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# MOTHER INDIA

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JULY 2022

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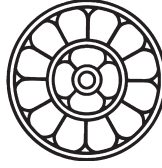
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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JULY 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. LXXVII

No. 7

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## 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*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 258)



## ‘LET ME BE ONLY THY SERVANT . . .’

**July 27, 1914**

Humbly, quietly, my prayer rises to Thee, O sweet Master, Thou who acceptest without argument and without censure all that is offered to Thee, Thou who givest Thyself and makest Thyself known to all, without asking whether they are worthy of it or not, Thou who findest nothing too weak, too small, too modest, too inadequate to manifest Thee. . . .

Let me lay myself at Thy feet, let me melt into Thy heart and disappear in Thee, let me be annihilated in Thy beatitude, or rather let me be only Thy servant, claiming nothing more. I desire, I aspire for nothing else. To be only *Thy* servant is all I ask.

The Mother

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 1, p. 211)*





## A CONVERSION OF 27 NOVEMBER 1965

[*This talk begins with Mother's comments on the message distributed on the Darshan day of November 24<sup>th</sup>.*]

*It is certainly a mistake to bring down the light by force — to pull it down. The Supramental cannot be taken by storm. When the time is ready it will open of itself — but first there is a great deal to be done and that must be done patiently and without haste.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

It is good for reasonable people. They will say, “There, he does not promise miracles.”

*Why? Do many people have the tendency to “pull down”?*

People are in a hurry, they want to see the results immediately.

And then, they believe they are pulling down the Supramental — they pull down some small vital individuality who mocks at them and in the end makes them play the shabby fool. This is what happens most often — ninety-nine times out of a hundred.

A small individuality, a vital entity who plays the big play and makes a great show, plays of light. Then the poor fellow who has “pulled” is bedazzled; he says, “There, it is the Supramental”, and he falls into a pit.

It is only when you have touched, seen in some way and had a contact with the true Light, that you can distinguish the vital, and you perceive that it is altogether like the plays of light on a stage, an artificial light. But otherwise, others are dazzled — it is dazzling, it is “wonderful”, and then they are deceived. It is only when you have *seen* and when you have had the contact with the Truth, ah! then you smile.

It is quackery, but you must know the truth in order to recognise quackery.

At bottom, it is the same for everything. The vital is like a superstage that gives shows — very attractive, dazzling, deceptive; it is only when you know the True Thing that you recognise immediately, instinctively, without reasoning, and you say, “No, I do not want that.”

And for everything it is so. Where it has taken a capital importance in human life is with regard to love. Vital passions, vital attractions have almost everywhere taken the place of true feeling, which is quiet, whereas the other puts you in ferment, gives you the feeling of something “living”. It is very deceptive. And you do not know it, you do not feel it, you do not perceive it clearly unless you know the True Thing. If you have touched true love through the psychic and the divine union, then

the other thing appears hollow, thin, empty — an appearance and a comedy, more often tragic than comic.

Whatever one may say about it, however one may explain it, is of no use at all, because he or she who is caught says immediately, “Oh, this is not what it is for others” — what happens to yourself is never like what happens to others! One must have the true experience, then the whole vital appears like a masquerade — not attractive.

And when you “pull”, well, it is much more than ninety-nine times out of one hundred . . . out of a million there is found only one case where one happens to pull the True Thing — this proves one was ready. Otherwise it is always the vital which you pull, the appearance, the theatrical show of the Thing, not the Thing itself.

To pull is always an egoistic movement. It is a deformation of aspiration. True aspiration consists in a giving, a self-giving, whereas to pull means to want for oneself. Even if in the mind you have a vaster ambition — the earth, the universe — that means nothing, these are mental activities.

*(Long silence)*

You felt nothing special on the Darshan day?

*No.*

Sri Aurobindo was there from the morning till the evening.

For, yes, for more than an hour he made me live, as in a concrete and living vision of the condition of humanity and of the different strata of humanity in relation to the new or supramental creation. And it was wonderfully clear and concrete and living. . . . There was all the humanity which is no longer altogether animal, which has benefited by mental development and created a kind of harmony in its life — a harmony vital and artistic, literary — in which the large majority are content to live. They have caught a kind of harmony, and within it they live life as it exists in a civilised surrounding, that is to say, somewhat cultured, with refined tastes and refined habits. And all this life has a certain beauty where they are at ease, and unless something catastrophic happens to them, they live happy and contented, satisfied with life. These people can be drawn (because they have a taste, they are intellectually developed), they can be attracted by the new forces, the new things, the future life; for example, they can become disciples of Sri Aurobindo mentally, intellectually. But they do not feel at all the need to change materially; and if they were compelled to do so, it would be first of all premature, unjust, and would simply create a great disorder and disturb their life altogether uselessly.

This was very clear.

Then there were some — rare individuals — who were ready to make the

necessary effort to prepare for the transformation and to draw the new forces, to try to adapt Matter, to seek means of expression, etc. These are ready for the yoga of Sri Aurobindo. They are very few in number. There are even those who have the sense of sacrifice and are ready for a hard, painful life, if that would lead or help towards this future transformation. But they should not, they should not in any way try to influence the others and make them share in their own effort; it would be altogether unfair — not only unfair, but extremely maladroit, for it would change the universal rhythm and movement, or at least the terrestrial movement, and instead of helping, it would create conflicts and end in a chaos.

But it was so living, so real that my whole attitude (how to say it? — a passive attitude which is not the result of an active will), the whole position taken in the work has changed. And that has brought a peace — a peace and a calmness and a confidence altogether decisive. A decisive change. And even what seemed in the earlier position to be obstinacy, clumsiness, inconstancy, all kinds of deplorable things, all that has disappeared. It was like the vision of a great universal Rhythm in which each thing takes its place and . . . everything is all right. And the effort for transformation, reduced to a small number, becomes a thing *much* more precious and much more powerful for the realisation. It is as though a choice has been made for those who will be the pioneers of the new creation. And all these ideas of “spreading”, of “preparing”, or of “churning Matter” . . . are a childishness. It is human restlessness.

The vision was of a beauty so majestic, so calm, so smiling. Oh! It was full, truly full of the divine Love. And not a divine Love that “pardons” — it is not at all that, not at all! Each thing in its place, realising its inner rhythm as perfectly as it can.

It was a very beautiful gift.

Well, all these things people know in some part, intellectually, like that, in idea; they know all that, but it is quite useless. In everyday practice you live in another way, with a truer understanding. And there, it is as though you touched the things — you saw them, you touched them — in their higher disposition.

It came after a vision of plants and the spontaneous beauty of plants (it is something so wonderful), then of the animal with so harmonious a life (so long as men do not intervene), and all that was in its right place; then of the true humanity as humanity, that is to say, the maximum of what a mental poise could create of beauty, harmony, charm, elegance of life, taste of living — a taste of living in beauty, and, naturally, suppressing all that is ugly and low and vulgar. It was a fine humanity — humanity at its maximum, but nice. And perfectly satisfied with its being humanity, because it lives harmoniously. And it is perhaps also like a promise of what almost the whole of humanity will become under the influence of the new creation. It appeared to me that it was what the supramental consciousness could make of humanity. There was even a comparison with what humanity has made of the animal species. It is extremely mixed, naturally, but things have been perfected, bettered, utilised more completely. Animality, under the mind’s influence, has become another thing, which

is, naturally, something mixed because the mind was incomplete. In the same way there are examples of a harmonious humanity among well-balanced people, and this seemed to be what humanity could become under the supramental influence.

Only, it is very far ahead. You must not expect that it will be immediately — it is very far ahead.

It is clearly, even now, a period of transition which may last quite long and which is rather painful. Only, the effort, sometimes painful (often painful) is compensated by a clear vision of the goal to attain, of the goal that *will* be attained: an assurance, yes, a certainty. But it would be something that would have the power to eliminate all error, all deformation, all the ugliness of the mental life — and then a humanity very happy, very satisfied with being human, not at all feeling the need of being anything other than human, but with a human beauty, a human harmony.

It was very charming, it was as though I lived in it. The contradictions had disappeared. It was as though I lived in this perfection. And it was almost like the ideal conceived by the supramental consciousness, of a humanity become as perfect as it can be. And it was very good.

And this brings a great repose. The tension, the friction, all that disappeared, and the impatience. All that had completely disappeared.

*That is to say, you concentrate the work instead of diffusing it a little everywhere?*

No, it may be diffused materially, because the individuals are not necessarily collected together. But they are few in number.

This idea of a pressing need to “prepare” humanity for the new creation, this impatience has disappeared.

*It must first of all be realised in some.*

Quite so.

I was seeing, I saw that in such a concrete way. Apart from those who are fit to prepare the transformation and the supramental realisation, and whose number is necessarily very restricted, there must develop more and more, in the midst of the ordinary human mass, a superior humanity which has towards the supramental being of the future or in the making the same attitude as animality, for example, has towards man. There must be, besides those who work for the transformation and who are ready for it, a superior humanity, intermediary, which has found in itself or in life this harmony with Life — this harmony *human* — and which has the same feeling of adoration, devotion, faithful consecration to “something” which seems to it so high that it does not even try to realise it, but worships it and feels the need of its influence, its protection, and the need to live under this influence, to have the delight of being under this protection. It was so clear. But not this anguish, these torments of wanting

something that escapes you because — because it is not your destiny yet to have it, and because the amount of transformation needed is premature for your life and it is that then which creates a disorder and suffering.

For example, one of the very concrete things that brings out the problem well: humanity has the sexual impulse in a way altogether natural, spontaneous and, I would say, legitimate. This impulse will naturally and spontaneously disappear with animality. Many other things will disappear, as for example the need to eat and perhaps also the need to sleep in the way we sleep now. But the most conscious impulse in a superior humanity, which has continued as a source of . . . bliss is a big word, but joy, delight — is certainly the sexual activity, and that will have absolutely no reason for existence in the functions of Nature when the need to create in that way will no longer exist. Therefore, the capacity of entering into relation with the joy of life will rise by one step or will be oriented differently. But what the ancient spiritual aspirants had sought on principle — sexual negation — is an absurd thing, because this must be only for those who have gone beyond this stage and no longer have animality in them. And it must drop off naturally, without effort and without struggle. To make of it a centre of conflict and struggle is ridiculous. It is only when the consciousness ceases to be human that it drops off quite naturally. Here also there is a transition which may be somewhat difficult, because the beings of transition are always in an unstable equilibrium; but within oneself there is a kind of flame and a need which makes it not painful — it is not painful effort, it is something that one can do with a smile. But to seek to impose it upon those who are not ready for this transition is absurd.

It is common sense. They are human, but they must not pretend that they are not.

It is only when spontaneously the impulse becomes impossible for you, when you feel that it is something painful and contrary to your deeper need that it becomes easy; then, well, externally you cut these bonds and it is finished.

It is one of the most convincing examples.

It is the same with regard to food. It will be the same thing. When animality will drop off, the absolute necessity of food also will drop off. And there will probably be a transition where one will have less and less purely material food. For example, when you smell flowers it is nourishing. I have seen it, you nourish yourself in a more subtle way.

Only, the body is not ready. The body is not ready and it deteriorates, that is to say, it eats itself. This proves that the time has not come, that it is only an experience — an experience that teaches you something, teaches you that it will not be a brutal refusal to come into contact with the corresponding Matter and an isolation (one cannot isolate oneself, it is impossible), but a communion on a higher or deeper plane.

(*Silence*)

Those who have reached the higher regions of intelligence, but have not dominated the mental faculties in them, have an innocent need that everybody should think like them and be able to understand as they understand. And when they see that others do not, cannot understand, their first reflex is to be horribly shocked; they exclaim, “What an idiot!” But they are not at all idiots — they are different, they are in another domain. You do not go and say to an animal, “You are an idiot”; you say, “It is an animal.” Well, you say, “It is a man.” It is a man; only, there are those who are no longer men and are not yet gods, and they are in a situation . . . rather awkward.

But it was so soothing, so sweet, so wonderful, this vision — each thing expressing its kind quite naturally.

And it is quite evident that with the amplitude and totality of the vision, there comes something which is a compassion that understands — not that pity of the superior for the inferior: the true divine Compassion, which is the total comprehension that each one is what he must be.

THE MOTHER

(*Notes on the Way*, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 11, pp. 22-29)



## A CONVERSATION OF 19 MARCH 1958

*Next, it may be conceded that each type or pattern of consciousness and being in the body, once established, has to be faithful to the law of being of that type, to its own design and rule of nature. But it may also very well be that part of the law of the human type is its impulse towards self-exceeding, that the means for a conscious transition has been provided for among the spiritual powers of man; the possession of such a capacity may be a part of the plan on which the creative Energy has built him. It may be conceded that what man has up till now principally done is to act within the circle of his nature, on a spiral of nature-movement, sometimes descending, sometimes ascending, — there has been no straight line of progress, no indisputable, fundamental or radical exceeding of his past nature: what he has done is to sharpen, subtilise, make a more and more complex and plastic use of his capacities. It cannot truly be said that there has been no such thing as human progress since man's appearance or even in his recent ascertainable history; for however great the ancients, however supreme some of their achievements and creations, however impressive their powers of spirituality, of intellect or of character, there has been in later developments an increasing subtlety, complexity, manifold development of knowledge and possibility in man's achievements, in his politics, society, life, science, metaphysics, knowledge of all kinds, art, literature; even in his spiritual endeavour, less surprisingly lofty and less massive in power of spirituality than that of the ancients, there has been this increasing subtlety, plasticity, sounding of depths, extension of seeking. There have been falls from a high type of culture, a sharp temporary descent into a certain obscurantism, cessations of the spiritual urge, plunges into a barbaric natural materialism; but these are temporary phenomena, at worst a downward curve of the spiral of progress. This progress has not indeed carried the race beyond itself, into a self-exceeding, a transformation of the mental being. But that was not to be expected; for the action of evolutionary Nature in a type of being and consciousness is first to develop the type to its utmost capacity by just such a subtilisation and increasing complexity till it is ready for her bursting of the shell, the ripened decisive emergence, reversal, turning over of consciousness on itself that constitutes a new stage in the evolution. If it be supposed that her next step is the spiritual and supramental being, the stress of spirituality in the race may be taken as a sign that that is Nature's intention, the sign too of the capacity of man to operate in himself or aid her to operate the transition. If the appearance in animal being of a type similar in some respects to the ape-kind but already from the beginning endowed with the elements of humanity was*



*the method of the human evolution, the appearance in the human being of a spiritual type resembling mental-animal humanity but already with the stamp of the spiritual aspiration on it would be the obvious method of Nature for the evolutionary production of the spiritual and supramental being.*

Sri Aurobindo  
*The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol. 22, pp. 873-74<sup>1</sup>

One thing seems obvious, humanity has reached a certain state of general tension — tension in effort, in action, even in daily life — with such an excessive hyperactivity, so widespread a trepidation, that mankind as a whole seems to have come to a point where it must either break through the resistance and emerge into a new consciousness or else fall back into an abyss of darkness and inertia.

This tension is so complete and so widespread that something obviously has to break. It cannot go on in this way. We may take it as a sure sign of the infusion into matter of a new principle of force, consciousness, power, which by its very pressure is producing this acute state. Outwardly, we could expect the old methods used by Nature when she wants to bring about an upheaval; but there is a new characteristic, which of course is only visible in an *élite*, but even this *élite* is fairly widespread — it is not localised at one point, at one place in the world; we find traces of it in all countries, all over the world: the will to find a new, higher, progressive solution, an effort to rise towards a vaster, more comprehensive perfection.

Certain ideas of a more general nature, of a wider, perhaps more “collective” kind, are being worked out and are acting in the world. And both things go together: a possibility of a greater and more total destruction, a reckless inventiveness which increases the possibility of catastrophe, a catastrophe which would be on a far greater scale than it has ever been; and, at the same time, the birth or rather the manifestation of much higher and more comprehensive ideas and acts of will which, when they are heard, will bring a wider, vaster, more complete, more perfect remedy than before.

This struggle, this conflict between the constructive forces of the ascending evolution of a more and more perfect and divine realisation, and the more and more destructive, powerfully destructive forces — forces that are mad beyond all control — is more and more obvious, marked, visible, and it is a kind of race or struggle as to which will reach the goal first. It would seem that all the adverse, anti-divine forces, the forces of the vital world, have descended on the earth, are making use of it as their field of action, and that at the same time a new, higher, more powerful spiritual force has also descended on earth to bring it a new life. This makes the struggle more acute, more violent, more visible, but it seems also more definitive, and that is why we can hope to reach an early solution.

1. The original *SABCL* reference has been standardised to the *CWSA* reference. — *MI* Ed.



There was a time, not so long ago, when the spiritual aspiration of man was turned towards a silent, inactive peace, detached from all worldly things, a flight from life, precisely to avoid battle, to rise above the struggle, escape all effort; it was a spiritual peace in which, along with the cessation of all tension, struggle, effort, there ceased also suffering in all its forms, and this was considered to be the true and only expression of a spiritual and divine life. It was considered to be the divine grace, the divine help, the divine intervention. And even now, in this age of anguish, tension, hypertension, this sovereign peace is the best received aid of all, the most welcome, the solace people ask and hope for. For many it is still the true sign of a divine intervention, of divine grace.

In fact, no matter what one wants to realise, one must begin by establishing this perfect and immutable peace; it is the basis from which one must work; but unless one is dreaming of an exclusive, personal and egoistic liberation, one cannot stop there. There is another aspect of the divine grace, the aspect of progress which will be victorious over all obstacles, the aspect which will propel humanity to a new realisation, which will open the doors of a new world and make it possible not only for a chosen few to benefit by the divine realisation but for their influence, their example, their power to bring to the rest of mankind new and better conditions.

