recounted to Sri Aurobindo seem to have been incorporated into *Savitri*. He has included many of them — Nolini says so; he was familiar with the first version Sri Aurobindo wrote long ago, and he said that an enormous number of experiences were added when it was taken up again. This explained to me why . . . suddenly, as I read it, I live the experience — line by line, page by page. The realism of it is astounding.

(C - 4.7.1961)

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### **The true method is to enter into direct contact with the inner truth**

In modern civilisation, men work on the surface. The mind is the surface of existence; they work on the surface and they try to find the Truth that is behind by studying more and more deeply. Whereas the true method is to enter into direct contact with the inner Truth, and impelled by that, guided by that, to make an outer construction which is not a seeking for the Truth, but a creation of the Truth; that is to say, the Truth-force realises itself outwardly through the human instrument.

Men always make plans, mental constructions and attempt to create on that basis, but not one human creation is a total realisation of their mental construction. They always add something, or else it is always altered by a force they do not understand; they think it is chance, fortune, circumstances, all sorts of things, but it is in fact the Truth-force which is trying to manifest on earth and which is exerting a pressure, and naturally this changes the mental and vital creations which are only superficial ones. In the *Bulletin* there was a quotation from Sri Aurobindo on this subject. He said: first one must know and then act, whereas men act and *then* try to know through their action.

(M14:346-47)

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## The old idea

No, it's the old tradition — you step back from Nature and Nature does whatever she wants. It doesn't concern you, you have no responsibility, 'you are not that.' It's the old idea.

Sri Aurobindo was completely against it. Somewhere he makes fun of a man who said he was the Supreme and that whatever he did, it wasn't he himself doing it — and then he was angry when his meal was late! But of course it wasn't him: the stomach-nature was angry!<sup>1</sup>

It's one of the most ironic things Sri Aurobindo has written.

(C - 20.6.1961)

1. See p. 17 of this issue — Ed.

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## You are in good company

*I am shocked to hear that X has complained to you against me. I have been specially kind to her.*

This is exactly the kind of treatment the Divine received from the world. Even Sri Aurobindo was not spared. So you see that you are in good company and there is no reason to despair!

(M14:282)

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## Too perfect to be here

But truly, sincerely, I tell you, and I have a sufficiently long experience of life, I know nothing so grotesque as people who are satisfied with themselves. It is truly ridiculous. They make themselves utterly ridiculous. There are people like that; some of them came to see Sri Aurobindo telling him all that they were capable of, all that they had done and all they could do, all that they had realised — and so Sri Aurobindo looked at them very seriously and replied: "Oh! you are too perfect to be here. It would be better for you to go away."

(M5:337)

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### **Relation with the Divine**

*When one is identified with the Divine, does one see Him in the form one thinks He has?*

Usually. It is very rare — unless one is able to get rid of one's mental formation completely — it is very rare to see Him quite objectively. Besides, Sri Aurobindo always used to say that the relation with the Divine depended on what one wanted it to be. Everyone aspires for a particular form of relation, and for him the relation takes that form.

(M5:322)

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### **We are your whole family . . .**

Take advantage of the circumstances to get rid of all attachment to the members of your family.

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

(M14:285)

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### **Call for help to Sri Aurobindo and myself**

The Grace is always there ready to act but you must let it work and not resist its action. The one condition required is faith. When you feel attacked, call for help to Sri Aurobindo and myself. If your call is sincere (that is to say, if you sincerely want to be cured) your call will be answered and the Grace will cure you.

(M14:87)

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### **Pray to Sri Aurobindo to give you the right consciousness**

You know that it is indispensable to be calm; you must try hard to become calm. Then in the calm, pray to Sri Aurobindo to give you the right consciousness; pray in all sincerity, with faith and trust. Your prayer will surely be granted one day.

(M14:133)

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### **Sense of unworthiness**

If the sense of unworthiness fills you with overflowing gratitude and throws you at Sri Aurobindo's feet in an ecstasy of joy, then you can know that it comes from a true source; if, on the contrary, it makes you miserable and brings an impulse to hide or to run away, then you can be sure that its origin is hostile. To the first you can open freely; the second must be rejected.

(M14:235)

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### **The big work to be done**

The best remedy is to stop thinking of yourself and your defects and difficulties.

Let us think *only* of the big work to be done, the ideal that Sri Aurobindo has given us to realise. *The work* and NOT how *we* do it.

I will help.

(M14:224)

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### **It is in work that integral yoga is *best done***

If you leave the department, the work will be ruined! As soon as I have a moment free I shall call you in the morning and we shall talk it over.

The more I grow, the more I know that it is in work that Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga is *best done*.

Love and blessings.

(M14:318)

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### **Greatest obstacle to true understanding**

So, *mon petit*. . . Sri Aurobindo always said the greatest obstacle to true understanding and participation in the Work is common sense. He said that's why Nature creates madmen from time to time! They are people not strong enough to bear the dismantling of this petty stupidity called common sense.

(C - 4.2.1961)

\*

**à la Z . . .**

Anyhow . . . Only Sri Aurobindo can speak of Sri Aurobindo. And as for their notes, it's still Sri Aurobindo *à la Z*, or Sri Aurobindo *à la A*, and all the more so since Sri Aurobindo wrote in very different ways depending upon the person he was writing to (*gesture indicating different levels*).

(C - 18.2.1961)

\*

**Supreme Love**

And when the day comes for the manifestation of supreme Love — a crystalised, concentrated descent of supreme Love — that will truly be the hour of Transformation, for nothing will be able to resist That.

But as it's all-powerful, a certain receptivity must be prepared on earth so its effects are not devastating. Sri Aurobindo has explained it in one of his letters. Someone asked him, "Why doesn't this Love come now?", and he replied something like this: If divine Love in its essence were to manifest on earth, it would be like an explosion; for the earth is not supple enough or receptive enough to widen to the measure of this Love. The earth must not only open itself but become wide and supple. Matter — not just physical Matter, but the substance of the physical consciousness as well — is still much too rigid.

(C - 10.1.1961)

THE MOTHER





### WAVE-BREAK

With arms that curve to a garland of brief foam  
 And crumble in the very joy of clinging,  
 The enormous strengths and majesties surge home;  
 They yearn with music and they part with singing:  
 No passionate grasp on goals of blue endeavour  
 Shackles the laughter and the liberty  
 Winning by cool erosion rocks for ever  
 To the infinite self-forgetfulness of sea.  
 A rapturous unconcern, a worship-will  
 Unmarred by lust that makes the conqueror slave,  
 Their hands of moon-love gather but to spill  
 Victory as pure libation through each wave.

AMAL KIRAN  
 (K. D. SETHNA)

#### On Spiritual Poetry of Amal

*The spiritual vision must never be intellectual, philosophical or abstract, it must always give the sense of something vivid, living and concrete, a thing of vibrant beauty or a thing of power. An abstract spiritual poetry is possible but that is not Amal's manner. The poetry of spiritual vision as distinct from that of spiritual thought abounds in images, unavoidably because that is the straight way to avoid abstractness; but these images must be felt as very real and concrete things, otherwise they become like the images used by the philosophic poets, decorative to the thought rather than realities of the inner vision and experience.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(Letters on Poetry and Art, CWSA, Vol. 27, p. 99)*

## GOLDEN MEMORIES OF SWARNAPRABHA — II

(Continued from the issue of March 2022)

The Mother encouraged the Ashram inmates to read, write and speak in English and French. Therefore Swarna focussed her attention on learning English.

She used to study late in the night, after completing the daily routine. She was quite at ease while conversing with Datta in English. And she sent Swarna to the Mother, so that her spoken language would be refined. Just before the outbreak of the Second World War, Datta got two more assistants. One of them was Mrs. Mario Schiff. She was French. She arrived in the year 1937. She was a year older than Sri Aurobindo. She was a pretty lady. She had been married twice. Her second husband was an Italian. Her son Gabriel worked for the French Government in Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo named Mario “Jwalanti”, having seen in her the “Aspiring Flame” for the spiritual life.

Jwalanti became Datta’s assistant. The Mother had also instructed her to be Swarna’s French tutor.

The year 1938 saw the coming of Margaret Woodrow Wilson. She was the daughter of the U.S. President Thomas Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921). She was so deeply impressed by the book, *Essays on the Gita*, that she travelled all the way from the US to the Ashram to have Sri Aurobindo’s darshan. She arrived in the month of September. But in November, Sri Aurobindo met with an accident. So the November darshan was cancelled. Nevertheless, she stayed back in the Ashram. Like Datta, she too started wearing a saree. She also practised cross-legged sitting. Margaret’s one-pointedness for Yoga earned her the name of “Nishtha” from the Mother.

The four sadhikas worked together in the same place (now known as Datta House). They also had meals together. What they liked most was eating the portion sent by the Mother, that which Mother always set aside from her food. After having this “prasad”, the ladies used to wipe and dry the cups and plates in the sun. The lovely crockery was then put back in the cabinet.

The Mother had got them shipped from France. Even bedsheets and towels were procured from France, since in those days such articles were unavailable in Pondicherry. Many a time she instructed Dyuman-bhai to purchase vegetables from the periphery of Pondicherry.

The Ashram’s requirements were enormous, and the Mother did not want to create any scarcity in the local market.

Swarna’s workload didn’t grow any lighter, on the contrary it increased, although she now had Jwalanti and Nishtha by her side. Sometimes she would sit late, till it was dark, to complete her work. Datta would then escort her home. In fact

Swarna holds a record of sorts in non-stop working. The story goes like this: With the outbreak of the Second World War, many businessmen were leaving Pondicherry. Two Sindhi merchants named Tularam and Baliram were also closing shop. So they offered to the Mother bags full of exquisite georgette sarees. She chose a few and returned the rest. Picking one of the sarees, she made it known that she wished to wear it on Prosperity day. But there was only one day in between. The task was difficult. The *anchal* of the saree had to be similarly designed like the border. Then a matching long-sleeved blouse had to be made.

Datta looked at Swarna expectantly and enquired whether she could fulfil the Mother's request. Swarna was certain that with the Mother's blessings, she would be able to accomplish the work, but she humbly replied, "I will try my best."

The following day saw Swarna on the job. After her breakfast she came to her place of work, *i.e.* Datta's room, — and spread out a mat and focussed on the work. Datta watched Swarna's swift and deft stitching. Every stitch was perfectly executed! It was 10.30 at night when the assignment was completed. It took another hour for ironing the saree. It was after 11.30 p.m. that Datta escorted Swarna home. The new saree was in the Mother's hands the next morning. Swarna was filled with an inexpressible joy when she beheld the Mother attired in that saree during the Prosperity distribution.

The Mother flashed at her a mystical smile!

Datta came over to Swarna and said, "The Mother is looking exquisite! You worked for sixteen hours to make possible the impossible task."

Swarna was an expert in darning. She was extremely skilful. Her repair work was always difficult to detect. Once, Sri Aurobindo's dhoti was sent to her for sewing. It had about a yard-long tear. But Sri Aurobindo did not want it to be discarded. Datta advised her to wash the dhoti and then darn it with threads harvested from another old dhoti. After the darning was completed, the repair work was difficult to trace. She handed it over to Datta, and her face lit up with happiness. Datta then gave it to Champaklal.

There was another art-work Swarna did for the Mother. She would embroider a flower on the *anchal* of the saree. This not only aided in identifying the upper or shoulder end, but also in recognising the outer surface of the saree. The Mother usually did not discard anything used by her. The older the item, the dearer it was to her. One day a set of used and old kerchiefs were sent to Swarna. In one of them she discovered a big hole, bordered by torn ends of cloth. She showed it to Datta, because it was a kerchief not worth repairing. But Datta told her that this couldn't be mentioned to the Mother and that it had to be mended in the best way possible. Then she recounted an incident that had happened in the recent past. She had discarded an old tattered handkerchief. Before throwing it in the waste basket, Datta had mentioned it to the Mother. But the Mother being busy with some other work didn't reply. A while later the Mother was enquiring about the same kerchief! On hearing that it had

been disposed off, she told Datta, “Do you know how well it has served me? And you have thrown it away.” Saying this, the Mother retrieved it by rummaging through the bin! Swarna was startled! Without another word she rushed off to her work-station and busied herself in darning the kerchief! All the kerchiefs were sent back to the Mother, after repair. The Mother looked at them for a long time and said, “Swarna does her work with so much care. Datta, give her the Benarasi blouse piece, on which she can stitch a design of her choice.” This Benarasi cloth was given to Swarna. She immediately decided on the design. There was another lady named Vasudha or “Akka”, whose embroidery was highly appreciated by the Mother.

In those days, the Ashramites were entitled to Rs 2/- per head as pocket money, although not everybody took it. As and when Swarna accepted the money, she would purchase threads and buttons. For the Benarasi blouse she bought gold-coloured threads. She worked on this project after completing her daily routine. This extra labour was now a strain on her eyes and soon they became red and puffy. She was advised rest. After a couple of months she resumed work, and then completed the Benarasi blouse. On receiving it, the Mother commented, “Excellent! It looks like Vasudha’s work! Finer than Vasudha’s!”

Swarna was so engrossed in her work that she neglected her health. This led to extreme weakness. On hearing about her ill-health, the Mother advised her to consult Nirodbaran, who was then the physician-in-charge. He prescribed increase in food intake and sipping of tea, the latter would boost her energy level. Alas, she didn’t know how to brew tea. Nirodbaran smilingly advised her to learn the art of tea making. He conveyed all this to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. In his turn Sri Aurobindo wrote and sent her the recipe for brewing tea! Champaklal provided her with the tea. The Mother began sending her a big bowl of salad everyday. The quota of milk and banana from the dining room was increased. With all the love and care, she soon recovered! Finally, the Mother provided her with an ironing table, thus making her job easy. Swarna kept the table in her room.

Jwalanti too was not in the best of health. She had difficulty walking. So, Mother assigned to Swarna the job of escorting Jwalanti home. This gave Swarna the opportunity to speak in French with Jwalanti. Since the outbreak of the Second World War, there used to be regular “black-outs” after dusk. Swarna held Jwalanti by the arm while accompanying her home. In the other hand Jwalanti carried a bag. As they trudged homeward in the darkness, Swarna recounted her childhood tales to Jwalanti. She spoke in French. On one such evening a thug snatched Jwalanti’s bag and disappeared in the darkness. Swarna gave a short chase shouting “stop-stop”. But the thief fled westward through the balcony road. Nolini-da heard the commotion, and called Swarna from the window. She told him about the theft. He advised her to go home. So she came back to where Jwalanti was standing and resumed walking. Except for a silver-brooch, Jwalanti confided to Swarna that nothing else of value was in the bag. The following day a report of theft was registered in the Mayor’s



office. It's not known whether any investigation ever took place. The lost items were not recovered. However, the Mayor did offer a monetary compensation. But it was turned down.

The Mother used to send an ample amount of salad for the sadhikas. In the evening, Datta, Swarna, Nishtha and Jwalanti would partake of this divine salad. One evening Nishtha asked Swarna, "I've heard that Indian women rarely leave their husband and the family . . ." Swarna replied, "I dislike it, because I hate that life. But, you Nishtha, tell me how you remained unmarried? After all you are the daughter of such an influential and wealthy father. To me this seems to be quite un-American." Nishtha smiled and replied, "I spent most of my time listening to music and reading books. I also took care of about 200 slaves who worked in my grandmother's house. The word slave is derogatory, but that is how they are called. I used to look after them, listen to their stories, and tend to their daily meals. So, I really did not have the time to get married! After having read Sri Aurobindo, the outlook and objective of my life changed and I came here . . ."