This opens up roads of realisation into the future, possibilities which are already foreseen, when an entire part of humanity, the one which has opened consciously or unconsciously to the new forces, is lifted up, as it were, into a higher, more harmonious, more perfect life. . . . Even if individual transformation is not always permissible or possible, there will be a kind of general uplifting, a harmonisation of the whole, which will make it possible for a new order, a new harmony to be established and for the anguish of the present disorder and struggle to disappear and be replaced by an order which will allow a harmonious functioning of the whole.

There will be other consequences which will tend to eliminate in an opposite way what the intervention of the mind in life has created, the perversions, the ugliness, the whole mass of distortions which have increased suffering, misery, moral poverty, an entire area of sordid and repulsive misery which makes a whole part of human life into something so frightful. That must disappear. This is what makes humanity in so many ways infinitely worse than animal life in its simplicity and the natural spontaneity and harmony that it has in spite of everything. Suffering in animals is never so miserable and sordid as it is in an entire section of humanity which has been perverted by the use of a mentality exclusively at the service of egoistic needs.

We must rise above, spring up into Light and Harmony or fall back, down into the simplicity of a healthy unperverted animal life.

*[When this talk was first published in 1958, Mother added the following note on the “uplifting” of an entire part of humanity by the action of the new forces:]*

But those who cannot be lifted up, those who refuse to progress, will automatically lose the use of the mental consciousness and will fall back to a sub-human level.

I shall tell you about an experience I had which will help you to understand better. It was shortly after the supramental experience of the third of February,<sup>2</sup> and I was still in the state in which things of the physical world seemed so far off, so absurd. A group of visitors had asked permission to come to me and one evening they came to the Playground. They were rich people, that is, they had more money than they needed to live on. Among them there was a woman in a sari; she was very fat, her sari was arranged so as to hide her body. As she was bending down to receive my blessings, one corner of the sari came open, uncovering a part of her body, a naked belly — an enormous one. I felt a real shock. . . . There are corpulent people who have nothing repugnant about them, but I suddenly saw the perversion, the rottenness that this belly concealed, it was like a huge abscess, expressing greed, vice, depraved taste, sordid desire, which finds its satisfaction as no animal would, in grossness and especially in perversity. I saw the perversion of a depraved mind at the service of the lowest appetites. Then, all of a sudden, something sprang up from me, a prayer, like a Veda: “O Lord, this is what must disappear!”

One understands very well that physical misery, the unequal distribution of the goods of this world could be changed, one can imagine economic and social solutions which could remedy this, but it is that misery, the mental misery, the vital perversion, it is that which cannot change, doesn't want to change. And those who belong to this type of humanity are condemned in advance to disintegration.

That is the meaning of original sin: the perversion which began with the mind.

That part of humanity, of human consciousness, which is capable of uniting with the supermind and liberating itself, will be completely transformed — it is advancing towards a future reality which is not yet expressed in its outer form; the part which is closest to Nature, to animal simplicity, will be reabsorbed into Nature and thoroughly assimilated. But the corrupted part of human consciousness which allows perversion through its misuse of the mind will be abolished.

This type of humanity is part of an unfruitful attempt — which must be eliminated — just as there have been other abortive species which have disappeared in the course of universal history.

Certain prophets in the past have had this apocalyptic vision but, as usual, things were mixed, and they did not have together with their vision of the apocalypse the vision of the supramental world which will come to raise up the part of humanity which consents and to transform this physical world. So, to give hope to those who have been born into it, into this perverted part of human consciousness, they have taught redemption through faith: those who have faith in the sacrifice of the Divine

2. The Mother spoke about the experience of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February on the 19<sup>th</sup> February. See the two following pieces in this issue. — *MI* Ed.

in Matter will be automatically saved, in another world — by faith alone, without understanding, without intelligence. They have not seen the supramental world nor that the great Sacrifice of the Divine in Matter is the sacrifice of involution which must culminate in the total revelation of the Divine in Matter itself.

THE MOTHER

*(Questions and Answers 1957-1958, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 9, pp. 295-301)*



## A CONVERSATION OF 19 FEBRUARY 1958

[*Mother reads her comments upon an experience she had on February 3:*]

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

The experience I had on the third of February is a proof of this. Before that I had had an individual subjective contact with the supramental world, whereas on the third of February I moved in it concretely, as concretely as I once used to walk in Paris, in a world *that exists in itself*, outside all subjectivity.

It is like a bridge being thrown between the two worlds. Here is the experience as I dictated it immediately afterwards:

(*Silence*)

The supramental world exists permanently and I am there permanently in a supramental body. I had the proof of this even today when my earth-consciousness went there and remained there consciously between two and three o'clock in the afternoon. Now, I know that what is lacking for the two worlds to unite in a constant and conscious relation, is an intermediate zone between the physical world as it is and the supramental world as it is. This zone remains to be built, both in the individual consciousness and the objective world, and it is being built. When I used to speak of the new world which is being created, it was of this intermediary zone that I was speaking. And similarly, when I am on this side, that is, in the field of the physical consciousness, and I see the supramental power, the supramental light and substance constantly penetrating matter, it is the construction of this zone which I see and in which I participate.

I was on a huge boat which was a symbolic representation of the place where this

work is going on. This boat, as large as a city, is fully organised, and it had certainly already been functioning for some time, for its organisation was complete. It is the place where people who are destined for the supramental life are trained. These people — or at least a part of their being — had already undergone a supramental transformation, for the boat itself and everything on board was neither material nor subtle-physical nor vital nor mental — it was a supramental substance. This substance was of the most material supramental, the supramental substance which is closest to the physical world, the first to manifest. The light was a mixture of gold and red, forming a uniform substance of a luminous orange. Everything was like that — the light was like that, the people were like that — everything had that colour, although with various shades which made it possible to distinguish things from each other. The general impression was of a world without shadows; there were shades but no shadows. The atmosphere was full of joy, calm, order; everything went on regularly and in silence. And at the same time one could see all the details of an education, a training in all fields, by which the people on board were being prepared.

This immense ship had just reached the shore of the supramental world and a first group of people who were destined to become the future inhabitants of this supramental world were to disembark. Everything had been arranged for this first landing. At the wharf several very tall beings were posted. They were not human beings, they had never been men before. Nor were they the permanent inhabitants of the supramental world. They had been delegated from above and posted there to control and supervise the landing. I was in charge of the whole thing from the beginning and all the time. I had prepared all the groups myself. I stood on the boat at the head of the gangway, calling the groups one by one and sending them down to the shore. The tall beings who were posted there were inspecting, so to say, those who were landing, authorising those who were ready and sending back those who were not and who had to continue their training on board the ship. While I was there looking at everybody, the part of my consciousness which came from here became extremely interested; it wanted to see and recognise all the people, see how they had changed and check which ones were taken immediately and which ones had to remain to continue their training. After a while, as I stood there observing, I began to feel that I was being pulled back so that my body might wake up — a consciousness or a person here — and in my consciousness I protested, “No, no, not yet, not yet! I want to see the people!” I was seeing and noting everything with intense interest. . . . Things continued in this way until suddenly the clock here began to strike three, and this brought me back violently. There was a sensation of suddenly falling into my body. I came back with a shock because I had been called back very suddenly, but with all my memory. I remained quiet, without moving, until I could recollect the whole experience and keep it.

On the boat the nature of objects was not the one we know on earth; for instance, clothes were not made of cloth and what looked like cloth was not manufactured: it

formed a part of the body, it was made of the same substance which took different forms. It had a kind of plasticity. When a change had to be made, it took place, not by any artificial and external means but by an inner operation, an operation of consciousness which gave form or appearance to the substance. Life created its own forms. There was *one single* substance in everything; it changed the quality of its vibration according to need and use.

Those who were sent back for fresh training were not of a uniform colour, it was as if their body had greyish, opaque patches of a substance resembling earthly substance; they were dull, as if they had not been entirely permeated with light, not transformed. They were not like that everywhere, only in places.

The tall beings on the shore were not of the same colour, at least they did not have that orange tint; they were paler, more transparent. Except for one part of their body, one could only see the outline of their form. They were very tall, they seemed not to have any bones and could take any form according to their need. Only from the waist down had they a permanent density, which was not perceptible in the rest of their body. Their colour was much lighter, with very little red, it was more golden or even white. The parts of whitish light were translucent; they were not positively transparent but less dense, more subtle than the orange substance.

When I was called back and while I was saying “Not yet”, each time I had a brief glimpse of myself, that is, of my form in the supramental world. I was a mixture of the tall beings and the beings aboard the ship. My upper part, particularly the head, was only a silhouette whose contents were white with an orange fringe. Going down towards the feet, the colour became more like that of the people on the boat, that is, orange; going upwards, it was more translucent and white and the red grew less. The head was only a silhouette with a sun shining within it; rays of light came from it which were the action of the will.

As for the people I saw on board the ship, I recognized them all. Some were from here, from the Ashram, some came from elsewhere, but I know them too. I saw everybody but as I knew that I would not remember them all when I returned, I decided not to give any names. Besides, it is not necessary. Three or four faces were very clearly visible, and when I saw them, I understood the feeling I had here on earth when looking into their eyes: there was such an extraordinary joy . . . People were mostly young, there were very few children and they were about fourteen or fifteen, certainly not below ten or twelve — I did not remain long enough to see all the details. There weren't any very old people, apart from a few exceptions. Most of the people who went ashore were middle-aged, except a few. Already, before this experience, some individual cases had been examined several times at a place where people capable of being supramentalised were examined; I had a few surprises and noted them; I even told some people about it. But the ones whom I put ashore today, I saw very distinctly; they were middle-aged, neither young children nor old people, apart from a few rare exceptions, and that corresponded fairly well with what I

expected. I decided not to say anything, not to give any names. As I did not remain until the end, it was not possible for me to get an exact picture; the picture was not absolutely clear or complete. I do not want to say things to some and not to others.

What I can say is that the point of view, the judgment, was based *exclusively* on the substance of which the people were made, that is, whether they belonged completely to the supramental world, whether they were made of that very special substance. The standpoint taken is neither moral nor psychological. It is probable that the substance their bodies were made of was the result of an inner law or inner movement which at that time was not in question. At least it is quite clear that the values are different.

When I came back, simultaneously with the recollection of the experience I knew that the supramental world is permanent, that my presence there is permanent, and that only a missing link was necessary for the connection to be made in the consciousness and the substance, and it is this link which is now being forged. I had the impression — an impression which remained for quite a long time, almost a whole day — of an extreme relativity — no, not exactly that: the impression that the relation between this world and the other completely changed the standpoint from which things should be evaluated or appraised. This standpoint had nothing mental about it and it gave a strange inner feeling that lots of things we consider good or bad are not really so. It was very clear that everything depended on the capacity of things, on their aptitude in expressing the supramental world or being in relation with it. It was so completely different, sometimes even altogether contrary to our ordinary appraisal. I recollect one little thing which we usually consider to be bad; how strange it was to see that in truth it was something excellent! And other things we consider to be important have in fact absolutely no importance at all: whether a thing is like this or like that is not at all important. What is very obvious is that our appraisal of what is divine or undivine is not right. I even laughed to see certain things. . . . Our usual feeling of what is anti-divine seems artificial, seems based on something that's not true, not living — besides, what we call life here did not seem living to me compared with that world — anyway, this feeling should be founded on our relation between the two worlds and on how things make the relation between them easier or more difficult. This would make a great difference in our appraisal of what brings us nearer to the Divine or what separates us from Him. In people too I saw that what helps them to become supramental or hinders them from it, is very different from what our usual moral notions imagine. I felt how . . . ridiculous we are.

*(End of the February 3 experience)*

*(Mother speaks to the children:)* There is a continuation of this, a kind of consequence in my consciousness of the experience of third February, but it seemed a little



premature to read it now. It will appear later in the April issue,<sup>1</sup> following this.

One thing — I must insist on this — seems to me at the moment to be the most essential difference between our world and the supramental world — and it is only after having gone there consciously, with the consciousness which normally operates here, that this difference has become apparent to me in all its enormity, so to say — everything here, except what goes on within, very deep within, seemed to me absolutely artificial. None of the values of the ordinary physical life are based on truth. And just as to clothe ourselves we have to obtain some cloth and sew clothes to put on when we want to wear them, so too to feed ourselves we need to take things from outside and put them inside our bodies in order to be nourished. In everything our life is artificial.

A true, sincere, spontaneous life like the one in the supramental world, is a springing forth of things from the action of the conscious will, a power over substance which makes it harmonise with what we decide should be. And one who has the power and the knowledge can obtain what he wants, whereas one who does not have them has no artificial means of getting what he desires.

In ordinary life, *everything* is artificial. According to the chance of birth or circumstance, you have a higher or lower position or a more or less comfortable life, not because it is the spontaneous, natural, sincere expression of your way of being and your inner need, but because chance circumstances in life have brought you in contact with these things. An absolutely worthless man may be in a very high position and a man with a marvellous ability to create and organize may find himself toiling in an absolutely limited and inferior situation, whereas he would be a completely useful person if the world were sincere.

This artificiality, this insincerity, this complete lack of truth became so shockingly apparent to me that . . . one wonders how, in so false a world, we can have any true evaluations.

But instead of making you sad, morose, rebellious, dissatisfied, there is rather the feeling of what I was saying at the end, of something so laughably ridiculous that for several days I was seized with uncontrollable laughter when I saw things and people! — an uncontrollable laughter, absolutely inexplicable except to myself, at the ridiculousness of things.

When I invited you to a journey into the unknown, a journey of adventure, I did not know I was so close to the truth, and I can promise those who are ready to attempt the adventure that they will make very interesting discoveries.

THE MOTHER

(*Questions and Answers 1957-1958*, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 9, pp. 271-78)

1. *Bulletin*: April 1958. The text is given in this issue as an appendix to this talk.



## APPENDIX TO THE CONVERSATION OF 19 FEBRUARY 1958

*[A few days after the experience of February 3, Mother had other experiences which were a kind of continuation of the first one:]*

Each person carries with himself in his atmosphere what Sri Aurobindo calls the “Censors”; they are in a way permanent delegates of the adverse forces. Their role is to criticise mercilessly every act, every thought, the slightest movement of the consciousness, and to bring you face to face with the most hidden springs of your actions, to bring to light the slightest vibration of a lower kind accompanying what seem to be your purest and highest thoughts and acts.

This is not a question of morality. These gentlemen are not moralising agents although they know very well how to make use of morality! And when they are dealing with a scrupulous conscience, they can harass it without mercy, whispering to it at every minute, “You should not have done this, you should not have done that, you should have done this thing instead, said that thing; now you have spoilt everything, committed an irreparable mistake; see how everything is irretrievably lost now through your fault.” They may even take possession of some people’s consciousness: you chase away the thought, and there! it comes back two minutes later; you chase it away again and it is still there, all the time hammering away at you.

Every time I meet these gentlemen I welcome them, for they compel you to be absolutely sincere, they track down the most subtle hypocrisy and make you at every moment face your most secret vibrations. And they are intelligent! — their intelligence infinitely surpasses ours: they know everything, they know how to turn against you the least thought, the least argument, the least action, with a truly wonderful subtlety. Nothing escapes them. But what gives a hostile tinge to these beings is the fact that they are first and foremost defeatists. They always paint the picture for you in the darkest colours; if need be they distort your own intentions. They are truly instruments of sincerity. But they always forget one thing, deliberately, something that they cast far behind as if it did not exist: the divine Grace. They forget prayer, that spontaneous prayer which suddenly springs up from the depths of the being like an intense call, and brings down the Grace and changes the course of things.

And each time you have made some progress, have passed on to a higher level, they make you face once again all the acts of your past life, and in a few months, a few days or a few minutes, they make you go through all your exams once again at a higher level. And it is not enough to brush the thought aside and say, “Oh! I know”, and throw a little cloak over it so as not to see. You must face it and conquer, keep your consciousness full of light, without the least tremor, without a word, without the

slightest vibration in the cells of the body — and then the attack melts away.

But our ideas of good and evil are so ridiculous! So ridiculous is our notion of what is close to the Divine or far from the Divine! The experience I had the other day, on the third of February, was for me revelatory, I came out of it completely changed. I suddenly understood very many things from the past, actions, parts of my life which had remained inexplicable — in truth, the shortest way from one point to another is not the straight line that men imagine it is!

And all the time the experience lasted, one hour — one hour of that time is long — I was in a state of extraordinary joyfulness, almost in an intoxicated state. . . . The difference between the two states of consciousness is so great that when you are in one, the other seems unreal, like a dream. When I came back what struck me first of all was the futility of life here; our little conceptions down here seem so laughable, so comical. . . . We say that some people are mad, but their madness is perhaps a great wisdom, from the supramental point of view, and their behaviour is perhaps nearer to the truth of things — I am not speaking of the obscure mad men whose brains have been damaged, but of many other incomprehensible mad men, the luminous mad: they have wanted to cross the border too quickly and the rest has not followed.