Datta, Nishtha and Jwalanti had come here, so far away from their own country, their culture and had totally dedicated themselves to the Mother's work. But they never revealed the hardship and the struggle they underwent to adjust themselves to a new environment.

Thus, Swarna reminisced about her beloved companions, as she quietly sat on the terrace, in the fading light of the setting sun.

Datta remained in the Ashram until her last breath, in the year 1949 (2.1.1884 to 2.7.1949).

Jwalanti lived up to the age of 90 years. Since her son was an employee of the French Government a grand coffin was made ready for her last rites. However, she had willed to be cremated in the Hindu way; and that was done.

Nishtha too lived all her life in Nanteuil House of the Ashram. She left her body in February 1944.

Swarna, our Swarnaprabha, is still amongst us. She is a shining and inspired example of dedicated service. The Mother's dear flower. The first and last word of that flower — Swarnaprabha — is to serve the Mother through work — "Service."<sup>1</sup>

(Concluded)

MARGUERITE

(Translated by Dr. Shyam Sundar Majumdar from the original Bengali 'Swarnasmriti Prangonae', by Marguerite, in the journal *Bortika* published by Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir, Calcutta.)

1. Swarnaprabha passed away in January 1996. — Ed. Note.

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

(Part 24)

(Continued from the issue of March 2022)

## SECTION 3: A QUIET AND HUMBLE DISPOSITION

When Sri Aurobindo was arrested in the Alipore Bomb Case the British government, out of dread, treated Sri Aurobindo as a special prisoner by putting him in a solitary cell. The other arrested revolutionaries were kept in batches of three to a cell and so they, at least, had some company and social interaction. It was here that Sri Aurobindo realised the “dangerous potentiality of solitary confinement,”<sup>1</sup> and noted, “According to the proverb, one who can stand solitude is either a god or a brute, it is a discipline quite beyond the power of men.”<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo writes how he overcame this perilous situation:

I called upon God with eagerness and intensity and prayed to him to prevent my loss of intelligence. That very moment there spread over my being such a gentle and cooling breeze, the heated brain became relaxed, easy and supremely blissful such as in all my life I had never known before. . . . From that day all my troubles of prison life were over. Afterwards on many occasions, during the period of detention, inquietude, solitary imprisonment, and mental unease because of lack of activity, bodily trouble or disease, in the lean periods of yogic life, these have come, but that day in a single moment God had given my inner being such strength that these sorrows as they came and went did not leave any trace or touch on the mind; relishing strength and delight in the sorrow itself the mind was able to reject these subjective sufferings. The sufferings seemed as fragile as water drops on a lotus leaf. Then when the books came, their need had considerably lessened. I could have stayed on even if the books were not there. Though it is not the purpose of these articles to write a history of my inner life, still I could not but mention this fact. From this one incident it will be clear how it was possible to live happily during long solitary confinement. It was for this reason that God had brought about this situation or experience. Without turning me mad he had enacted in my mind the gradual process towards insanity that

1. Sri Aurobindo, *Tales of Prison Life*, 2014, p. 38.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

takes place in solitary confinement, keeping my intelligence as the unmoved spectator of the entire drama. Out of this came strength, and I had an excess of kindness and sympathy for the victims of human cruelty and torture. I also realised the extraordinary power and efficacy of prayer.<sup>3</sup>

Sri Aurobindo further notes:

He showed me the state of mind in which prisoners condemned to solitary cells move towards insanity . . . I also understood His second purpose: it was to reveal and expose before my mind its own weakness so that I might get rid of it for ever. For one who seeks the yogic state, crowd and solitude should mean the same. Indeed, the weakness dropped off within a very few days, and now it seems that the mental poise would not be disturbed even by twenty years of solitude.<sup>4</sup>

Sri Aurobindo’s ability to conquer the potentially catastrophic effects of solitary confinement evokes a verse from *Savitri*:

The great are strongest when they stand alone.  
A God-given might of being is their force,  
A ray from self’s solitude of light the guide;  
The soul that can live alone with itself meets God;  
Its lonely universe is their rendezvous.<sup>5</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has written: “To be by oneself very much needs a certain force of inner life”<sup>6</sup> and “to be capable of solitude and to have the Ananda of solitude can always be helpful to sadhana, and a power of inner solitude is natural to the Yogi.”<sup>7</sup>

Later, all the revolutionaries, to their delight, were put in a spacious hall divided into three compartments. Sri Aurobindo, however, initially was none too pleased to be shifted from his single cell. He writes:

I found that while spending one’s time in solitary imprisonment had grown easy and pleasant, it was not that easy in the midst of the crowd and in the life-and-death game of a serious political case.<sup>8</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has explained the complexity of being in a crowd:

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

5. *CWSA*, Vol. 34, pp. 460-461.

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. 29, p. 380.

7. *Ibid.*, Vol. 31, p. 339.

8. Sri Aurobindo, *Tales of Prison Life*, 2014, pp. 47-48.

The difficulty is that the things in the atmosphere come in even if one does not speak with people. There are always mind waves moving about. It is a mastery that has to be developed, beginning with a power of silence, exclusion, non-response.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, Sri Aurobindo describes his experiences from the time he started sharing the hall with his fellow revolutionaries:

Be it as it may, everyone, excepting me, was extremely pleased at the change. At that period I was unwilling to be in the midst of a crowd, for my spiritual life, *sadhana*, was proceeding at a rapid pace. I had tasted a little of Equality, Non-attachment and Peace, but these states had not yet been fully stabilised. By being in company, with the pressure of other men's thought-waves on my unripe young ideas, this new state of being might suffer, or be even washed away. In fact, it did not happen like that. Then I did not understand that for the fullness of my spiritual experience it was necessary to evoke opposite emotions; hence the Inner Guide, *antaryamin*, had suddenly deprived me of my dear solitude, and flung me into the stream of violent outward activity.<sup>10</sup>

Sri Aurobindo writes of three periods during his imprisonment in Alipore jail, the first and the third was in solitary confinement whilst the second was spent in the company of his revolutionary comrades. He describes how he used his time during these phases:<sup>11</sup>

In the jail he spent almost all his time in reading the Gita and the Upanishads and in intensive meditation and the practice of Yoga. This he pursued even in the second interval when he had no opportunity of being alone and had to accustom himself to meditation amid general talk and laughter, the playing of games and much noise and disturbance; in the first and third periods he had full opportunity and used it to the full. In the Sessions Court the accused were confined in a large prisoners' cage and here during the whole day he remained absorbed in his meditation attending little to the trial and hardly listening to the evidence.<sup>12</sup>

Upendranath Banerjee observed in Alipore jail that Arabinda would be lost in his spiritual meditations.<sup>13</sup>

9. CWSA, Vol. 31, p. 93.

10. Sri Aurobindo, *Tales of Prison Life*, 2014, pp. 75-76.

11. Sri Aurobindo sometimes wrote about himself in the third person.

12. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 60.

13. Shyam Kumari, *Beautiful Vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, 2003, p. 9 (Upendranath Banerjee, *Nirbashiter Atma Katha* – translated from Bengali).

And on Sri Aurobindo’s demeanour in the Alipore court, Abinash Bhattacharya writes:

During the trial, Aurobindo-babu sat in the first place on the first bench, I sat next to him. He was always absorbed in meditation.<sup>14</sup>

Upendranath Banerji noticed Sri Aurobindo’s deep calm and stillness during the Alipore trial. He writes:

Once I was sitting in the prisoners’ dock when I chanced to look at him. I saw his eyeballs still as glass; he did not blink, nor was there any iota of edginess in them. I had read somewhere that the eyes show such signs when the functions of the mind are stilled. . . .

Not that I understood much of what I heard from him about all the wonderful mysteries of the inner life, but the fact that a completely new chapter had begun in the life of this unusual person, became a deep-rooted conviction in me. I heard something about his completing the Vedantic Sadhana and all the Tantric Sadhana too. I had never heard him speak about the Tantric lore. So I asked him where he found that occult knowledge. In answer he stated that a great soul, in his subtle body, visited him and taught him that discipline.

When asked about the outcome of the case, he said, “I will be acquitted.”<sup>15</sup>

Sudhir Kumar Sarkar observed that in jail Sri Aurobindo’s “eyes were full of profound peace and tranquillity.”<sup>16</sup> He further remarked:

Then Sri Aurobindo stopped speaking altogether. His eyes seemed far away, though they were not vacant, as if he dwelt in some far off twilit region. . . . He had nothing to discuss with his lawyers, C. R. Das and Byomkesh, no comments to give them about his case. He would sit in a corner of the dock and sometimes laugh uncontrollably, becoming almost red in the face. What he saw there he alone knew. During the identification parade he failed to move aside even when he was told to do so. Was it reckless madness or some profound reliance?<sup>17</sup>

Sudhir Sarkar bemusedly adds:

Thus a whole year passed before us. When C. R. Das could not get any assistance

14. Abinash Bhattacharya, ‘Sri Aurobindo’, *Mother India*, July 2012, pp. 537-38.

15. Manoj Das, *Sri Aurobindo – Life and Times of the Mahayogi*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 2020, pp. 480-81.

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

17. *Ibid.*

from Sri Aurobindo, he would stand looking helpless, wipe away his tears in dismay and go away. We would say among ourselves, “Political leaders, when the blows fall hard and mercilessly, either turn into sadhus or else they go mad!”<sup>18</sup>

Sri Aurobindo’s quietude had an unfathomable facet to it. Sudhir Sarkar writes:

His silence was something totally unlike that of ours, which is just the shutting of our mouths. Slowly his silence spread itself inwardly and outwardly; all became silent, as if all the inner mechanisms of his body, even the breathing was suspended. When I could not reconcile his silence with my own feeling; I would mutter to myself. Has he gone mad? But inside myself I could not accept this.<sup>19</sup>

On retirement or solitude as a means of doing sadhana, Sri Aurobindo has written:

And if some find that retirement is the best way of giving oneself to the Higher, to the Divine by avoiding as much as possible occasions for the bubbling up of the lower, why not? The aim they have come for is that and why blame or look with distrust and suspicion on the means they find best or daub it with disparaging adjectives to discredit it — grim, inhuman and the rest? It is your vital that shrinks from it and your vital mind that supplies these epithets which express only your shrinking and not what the retirement really is. For it is the vital or the social part of it that shrinks from solitude; the thinking mind does not but rather courts it. The poet seeks solitude with himself or with Nature to listen to his inspiration; the thinker plunges into solitude to meditate on things and commune with a deeper knowledge; the scientist shuts himself up in his laboratory to pore by experiment into the secrets of Nature; these retirements are not grim and inhuman. Neither is the retirement of the sadhak into the exclusive concentration of which he feels the need; it is a means to an end, to the end on which his whole heart is set. As for the Yogin or bhakta who has already begun to have the fundamental experience, he is not in a grim and inhuman solitude. The Divine and all the world are there in the being of the one, the supreme Beloved or his Ananda is there in the heart of the other.

I say this as against your depreciation of retirement founded on ignorance of what it really is; but I do not, as I have often said, recommend a total seclusion, for I hold that to be a dangerous expedient which may lead to morbidity and much error. Nor do I impose retirement on anyone as a method or approve of it unless the person himself seeks it, feels its necessity, has the joy of it and the

18. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

personal proof that it helps to the spiritual experience. It is not to be imposed on anyone as a principle, for that is the mental way of doing things, the way of the ordinary mind — it is as a need that it has to be accepted, when it is felt as a need, not as a general law or rule.<sup>20</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has also clarified:

No path of Yoga is easy and to imagine that by leaving the world and plunging inside oneself one automatically shuffles off the vital and external nature is an illusion. If I ask you to develop equanimity and egolessness by work done with opening to the Divine, it is because it is so that I did it and it is so that it can best be done and not by retiring into oneself and shutting oneself away from all that can disturb equanimity and excite the ego. As for concentration and perfection of the being and the finding of the inner self, I did as much of it walking in the streets of Calcutta to my work or in dealing with men during my work as alone and in solitude.<sup>21</sup>

In early 1908, when Sri Aurobindo was living in Scott’s Lane, Abinash Bhattacharya writes that although Sri Aurobindo was quiet and inward he also pleasantly interacted with visitors, albeit briefly:

I observed Aurobindo-babu’s day-to-day life very attentively. Many people came to meet him here. It was during this political period that he gave up the principalship of the National College and started editing *Bande Mataram*. He was always in a meditative state. When somebody came he talked and chatted cheerfully, then he fell silent and became absorbed in meditation.<sup>22</sup>

To a sadhak Sri Aurobindo wrote: “Talking means a vital interchange . . .”<sup>23</sup> In a letter to a disciple he wrote: “In talking one has the tendency to come down into a lower and more external consciousness because talking comes from the external mind”<sup>24</sup> and in another he noted, “. . . to minimise speech is sure to be helpful both for right action and for inner sadhana.”<sup>25</sup> And when Sri Aurobindo was asked, “Is it not possible to avoid the dissipation of forces received, even when there is contact with others, talk, etc.?” he replied:

20. CWSA, Vol. 31, pp. 343-44.

21. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 262 (This incomplete letter-draft was not sent in this form to the intended recipient. It was written sometime in the mid-1930s).

22. Abinash Bhattacharya, ‘Sri Aurobindo’, *Mother India*, July 2012, p. 531.

23. Nagin Doshi, *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. II, p. 103.

24. CWSA, Vol. 31, p. 80.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

It is difficult. Of course, when one lives very much within on a basis of great, calm, equanimity and freedom, it is possible.<sup>26</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has also written:

Talk — of the usual kind — does very easily disperse or bring down the inner condition because it usually comes out of the lower vital and the physical mind only and expresses that part of the consciousness — it has a tendency to externalise the being. That is of course why so many Yogis take refuge in silence.<sup>27</sup>

In two other letters he wrote:

Even those who have a strong inner life, take a long time before they can connect it with the outer speech and action. Outer speech belongs to the externalising mind — that is why it is so difficult to connect it with the inner life.<sup>28</sup>

And:

It is really an inner silence that is needed — a something silent within that looks at outer talk and action but feels it as something superficial, not as itself and is quite indifferent and untouched by it. It can bring forces to support speech and action or it can stop them by withdrawal or it can let them go on and observe without being involved or moved.<sup>29</sup>

However, time permitting, Sri Aurobindo mixed well when he wanted to. Bhupendranath Dutta, a worker in *Yugantar*, mentions that the young revolutionaries looked up to Sri Aurobindo and he “mixed with all.”<sup>30</sup>

By end 1907 Sri Aurobindo, despite his political activities, was getting more and more immersed in his sadhana and would therefore avoid much social interaction. Abinash Bhattacharya writes:

Every day, many people came to see Aurobindo. He told me this disturbed his sadhana. I too was a bit disturbed — how was I going to stop them from coming? I politely asked a lot of people to go away, but I could not do it with

26. Sri Aurobindo, ‘Some Letters’, *Mother India*, September 2003, p. 732.

27. *CWSA*, Vol. 31, p. 82.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

30. See *Sri Aurobindo: His Political Life and Activities*, compiled and edited by Anurag Banerjee, p. 106 (Bhupendranath Dutta, *Aurobindo Smarane* – translated from Bengali).



everyone. It wasn't just Bengalis; Marwaris came too.<sup>31</sup>

Alluding to his time from January 1908, Sri Aurobindo has stated:

When I got the emptiness, it lasted for years. Whatever else came, came in the emptiness and I could at any time withdraw from the activity into the pure silent peace.<sup>32</sup>