When one looks at the world of men from the supramental consciousness, the predominant feature is a feeling of strangeness, of artificiality — of a world that is absurd because it is artificial. This world is false because its material appearance does not at all express the deeper truth of things. There is a kind of disconnection between the appearance and what is within. In this way, a man with a divine power in the depths of his being may find himself in the position of a slave on the external plane. It is absurd! In the supramental world, on the other hand, it is the will which acts directly on the substance and the substance is obedient to this will. You want to cover yourself: the substance you live in immediately takes the form of a garment to cover you. You want to go from one place to another: your will is enough to transport you without needing any conveyance, any artificial device. Thus, the boat in my experience had no need of any mechanism to move it; it was the will which modified the substance according to its needs. When it was time to land, the wharf took shape of itself. When I wanted to send the groups ashore, those who were to land knew it automatically without my having to say a word, and they came up in turn. Everything went on in silence, there was no need to speak to make oneself understood; but the silence itself on board the ship did not give that impression of artificiality it does here. Here, when one wants silence, one must stop talking; silence is the opposite of sound. There the silence was vibrant, living, active and comprehensive, comprehensible.

The absurd thing here is all the artificial means one must use. Any idiot at all has more power if he has more means to acquire the necessary artifices; whereas in the supramental world, the more conscious one is and the more in touch with the truth of things, the more authority does the will have over substance.

The authority is a true authority. If you want a garment you must have the power to make it, a real power. If you do not have this power, well, you remain naked. No device is there to make up for the lack of power. Here, not once in a million times is authority an expression of something true. Everything is formidably stupid.

When I came down again — “came down”, it’s a way of speaking, for it is neither above nor below, neither inside nor outside; it is . . . somewhere — it took me some time to readjust myself. I even remember saying to someone, “Now we are going to fall back into our usual stupidity.” But I have understood many things and come back from there with a definitive force. Now I know that our way of evaluating things down here, our petty morality, has no relation with the values of the supramental world.

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These surface things have nothing dramatic about them. They seem to me more and more like soap-bubbles, especially since the third of February.

There are people who come to me in despair, in tears, in what they call terrible psychological suffering; when I see them like this, I slightly shift the needle in my consciousness which contains you all, and when they go away they are completely comforted. It is just like a compass needle; one shifts the needle a little in the consciousness and it is all over. Of course, it comes back later, out of habit. They are nothing but soap-bubbles.

I have known suffering also, but there was always a part of myself which knew how to stand behind, apart.

The only thing in the world which still seems intolerable to me now, is all the physical deterioration, the physical suffering, the ugliness, the inability to express that capacity for beauty which is in every being. But that too will be conquered one day. There too the power will come one day to shift the needle a little. Only, we must rise higher in consciousness: the deeper one wants to go down into matter, the higher is it necessary to rise in consciousness. That will take time. Sri Aurobindo was surely right when he spoke of a few centuries.

THE MOTHER

*(Questions and Answers 1957-1958, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 9, pp. 279-83)*

## SPARKS AND GLIMPSES

### For always there are two

*You said that this physical world was a projection of invisible worlds. Then why should the divine Emanations come into the physical world to transform it? They have only to do the work in the invisible planes; then the projections will be good.*

That indeed is a serious question! . . . You know the image sometimes given to the universe: a serpent biting its tail? And it is taken as the symbol of the infinite, of the universe. Well, it is a fact. In the creation there is a progressive, a greater and greater materialisation. But we could take another image (I am taking an approximate image): the universe is a circle or rather a sphere (but for the convenience of explanation, let us take a circle). There is a progressive descent from the most subtle to the most material. But the most material happens to touch the point of origin of the most subtle. Then, if you understand the image, instead of going all the way round to change matter, it is much more easy to do the thing directly, for the two extremities meet — the extremely subtle and the extremely material touch, since it is a sphere. Hence, instead of doing all that (*Mother draws a circle*), it is much better to do this (*Mother touches the extreme material end of the circle*). In fact, psychologically it is that. The rest will follow quite naturally. If that is done (*Mother touches the same extreme material end*), all the rest will get settled as a matter of course. And it is not even like this! It is precisely for the convenience of work that all has been concentrated or concretised at one point so that instead of having to spread oneself out in the infinite to change things, one can work just on the point that serves as the symbol of the whole universe. And from the occult standpoint, earth (which is nothing from the astronomical standpoint; in the immensity of the astronomical skies, earth is a thing absolutely without interest and without importance), but from the occult and spiritual point of view, earth is the concentrated symbol of the universe. For it is much more easy to work on one point than in a diluted vastness. All those who do the work know this. Well, for the convenience and necessity of work, the whole universe has been concentrated and condensed symbolically in a grain of sand which is called Earth. And therefore it is the symbol of everything; all that is to be changed, all that is to be transformed, all that is to be converted is there. This means that if one concentrates on this work and does it there, all the rest will follow automatically, otherwise there will be no end — and no hope.

But that is also why this point appears as particularly bad! Because everything is concentrated. And that can be particularly good also. For always there are the two,

the two opposites are together. And always the best borders on the worst, or the worst borders on the best (it depends on the side you look from). But it is because of the worst that you can find the best and it is because of the best that you can transform the worst — the two act and react upon each other. . . . That was published in the *Bulletin*: the “Evil Persona”.<sup>1</sup> It is always said that there is a dark double of all the stars and a luminous double of all the planets. In the occult way, it is said that there is a luminous earth. All that is the experience of the luminous earth. Sri Aurobindo has described the experience.

*What experience?*

It is an experience that I had and I wrote about it to Sri Aurobindo. He answered me saying that it was an experience of Vedic times, an experience that happened in the luminous double of the earth. . . . That will come out somewhere one day.

(M5: 274-76)

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### **An experience of the Mother**

*[The experience referred to is one which the Mother had on 26 November 1915. This has been described in her Prayers and Meditations. It is a letter which the Mother sent to Sri Aurobindo.]*

*November 26, 1915*

The entire consciousness immersed in divine contemplation, the whole being enjoyed a supreme and vast felicity.

Then was the physical body seized, first in its lower members and next the whole of it, by a sacred trembling which made all personal limits fall away little by little even in the most material sensation. The being grew in greatness progressively, methodically, breaking down every barrier, shattering every obstacle, that it might

1. What you say about the “Evil Persona” interests me greatly as it answers to my consistent experience that a person greatly endowed for the work has, always or almost always — perhaps one ought not to make a too rigid universal rule about these things — a being attached to him, sometimes appearing like a part of him, which is just the contradiction of the thing he centrally represents in the work to be done. Or, if it is not there at first, not bound to his personality, a force of this kind enters into his environment as soon as he begins his movement to realise. Its business seems to be to oppose, to create stumblings and wrong conditions, in a word, to set before him the whole problem of the work he has started to do. It would seem as if the problem could not, in the occult economy of things, be solved otherwise than by the predestined instrument making the difficulty his own. That would explain many things that seem very disconcerting on the surface.

Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga – IV*, CWSA, Vol. 31, p. 648

contain and manifest a force and a power which increased ceaselessly in immensity and intensity. It was as a progressive dilatation of the cells until there was a complete identification with the earth: the body of the awakened consciousness was the terrestrial globe moving harmoniously in ethereal space. And the consciousness knew that its global body was thus moving in the arms of the universal Being, and it gave itself, it abandoned itself to It in an ecstasy of peaceful bliss. Then it felt that its body was absorbed in the body of the universe and one with it; the consciousness became the consciousness of the universe, immobile in its totality, moving infinitely in its internal complexity. The consciousness of the universe sprang towards the Divine in an ardent aspiration, a perfect surrender, and it saw in the splendour of the immaculate Light the radiant Being standing on a many-headed serpent whose body coiled infinitely around the universe. The Being in an eternal gesture of triumph mastered and created at one and the same time the serpent and the universe that issued from him; erect on the serpent he dominated it with all his victorious might, and the same gesture that crushed the hydra enveloping the universe gave it eternal birth. Then the consciousness became this Being and perceived that its form was changing once more; it was absorbed into something which was no longer a form and yet contained all forms, something which, immutable, sees, — the Eye, the Witness. And what It sees, is. Then this last vestige of form disappeared and the consciousness itself was absorbed into the Unutterable, the Ineffable.

The return towards the consciousness of the individual body took place very slowly in a constant and invariable splendour of Light and Power and Felicity and Adoration, by successive gradations, but directly, without passing again through the universal and terrestrial forms. And it was as if the modest corporeal form had become the direct and immediate vesture, without any intermediary, of the supreme and eternal Witness.

(M1: 311-12)

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### **Vedic in the real sense**

*[Sri Aurobindo answered to the letter on 31 December 1915.]*

The experience you have described is Vedic in the real sense, though not one which would easily be recognised by the modern systems of Yoga which call themselves Vedic. It is the union of the “Earth” of the Veda and Purana with the divine Principle, an earth which is said to be above our earth, that is to say, the physical being and consciousness of which the world and the body are only images. But the modern Yogas hardly recognise the possibility of a material union with the Divine.

(M1: 312)

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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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## An integral transformation

*[Mother reads out her article ‘Transformation’ (On Education), then comments on it:]*

We want an integral transformation, the transformation of the body and all its activities.

Formerly, when one spoke of transformation one meant solely the transformation of the inner consciousness. One tried to discover in oneself this deep consciousness and rejected the body and its activities like an encumbrance and a useless thing, in order to attend only to the inner movement. Sri Aurobindo declared that this was not enough; the Truth demanded that the material world should also participate in this transformation and become an expression of the deeper Truth. But when people heard this, many thought that it was possible to transform the body and its activities without bothering in the least about what was happening within — naturally this is not quite true. Before you can undertake this work of physical transformation, which of all things is the most difficult, your inner consciousness must be firmly established, solidly established in the Truth, so that this transformation may be the final expression of the Truth — “final” for the moment at least.

(M4: 18)

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## Transformation

We want an integral transformation, the transformation of the body and all its activities. But there is an absolutely indispensable first step that must be accomplished before anything else can be undertaken: the transformation of the consciousness. The starting-point is of course the aspiration for this transformation and the will to realise



it; without that nothing can be done. But if in addition to the aspiration there is an inner opening, a kind of receptivity, then one can enter into this transformed consciousness at a single stroke and maintain oneself there. This change of consciousness is abrupt, so to say; when it occurs, it occurs all of a sudden, although the preparation for it may have been long and slow. I am not speaking here of a mere change in mental outlook, but of a change in the consciousness itself. It is a complete and absolute change, a revolution in the basic poise; the movement is like turning a ball inside out. To the transformed consciousness everything appears not only new and different, but almost the reverse of what it seemed to the ordinary consciousness. In the ordinary consciousness you advance slowly, by successive experiences, from ignorance to a very distant and often doubtful knowledge. In the transformed consciousness your starting-point is knowledge and you proceed from knowledge to knowledge. However, this is only a beginning; for the outer consciousness, the various planes and parts of the outer active being are transformed only slowly and gradually as a result of the inner transformation.

There is a partial change of consciousness which makes you lose all interest in things that you once found desirable; but it is only a change of consciousness and not what we call the transformation. For the transformation is fundamental and absolute; it is not merely a change, but a reversal of consciousness: the being turns inside out, as it were, and takes a completely different position. In this reversed consciousness the being stands above life and things and deals with them from there; it is at the centre of everything and directs its action outwards from there. Whereas in the ordinary consciousness the being stands outside and below: from outside it strives to reach the centre; from below, crushed by the weight of its own ignorance and blindness, it struggles desperately to rise above them. The ordinary consciousness is ignorant of what things are in reality; it sees only their shell. But the true consciousness is at the centre, at the heart of reality and has the direct vision of the origin of all movements. Seated within and above, it knows the source, the cause and effect of all things and forces.

I repeat, this reversal is sudden. Something opens within you and all at once you find yourself in a new world. The change may not be final and definitive to begin with; it sometimes requires time to settle permanently and become your normal nature. But once the change has taken place, it is there, in principle, once and for all; and then what is needed is to express it gradually in the details of practical life. The first manifestation of the transformed consciousness always seems to be abrupt. You do not feel that you are changing slowly and gradually from one state into another; you feel that you are suddenly awakened or newly born. No effort of the mind can lead you to this state, for with the mind you cannot imagine what it is and no mental description can be adequate.

Such is the starting-point of all integral transformation.

(M12: 80-81)

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## **Infinite number of gradations**

There are very few people who know that there exists in the universe an infinite number of gradations and that each one of these gradations has its own reality, its own life, its own law, its own determinism, and that the creation did not come about “like that”, by an arbitrary will, in an arbitrary way but is a deploying of consciousness and each thing has evolved as a logical result of the preceding one. I am telling you all this as simply as I can, you see, it is a very incomplete expression, but if I wanted to tell you the story exactly as it is, it would be a little difficult to make you understand. Only I would like you to know my conclusion (I have already spoken about it several times, more or less in detail), it is this: each one of these numberless regions has its own very logical determinism — everything proceeds from cause to effect; but these worlds, although differentiated, are not separate from each other and, by numerous processes which we may study, the inner or higher worlds are in constant contact with the lower or external worlds and act upon these, so that the determinism of one changes the determinism of the other. If you take the purely material domain, for instance, and if you notice that the material laws, the purely material laws are altered by something all of a sudden, you ought to say that it was a “miracle”, because there is a rupture of the determinism of one plane through the intervention of another, but usually we do not call this a miracle. For example, when the human will intervenes and changes something, that seems to you quite natural, because you have been accustomed to it from your childhood; you remember, don’t you, the example I gave you the other day: a stone falls according to the law of its own determinism, but you wish to interrupt its fall and you stretch out your hand and catch it; well you ought to call this a “miracle”, but you don’t because you are used to it (but a rat or a dog would perhaps call it a miracle if they could speak). And note that it is the same for what people call a “miracle”; they speak of a “miracle” because they are absolutely ignorant, unaware of the gradations between the will which wants to express itself and the plane on which it expresses itself. When they have a mental or a vital will, the thing seems quite natural to them, but when it is a question of the will of a higher world — the world of the gods or of a higher entity — which all of a sudden upsets all your little organisation, that seems to you a miracle. But it is a miracle simply because you are unable to follow the gradations by which the phenomenon took place. Therefore, the Supreme Will, that which comes from the very highest region, if you saw it in its logical action, if you were aware of it continually, it would seem to you altogether natural. You can express this in two ways: either say, “It is quite natural, it is like this that things must happen, it is only an expression of the divine Will”, or, each time you see on the material plane an intervention coming from another plane, you ought to say, “It is miraculous!” So I may say with certainty that people who want to see miracles are people who cherish their ignorance! You understand my logic, don’t you? These people love their ignorance, they insist upon seeing miracles

and being astounded! And that is why people who have done yoga seriously consider it altogether fatal to encourage this tendency; hence it is forbidden.

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

(M4: 83-85)

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### **Aspiration springs up like a ready flame**

True aspiration does not come from the head; even when it is formulated by a thought, it springs up like a flame from the heart. I do not know if you have read the articles Sri Aurobindo has written on the Vedas. He explains somewhere that these hymns were not written with the mind; they were not, as one thinks, prayers, but the expression of an aspiration which was an impulse, like a flame coming from the heart (though it is not the “heart” but the psychological centre of the being, to use the exact words). They were not “thought out”, words were not set to experiences, the experience came wholly formulated with the precise, exact, inevitable words — they could not be changed. This is the very nature of aspiration: you do not seek to formulate it, it springs up from you like a ready flame. And if there are words (sometimes there aren’t any), they cannot be changed: you cannot replace one word by another, every word is just the right one. When the aspiration is formulated, this is done categorically, absolutely, without any possibility of change. And it is always something that springs up and gives itself, whereas the very nature of desire is to pull things to oneself.

(M4: 136)

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## The best possible for the unfolding of the whole

*You say, "If one always had the feeling that it is the best that happens in all circumstances, one would not be afraid." Is it really the best that happens in all circumstances?*

It is the best, given the state of the world — it is not an absolute best.

There are two things: in a total and absolute way, at each moment, it is the best possible for the divine Goal of the whole; and for one who is consciously connected with the divine Will, it is the most favourable for his own divine realisation.

I believe this is the correct explanation.

For the whole, it is always, at every moment, what is most favourable for the divine evolution. And for the elements consciously linked with the Divine, it is the best for the perfection of their union.

Only you must not forget that it is constantly changing, that it is not a static best; it is a best which if preserved would not be the best a moment later. And it is because the human consciousness always has the tendency to preserve statically what it finds good or considers good, that it realises that it is unseizable. It is this effort to preserve which falsifies things.

*(Silence)*

I saw this when I wanted to understand the position of the Buddha who blamed the Manifestation for its impermanence; for him perfection and permanence were one and the same thing. In his contact with the manifested universe he had observed a perpetual change, therefore he concluded that the manifested world was imperfect and had to disappear. And change (impermanence) does not exist in the Unmanifest, hence the Unmanifest is the true Divine. It was by considering and concentrating on this point, that in fact I saw that his finding was right: the Manifestation is absolutely impermanent, it is a perpetual transformation.

But in the Manifestation, perfection consists in having a movement of transformation or an unfolding identical with the divine Movement, the essential Movement; whereas all that belongs to the inconscient or tamasic creation seeks to preserve exactly the very same existence instead of trying to last through constant transformation.

That is why some thinkers have postulated that the creation was the result of an error. But one finds all possible concepts: perfect creation, then a "fault" which introduced error; the creation itself as a lower movement which must have an end since it had a beginning; then the Vedic concept, as Sri Aurobindo has explained it, of an unfolding or a progressive and infinite discovery — indefinite and infinite — of the All by Himself. . . . Naturally, all these are human interpretations. For the

moment, as long as you express yourself in human terms, it is a human translation. But according to the initial position of the human translator (that is to say, whether it is the position which admits “original sin” or an “accident” in the creation or a supreme conscious Will from the beginning in a progressive unfolding), in the yogic attitude, the conclusions or “descents” are different. . . . There are Nihilists, Nirvanists, Illusionists; there are all the religions which admit the devil’s intervention under one form or another; then there is the pure Vedism which is the eternal unfolding of the Supreme in a progressive objectification. And according to taste, one places oneself here, another there or elsewhere, with all the nuances between. But according to what Sri Aurobindo has felt to be the most total truth, according to this conception of a progressive universe, one is led to say that at every minute what happens is the best possible for the unfolding of the whole. It is absolutely logical. And I believe that all contradictions can arise only from a more or less pronounced tendency towards this or that, for one position or another. All who admit the intrusion of a “sin” or an “error” and the conflict resulting from it between forces which pull back and those which pull forward, may naturally contest the possibility. But one has to say that for him who is spiritually linked with the supreme Will or the supreme Truth, for him it is necessarily, at every instant, the best that happens for his personal realisation. In all instances it is like that. An unconditional best can be admitted only by one who sees the universe as an unfolding, as the Supreme’s self-awareness of Himself.

(M4: 212-15)

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### **A condensation of force**

Take a place like this, which is surcharged with certain forces, certain vibrations; these vibrations do not show themselves in visible and tangible things — they can produce changes, but as these changes occur according to a method (as all physical things do), you pass almost logically from one state to another and this logic prevents you from perceiving that there is something here which does not belong to normal life. Well, those who have no other perception than that of the ordinary mind, who see things working out as they habitually do or seem to do in ordinary life, will tell you, “Oh that, that is quite natural.” If they have no other perception than the purely physical perception, if they are not capable of feeling the quality of a vibration (some feel it vaguely, but those who are not even capable of feeling that, who have nothing in them corresponding to that or, if they have something, it is not awakened), they will look at the life here and tell you, “It is like the physical life — you have perhaps some ideas of your own, but there are many who have their own ideas; perhaps you do things in a special way, but there are lots of people who also do things in a special way. After all, it is a life like the one I live.” . . . And so, it may very well happen

that at a given moment the supramental Force manifests, that it is conscious here, that it acts on Matter, but those who do not consciously participate in its vibration are incapable of perceiving it. People say, “When the supramental force manifests, we shall know it quite well. It will be seen” — not necessarily. They will not feel it any more than those people of little sensitivity who may pass through this place, even live here, without feeling that the atmosphere is different from elsewhere — who among you feels it in such a precise way as to be able to affirm it? . . . You may feel in your heart, in your thought that it is not the same, but it is rather vague, isn’t it? But to have this precise perception . . . Listen, as I had when I came from Japan: I was on the boat, at sea, not expecting anything (I was of course busy with the inner life, but I was living physically on the boat), when all of a sudden, abruptly, about two nautical miles from Pondicherry, the quality, I may even say the physical quality of the atmosphere, of the air, changed so much that I knew we were entering the aura of Sri Aurobindo. It was a *physical* experience and I guarantee that whoever has a sufficiently awakened consciousness can feel the same thing.

I had the contrary experience also, the first time that I went out in a car after many, many years here. When I reached a little beyond the lake, I felt all of a sudden that the atmosphere was changing; where there had been plenitude, energy, light and force, all that diminished, diminished . . . and then . . . nothing. I was not in a mental or vital consciousness, I was in an absolutely physical consciousness. Well, those who are sensitive in their physical consciousness ought to feel that quite concretely. And I can assure you that the area we call “the Ashram” has a condensation of force which is not at all the same as that of the town, and still less that of the countryside.

(M4: 222-24)

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### **A hand that came and took away the pain**

. . . the effect produced depends naturally on the receptivity of the person. Supposing the person is receptive; the force of consciousness is put upon the affected part and its pressure restores order. Many of you here can tell how Sri Aurobindo cured them. It was like a hand which came and took away the pain. It is as clear as that.

(M4: 264)

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### **Not an ordinary cat**

I had a very sweet little cat, absolutely civilised, a marvellous cat. It was born in the house and it had the habit all cats have, that is to say, if something moved, it

played with that. Just then there was in the house a huge scorpion; as was its habit, the cat started playing with the scorpion. And the scorpion stung it. But it was an exceptional cat; it came to me, it was almost dying, but it showed me its paw where it was bitten — it was already swollen and in a terrible state. I took my little cat — it was really sweet — and put it on a table and called Sri Aurobindo. I told him, “Kiki has been stung by a scorpion, it must be cured.” The cat stretched its neck and looked at Sri Aurobindo, its eyes already a little glassy. Sri Aurobindo sat before it and looked at it also. Then we saw this little cat gradually beginning to recover, to come around, and an hour later it jumped to its feet and went away completely healed. . . . In those days, I had the habit of holding a meditation in the room where Sri Aurobindo slept (the room A uses now) and it was regularly the same people who came; everything was arranged. But there was an armchair in which this very cat always settled beforehand — it did not wait for anyone to get into the chair, it got in first itself! And regularly it went into a trance! It was not sleeping, it was not in the pose cats take when sleeping: it was in a trance, it used to start up, it certainly had visions. And it let out little sounds. It was in a profound trance. It remained thus for hours together. And when it came out from that state, it refused to eat. It was awakened and given food, but it refused: it went back to its chair and fell again into a trance! This was becoming very dangerous for a little cat. . . . But this was not an ordinary cat.

(M4: 237-38)

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### **The consciousness must not sleep**

Physical perfection does not at all prove, not in the least, that one has taken one step farther towards spirituality. Physical perfection means that the instrument the force will use — any force whatever — will be sufficiently perfected to be remarkably expressive. But the important point, the essential point is the force which will use the instrument, and it is there that the choice is necessary. If you perfect your body and make of it a remarkable instrument, you must not at all think that because of that you are nearer to the spiritual life. You prepare a remarkable instrument so that this spiritual life may manifest in it, if it manifests itself. But it is for you always to choose what will be manifested. There are people who perfect their body, who build a strong, solid, energetic, agile, capable body, and all this simply to be able to better affirm their ego and the strength of their ego. Others may prepare the body to be sure that when the spiritual light manifests, it will find an instrument capable of doing all that is asked of it. Whatever the work required, the instrument will be so perfected as to be able to do it without difficulty, spontaneously, immediately. . . . This is to arouse your attention to the most important fact which is the choice of the force

you will allow to manifest in your body. Perfect your body, make it a remarkable instrument, but never forget that there is a choice to be made and that this choice ought to be made constantly — one doesn't make it once for all, it must always be renewed. Because, before one reaches the total union, the total expression, there will always be this invasion of external things which will try to enter you and spoil all the work. So, the necessary, indispensable condition is a constant vigilance. Do not sleep with satisfaction under the pretext that you have once made your choice: "Oh! Now it is all right, everything is all right." In principle everything is all right; in the sincerity of your choice lies also the guarantee of its duration. But for the sincerity to be perfect and the choice unshakable, one must never sleep — I don't mean you must not sleep physically, I mean the consciousness must not sleep! And this is an introduction to what I shall read to you next time, a letter Sri Aurobindo wrote quite a long time ago; if I remember rightly, it was in 1928, October 1928. You see, things do not change very quickly.

(M4: 325-26)

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## Human nature

*This yoga can only be done to the end by those who are in total earnest about it and ready to abolish their little human ego and its demands in order to find themselves in the Divine. It cannot be done in a spirit of levity or laxity; the work is too high and difficult, the adverse powers in the lower Nature too ready to take advantage of the least sanction or the smallest opening, the aspiration and tapasya needed too constant and intense. It cannot be done if there is a petulant self-assertion of the ideas of the human mind or wilful indulgence of the demands and instincts and pretensions of the lowest part of the being, commonly justified under the name of human nature.*

Sri Aurobindo  
(CWSA, Vol. 31, pp. 154-55)

Everybody knows this; those who do not want to change their way of doing things or their way of being always say, "Oh! What do you expect, it is human nature." This is what is called a "wilful indulgence". That is to say, instead of becoming conscious that these are weaknesses and difficulties on the way, one justifies these things, saying, "Oh! It can't be helped, it is human nature." One wants to continue to do what one is doing, without changing, one is full of a wilful indulgence of one's demands. For the lower nature of man always demands things; it says, "These are necessities, these are needs, I can't do without them." Then, the instincts — a sort of instinct for one's own satisfaction — and pretensions: the lower being



claims that it has a considerable importance and must be given what is necessary for it, otherwise it won't be able to live; it asserts that it alone is important, and so on. It is all this which creates obstacles, all these obscure, ignorant movements, all these justifications of the old ways of being: those who fly into a temper and say, "What do you expect, it can't be helped", and everything one does saying, "Oh! It is human nature", everything one justifies saying, "What can be done, people are like that, there is nothing to be done about it." It is the old idea that we are born with a particular nature and must get adjusted to it, for we cannot change it.

So Sri Aurobindo tells us that if one cannot change the nature it is not worth the trouble of doing yoga, for yoga is done precisely in order to change the nature, otherwise it has no meaning.

(M4: 331-32)

THE MOTHER





## TIME TO JOIN THE TWO EXTREMES

Throughout this teaching [of the *Dhammapada*] there is one thing to be noticed; it is this: you are never told that to live well, to think well, is the result of a struggle or of a sacrifice; on the contrary it is a delightful state which cures all suffering. At that time, the time of the Buddha, to live a spiritual life was a joy, a beatitude, the happiest state, which freed you from all the troubles of the world, all the sufferings, all the cares, making you happy, satisfied, contented.

It is the materialism of modern times that has turned spiritual effort into a hard struggle and a sacrifice, a painful renunciation of all the so-called joys of life.

This insistence on the exclusive reality of the physical world, of physical pleasures, physical joys, physical possessions, is the result of the whole materialistic tendency of human civilisation. It was unthinkable in ancient times. On the contrary, withdrawal, concentration, liberation from all material cares, consecration to the spiritual joy, that was happiness indeed.

From this point of view it is quite evident that humanity is far from having progressed; and those who were born into the world in the centres of materialistic civilisation have in their subconscious this horrible notion that only material realities are real and that to be concerned with things that are not material represents a wonderful spirit of sacrifice, an almost sublime effort. Not to be preoccupied from dawn to dusk and from dusk to dawn with all the little physical satisfactions, physical pleasures, physical sensations, physical preoccupations, is to bear evidence of a remarkable spirit. One is not aware of it, but the whole of modern civilisation is built on this conception: "Ah, what you can touch, you are sure that is true; what you can see, you are sure that is true; what you have eaten, you are sure of having eaten it; but all the rest — pooh! We are not sure whether they are not vain dreams and whether we are not giving up the real for the unreal, the substance for the shadow. After all, what are you going to gain? A few dreams! But when you have some coins in your pocket, you are sure that they are there!"

And that is everywhere, underneath everything. Scratch the appearances just a little, it is there, within your consciousness; and from time to time you hear this thing whispering within you, "Take care, don't be taken in." Indeed, it is lamentable.

We have been told that evolution is progressive and that it follows a spiral of ascending progression. I do not doubt that what one calls comfort in modern cities is a much higher degree of evolution than the comfort of the cave-man. But in ancient narratives, they always spoke of a power of foresight, of the prophetic spirit, the announcement of future events through visions, life's intimacy with something more subtle that had for the simple people of that age a more concrete reality.

Now, in those beautiful cities that are so comfortable, when one wants to

condemn anything, what does one say? — “It’s a dream, it is imagination.”

And precisely, if a person lives in an inner perception, people look at him slightly askance and wonder whether he is altogether mentally sound. One who does not pass his time in striving for wealth or in trying to increase his comforts and well-being, to secure a good position and become an important person, a man who is not like that is mistrusted, people wonder whether he is in his right mind.

And all that is so much the stuff of the atmosphere, the content of the air you breathe, the orientation of the thoughts received from others that it seems absolutely natural. You do not feel that it is a grotesque monstrosity.

To become a little more conscious of oneself, to enter into relation with the life behind the appearances, does not seem to you to be the greatest good. When you sit in a comfortable chair, in front of a lavish meal, when you fill your stomach with delicious dishes, that certainly appears to you much more concrete and much more interesting. And if you look at the day that has passed, if you take stock of your day, if you have had some material advantage, some pleasure, a physical satisfaction, you mark it as a good day; but if you have received a good lesson from life, if it has given you a knock on your nose to tell you that you are a stupid fellow, you do not give thanks to the Grace, you say, “Oh, life is not always fun!”

When I read these ancient texts, I really have the impression that from the inner point of view, from the point of view of the true life, we have fallen back terribly and that for the acquisition of a few ingenious mechanisms, a few encouragements to physical laziness, the acquisition of instruments and gadgets that lessen the effort of living, we have renounced the reality of the inner life. It is that sense which has been lost and it needs an effort for you to think of learning the meaning of life, the purpose of existence, the goal towards which we must advance, towards which all life advances, whether you want it or not. One step towards the goal, oh! it needs so much effort to do that. And generally one thinks of it only when the outer circumstances are not pleasant.

How far we are from the times when the shepherd, who did not go to school and kept watch over his flock at night under the stars, could read in the stars what was going to happen, commune with something which expressed itself through Nature, and had the sense of the profound beauty and that peace which a simple life gives!

It is very unfortunate that one has to give up one thing in order to gain another. When I speak of the inner life, I am far from opposing any modern inventions, far from it, but how much these inventions have made us artificial and stupid! How much we have lost the sense of true beauty, how much we burden ourselves with useless needs!

Perhaps the time has come to continue the ascent in the curve of the spiral and now with all that this knowledge of matter has brought us, we shall be able to give to our spiritual progress a more solid basis. Strong with what we have learnt of the secrets of material Nature, we shall be able to join the two extremes and rediscover

the supreme Reality in the very heart of the atom.

24 January 1958

THE MOTHER

*(Questions and Answers 1929-1931, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 3, pp. 203-06)*



## “GLIMMERINGS” — CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo —

This poem in its original form was written ten years ago — that is, before my coming to Pondy. Reading it yesterday I thought that with some judicious corrections it might not be uninteresting. Of course you can't expect spiritual insight, but some subtlety of imagination and feeling is perhaps there. What do you think of it as it stands now? And may I know what exactly seems to you to be its drift?

### GLIMMERINGS

My soul's deep glimmerings  
Are a passionate mystery:  
My eyes can never see  
What colour sits and sings  
Upon its hidden face;  
For they can but behold  
Its loveliness unfold  
In all that charms their gaze  
When cast on outward things.  
Often I see it glow  
In the rhythmic radiance  
That coils a white suspense  
Round waves that dimly flow  
Towards the occident  
While the nocturnal track  
Of the belting Zodiac  
Is wet with star-dew sprent  
From skies across which blow  
Wind-birds on wings of green  
In whose enormous sweep  
Unto the land of sleep  
I feel my soul has been!  
For out of foam and mist  
Wherewith past eyes were fraught  
Perchance my brain was wrought  
To love — a rhapsodist —  
Vague sorceries of sheen!

For I cannot escape  
    This dream which holds my mind  
    That I would be too blind  
To mark the gorgeous shape  
    Of what inflames my soul,  
    If never cloudy sails  
    Fluttered through gleaming gales  
    And white waves did not roll  
Nor changeful lights undrape  
Their coloured nudities  
    Within my spirit's zone!  
    My look is outward thrown  
In tuneful sympathies  
    On every quivering haze  
    As if that gloom were kin  
    To a secrecy within,  
    Because of passioning clay's  
Pre-human memories . . .

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

It is a very good poem — perhaps a little diffuse and wanting in grip, but the thought and expression have a certain beauty in them and the close is very fine. Drift? well it drifts — but I suppose it is the seeing of natural beauty as reflection or else of a vision of concealed spiritual beauty within.

13 March 1936

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

*In the Overmind we have a first firm foundation of the experience of a universal beauty, a universal love, a universal delight.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(Letters on Poetry and Art, CWSA, Vol. 27, p. 42)*

## PURANI-JI AND WRESTLING

### The Background

Warfare in medieval times demanded proficiency in horse-riding, archery, skill in the use of spears, swords, maces, daggers, etc. These were best acquired through regular training in professional gymnasiums which helped develop physical strength, endurance and agility through athletics, gymnastics, weapons-training, exercises with and without weights, wrestling, boxing, etc. The training was imparted not only to princes and sons of military and civil officers but also youngsters from all castes and classes — for wars meant a large-scale recruitment of soldiers. Therefore, in India, *akhādas* were accorded royal patronage; therefore regular competitions, prize-fighting between individual wrestlers within and between kingdoms were widespread.

Swami Samartha Rāmadās (1608-81) re-established the traditional *akhādas* all over Mahārāshṭra in his crusade to build a Hindu *rāṣṭra* capable of defying the Mohamedan scourge, adding another aspect to their purpose — loyalty to race and religion. The State accorded facilities and privileges to gymnasiums and Pune housed many wrestlers receiving royal stipends annually. The practice prevailed in the territories of Mahratta chieftains, *jāgirdārs* and other independent kings. The wrestlers demonstrated their skills on festival days in front of special guests, or fought wrestlers accompanying visiting kings or any outsider who challenged them. Regular wrestling bouts were held in Pune on Saturdays for the public, of whom many were well-versed in wrestling to be capable of appreciating the techniques employed and the skills exhibited.