When Sri Aurobindo was acquitted in the Alipore Bomb Trial on 6 May, 1909, he and the other acquitted revolutionaries were taken to Chittaranjan Das' residence. Chittaranjan Das' cousin Sudhi Ranjan Das, later to become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court from 1956-59, writes:

Sri Aurobindo sat amidst the other guests fresh from the prison — rarely speaking and his eyes fixed afar. He appeared to have withdrawn his attention from all that was going on around him and sat completely self-absorbed.<sup>33</sup>

Besides being reserved Sri Aurobindo was soft-spoken. When there was a demand from the students at Baroda College to learn French, the Principal, eager to use Sri Aurobindo's scholarly skills, wrote to the Dewan on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1897:

I have had an interview with Mr. Ghose on the subject and I should be glad if you could spare him for an hour daily to teach French in the College. . . . It is a question whether Mr. Ghose has a strong enough voice to teach large classes, but these classes are small.<sup>34</sup>

Despite his soft voice Sri Aurobindo did address audiences at Baroda College. His influence over his students was not only confined to the classroom; it also extended to the College Debating Hall. Sri Aurobindo was the chairman of the Baroda College Union and Debating Society and he was quite a draw when he spoke. Rajaram N. Patkar recalls:

But more than his college lectures, it was a real treat to hear him on the platform. . . . When he was to preside, the College Central Hall which is sufficiently large was almost packed to the full with the audience which not only consisted of the College students but many educated persons from the outside public especially when the subject selected for the debate was interesting. Mr. Ghose was never an orator but a speaker of a very high order, and when he rose to speak, there

31. Abinash Bhattacharya, 'Sri Aurobindo', *Mother India*, July 2012, pp. 532-33.

32. CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 260.

33. Manoj Das, 'Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi', *Mother India*, July 2016, p. 535.

34. Papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

was a pin-drop silence and the audience used to listen to him with rapt attention. Without any gestures or the movements of the limbs, he stood . . . and the language used to flow like a stream from his lips with a natural ease and melody that kept his audience almost spell-bound. Every sentence he uttered was full of meaning and set the audience thinking for days together. . . . Though it is more than five decades now since I heard him on the Baroda College platform, I still remember his figure with the metallic ring of his sweet melodious voice as if I heard him yesterday. . . .<sup>35</sup>

About Sri Aurobindo’s spoken Bengali, Sudhir Kumar Sarkar remarked: “. . . his faltering Bengali which sounded so sweet in his English-accented tongue . . .”<sup>36</sup> When Sri Aurobindo came from Alipore jail to the residence of Chittaranjan Das, Sudhi Ranjan Das, observed: “Once in a while he exchanged a few words with *Dadababu* [Chittaranjan Das]. What a tender voice! There wasn’t the slightest trace of excitement in it.”<sup>37</sup>

A few months later, Nolini Kanta Gupta attended one of Sri Aurobindo’s political speeches. He recalls Sri Aurobindo’s humble presence and the tone and cadence of Sri Aurobindo’s voice:

On another day I chanced to see, in the fading twilight of evening at a meeting in College Square, Sri Aurobindo. He was wrapped in a shawl from head to foot — perhaps he was slightly ill. He spoke in soft tones, but every word he uttered came out distinct and firm. The huge audience stood motionless under the evening sky listening with rapt attention in pin-drop silence. . . . And the other thing I remember was the sweet musical rhythm that graced the entire speech. This was the first time I saw him with my own eyes and heard him.<sup>38</sup>

Sri Aurobindo’s voice was neither loud nor could he speak fluently in Bengali, yet he reached out to the crowds with his serene saint-like presence. His magnetism was such that the audience would become entirely silent so as to hear him. About a meeting in Beadon Square on 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1907, where after several eloquent speeches had been delivered by well-known orators, Hemendra Prasad Ghose notes that “the audience would not rest till they heard S. J. Aurobindo Ghosh speak” — though he could do so only in English.<sup>39</sup>

In late 1909, Nolini Kanta Gupta accompanied Sri Aurobindo on a political tour of Bengal and Assam. He writes how Sri Aurobindo impacted the simple village people:

35. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 64.

36. Mona Sarkar, *A Spirit Indomitable*, 1989, p. 91.

37. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, July 2016, p. 535.

38. *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 7, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 1978, pp. 323-24.

39. See Manoj Das, *Sri Aurobindo – Life and Times of the Mahayogi*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 2020, p. 296.

Out on tour Sri Aurobindo used to address meetings, meet people when he was free and give them instructions and advice. Most of those who came to his meetings did not understand English, they were common village folk. But they came in crowds all the same, men, women and children, just to hear him speak and have his *darshan*. When he stood up to address a gathering, a pin-drop silence prevailed. His audience must surely have felt a vibration of something behind the spoken word.<sup>40</sup>

Barindra Kumar Ghose has remarked that when Sri Aurobindo “rose to speak his voice was hardly audible except to those nearest to him,” but “crowds of thousands materialised as if by magic and were kept spell-bound as it were in a dream by his wonderful personal magnetism.”<sup>41</sup>

Nirodbaran, who was fortunate to hear Sri Aurobindo’s voice when he attended on him at Pondicherry, has attempted to describe it: “The nearest characterisation I can hazard is that it was masculine, but soft — some have called it musical — low-pitched, quiet and measured, with a clear English accent.”<sup>42</sup> Nirodbaran also mentions that Sri Aurobindo would dictate *Savitri* “in a quiet, subdued voice slowly and distinctly, with an English accent.”<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, Narayan Prasad, alluding to Amrita during his youth, writes that “Sri Aurobindo’s great Epic *Savitri* was begun when he was at Baroda. It was the one book which commanded his attention again and again till the last year of his life. Amrita was the first to hear one canto of its early version from Sri Aurobindo’s own lips.”<sup>44</sup>

After the Congress Surat session December 1907 Sri Aurobindo was persuaded by Tilak to go on a political tour to various towns in Maharashtra. Sri Aurobindo was one of the foremost political writers of his time and in his Poona speech he modestly remarked, “I must confess that making speeches is not my vocation. My weapon is the pen and not the tongue.”<sup>45</sup> Yet, during his Maharashtra tour in January 1908 his speeches were so inspiring that seven of his important speeches were published as a book. All told, Sri Aurobindo delivered fourteen speeches between 22 December, 1907 and 1 February, 1908. Reports of eleven of them survive.<sup>46</sup> One of his most important speeches was given at Bombay on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1908. Tilak’s Marathi paper, *Kesari* reported: “Though the hand-bills announcing the lecture were published only four hours before the time fixed for the lecture, over three thousand people gathered to hear Babu Arvind Ghose.”<sup>47</sup> Sri Aurobindo’s mind was

40. *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 7, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 1978, p. 389.

41. *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1980, p. 219.

42. Nirodbaran, *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, 2005, p. 225.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

44. Narayan Prasad, ‘Sri Aurobindo Ashram’, *Mother India*, October 1960, p. 27.

45. *SABCL*, Vol. 27, p. 62.

46. *CWSA*, Vol. 7, p. 806.

47. Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., p. 258.

completely silent — absorbed in the ‘Silent Brahman’. He remarked that “the whole speech came down from above; not a single thought or expression was mine. It got hold of my organ of speech and expressed itself through it from the beginning to the end. In my tour from Bombay to Calcutta all the speeches I made were from that condition of silence.”<sup>48</sup>

The Bombay speech, both on account of its substance and the mode of delivery, became famous. The text was published in the *Mahratta* (Poona) on 2 February and in the weekly edition of the *Bande Mataram* on 23 February. We reproduce an extract where Sri Aurobindo elucidates the true significance of Nationalism:

Nationalism is not a mere political programme; Nationalism is a religion that has come from God . . . You must remember that you are the instrument of God for the salvation of your own country. You must live as the instruments of God. . . .