Bālāji Vishwanath Bhatt became the first Peshwa in 1713. His wife belonged to the Barvé family and had been granted fiefdom of Koṭhuré and adjacent villages in Nasik district. The family gave Sri Janārdanbhatt Devdhar, a Brahmin proficient in the Vedas, the charge of Sri Bāṇeshwar temple they had built there. Around 1795, he was sent to Pune to serve the Peshwa, Bājirao II. His son, Bālambhatt, was about sixteen years old when he was accepted by Raghoba-*dādā* into his *akhāda*. His exceptional aptitude and ability made him the master's favourite. When Raghoba, weakened by age was challenged by his chief disciple, he asked for a year's time. During this interim, he taught everything he knew to Bālambhatt who fought and defeated the challenger.

When the Nizam of Hyderabad sent his champions, the giants Ali and Gulāb, Bājirao II obtained a six-month period before their setting up the bouts. He saw that though a fully-trained wrestler, Bālambhatt was no match for those hulks whose mastery was well known all over the country. But being well-versed in the Vedas

and all scriptures, and being the only son of a venerated Brahmin priest, Bālambhatt realised that he needed divine help. He trekked up to Saptashriṅgavāsini's temple in the Saptashriṅga mountain range. In a 21-day *anusthāna*, every morning he recited the hundred shlokas of *Chandi Pātha* and lived on the fruits and roots he could find in the area. The goddess appeared and assured him that Maruti would be his tutor. For the next three days, Hanuman came in the form of a monkey and taught him many elaborate ways of jumping and many intricate holds using a tree as the apparatus. Later, noting down all he had learned, Bālambhatt designed the *malla-khambha* and systematised the exercises that could be done with its help. Thus was born a new means of building up endurance, stamina and agility to face bigger, stronger and heavier opponents. On the day of the bout Ali came up first. Bālambhatt kept slipping out of his holds until the huge wrestler tired and slowed his pace. Then Bālambhatt clamped a neck-hold which Ali could neither break nor slip out of and finally the renowned wrestler had to admit defeat. Scared by what he had just witnessed, Gulāb gave up. Made a *dādā* in his own right, Bālambhatt Devdhar erected two iron *malla-khambhas* in a corner of his *haudā* (wrestling pit) — one narrow and another thick, each meant for different sets of exercises. Three of his disciples earned fame all over; and their gymnasiums remained active right until late 1930s.

By 1740, when the second and greatest Peshwa, Bāji Rao I died, the great Mahratta Confederacy that he had created began to weaken due to internecine squabbles. But as long as he was alive, Nana Fadnavis held it together. “With his death in 1800”, writes British historian Grant Duff, “departed all the wisdom and moderation of the Mahratta Confederacy.” By then, one after the other, the Gaekwad, the Sindhia, the Holkar, the Bhonsle, and Peshwa Bājirao II, had signed bi-lateral treaties after treaties with the British, and by 1819, they had all been degraded into abject feudatories with not even an iota of the fire and freedom they had under Bājirao I. And by 1835, the English had ‘legally’ enslaved the entire Indian subcontinent.

After the death of Bājirao II, his dependants, among them Bālambhatt, served his adopted son Nanāsaheb who moved to Brahmavarta on the banks of the Ganges. Bālambhatt-*dādā* started another *akhāda* there, and he and his chief disciple Tātyā Sathe fought many bouts with Indian champions from the North and established his system in the most important places. Around 1852, he took *jala-samādhi* in the Ganges. Although his three sons were masters in his system, his third son, Narayan, alone seems to have kept the father's profession alive. Once, Narayan, then around 20 years old, had to go by an English army camp. Some soldiers started bullying him. Unable to keep his cool, Narayan knocked down their leader with one punch; when the others attacked him, he gave them such a drubbing that more soldiers had to rush in to overpower him. When the captain found out that it was his own boys who were at fault, he released Narayan. Realising the dangers of living there, the family trekked to Kashi. In the bi-annual boxing competitions held there, the rule said that one who drove his opponent to the end of the arena would be declared



winner. Narayan and one of his brothers won all the bouts they participated in, even with twenty-five opponents at a time attacking them.

In 1865, Narayan-*dādā* settled in Baroda. After a relative who was living in Chāṇḍod-Karnāḷi on the banks of the holy Narmadā once took him there, Narayan returned every year to spend a few days there. He never married and lived like a *sannyasi*. As proficient as his father and grandfather in Vedas he cured many with his mastery of Ayurveda. The Treasurer of Baroda granted him the highest allowance permissible. A member of one of the *akhādas* being run in those days in Shāstri's Lane learned of his mastery in wrestling and took him to that *akhāda* where, his skills being witnessed, he was made its Master. Later, some of them opened an *akhāda* in Dandia Bazar (Khāserao Jādhav had a bungalow there in which Sri Aurobindo lived for some time, and seems to have taken to *dand-baithaks*.) In 1898 Narayan moved to Karnāḷi where he died in 1902. In that period Dattātreyā Chintamani Majumdar (alias Abbāsāheb) became his disciple and opened a third *akhāda* run on the same system.

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Chotubhai, the second son of his father, Bālakrishna Purani, a respected teacher in the English School in the Princely State of Jāmnagar, was born in July 1885. The Purani family was respected in the Mewādā (Mewād's) Bhatt community of Bharuch, for their noble *sanskaras* and outstanding education. According to tradition, the family, priests of the royal family, left Mewād with Mahārāṇā Pratāp. They too were, like the royal family, votaries of Ekling Mahādev. Chotubhai's mother died when he was barely two years old. His stepbrother Ambubhai (known only as 'Purani-ji' in Sri Aurobindo Ashram) was born in May 1895. Chotubhai imbibed his father's habit of taking long walks every evening across the open fields and hilly terrains of Jāmnagar abounding in trees, while *kabbadi*, *gilli-danda* and *khō-khō* had developed his agility, strength, and concentration. Joining the Gujarat College in Ahmedabad after Matriculation in 1900, he lived in the hostel and spent a lot of time playing cricket and tennis. Luckily, he was befriended by Yashwant Pandit, a Mahārāshṭriyan fellow-student. Yashwant had built himself a strong body and character through traditional exercises like *dand-baithaks* etc., as well as exhausting walks and runs. A deeper influence on their friendship was their families' connection with Tilak and their personal knowledge of Tilak's life and political views. When the Lōkamānya visited Ahmedabad in 1902 (where he also held a secret meeting with Sri Aurobindo behind the ostentatious *pandal* of the annual Congress jamboree) he stayed with the Pandits. Thus Chotubhai became a die-hard nationalist.

On passing the inter-university exams in 1903, Chotubhai decided to major in Biology and Botany and joined the Baroda College. There, determined to build a strong body through indigenous exercise systems, he started with five *dands* and

ten *baithaks* every morning and progressed to 200/250 *dand*s and 400/500 *baithaks*. Every evening he went for a long run or a fast walk and devoted four hours to his college studies.

That year, Lord Curzon was appointed Viceroy of India. The partition of Bengal in 1905 raised the greatest nation-wide opposition.

That was also the year when, leaving the Baroda State Service, Sri Aurobindo went to Bengal and plunged into revolutionary politics.

In 1906, obtaining an M.A. in his chosen subjects, Chotubhai was appointed professor of Science in Kalā Bhavan. That year Sri Aurobindo launched the English daily *Bande Mataram*. Its articles coursed like fire through the veins of every self-respecting youth of the country. Chotubhai read every issue with intense concentration from the day the paper began publication to the day the Government suppressed it — that was his political education, and for the rest of his life Sri Arvind Ghose, the fiery nationalist, remained his exemplar.

After the Congress split at Surat in December 1907, Sri Aurobindo toured Mahārāshṭra to enlighten the people on the precarious situation that had been created. In that connection, he visited Baroda. In Ambubhai's words, "At the Vānkāner Theatre and at Prof. Manik Rao's old *akhāda* in Dandia Bazar he delivered several speeches which not only took the audience by storm but changed entirely the course of many lives. I also heard him [*Ambubhai was then twelve years old*] without understanding everything that was spoken. But ever since I had seen him I had got the constant feeling that he was one known to me, and so my mind could not fix the exact moment when I knew him. It is certain that the connection seemed to begin with the great tidal wave of the national movement in the political life of India; but I think it was only the apparent beginning."

Chotubhai decided to meet Sri Arvind Ghose. In course of their meeting he said, "I am eager to serve my country. Please guide me in that direction." Sri Aurobindo described the *akhāda* movement in Bengal and explained how it could train the youth and prepare them to serve the country. Drawing three concentric circles on a piece of paper, he suggested the creation of clusters — four revolutionaries in the innermost circle — each consisting of three working under one *tyāgi*, a renunciate. At the end, he asked Chotubhai to meet his brother Barindra who was on his way to Baroda. After two days, Chotubhai met Barindra in Khāserao Jādhav's bungalow in Dandia Bazar. Barindra "had the magical Shakti to attract others and influence them . . . an attractive way of conversing which inspired a person and motivated him to do the work he suggested." For three consecutive days, they talked nine hours every day. But when Barindra finally asked him to raise a secret group of revolutionaries as he had done in Bengal, Chotubhai perhaps could not state the fact that Gujaratis, however educated or patriotic, had never faced the palpable threat to their race, a factor which had incensed patriotic Bengalis in 1903-05 and led to several secret societies; and so it was natural though deplorable that they failed to

see the menace facing the entire nation because of their refusal to accept Tilak and Sri Aurobindo's lead at the Surat Congress. However, he promised to organise an *akhāda* movement that would encourage Gujarati youngsters to build strong resilient bodies and character and be ready to sacrifice themselves for India's independence.

In a book on the *akhāda* movement, Suman Mehta writes:

. . . in 19th century Gujarat, all the eighteen classes of men & women were capable of self-defence. Till then in volunteering whenever their nation needed to be defended as well as in joining regular fighting armies Baniyas, Brahmins, Nāgaras [the highest caste of Brahmins in Gujarat], Rajputs, Patels, Ahīrs, Rabāris, Bheels, Kolies, & all other low castes, as well as Muslims & Parsis are known to have participated in wars, displayed courage & ability & laid down their lives. From the time Ahmed Shah established his rule in Gujarat (1411-44) to the end of the Moghul Empire (1858), Gujarati soldiers and officers must have formed the majority in the armies of Gujarat. But there is no reliable and complete record of *akhādas* run by Gujarati professionals under the Gaikwādi rule established by Pilāji Gaekwad in 1758, except in Surat. . . . Chotubhai's and Ambubhai's goal was to make Gujarati youth physically strong and healthy, fearless, adventurous, patriotic and eager to do selfless service. While they were certainly to learn all exercises and fighting skills, it was indispensable that they cultivate brotherhood, equality, discipline, the courage to do everything for the motherland to the extent of giving up their life for her.

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Apart from building that organisation (which is extant), the brothers and their trusted assistants also trained a core group capable of jumping into armed revolution. A decade later, in 1919, when that group was ready for action, Ambubhai came to Sri Aurobindo for further orders and was convinced to work for the spiritual revolution that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were working and the guidelines for which had been laid out in the *Arya*. Ambubhai had subscribed to the *Arya* from the time it began to appear in print, i.e., from 1916; and, entering into a correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, had begun to translate its main articles into Gujarati as soon as he received his copy of the journal.

The *mandal* of his friends Nājuklal Choksi, Lakshminath and others began as a platform to voice their patriotic feelings and hopes. When Professor Chotubhai was invited to preside over one of their meetings, he suggested taking up practical work. Lakshminath offered a vacant plot behind his building. The roof over it had collapsed and debris and wild bushes covered the ground. *Rama-navami* was just a couple of days away so the ground was cleared, cleaned up with the help of ten or twelve young volunteers from the neighbourhood labouring two and half hours

every evening. Then the *haudā* was dug out for wrestling and in one corner a *malla-khambha* of *sheesum* (a type of hard rose-wood of the Sheesum tree) was planted. In front of the *haudā* two small statues of Hanuman were placed in a small case. Every Wednesday and Saturday incense was placed before the idols and a group meditation was conducted. On 1<sup>st</sup> May 1909 Seth Hariprasad inaugurated the *Lakshminath Vyāyām Mandir*.

But Chotubhai and his colleagues did not know much more than *dand-baithaks* and that was how the *akhāda* began. As was the custom, it became obligatory for the members to wear *langots* (loincloths) during the workouts. (Recall that the ancient Greeks wore nothing in their gymnasiums and in their Olympic games.) But this created two problems, thanks to the foreign ‘civilisation’ imposed since the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century by the two invading ‘cultures’: the youngsters felt it humiliating to be wearing just *langots* and exercise in the open, and the people of the neighbourhood found it unbearable and disgraceful: “Is this the way to exercise, dancing around naked in our *mohalla*? Damn these shameless people, are they bent on making ruffians of our children? O Lakshminath what have you started?” When that did not work, they started throwing garbage and spitting on the organisers. Undaunted, the *akhāda* group began to rope in potential youngsters from all over the city. Within a decade such a transformation came over hostility of the elders that they themselves began to persuade, even compel their children to attend the *akhāda*.

In the beginning two acquaintances who knew wrestling well enough, then a third one with better knowledge, pitched in. But it was not enough, so Chotubhai got Ambubhai and his close friend Yashwantbhai admitted to Abbāsāheb Majumdar’s *akhāda*. There for a long time all that the two were made to do were strengthening, *dand-baithaks* etc. without even being allowed to get into the wrestling pit — in fact, while it was common for young Mahārāshṭrians to go to *akhādas*, very few Gujaratis could or did. So they began to forget to take their books home and return when wrestling was being taught to the others or make a hole in the thin wall and try to learn the different *dāñvas* or *dāoñs*. But this did not help them to learn as fast as they wished. “Finally,” wrote Chotubhai, “our sympathiser Bāpurao Faṅsalkar, a specialist in physical education, taught us the art and science of wrestling with all his mind and heart. Myself, Ambubhai and Nājuklal Choksi, devoted four hours every morning and four every evening to learning wrestling and *malla-khambha*. Once we learned the *dāñvas* and exercises and we systemised them in three categories.”

The day after the inauguration of their *akhāda*, Chotubhai, four of his colleagues and a young Kāthiāwādi set out on a walking tour to Pāvāgadh (c. 38 km west of the city) in the evening. The next day after climbing up the mountain, a pilgrimage centre because of the temple to Mahākālī on its summit, and visiting all its scenic spots, they started back in the evening. This time they took the shorter route that brought them to the Ājwā reservoir about 12 km from the city. Thereafter, every summer, long walking tours were organised to places all around. The idea was that

these not only built a sense of group feeling, close friendships, fearlessness, but also inculcated in the leader proficiency in organising the trip and other qualities like selflessness, generosity, ability to face all difficulties, etc. Later, each participant was expected to familiarise himself with the geography of the entire district, acquire ample knowledge of the areas they passed through, like memorising the landmarks — police *chowkies*, temples, houses they could shelter in, especially noting the possible unconventional routes to reach the destination in case the need arose at some future date. The last was one of the ways a unit of the Purani group's revolutionary team carried pistols smuggled from the western borders to fellow revolutionaries in the eastern borders during the Quit India movement: when he was posted in Lahore, Chotubhai had come in contact with Bhagat Singh who later visited him in Baroda. Another unit bombed a part of the electric power house of an English Company providing electricity to Ahmedabad.

Afterwards the *akhāda* organised long-distance runs for its younger members to places outside the city — increasing the distance from 3 miles up and 3 miles down to 20 miles up and 20 miles down. Ambubhai and Pujalal-ji were the best swimmers of their group; they could cross rivers (sometimes in spate), and save people from drowning.

*(To be concluded)*

“S”

Note: The information has been gathered from the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the Gujarati monograph '*Gujarāt-mā Vyāyām Prachārak Mandal*', and the Purani 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday Commemorative volume.

*. . . when the wrestlers meet and embrace in the mighty arena,  
Not at their sins and their virtues the high gods look in that trial;  
Which is the strongest, which is the subtlest, this they consider.  
Nay, there is none in the world to befriend save ourselves and our courage;  
Prowess alone in the battle is virtue, skill in the fighting  
Only helps, the gods aid only the strong and the valiant.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(‘Ilion’, Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 383)*

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

(Part 27)

(Continued from the issue of June 2022)

## Section 3: A QUIET AND HUMBLE DISPOSITION

Although reserved by nature, Sri Aurobindo had some significant and decisive friends and associates. Besides Tilak, he knew several other great Nationalist leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal, G. S. Kharpade, C. R. Das and others, and was esteemed by them for his self-sacrifice, patriotism, vast learning, vision, purity, composure, sattwic temperament and spirituality.

### Lala Lajpat Rai

Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928) along with Tilak and Sri Aurobindo comprised the top trio of Swadeshi leaders. He notes of Sri Aurobindo that “he is deeply religious and spiritual. He is a worshipper of Krishna and a high-souled Vedantist. . . . he believes in the spiritual mission of his people.”<sup>1</sup>

In a letter to *Bande Mataram* dated 4<sup>th</sup> May 1907 Lala Lajpat Rai wrote:

Let me assure you that I spare no opportunity of recommending your excellent paper to my friends as well as those I meet. For me it is generally an intellectual feast and it is my earnest desire that nothing will happen to mar its usefulness. It is doing a splendid service. May it live long is the earnest prayer.<sup>2</sup>

Five days later the news of Lala Lajpat Rai’s deportation to Mandalay, Burma reached the *Bande Mataram* office at midnight. Sri Aurobindo was instantly aroused from his sleep at Subodh Mullick’s house. He immediately asked for a piece of paper and pencil and wrote a message that was published in *Bande Mataram* on 10<sup>th</sup> May:

. . . Lala Lajpat Rai has been deported out of British India. . . . The hour for speeches and fine writing is past. The bureaucracy has thrown down the gauntlet. We take it up. Men of the Punjab! Race of the lion! Show these men

1. Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 1981, p. 119.

2. Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, p. 347.



who would stamp you into the dust that for one Lajpat they have taken away, a hundred Lajpats will arise in his place. Let them hear a hundred times louder your war-cry — *Jai Hindusthan!*<sup>3</sup>

The next day Sri Aurobindo followed up with a stirring fiery longer piece.

In his Presidential address at the 1920 Calcutta Congress, Lajpat Rai said that “the ideas of new Nationalism that have since then grown into a mighty tree, were first expounded and explained by one of the purest minded and the most intellectual of Bengal’s gifted sons, I mean Sri Arabindo Ghosh.”<sup>4</sup> And in his *India’s Will to Freedom* Lala Lajpat Rai writes:

No assembly in India could be called national which precluded by virtue of his creed a man of purity and of the absolute disinterestedness and high patriotism of the nation as Aurobindo Ghose.<sup>5</sup>

Ever since Sri Aurobindo’s departure from Calcutta in 1910, attempts were made from time to time to bring him back to active political life. Lajpat Rai, C. R. Das, Dr. B. S. Moonje (Tilak’s associate and later president of the Hindu Mahasabha), Joseph Baptista (Tilak’s confidante), were among the Nationalist leaders who tried to persuade Sri Aurobindo to return to India from his self-imposed exile and give a lead to the country. Invariably he excused himself.<sup>6</sup>

Even long after Sri Aurobindo retired from politics, Lala Lajpat Rai along with Purushottam Das Tandon (a future Bharat Ratna awardee) and others travelled to Pondicherry, specifically to meet him. On 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1925, Lajpat Rai had a 45-minutes private meeting with Sri Aurobindo, they then joined the others.

### Chittaranjan Das

Another close friend of Sri Aurobindo was Chittaranjan Das (1870-1925). He and Sri Aurobindo were in England at the same time and they had possibly come in contact with each other there. Like Sri Aurobindo, Chittaranjan too sat for the I.C.S. examination. It was believed that he was excluded from the list of successful candidates because of his nationalist speeches in England.<sup>7</sup> A disciple asked Sri Aurobindo, “We heard that you and C. R. Das used to make plans for revolution in India while in England,” to which he replied, “Not only C. R. Das but many others. Deshpande was one.”<sup>8</sup>

3. *CWSA*, Vol. 6, p. 395.

4. Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, p. 378.

5. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, December 2014, p. 1019.

6. See K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2006, pp. 727-28.

7. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, October 2015, p. 831.

8. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 568.



Sometime in 1902-03 Sri Aurobindo formed a secret society with a committee of five for the overall charge of the revolutionary work in Bengal. It was headed by P. Mitra and included C. R. Das. From the beginning, Sri Aurobindo used to contribute big sums for the work of the secret society; C. R. Das and P. Mitra also contributed.<sup>9</sup>

C. R. Das came back to India as a barrister in 1893, the very year Sri Aurobindo returned; his legal skills came to the fore in the Alipore Bomb trial in 1908-09. After the assassination of the approver Naren Gossain in the case, Sri Aurobindo's maternal uncle K. K. Mitra realised that they had to find a very capable lawyer to match the talent of the government prosecutor, the formidable Yeardley Norton whose theatricals and bullying tactics with the witnesses were legendary. It was then that K. K. Mitra approached C. R. Das through his former student, Dhannulal Agarwal, a High Court Attorney, frankly stating that all that the Defence Fund was left with was an inadequate amount of Rs. 6,000. Das was not yet famous but a young promising barrister. Most importantly, he was a great admirer of Sri Aurobindo and thus agreed to take up the case despite deficient funds.<sup>10</sup> Sudhi Ranjan Das, Chittaranjan Das' young cousin who later became the 5<sup>th</sup> Chief Justice of India, said that C. R. Das held Sri Aurobindo in high esteem and venerated him for his ideals.<sup>11</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's biographer, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar notes that it was the spirit of Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya, who had died during captivity in the Campbell Hospital, which appeared in a dream to C. R. Das and told him that he should take up the defence of Sri Aurobindo in the Alipore Bomb Case. Das's mother too seems to have asked him not to hesitate, for his duty lay in taking up the case.<sup>12</sup> Chittaranjan's daughter Aparna Devi notes that her father was only waiting for the challenging proposal. She writes:

Nobody had approached Father to take up the case. But from the very beginning he was eagerly waiting for the chance. That was a time when he often sat in a circle with friends to invoke the spirits of the departed, at night. We the curious children would peep into their room through different doors. One day Father said, “Tonight I will ask about the case of Aurobindo.” The late Maharaja of Natore, Jagadindranath Roy, also used to be present in these sessions. That night they invoked the spirit of Brahmabandhav Upadhyay. The automatic writing in English read: “You must defend Aurobindo.” The pencil went on moving again and again repeating the same words. Father was quite excited. When Uncle Bijay (B. C. Chatterjee, Barrister) came, Father exclaimed, “You'll see, Bijay, the case will surely come to me.”<sup>13</sup>

9. Sujata Nahar, *Mother's Chronicles*, Book V, p. 314.

10. See Manoj Das, 'Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi', *Mother India*, October 2015, p. 831.

11. See S. R. Das, 'A Reminiscence of Sri Aurobindo', *Mother India*, January 1959, p. 51.

12. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2006, p. 326.

13. Manoj Das, 'Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi', *Mother India*, October 2015, p. 832 (Aparna Devi, *Manush Chittaranjan*, – translated from Bengali).

Aparna Devi recollects that even though they were not financially stable, C. R. Das forgot about all his obligations and remained absorbed in law books and the documents regarding the case, literally forgetting his sleep and food. He was so focussed on the task that he and his staff did not entertain any other client. He looked like a Yogi lost to the world around him and family members were careful not to disturb him.<sup>14</sup>

During the Alipore Bomb trial C. R. Das defended Sri Aurobindo’s writings in the *Bande Mataram*:

So far as these articles are concerned I submit that the charge of racial antipathy cannot be brought against the *Bande Mataram*. The particular note in the *Bande Mataram* was love for its own people and if that in itself involved some antipathy it may be expected, but what I want to lay stress on is, that the dominant note was not antipathy but love for its own people, and in dealing with that it may be that the articles have referred to other nations not in very complimentary languages. If you read the whole thing you will find that the object is not to attack any nation at all, but to point out that we must fall back upon our own resources, and stand on our own legs or in other words, as I have pointed out before, that you cannot attain your ideal except through your own salvation. The *Bande Mataram* had to attack other nations because it pointed out that the people of this country were under the spell of foreign civilisation, under alien civilisation and wanted to dispel by these articles that peculiar hypnotism that was cast on the people of this country by European nations. Not that European civilisation is bad, but that European civilisation is for “Europeans”. European nations must develop in their own way; they must rise to the noblest and best in them according to their own traditions. So also with the Indians; they must also take their own stand. . . . European civilisation applied to us, European traditions brought into this country, are not the materials upon which this nation can grow. That is the philosophy underlying all the articles. . . . the development of a nation must be based on its own traditions. If you base it on any other traditions the soil will not be congenial.<sup>15</sup>

Incidentally, when *Bande Mataram* was launched by Bipin Pal in August 1906 with only Rs. 500 in his pocket, he requested Sri Aurobindo’s help as assistant editor. However, it ran out of funds weeks later. Contributions by C. R. Das, Subodh Mullick and others revitalised it in September 1906. Despite his low salary at Bengal National College Sri Aurobindo too contributed a generous sum of Rs. 300. C. R. Das and others “strongly supported” Bipin Pal as editor. Sri Aurobindo convinced Subodh Mullick, C. R. Das and Charu Chandra Dutt to recognise *Bande Mataram*

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, April 2016, p. 316.

as the mouth piece of the Extremist Party.<sup>16</sup>

Commenting on C. R. Das’s defence, Nolini Kanta Gupta remarked: “Chittaranjan’s voice rose slowly in a crescendo of measured tones. We all stood up and listened intently attentive in pin-drop silence as Chittaranjan went on speaking, as if divinely inspired and like one god-possessed.”<sup>17</sup> C. R. Das’s defence of Sri Aurobindo in the Sessions Court spanned across eight days. He concluded with an impassioned appeal:

My appeal to you is this, that long after the controversy will be hushed in silence, long after this turmoil and the agitation will have ceased, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed, not only in India but across distant seas and lands. Therefore I say that the man in his position is not only standing before the Bar of this Court, but before the Bar of the High Court of History.<sup>18</sup>

Sri Aurobindo was acquitted. When released from Alipore jail he was taken to the residence of C. R. Das whose daughter Aparna Devi recollects with pride:

I can never forget our festive home at Russa Road the day Sri Aurobindo and his fellow-prisoners were set free. Whose magic touch was it that made the otherwise serene and silent home get filled with jubilation by our countrymen? As Sri Aurobindo and others entered our house, the women folk greeted them blowing conch-shells and with cheers. A heap of new *dhoties* had been secured for them. Shouting “Bande Mataram” the guests plunged into our pond. The water seemed to be surging up with the lively joy of the liberated ones. Their chorus of the national song [was] vibrant in the air and the sky.

Mother and others were busy cooking. We, the little brothers and sisters, eager to witness that feast of gods, engaged ourselves in cleaning the banana leaves and the earthen tumblers. “The delight cannot be described” — was the emotional state of us all. The spacious courtyard in front of Father’s office was the chosen site for the feast. Singing, swimming and playing in the water for about an hour, the guests emerged from the pond and were attired in new clothes. With dots of sandalwood paste on their foreheads, these worthy children of our motherland sat down for lunch with their colossal appetite. Again they shouted “Bande Mataram”. Mother and others felt gratified by serving them. Since we

16. See *CWSA*, Vol. 36, pp. 54, 79. See Hemendra Prasad Ghose, ‘Reminiscences of Aurobindo Ghose’, *Orient Illustrated Weekly*, 27 February 1949; papers at Sri Aurobindo Archives.

17. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, April 2016, p. 311.

18. Cited in Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., p. 215.

too were extremely eager to assist, we were allowed to serve salt, water and sweet. We were in heaven. I still remember with a sense of pride that I had placed *Sandesh* on Sri Aurobindo's leaf. Father partook of food along with them. . . . That day, upon that courtyard, Bengal seemed to bow down to Hari and Hara in the persons of Sri Aurobindo and Chittaranjan.<sup>19</sup>

The editorial of the *Amrita Bazar* in its issue of 7 May 1909 said: “The defence of Babu Aurobindo by Mr. C. R. Das was a masterpiece of its kind and will no doubt find a place in history.”<sup>20</sup>

C. R. Das again led the defence team in the appeal at the High Court. As predicted by Sri Aurobindo, Barindra Kumar's and Ullaskar's capital punishment was commuted to transportation for life to the Andamans Cellular Jail while Abinash Bhattacharya's and Sudhir Kumar Sarkar's sentence was reduced to seven years of incarceration in the Andamans. The Chief Justice, Lawrence Hugh Jenkins, thanked the Defence lawyers for sparing no effort of industry in bringing to the Court's notice everything that could be legitimately argued for their clients' advantage. He concluded by stating: “I desire in particular to place on record my high appreciation of the manner in which the case was presented to this Court by their leading advocate, Mr. C. R. Das.”<sup>21</sup>

In his Uttarpara speech Sri Aurobindo refers to C. R. Das as “a friend of mine”. In this speech he describes how God and this friend helped him in the Alipore Bomb Case:

Afterwards when the trial opened in the Sessions Court, I began to write many instructions for my Counsel as to what was false in the evidence against me and on what points the witnesses might be cross-examined. Then something happened which I had not expected. The arrangements which had been made for my defence were suddenly changed and another Counsel stood there to defend me. He came unexpectedly, — a friend of mine, but I did not know he was coming. You have all heard the name of the man who put away from him all other thoughts and abandoned all his practice, who sat up half the night day after day for months and broke his health to save me, — Srijut Chittaranjan Das. When I saw him, I was satisfied, but I still thought it necessary to write instructions. Then all that was put from me and I had the message from within, “This is the man who will save you from the snares put around your feet. Put aside those papers. It is not you who will instruct him. I will instruct him.” From that time I did not of myself speak a word to my Counsel about the case or give

19. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, June 2016, p. 445 (Aparna Devi, *Manush Chittaranjan* – translated from Bengali).

20. *Ibid.*, July 2016, p. 537.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 536-37.

a single instruction and if ever I was asked a question, I always found that my answer did not help the case. I had left it to him and he took it entirely into his hands, with what result you know.<sup>22</sup>

Sri Aurobindo later noted in the third person that he was deeply immersed within whilst C. R. Das argued the case in the Alipore Court:

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. C. R. Das, one of his Nationalist collaborators and a famous lawyer, had put aside his large practice and devoted himself for months to the defence of Sri Aurobindo who left the case entirely to him and troubled no more about it; for he had been assured from within and knew that he would be acquitted.<sup>23</sup>

After Sri Aurobindo retired from politics, C. R. Das was one of the rare friends that he did not lose touch with. In a letter dated June-July 1913 Sri Aurobindo writes to Motilal Roy: “I enclose a letter for C. R. Das. Please transmit it & get a reply written or verbal. You will see, I did not authorise Bhaga to ask him for money; at the same time, in doing so, he obeyed an unspoken general *vyapti* from myself which his mind seems to have got hold of & mixed up with its own desires & anxieties.”<sup>24</sup> In the same year, on learning that Sri Aurobindo was in financial need, Das offered him Rs. 1,000 in exchange for a translation of his book of poems, *Sagar-Sangit* (Sea-Songs). Sri Aurobindo agreed and completed the translation, which eventually was published, around 1923. Years later Sri Aurobindo wrote of his rendering: “I was not . . . self-moved to translate this work, however beautiful I found it; I might even be accused of having written the translation as a pot-boiler, for Das knowing my impecunious and precarious situation at Pondicherry offered me Rs. 1,000 for the work. Nevertheless I tried to give his beautiful Bengali lines as excellent a shape of English poetry as I could manage.”<sup>25</sup> Later in a long answer to a critic he also referred to Das's poem:

Das's poem expresses his communing with this ocean of universal life and psychic intimacies with the Cosmic Spirit behind it and these have a character of grave emotion and intense feeling, not of mere sentimentalism, but they come from a very Indian and even a very Bengali mentality and may seem in translation to a different mind a profuse display of fancy and sentiment. The

22. *CWSA*, Vol. 8, pp. 7-8.

23. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, pp. 60-61.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

25. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 623.

*Songs* are now far away from me in a dim backward of memory and I will have to read them again to be sure, but for that I have no time.<sup>26</sup>

Sri Aurobindo’s closeness to Chittaranjan Das is palpable in his letter of 18<sup>th</sup> November 1922:

Dear Chitta,

It is a long time, almost two years I think, since I have written a letter to anyone. I have been so much retired and absorbed in my Sadhana that contact with the outside world has till lately been reduced to a minimum. . . .

. . . I have become confirmed in a perception which I had always, less clearly and dynamically then, but which has now become more and more evident to me, that the true basis of work and life is the spiritual, that is to say, a new consciousness to be developed only by Yoga. I see more and more manifestly that man can never get out of the futile circle the race is always treading until he has raised himself on to the new foundation. I believe also that it is the mission of India to make this great victory for the world. . . . For I am determined not to work in the external field till I have the sure and complete possession of this new power of action, — not to build except on a perfect foundation.

. . . There are many who desire to come here and whom I can admit for the purpose, there are a greater number who can be trained at a distance; but I am unable to carry on unless I have sufficient funds to be able to maintain a centre here and one or two at least outside. I need therefore much larger resources than I at present command. I have thought that by your recommendation and influence you may help Barin to gather them for me. May I hope that you will do this for me? . . .

I have been following with interest your political activities specially your present attempt to give a more flexible and practically effective turn to the non-cooperation movement. I doubt whether you will succeed against such contrary forces, but I wish you success in your endeavour. I am most interested however in your indications about Swaraj; for I have been developing my own ideas about the organisation of a true Indian Swaraj and I shall look forward to see how far yours will fall in with mine.

Yours  
Aurobindo.<sup>27</sup>

When Das received the aforesaid letter, he wrote for permission to quote certain passages from it. Sri Aurobindo then wrote to Barin: “I waited for your letter in order to know precisely what portions Chittaranjan wanted to publish and why. . . . I should

26. *Ibid.*, Vol. 27, p. 347.

27. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, pp. 260-62.



have had no objection to the publication of the portion about the spiritual basis of life or the last paragraph about Swaraj.<sup>28</sup>

In June 1923 C. R. Das visited Pondicherry. Among the main topics of discussion were the Prabartak Sangha, Motilal Roy, the present political situation and Das's own spiritual life. There was also some talk about the formation of Das's Swarajya Party to which Sri Aurobindo gave his support.<sup>29</sup> During this visit Sri Aurobindo also discussed with Das the Hindu-Muslim settlement. “I had told Das that this question should be solved before the British go out, otherwise there was a danger of a civil war. He agreed and wanted to solve it,” he said.<sup>30</sup> Later about the Hindu-Muslim conflict, Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1946, “. . . C. R. Das had grave apprehensions and he even told me when he came to Pondicherry that he would not like the British to go out until this dangerous problem had been settled.”<sup>31</sup>

However, in December 1923 the C. R. Das-led Swaraj Party signed the Bengal Pact with the Muslim Bengal leaders — in spite of the opposition from the Congress central leadership — in the hope this would resolve the conflict. At that time the population in Bengal comprised 54% Muslims and 44% Hindus. The prominent provisions made in the pact were: a) The number of members from Muslim and Hindu communities in the legislative assembly and council would be decided by their respective proportion in Bengali population and b) In the local self government institutions, Muslims would have 60% seats while 40% would be reserved for Hindus. When Abinash Bhattacharya came to Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo told him that C. R. Das has done a blunder by signing this pact for this is an admission of two races in India. Sri Aurobindo did not want any distinction between Hindus and Muslims for all are Indians. “Now we will have to face the virulent consequences,” he added.<sup>32</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's prediction of “virulent consequences” of the Bengal pact came true. C. R. Das died prematurely in 1925 following which, due to pressure from the central leadership, the pact was repudiated in 1926. The annulment of the pact led to the Bengali Muslims moving away from the Congress and forming in 1926 itself an independent Muslim Party. Thus was sown the first seed of the partition of India.

On the vexing problem of Hindu-Muslim unity, Sri Aurobindo expressed in the *Karmayogin* in May 1909:

Of one thing we may be certain, that Hindu-Mahomedan unity cannot be effected by political adjustments or Congress flatteries. It must be sought deeper down, in the heart and the mind, for where the causes of disunion are, there the remedies must be sought. We shall do well in trying to solve the

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 333-34.

29. See A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, pp. 186-87.

30. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 718.

31. *CWSA*, Vol. 35, p. 208.

32. See Abinash Bhattacharya, ‘Sri Aurobindo’, *Mother India*, July 2012, p. 538.



problem to remember that misunderstanding is the most fruitful cause of our differences, that love compels love and that strength conciliates the strong. We must strive to remove the causes of misunderstanding by a better mutual knowledge and sympathy; we must extend the unfaltering love of the patriot to our Musulman brother, remembering always that in him too Narayana dwells and to him too our Mother has given a permanent place in her bosom; but we must cease to approach him falsely or flatter out of a selfish weakness and cowardice. . . . We shall make it a main part of our work to place Mahomed and Islam in a new light before our readers, to spread juster views of Mahomedan history and civilisation, to appreciate the Musulman’s place in our national development and the means of harmonising his communal life with our own, not ignoring the difficulties that stand in our way but making the most of the possibilities of brotherhood and mutual understanding. Intellectual sympathy can only draw together, the sympathy of the heart can alone unite. But the one is a good preparation for the other.<sup>33</sup>

During Das’s 1923 visit to Pondicherry there was also talk about his sadhana. A. B. Purani writes: “Sri Aurobindo was ready to help Das in his spiritual life, if Das was willing to leave politics and devote himself exclusively to sadhana. As Das was not able to take up that course, Sri Aurobindo advised him to continue his political work and attend at the same time to his spiritual life as much as he could.”<sup>34</sup> And Sri Aurobindo remarked: “He was the last of the old group. He came here and wanted to be a disciple. I said he wouldn’t be able to go through in Yoga as long as he was in the political movement. Besides, his health was shattered. I restored it to a certain extent but there was a relapse when he went back.”<sup>35</sup>

In an earlier conversation in 1926 Sri Aurobindo had observed: “Das asked to come here, but I refused because he would have brought a different world here and because he was not ready. His psychic being would have easily opened. But there was much vital movement in his nature. His intellect was lucid.”<sup>36</sup>

On his return to Calcutta C. R. Das sent a wire to Sri Aurobindo asking for a message for his Calcutta paper *Forward* that he was launching as the organ of the Swaraj Party. Sri Aurobindo replied that presently he did not want to act on the physical plane as it would interfere with the silent support which he was sending him.<sup>37</sup>

Sri Aurobindo had a high regard for C. R. Das. He remarked to his disciples, “India has got very good men; you had Tilak, Das, Vivekananda — none of them

33. *CWSA*, Vol. 8, p. 31.

34. A.B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, 2001, pp. 186-87.

35. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 27.

36. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2006, p. 531 (footnote).

37. See A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, pp. 121-22.

an ordinary man and yet you see Tamas there.”<sup>38</sup> In another instance he said that C. R. Das “was no less a patriot than anyone else.”<sup>39</sup> In a conversation on morality and greatness, Sri Aurobindo referred to C. R. Das:

SRI AUROBINDO: What connection is there between morality and greatness? Most great men were immoral. Looseness in private morality arises from a strong vital being, and that strong vital being leads to success in great works. Immorality consists in allowing the vital impulses to go out unchecked. They may arise from strength or from weakness. In case of strength the vital impulses go out by the strength, in case of weakness they go out because they cannot be checked. Self-control, *saṁyama*, does not necessarily require one to be a yogi or a divine man. Asuras exercise control over their vital impulses to conserve energy for great enjoyment. Those who do not give indulgence to their impulses through weakness or fear of society may be respectable, but I cannot call them pure. . . .

Most saints have been sinners in the earlier period of their lives — like Bilwamangal.

DISCIPLE: There are exceptions.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, the fact is that they do not confess their sins. Das was not exactly moral, but he became great.

DISCIPLE: In his later life he controlled himself.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. He was always a very strong man.<sup>40</sup>

On C. R. Das’ passing Sri Aurobindo was requested to write something, He wrote to the editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*:

Chittaranjan’s death is a supreme loss. Consummately endowed with political intelligence, constructive imagination, magnetism, driving force combining a strong will and an uncommon plasticity of mind for vision and tact of the hour, he was the one man after Tilak who could have led India to Swaraj.<sup>41</sup>

There is a connection between Sri Aurobindo’s two close friends, C. R. Das and Sister Nivedita. The eminent historian R. C. Majumdar wrote that the first Executive Committee of the Anusilan Samiti, Bengal’s first organised revolutionary secret society, consisted of P. Mitra, Sri Aurobindo, Sister Nivedita, C. R. Das and Surendra Nath Tagore.<sup>42</sup> And soon after Sri Aurobindo’s acquittal in the Alipore trial

38. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

39. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 2, 2013, p. 647.

40. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 379.

41. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 279.

42. R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. I, 1962, p. 463, Vol. II, p. 265.

a tired C. R. Das went to Darjeeling for rest. On a chance meeting with him on the road Sister Nivedita exclaimed: “I knew you are great; but I never knew you are so great!”<sup>43</sup>

## Sister Nivedita

Sister Nivedita (1867-1911) was Sri Aurobindo’s friend and comrade. Like the great leader Charles Parnell, whom Sri Aurobindo has eulogised, Sister Nivedita was also Irish but her life’s goal was focussed on the welfare of India and securing its independence. “India, ‘Mother India’, had become her Ishta, the supreme object of her devotion, in which she perceived the aim of her life and the peace of her acceptance,” wrote Nivedita’s biographer, Lizelle Reymond.<sup>44</sup>

Sister Nivedita first got to know of Sri Aurobindo when she read his scathing attacks of the British and the Congress leadership in the *Indu Prakash*. Nivedita could not have missed Sri Aurobindo’s first political article featured in the *Indu Prakash*, written in June 1893, exposing the self-seeking psychology of the English rulers and the necessity for Indians to make the necessary sacrifice if they wanted salvation for their country:

. . . We constantly find it asserted that the English are a just people . . . this is a grave and injurious delusion, which must be expunged from our minds if we would see things as they really are.

The English are not, as they are fond of representing themselves, a people panting to do justice to all whom they have to govern. They are not an incarnation of justice, neither are they an embodiment of morality; but of all nations they are the most sentimental: hence it is that they like to think themselves, and to be thought by others, a just people and a moral people. . . . It was certainly not by appealing to the English sense of justice that the Irish people have come within reach of obtaining some measure of redress for their grievances. Mr. Parnell was enabled to force Mr. Gladstone’s hand solely because he had built up a strong party with a purely Irish policy: but we unfortunately have neither a Parnell nor a party with a purely Indian policy.

. . . The simple truth of the matter is that we shall not get from the British Parliament anything better than nominal redress, or at the most a petty and tinkering legislation. . . . If we are indeed to renovate our country, we must no longer hold out supplicating hands to the English Parliament, like an infant crying to its nurse for a toy, but must recognise the hard truth that every nation

43. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, April 2016, p. 311 (Pramoda Ranjan Ghose, *Sri Aurobindo Jiban Katha O Jiban Darshan* – translated from Bengali).

44. Cited in Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 1981, p. 194.

must beat out its own path to salvation with pain and difficulty, and not rely on the tutelage of another.<sup>45</sup>

Sri Aurobindo writes: “I knew very well Sister Nivedita (she was for many years a friend and a comrade in the political field) and met Sister Christine, — the two closest European disciples of Vivekananda.”<sup>46</sup> Sri Aurobindo first met Sister Nivedita in 1902, when she was a State guest of the Maharaja Gaekwad. About this visit Sri Aurobindo notes:

I met Sister Nivedita first at Baroda when she came to give some lectures there. I went to receive her at the station and to take her to the house assigned to her; I also accompanied her to an interview she had sought with the Maharaja of Baroda. She had heard of me as one who “believed in strength and was a worshipper of Kali” by which she meant that she had heard of me as a revolutionary. I knew of her already because I had read and admired her book “Kali the Mother”. It is in these days that we formed our friendship.<sup>47</sup>

About the aforesaid interview Sister Nivedita had with the Maharaja, Sri Aurobindo told his attendants:

Once Nivedita came to Baroda to see the Gaekwad and told him that his duty was to join the revolution. She said, “If you have anything more to ask, you can ask Mr. Ghose.” But the Gaekwad never talked politics with me afterwards. . . .

The first time she came to see me, she said, “I hear, Mr. Ghose, you are a worshipper of Shakti?” There was no non-violence about her.<sup>48</sup>

About this visit Sri Aurobindo also writes:

I do not remember Nivedita speaking to me on spiritual subjects or about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. We spoke of politics and other subjects. On the way from the station to the town she cried out against the ugliness of the College [building] and its top-heavy dome and praised the Dharmashala near it. Khaserao stared at [her] and opined that she must be at least slightly cracked to have such ideas! I was very much enamoured at the time of her book *Kali the Mother* and I think we spoke of that; she had heard, she said, that I was a worshipper of Force, by which she meant that I belonged to the secret revolutionary party like herself and I was present at her interview with the

45. *CWSA*, Vol. 6, pp. 8-10.

46. *Ibid.*, Vol. 29, p. 38.

47. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 99.

48. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 656.

Maharaja whom she invited to support the secret revolution; she told him that he could communicate with her through me. Sayajirao was much too cunning to plunge into such a dangerous business and never spoke to me about it.<sup>49</sup>

Referring to the comparison she made between the College building and the Dharmashala, Sri Aurobindo said, “She had an artistic side too.”<sup>50</sup> And in an essay written sometime in 1910 Sri Aurobindo remarked: “Sister Nivedita’s literary genius, exquisite sympathetic insight and fine artistic culture are acknowledged by all who have the faculty of judging both in England and India.”<sup>51</sup>

Sister Nivedita’s visit to Baroda occurred in October 1902, three months after Swami Vivekananda passed away. She met the Maharaja with the expectation that he would support the cause of the uprising against the British. One wonders if she came to explore the possibility of the hope envisioned by her Master that the princes of India would collectively rise in a revolt to end their servitude. The Gaekwad disliked the British because of some of their diktats but was not willing to commit support to any organised anti-British move because of the high risk it entailed. From Sister Nivedita’s diary we get to know that she received a letter on 23<sup>rd</sup> October from the Gaekwad which upset her. Next day she saw the Gaekwad again. One can presume that Sister Nivedita must have been disillusioned with the Maharaja and soon abandoned the prospect of enrolling princely support for the struggle against the foreign rule. Before long she started actively participating in the revolutionary movement that was in keeping with Sri Aurobindo’s plan for a national resurgence.<sup>52</sup>

Sri Aurobindo’s biographer, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, writes: “Nivedita saw in Sri Aurobindo the divinely ordained successor to the revolutionary side of her great Guru, Swami Vivekananda”.<sup>53</sup>

In 1902 Sri Aurobindo sent from Baroda Jatindranath Banerji to Calcutta to begin revolutionary work in Bengal. Sri Aurobindo writes that “he made his first move when he sent a young Bengali soldier of the Baroda army, Jatin Banerji, as his lieutenant to Bengal with a programme of preparation and action. . . . The idea was to establish secretly or, as far as visible action could be taken, under various pretexts and covers, revolutionary propaganda and recruiting throughout Bengal.”<sup>54</sup> Anjali Basu writes: “Jatindranath succeeded in founding a centre for revolutionaries at 108 Circular Road. Sister Nivedita was linked with it.”<sup>55</sup>

49. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, pp. 73-74.

50. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 656.

51. *CWSA*, Vol. 1, p. 468.

52. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, December 2012, pp. 996-97.

53. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo – a biography and a history*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2006, p. 63.

54. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 49.

55. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, December 2012, p. 997 (Anjali Basu, *Samsad Bangali Charitavidhan – translated from Bengali*).

In 1903 Sri Aurobindo came to Calcutta to patch up differences between Jatin Banerji and Barin. He formed a committee of five consisting of P. Mitra (1853-1910), Sister Nivedita, C. R. Das, Surendranath Tagore and Jatin to be in charge of the revolutionary work in Bengal.<sup>56</sup> Arun Chandra Guha in his *First Spark of Revolution* writes that Sri Aurobindo “set up a council with P. Mitra as president and with Nivedita, Jatin, C. R. Das and Suren Tagore as members. Aurobindo continued to give his guidance to the council. His idea was to gather a bunch of young men who would take an active role in politics at the appropriate time.”<sup>57</sup> Sri Aurobindo writes about this period:

After I had started my revolutionary work in Bengal through certain emissaries, I went there personally to see and arrange things myself. I found a number of small groups of revolutionaries that had recently sprung into existence but all scattered and acting without reference to each other. I tried to unite them under a single organisation with the barrister P. Mitra as the leader of the revolution in Bengal and a central council of five persons, one of them being Nivedita. The work under P. Mitra spread enormously and finally contained tens of thousands of young men and the spirit of revolution spread by Barin’s paper “Yugantar” became general in the young generation; but during my absence at Baroda the council ceased to exist as it was impossible to keep up agreement among the many groups. I had no occasion to meet Nivedita after that until I settled in Bengal as principal of the National College and the chief editorial writer of the *Bande Mataram*.<sup>58</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has also alluded to Sister Nivedita being “practically an Indian in beliefs, in personal culture, in sympathies & aspirations”.<sup>59</sup> About the motivation of Nivedita’s patriotic fervour and her sacrifice for India’s cause, Sri Aurobindo has written that he had “heard casually of Vivekananda’s intense patriotic feelings which inspired Sister Nivedita.”<sup>60</sup> He told his attendants:

The Ramakrishna Mission was afraid of her political activities and asked her to keep them separate from the Mission’s work. . . .

But she took up politics as part of Vivekananda’s work. Her book is one of the best on Vivekananda. Vivekananda himself had ideas about political work and of revolution. Once he had a vision which corresponded to something like Maniktolla Garden. It is curious that many Sannyasins at that time had thought

56. See Nirodbaran, *Sri Aurobindo for All Ages*, p. 46.

57. Arun Chandra Guha, *First Spark of Revolution*, 1971, p. 101.

58. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, pp. 99-100.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

of India’s freedom. Ramana Maharshi’s young disciples were revolutionaries. Yogananda’s Guru had also such ideas. Thakur Dayananda was also one such.<sup>61</sup>

Incidentally, Sri Aurobindo has said that “Ramakrishna and Vivekananda’s influence worked from behind” during the Swadeshi movement.<sup>62</sup> Nirodbaran in his article ‘Sister Nivedita as a Disciple’ writes:

She was compelled to sever her connection with the Mission, India’s nationalism and independence were her only sadhana. Nevinson has said, “She was drunk with India.” Swami Brahmananda said: “Next to Vivekananda nobody else ever loved India so much.” “I see Nivedita as the Mother of the masses,” said Rabindranath. In various ways and forms she awakened our dormant spirit. Vivekananda knew and said that Nivedita would awaken nationalism among the Hindus and had directed her to dedicate herself to that end. He had warned her brother sadhaks not to interfere with her freedom. . . .

Lizelle Reymond writes in her book that at this meeting Nivedita asked Sri Aurobindo to go to Bengal. “It is not time yet. I am preparing the field,” he replied. Hearing of his plans and methods, Nivedita said, “Please count me as one of your group. I am always ready.”

After this Nivedita joined Sri Aurobindo openly in the political movement, and secretly in revolutionary activities. . . .

Sri Aurobindo’s opinion of Nivedita is evident from a single remark of his. One day we commented about a revolutionary leader, “He was fire!” The Guru heard and kept silent. Then when Nivedita was mentioned he said, “That was fire, if you like!”<sup>63</sup>

Sri Aurobindo’s high regard for Sister Nivedita is palpable when he spoke about her character and politics to his attendants:

She was one of the revolutionary leaders. She went about visiting places in India to come in contact with the people. She was open and frank and talked about her revolutionary plan to everybody. When she used to speak on revolution it was her very soul that spoke, her true personality used to come out. Yoga was yoga of course, but it was as if that sort of work was intended for her: that was fire if you like. Her book *Kali the Mother* is very inspiring, but it is revolutionary and not non-violent. She went about among the Thakurs of Rajputana trying to preach them revolution. At that time everybody wanted some sort of revolution. I met several Rajput Thakurs who, unsuspected by the

61. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 657.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 561.