Nationalism has not been crushed. Nationalism is not going to be crushed. Nationalism survives in the strength of God and it is not possible to crush it, whatever weapons are brought against it. Nationalism is immortal; Nationalism cannot die, because it is no human thing. It is God who is working in Bengal. God cannot be killed, God cannot be sent to jail.<sup>49</sup>

From Bombay Sri Aurobindo proceeded to Nasik. His first speech there on 24<sup>th</sup> January was on *Swaraj*. An account in the *Mahratta* stated: “Sjt. Arabindo addressed the audience for nearly an hour and a half and held it spellbound. His address was full of inspiration and thorough confidence in the will of God.”<sup>50</sup> The text of the speech was published in Marathi translation in the Nasik *Vritta* the next day and later retranslated into English. It gives the essence and true significance of *Swaraj*:

Swaraj is life, it is nectar and salvation. Swaraj in a nation is the breath of life. Without breath of life a man is dead. So also without Swaraj a nation is dead. Swaraj being the life of a nation it is essential for it. History shows the fate of nations without Swaraj. In ancient times the Romans had extended their sovereignty over many countries as England has done at present, and under their sovereignty the people of other countries enjoyed as we are now enjoying all the comforts of a peaceful reign. Their lives and properties were all secure as ours are, but in spite of all this, it was said that the people under the sway of the Roman Empire came to grief with its downfall, and were harassed by savage people. The reason is, they had no Swaraj. After a lapse of centuries they stood on their own legs and established for themselves Swaraj and became

48. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 2, 2013, p. 953.

49. CWSA, Vol. 7, pp. 818-19.

50. *Sri Aurobindo: His Political Life and Activities*, compiled and edited by Anurag Banerjee, p. 162.

happy. It is for this reason that Swaraj is essentially needed, and is to be gained by our own exertions. If it is gained otherwise, which is impossible, it cannot last long for want of strength in us. One way of gaining it is to implore the sovereign, who holds our realm, but he won't give it. Unfortunately there still exists a party of men who still cling to the idea that we shall obtain Swaraj by asking for it, which is to be regretted. This party thinks that we are not capable of managing our own affairs, that we are being trained in that direction and that our benign English Government will extend Swaraj to us by degrees. But they do not understand that it is against human nature — Indians excepted. The English value the importance of India. Its possession gives them status. If they once allow India to slip from their grasp, they will become a nonentity. Under such circumstances it is silly to say that the English will train us and entrust us with Swaraj. By reposing confidence in the English people we are already reduced to a miserable condition and in the end will become extinct. . . .<sup>51</sup>

Then at the Nasik speech on 25<sup>th</sup> January, 1908, Sri Aurobindo first quoted the Gita, “To save the pious, to punish the wicked, to protect religion I create myself in every age,” and then continued:

So said God. This you will only realise by belief and firm faith. Three demons have been created in the world. The first is a nation having a desire to enrich itself by looting wealth of others. The second is a nation having a desire to extend supremacy over other nations by grinding them down. The third is an atheist.

The time is near at hand when God will appear in the world. We should put aside self-interest and work in unity with each other.<sup>52</sup>

A Police intelligence report on Sri Aurobindo's visit to Dulia on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> January 1908 stated: “A great demonstration was made on his arrival to welcome him. He was garlanded by many. Songs were sung in his honour and the carriage was dragged by the school-boys. *Pan supari* and garlands were given every few paces. The procession lasted for two hours, the distance being only 1½ miles. . . . This morning he gave a lecture at the Vijayananda Theatre. The theatre and compound was crowded — about two to three thousand men and boys being present.”<sup>53</sup>

On 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1908, Sri Aurobindo arrived at Amraoti. The Government of India, Home Department report read: “At 5.40 pm. Arabindo left Kharpade's house in his Victoria along with the procession of nearly 4,000 people organised in his

51. CWSA, Vol. 7, p. 834.

52. *Sri Aurobindo: His Political Life and Activities*, compiled and edited by Anurag Banerjee, p. 163 (Extract from Bombay Presidency Police Intelligence report).

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 163-64.

honour, and reached Undrabhobon [*sic*] Theatre at 7 p.m. when he addressed about 3,000 people in English on swadeshi, swaraj and national education. On the next day, *i.e.*, the 29<sup>th</sup> January, Arabindo again delivered a speech before a large number of people.”<sup>54</sup>

Fellow Nationalist leader, G. S. Kharpade, Sri Aurobindo’s host at Amraoti, held him in high regard, as is evident in his diary note dated 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1908:

Babu Arvinda is staying with me with his companion. The young men arranged a procession in the evening. It was very grand and Arvinda was taken round the city. I could not accompany him. But my desire to attend his lecture was so great that in spite of fever I went to ‘Indrabhuwan Theatre’ at 7 p.m. The place was crowded to suffocation and though it caused me great inconvenience I am glad I went to Arvinda Babu’s lecture. It repaid all my troubles. It was [a] really theosophic address giving the basis of Indian nationalism.<sup>55</sup>

Kharpade’s diary entry reads the next day: “29<sup>th</sup> January 1908, My illness has increased. To my great sorrow I could not attend Arvinda Babu’s lecture in Jog Square.”<sup>56</sup> In this speech Sri Aurobindo movingly spoke about the mighty power behind the mantra *Bande Matram*. A report said, “In this way the speaker went on clearing up the hidden meaning of the song. His manner of love and devotion was exceedingly touching and the audience sat before him like dumb statues, not knowing where they were or whether they were listening to a prophet revealing to them the higher mysteries of life. He then concluded with a most pathetic appeal to true patriotism and exhorted the audience to love the Motherland and sacrifice everything to bring about her salvation.”<sup>57</sup>

At Nagpur, Sri Aurobindo instilled courage amongst his countrymen. “Do not be afraid even if you are required to die. Do not retreat; bear pain for the sake of the nation,”<sup>58</sup> he urged. Sri Aurobindo was to leave Nagpur on 31<sup>st</sup> January but his two speeches evoked such a response that he was prevailed upon to stay another day. On his third lecture Sri Aurobindo then emphasised the criticality of Swadeshi and the developing of India’s industries and trade. He expressed his pain that some of the mill-owners in Bombay and Calcutta were opposing the growth of Swadeshi industry and appealed to the rich to sacrifice for the cause of Swadeshi. He asserted that if the nation had economic and educational Swaraj, political Swaraj will be a natural consequence.<sup>59</sup>

54. *Ibid.*, p. 168 (Government of India, Home Department report).

55. *Ibid.*, p. 169 (Diary of G. S. Kharpade).

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.* (Summary of a lecture delivered by Sri Aurobindo at Amraoti on 29 January 1908).

58. *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1980, pp. 121-135.

59. See Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., p. 261.



Right through his Maharashtra tour Sri Aurobindo spoke in English, and there was at least one address in Sanskrit.<sup>60</sup> Despite the fact he could not speak in the local vernacular, Marathi, he made a huge impact during his political tour in Maharashtra. Chittaranjan Das later hailed Sri Aurobindo as the ‘Prophet of Nationalism’, and this tour was a manifestation of this. In the subsequent Alipore Bomb Case, Judge Beachcroft, in his judgment, stated that during Sri Aurobindo’s tour in the Bombay Presidency in January and February 1908 “he was received with acclamation wherever he went . . .”<sup>61</sup>

Kapali Sastry, who later joined the Ashram, had attended in 1907 an address of Bipin Chandra Pal who had then come to Madras on a lecture tour. Kapali Sastry and indeed the entire audience were deeply impressed with his speeches. But Kapali Sastry soon discovered that behind the curtain it was Sri Aurobindo who was the true inspiration of the Swadeshi movement. Kapali Sastry refers to one of Sri Aurobindo’s speeches during the 1908 Maharashtra tour:

And it was after one of these that a friend . . . took me aside and said: “This Pal is a loud speaker; inspired, he orates, true, but he is not the chief leader. There is another man behind the scenes, working at the desk, giving directions. His name is Aurobindo Ghose — a saintly man, a Shakti-Upasaka.” I got interested and when in the course of a year another friend returned from Nagpur where he attended a lecture by Sri Aurobindo (after the Surat Congress on his way from Bombay to Calcutta), I lost no time in getting as much information as possible from him. He was all admiration and respect while describing the leader. “He does not have a loud voice. But when he started speaking in distinctive tones, we all felt a kind of rhythm creeping over the vast concourse and when the lecture was over, we woke up as if from an achievement,” he said.<sup>62</sup>

Amongst the several brilliant speeches Sri Aurobindo delivered, the most exceptional and evocative is a non-political one. It was the Uttarpara speech “in which for the first time he spoke publicly of his Yoga and his spiritual experiences,”<sup>63</sup> and spoke of his “second realisation which was that of the cosmic consciousness and of the Divine as all beings and all that is, which happened in the Alipore jail . . .”<sup>64</sup> The speech was delivered on 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1909, and that morning Amarendranath Chatterji, a Swadeshi leader from Uttarpara, had come to Calcutta to escort Sri Aurobindo to Uttarpara. Amarendranath, who was liked even by the Moderates because of his genial demeanour, became a well-known revolutionary leader and later published

60. *Sri Aurobindo: His Political Life and Activities*, compiled and edited by Anurag Banerjee, p. 163 (Government of India, Home Department, Political A. Numbers 33-40, p. 71).

61. Manoj Das, *Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the Twentieth Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, pp. 70-71.

62. Manoj Das, *Sri Aurobindo – Life and Times of the Mahayogi*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 2020, pp. 364-65.

63. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 61.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

a Bengali version of the *Karmayogin*. He writes: “I went to the *Sanjivini* office to fetch Sri Aurobindo. I saw him there absolutely quiet, as if he was in meditation.”<sup>65</sup>

While boarding the train at Calcutta for Uttarpara, Sri Aurobindo asked Amarendranath if there was a necessity of travelling in the higher class which they were booked in. The escort was alert enough to reply that in such decisions the prerogative lies with the host and Sri Aurobindo laughingly gave in. During the train journey Amarendranath did not talk as he noticed that Sri Aurobindo sat absorbed in a trance-like state of deep peace.<sup>66</sup>

At Uttarpara the unassuming countenance and shy mannerisms of this daring saint-cum-national leader endeared him to the locals who had come in large numbers to see him. The moment Sri Aurobindo stood up to speak, the mantra of *Bande Mataram* rent the sky from the audience of ten thousand. But, writes Amarendra, “once the speaker raised his finger such was the silence that as if there was not a soul present there! And Sri Aurobindo began to speak — like the soothing murmurings of the *Gangotri*.”<sup>67</sup> About the speech Amarendranath further writes:

Sri Aurobindo was the only speaker. There were about ten thousand men in the audience. His voice was not voluminous and so the audience kept pin-drop silence to be able to hear him. The reception he got was extraordinary.<sup>68</sup>

During Sri Aurobindo’s return to Calcutta after delivering his speech, the train in which he was travelling stopped at a station. A large crowd came to see Sri Aurobindo, amongst whom was a very young Haradhan Buxi, who later settled in the Ashram. He had climbed a tree to get a good view and describes how the occasion made a deep impression on him:

In due time the train arrived. The crowd’s adoration is hard to describe. From my vantage point I could see everything clearly. Calm and serious, Sri Aurobindo came out and stood in the doorway of his compartment with hands joined in *Namaskar*. Since that felicitous day, I always do *Namaskar* to everybody.<sup>69</sup>

Later when Panch Koti Banerji, editor of the *Hitavadi*, read Sri Aurobindo’s speech, he told Amarendra Chatterji that Sri Aurobindo did wrong to speak about his spiritual experiences and quoted a line of scripture to support his view. Amarendra replied to him, “My Guru creates *Shashtra*, he does not follow it.”<sup>70</sup>

65. See Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., p. 304.

66. See Manoj Das, *Sri Aurobindo – Life and Times of the Mahayogi*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 2020, p. 589.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 590-92.

68. See Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., p. 304.

69. Shyam Kumari, *Beautiful Vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, 2003, p. 12.

70. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 123.



Sri Aurobindo, however, was particular not to disclose his spiritual experiences to anyone and he has written: “My yoga begun in 1904 had always been personal and apart . . .”<sup>71</sup> In a letter written in February 1908 to Mrinalini Devi he briefly describes that he has now become an instrument of God and like a puppet must follow his Will. He then ends the letter by saying:

Do not let anyone see this letter, for what I have said is extremely secret. I have not spoken about this to anyone but you; I am forbidden to do so.<sup>72</sup>

To a disciple Sri Aurobindo wrote:

There is no necessity to reveal one’s plans and movements to those who have no business to know it, who are incapable of understanding or who would act as enemies or spoil all as a result of their knowledge. Secrecy is perfectly admissible and usual in spiritual matters except in special relations like that of the shishya to the guru. We do not let people outside know what is going on in the Asram but we do not tell any lies about it either. Most Yogis say nothing about their spiritual experiences to others or not until long afterwards and secrecy was a general rule among the ancient Mystics. No moral or spiritual law commands us to make ourselves naked to the world or open up our hearts and minds for public inspection.<sup>73</sup>

Reverting to the subject of Amarendra Chatterji, Nolini Kanta Gupta, interestingly notes that in the early days at Pondicherry a tall and fair Sannyasi with a striking appearance came and begged for Sri Aurobindo’s darshan. When he met Sri Aurobindo he revealed, to the pleasant surprise of all present, that he was Amarendranath Chatterji. There was joy and excitement but also some apprehension regarding the British or the French authorities getting to know his true identity. His guise of a Sannyasi helped him evade arrest as a revolutionary leader. Finally, he set up an Ashram near Tanjore. He became a devotee and disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and remained faithful till his death.<sup>74</sup>

A. B. Purani describes in more detail Amarendra’s clandestine arrival in Pondicherry:

Finally, Amarendranath Chatterji of Uttarpara, who had been initiated into the revolutionary organisation by Sri Aurobindo, came in the summer of 1920 or 1921.

71. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 98.

72. *Sri Aurobindo in Baroda*, compiled and edited by Roshan and Apurva, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., p. 71.

73. CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 24.

74. See Nolini Kanta Gupta, *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 7, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 1978, pp. 415-17.

Amar was now a wanted man. For some time he had been travelling incognito all over India as the leader of a group of sannyasis. His assumed name was Swami Kevalananda. When he came to 41, Rue François Martin, Hrishikesh (later known as Vishuddhananda Giri), Motilal Roy, Rameshwar De, Natwardas, Amrita, Barin, Datta (Miss Hodgson) and the Mother, whom Amar did not meet, were staying in the house. Amar had long matted hair and carried iron tongs and a staff. He was unrecognisable. After some time he took Natwardas aside and revealed his identity to him in a low tone. When Motilal learned that it was Amar, he rushed up to him, embraced him and took him upstairs where Sri Aurobindo was staying. Precautions had to be taken so that the other sadhus would not find out what was going on.

In the revolutionary days Sri Aurobindo had given Amar the name “Gabriel”. Motilal told Sri Aurobindo that Gabriel had come. “Good Heavens!” was Sri Aurobindo’s response. All of them sat down to talk. For some time Sri Aurobindo had been receiving reports from Tanjore, Tiruchirapalli and other places that some Punjabi sadhus had been preaching his ideas and philosophy. He had been at a loss to know who these Punjabi sadhus could be. Now the question was solved. The sadhus were put up in a Dharamsala and that night Amar dined in Sri Aurobindo’s house. Sri Aurobindo told Amar not to resume his revolutionary activities. He and his companions departed the next morning.<sup>75</sup>

Soon after Sri Aurobindo’s acquittal in the Alipore Trial, the Tamil weekly *India*, published from Madras and later from Pondicherry and edited by the great Tamil poet Subramania Bharati, sent as its correspondent Parthasarathi, the brother of its publisher S. Srinivasacharya, to interview Sri Aurobindo in Calcutta. We reproduce an extract from this interview that was published in the issue of 18<sup>th</sup> September, 1909:

It is when he saw the eyes that our correspondent felt reassured. Oh! How knowing those eyes were! What grace in them! What peace! Mahashanti, mahashanti! The room exuded a great sattwic shanti.

. . . Our correspondent writes of the thoughts that arose in his mind even as the conversation was going on:

Aravinda’s voice was very calm. A state of peace was born in my mind. There was peace everywhere. It gave me great bliss to think that I was in the presence of a great being who has suffered much out of his love for the country, one whose utterances have been the wonder of the whole nation, and who was one of the Rishis of the Swadeshi Dharma. I was astonished to see him conversing with me calmly and peacefully even while his own brother was

75. A.B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, p. 176.

awaiting the death sentence.<sup>76</sup>

A few months later Sri Aurobindo got an *adesh* to go to Chandernagore. Motilal Roy, on hearing of Sri Aurobindo’s arrival, went to receive him at the river bank and surreptitiously took him to his house. Roy put him up in his unclean and untidy attic room and returned a little later with breakfast only to be awestruck by the aura of silence enveloping Sri Aurobindo. He writes:

There he was seated motionless and still, in absolute quietude, his eyes raised upward. I stood speechless! What an unearthly and enchanting darshan. Sri Aurobindo had come to my house in trance. He had completely surrendered himself unto God.<sup>77</sup>

Motilal Roy had brought some ordinary sweetmeats from a nearby shop to serve Sri Aurobindo at breakfast. He writes:

I placed the plate of food before him — he simply gazed at me and then ate a little — just mechanically! Sri Aurobindo appeared to be absorbed even when he was eating. He used to meditate with open eyes, and see subtle forms and spiritual visions.<sup>78</sup>

Later Motilal Roy took Sri Aurobindo to a friend’s place for the night but returned the next day to take him back home and accommodated him in a long room filled with furniture. Motilal Roy notes:

A small room . . . was out of repair and stocked with chairs. I spread his bed on one side of it. After everyone had retired, I asked him to follow me cautiously. He slowly accompanied me to the room and taking the bed, said, “You may go now, I shall be comfortable here.” He loved solitude, I realised. On the previous night, someone had shared the room with him, which interfered with his sadhana. I hung a small mosquito curtain, compactly piled up the chairs and returned to my apartment.<sup>79</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has stated: “At Chandernagore he plunged entirely into solitary meditation and ceased all other activity.”<sup>80</sup> He then continues:

76. *Sri Aurobindo: His Political Life and Activities*, compiled and edited by Anurag Banerjee, pp. 380-81 (Article from the Tamil weekly, *India*, 18 September 1909).

77. Shyam Sunder, *About Aurobindo*, p. 15.

78. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2006, p. 132.

79. See Motilal Roy, *My Life’s Partner*, pp. 171-91 (Translated from Bengali by D. S. Mahalanobis).

80. CWSA, Vol. 36, p. 64.

Then there came to him a call to proceed to Pondicherry. A boat manned by some young revolutionaries of Uttarpara took him to Calcutta; there he boarded the *Dupleix* and reached Pondicherry on April 4, 1910.

At Pondicherry, from this time onwards Sri Aurobindo’s practice of Yoga became more and more absorbing. He dropped all participation in any public political activity . . .<sup>81</sup>

Basanti Mitra, writes of Sri Aurobindo’s gladness when Sarojini twice came to see him at Pondicherry but on the second visit a smiling Sri Aurobindo was silent:

When Sarojinidi went to Pondicherry in 1920 to see Aurodada, he was very happy and spoke to her. Aurodada even sat with Sarojinidi while she ate. But in 1922, when Sarojinidi went again to Pondicherry, he did not converse with her; when he saw her he just smiled.<sup>82</sup>

Incidentally, during her second visit Sarojini taught the Mother how to wear a sari.<sup>83</sup>

Once in response to a query from a disciple, Sri Aurobindo clarified about his disposition:

All this talk about grimness and sternness is sheer rot — you will excuse me for the expression, but there is no other that is adequate. The only truth about it is that I am not demonstrative or expansive in public — but I never was.<sup>84</sup>

Despite his so-called reserve Sri Aurobindo was an embodiment of compassion. He used to receive his disciples with a subtle smile. In a letter to a disciple, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

I receive the sadhaks (not X or others) with a smile however unsatisfactory or invisible to you — but I suppose it becomes naturally a smile of the silence rather than a radiant substitute for cordial and bubbling laughter. *Que voulez-vous?* I am not Gandhi or Tagore.<sup>85</sup>

(*To be continued*)

GAUTAM MALAKER

81. *Ibid.*

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

83. See Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, *By the Way*, p. 127.

84. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, p. 48.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 50.



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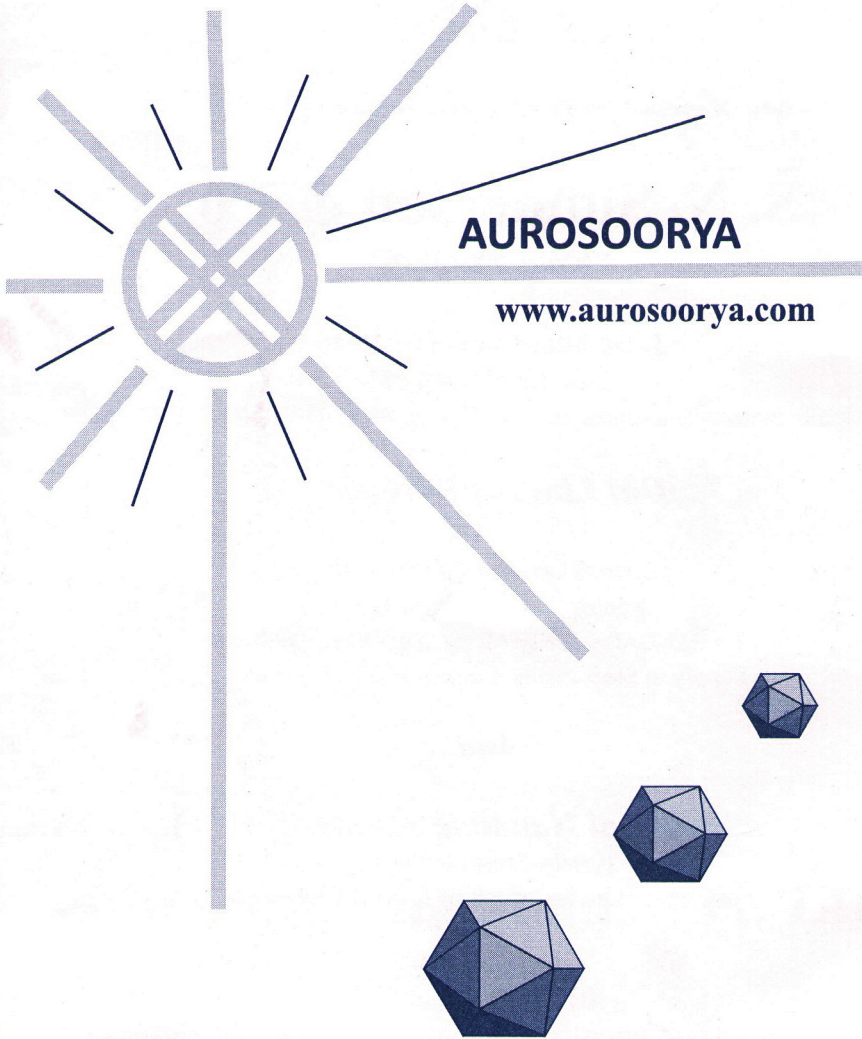
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