63. Nirodbaran, ‘Sister Nivedita as a Disciple’, *Mother India*, October 1967, pp. 599-601.



Government, had revolutionary ideas. . . . More than one battalion in the Indian Army was ready to help us.<sup>64</sup>

On her part, Nivedita discerned, quite early, something great and profound in Sri Aurobindo. “In Aurobindo,” she wrote in her diary, “I at once discovered a great spiritual personality. Here is a dormant volcano in the sultry desert of the Guzerat which is destined to erupt soon.”<sup>65</sup> Rishabchand in his biography of Sri Aurobindo writes of Sister Nivedita’s relations with Sri Aurobindo:

Sister Nivedita, who had read Sri Aurobindo’s fiery articles in the *Indu Prakash* and heard about him from various sources, saw him for the first time at Baroda, and was immensely impressed by his Yogic bearing, his rock-like calm, his serene poise, vibrating with superhuman power, and the steady gaze of his far-seeing eyes — eyes of “one who gazes at futurity”, as Nevinson has expressed his observation. She promised him unreserved support in his political work, which was then being carried on in secret through Jatin Banerji, Barin and others in Bengal . . . And when Sri Aurobindo left the State service and threw himself into politics, none was so intimate with him, none rendered him so devoted and persistent a help, none appreciated so well the significance of his work as Sister Nivedita . . .<sup>66</sup>

When Sri Aurobindo settled in Bengal in 1906, Sister Nivedita became a close political comrade. He writes:

By that time I had become one of the leaders of the public movement known first as extremism, then as nationalism, but this gave me no occasion to meet her except once or twice at the Congress, as my collaboration with her was solely in the secret revolutionary field. I was busy with my work and she with hers, and no occasion arose for consultations or decisions about the conduct of the revolutionary movement. Later on I began to make time to go and see her occasionally at Bagbazar.

In one of these visits she informed me that the Government had decided to deport me and she wanted me to go into secrecy or to leave British India and act from outside so as to avoid interruption of my work. There was no question at that time of danger to her; in spite of her political views she had friendly relations with high Government officials and there was no question of her arrest. I told her that I did not think it necessary to accept her suggestion; I would write an open letter in the *Karmayogin* which, I thought, would prevent

64. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, pp. 655-56.

65. Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, p. 551.

66. Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 1981, p. 193.

this action by the Government. This was done and on my next visit to her she told me that my move had been entirely successful and the idea of deportation had been dropped.<sup>67</sup>

In addition Sri Aurobindo's visits to Bagbazar to meet Sister Nivedita, she too used to visit Sri Aurobindo at his *Karmayogin* office at Shyamapukur. Upendra Chandra Bhattacharya writes, “Sister Nivedita and a few others too dropped in regularly.”<sup>68</sup>

A frequent visitor to the *Karmayogin* office “was Ganen Maharaj of Rama-krishna Mission who acted as the link with Sister Nivedita.”<sup>69</sup> Sri Aurobindo's closeness to Sister Nivedita was such that even his assistant at the *Karmayogin* and *Dharma* office, Nolini Kanta Gupta was well acquainted with her. He once wanted to join the laboratory of the great scientist J. C. Bose as an assistant, in order to learn the art of making a bomb. “I thought of Sister Nivedita. She was a great friend of Jagadish Bose and it was easy to approach Nivedita, for she was one among our circle of acquaintances. But the occasion did not arise,” he writes.<sup>70</sup>

Basanti Mitra writes how preoccupied Sri Aurobindo was with his two journals:

After his release from jail, Aurodada edited the English weekly *Karmayogin* and the Bengali weekly *Dharma*.

My father was imprisoned in Agra jail for 14 months. During this period Aurodada was acquitted in the case and he stayed in our house for almost a year. Hearing of his release, the world-poet Rabindranath Tagore came to see him at our house. At that time the poet talked with the rest of us as well.

At our house, Aurodada used to be busy almost all the time writing for *Dharma* and *Karmayogin*.<sup>71</sup>

Nolini Kanta Gupta has also written about these two journals and Sister Nivedita's close proximity with Sri Aurobindo:

. . . Sri Aurobindo on coming out of jail had taken up his work again and started the two weeklies, the English *Karmayogin* and the Bengali *Dharma*. At that time, Nivedita maintained rather close contacts with Sri Aurobindo and ourselves. She used to write for the *Karmayogin*, and when Sri Aurobindo went into retirement, it was she who edited the last few issues of the paper almost single-handed, with the sole exception of news-items. She continued

67. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 100.

68. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, January 2017, p. 33.

69. *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 7, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 1978, p. 392.

70. See Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, November 2014, p. 893.

71. Basanti Chakravarty (née Mitra), ‘Our Aurodada’, *Srinwantu*, April/August 1984, p. 85.

all the features which Sri Aurobindo had begun. Thus she too wrote a few “Conversations” on the lines of Sri Aurobindo’s “Conversations of the Dead.”<sup>72</sup>

When Sri Aurobindo received an *adesh* to go to Chandernagore on about 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1910, he notes that “Sister Nivedita was confidentially informed the day after his departure”.<sup>73</sup> Sri Aurobindo adds:

I sent someone from the office to Nivedita to inform her and to ask her to take up editing of the *Karmayogin* in my absence. She consented and in fact from this time onward until the suspension of the paper she had the whole conduct of it; I was absorbed in my *sadhana* and sent no contributions nor were there any articles over my signature. There was never my signature to any articles in the *Karmayogin* except twice only, the last being the occasion for the prosecution which failed.”<sup>74</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has also said: “I saw Nivedita before I left Calcutta for Chandernagore, and asked her to take charge of the paper, which she did.”<sup>75</sup>

On 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1910, Sister Nivedita wrote to S. K. Ratcliffe, the editor of *The Statesman*, who was then in England: “How I wish you could get the *Karmayogin* every week! In my opinion, it is a triumph of style and thought. Aravindo is magnificent.”<sup>76</sup>

Indeed, the patriotic fervour of *Karmayogin* travelled to the far south. The celebrated Tamil patriot-poet Subramania Bharati extracted the speeches and important articles and published them in his weekly *India*. Bharati even arranged for a Tamil edition of *Karmayogin*.<sup>77</sup>

Sister Nivedita also admired Sri Aurobindo’s political writings in the *Bande Mataram*. She considered them fine political history and literature, so much so that she wanted these writings preserved for posterity.<sup>78</sup>

Sister Nivedita recognised Sri Aurobindo’s selflessness and self-sacrifice for the country and the fact that she too was selfless was one of the reasons that these two great political-cum-spiritual personalities bonded. When asked, “How much is India indebted to Sister Nivedita?” Sri Aurobindo replied: “Indebted? There can be no measure of our indebtedness to Nivedita.”<sup>79</sup> And in response to Mahatma Gandhi’s remark that Nivedita was volatile and mercurial Sri Aurobindo said:

72. *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 7, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 1978, p. 368.

73. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 91.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

75. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 240.

76. Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, pp. 532-33.

77. See M. Srinivasan, ‘Bharati and Sri Aurobindo’, *Srinivantu*, February 1981, p. 54.

78. See Nirodbaran, *Sri Aurobindo for All Ages*, 1994, p. 67.

79. Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles*, Book V, p. 552.

“Nivedita volatile? What nonsense! She was a solid worker.”<sup>80</sup> On her part Sister Nivedita not only admired Sri Aurobindo but revered him. Her biographer, Lizelle Reymond, writes in her *Nivedita: Fille de l’Inde*, how Sri Aurobindo “seized hold on the people”, and “had become the teacher of the nation”:

And in Baroda she made the acquaintance of Aurobindo Ghosh. . . . He and Nivedita were already known to one another through their writing, as well as through their bond in their love of India and of freedom. To Aurobindo Ghosh, Nivedita was the author of *Kali, the Mother*. To her, he was the leader of the future, whose fiery articles in the *Indu Prakash* . . . had sounded the opening guns in the coming struggle, four years before.

What he (Sri Aurobindo) was doing was to impart an esoteric significance to the nationalist movement, and make it a confession of faith. In appearance a passive type, a quiet — even silent — figure, he was a man of iron will whose work, personality, possessions, earnings, belonged to God and to that India which he considered not as a geographical entity but as the Mother of every Hindu; and he seized hold on the people and created between them and the nation a profoundly mystic bond. . . . The nationalism he taught was thus a religion in itself, and it was so that he had become the teacher of the nation. He wanted every participant on the movement to feel himself an instrument in the hand of God, renouncing his own will and even his body and accepting this law as an act of obedience and inner submission. . . . This injunction to act, endure, and suffer without question — to let oneself to be guided by the assurance that God gives strength to him who struggles — required sacrifices which became in turn a reservoir of power from which new fighters drew inspiration to go forward. The individual and the community were no longer separated. . . . Aurobindo Ghosh with his clear insight into the swadharma (law of action) of his own people was suffusing it with a spiritual strength and making it live.<sup>81</sup>

Returning from Europe to India in July 1909, Nivedita, delighted that Sri Aurobindo was released from prison, celebrated in a big way. She marvelled at this complete transformed being, from a revolutionary he became a siddha yogi, a successor to the great lineage of Indian spiritual masters. Lizelle Reymond describes:

Aurobindo Ghose was now out of prison, and Nivedita had her school decorated as for the most auspicious festival days to celebrate his release. She found him completely transformed. His piercing eyes seemed to devour the tight-drawn skin and bones of his face. He possessed an irresistible power, derived from a

80. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 657.

81. Cited in Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 1981, pp. 194-95.

spiritual revelation that had come to him in prison. During the entire ordeal he had seen before him nothing but Lord Krishna. . . .

Now released from prison Aurobindo Ghose found his party discouraged and downcast. With a mere handful of supporters — Nivedita among them — he launched an appeal and tried to rekindle the patriotic spark in the weakening society. His mission was now that of a *Yogin* sociologist. The two newspapers that he founded — the *Karmayogin* in English and the *Dharma* in Bengali, both violent in tone — preached his lofty aim . . .

. . . he was already known as the ‘seer’ Sri Aurobindo, although still involved in political life, and as yet not manifested to his future disciples on the spiritual path. For Nivedita he was the expression of life itself, the life of a new seed grown on the ancient soil of India, the logical and passionate development of all her Guru’s teachings . . .

Aurobindo’s open and logical method of presenting his own spiritual experience, and revealing the divine message he had received in his solitary meditation, created the necessary unity between his past life of action and his future spiritual discipline. . . .

Aurobindo Ghose was throwing out the first ideas of the integral yoga he was to teach, depicting man in his cosmic reality. . . . He was, as Nivedita understood him, the successor to the spiritual Masters of the past, offering the source of his inspiration for all to drink from in yogic solitude. Since his imprisonment at Alipore, Aurobindo Ghose was no longer a fighter but a Yogi.<sup>82</sup>

This biography of Sister Nivedita, *Nivedita: Fille de l’Inde*, by Lizelle Reymond was published in 1945. In 1946, passages of Reymond’s book dealing with Sri Aurobindo were read out to him. Sri Aurobindo recognised the significance of this biography and on 13<sup>th</sup> September of that year dictated a reply in the form of a letter to his disciple Pavitra (P. B. Saint Hilaire) in order to correct certain factual errors in the book relating to his imprisonment, yoga, Vivekananda, relations with Sister Nivedita, exile to Chandernagore etc.:

. . . It is a fact that I was hearing constantly the voice of Vivekananda speaking to me for a fortnight in the jail in my solitary meditation and felt his presence, but this had nothing to do with the alleged circumstances narrated in the book . . . . The voice spoke only on a special and limited but very important field of spiritual experience and it ceased as soon as it had finished saying all that it had to say on that subject. . . .

It is best that you should communicate my statement of facts to Lizelle Reymond so that she may be able to make the necessary corrections or omissions

82. Cited in Rishabchand, *Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 1981, pp. 310-11.

in a future edition and remove this wrong information which would otherwise seriously detract from the value of her life of Nivedita.<sup>83</sup>

About his relations with Sister Nivedita, Sri Aurobindo notes that “they were purely in the field of politics.” He adds, “Spirituality or spiritual matters did not enter into them and I do not remember anything passing between us on these subjects when I was with her. Once or twice she showed the spiritual side of her but she was then speaking to someone else who had come to see her while I was there.”<sup>84</sup> And when Sri Aurobindo was asked about Sister Nivedita’s yogic achievements, he replied:

I don’t know. Whenever we met we spoke about politics and revolution. But her eyes showed a power of concentration and a capacity for going into trance. She had got something in her spiritual life.<sup>85</sup>

About Sister Nivedita and Sister Christine, Sri Aurobindo writes that both were “Westerners to the core and had nothing at all of the Hindu outlook,” but also adds, “although Sister Nivedita, an Irishwoman, had the power of penetrating by an intense sympathy into the ways of life of the people around her, her own nature remained non-Oriental to the end. Yet she found no difficulty in arriving at realisation on the lines of Vedanta.”<sup>86</sup>

Incidentally, in a letter written in February 1913 from Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo requests Motilal Roy to send him a copy of Sister Nivedita’s *My Master as I Saw Him*.<sup>87</sup>

Sri Aurobindo’s connection with Sri Ramakrishna — whom he considered “quite as much an Avatar as Christ or Chaitanya”<sup>88</sup> — and his disciples is striking. In a letter he wrote: “Remember also that we derive from Ramakrishna. For myself it was Ramakrishna who personally came & first turned me to this Yoga.”<sup>89</sup> And elsewhere he noted: “I have had no inspirations from the sadhana of Bejoy Goswami, though a good deal at one time from Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.”<sup>90</sup> However, Sri Aurobindo has also said: “The other strong intellectual influence [that] came in India in early life were the sayings of Ramakrishna and the writings and speeches of Vivekananda, but this was a first introduction to Indian spiritual experience and not as philosophy. They did not, however, carry me to the practice of Yoga: their influence was purely mental.”<sup>91</sup>

83. *CWSA*, Vol. 36, pp. 98-101.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

85. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 657.

86. *CWSA*, Vol. 29, p. 38.

87. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 184.

88. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 162.

89. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 179.

90. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 696.

91. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 113.

Once asked if he “had seen or met Vivekananda somewhere,” Sri Aurobindo replied:

No, not in the body. My contact with him was in the jail when he was speaking with me for about 15 days, giving me the first insight into the Intuition plane (not the intuitive mind which is mental and not supramental) as the first opening to Supermind.<sup>92</sup>

Incidentally, when a disciple told Sri Aurobindo that he had heard that Swami Brahmananda (1863-1922), Sri Ramakrishna’s other beloved disciple, had a greater realisation than Vivekananda, he replied:

Yes, I think so. He was spiritually higher. I once met Brahmananda when I went to see Belur Math. He asked me about some letters received from the Government. I don’t remember what it was about. He asked me whether he should do anything or keep quiet. I asked him to keep silent and not give any reply.<sup>93</sup>

Sri Aurobindo’s connection with Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples goes even further. Maa Sarada Devi (1853-1920) said of Sri Aurobindo: “He is my brave son,”<sup>94</sup> and also later referred to him as “Mahayogi Aurobindo”<sup>95</sup> Sri Aurobindo has alluded to Maa Sarada Devi being a great spiritual figure.<sup>96</sup>

Sister Nivedita was very close to Maa Sarada Devi. In 1898, Maa Sarada Devi came to open Nivedita’s newly founded school in Bagbazar. She said: “What sincere devotion Nivedita had! She never considered anything too much that she might do for me. She would often come to see me at night.”<sup>97</sup>

Sister Nivedita died on 13 October 1911 in Darjeeling. Her epitaph reads, “Here lies Sister Nivedita who gave her all to India.”<sup>98</sup>

Twenty months prior to Sister Nivedita’s passing, Sri Aurobindo retired from politics. About his decision to withdraw from politics he said:

I may also say that I did not leave politics because I felt I could do nothing more there; such an idea was very far from me. I came away because I did

92. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 264.

93. A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2007, p. 674.

94. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, May 2015, p. 379 (*The Eternal Mother: An Anthology on the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Sarada Devi*).

95. Manoj Das, ‘Sri Aurobindo: Life and Times of the Mahayogi’, *Mother India*, November 2012, p. 891 (Shailendra Basu: *Sri Aurobindo Sahadharmini Mrinalini Devir Smritikatha* – translated from Bengali).

96. See *CWSA*, Vol. 36, p. 89.

97. Website: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sister\\_Nivedita/dated\\_4.2.2022](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sister_Nivedita/dated_4.2.2022).

98. *Ibid.*



not want anything to interfere with my Yoga and because I got a very distinct *adesh* in the matter. I have cut connection entirely with politics, but before I did so I knew from within that the work I had begun there was destined to be carried forward, on lines I had foreseen, by others, and that the ultimate triumph of the movement I had initiated was sure without my personal action or presence. There was not the least motive of despair or sense of futility behind my withdrawal.<sup>99</sup>

*(To be continued)*

GAUTAM MALAKER

99. CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 26.

*... Nor was the life of India ascetic, gloomy or sad, as the too logical mind of the critic would have it be. The outward form is more quiet than in other countries, there is a certain gravity and reserve before strangers which deceives the foreign observer, and in recent times asceticism and poverty and an increase of puritanic tendency had their effect, but the life portrayed in the literature of the country is glad and vivid, and even now despite certain varieties of temperament and many forces making for depression laughter, humour, an unobtrusive elasticity and equanimity in the vicissitudes of life are very marked features of the Indian character.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(The Renaissance in India, CWSA, Vol. 20, pp 248-49)*



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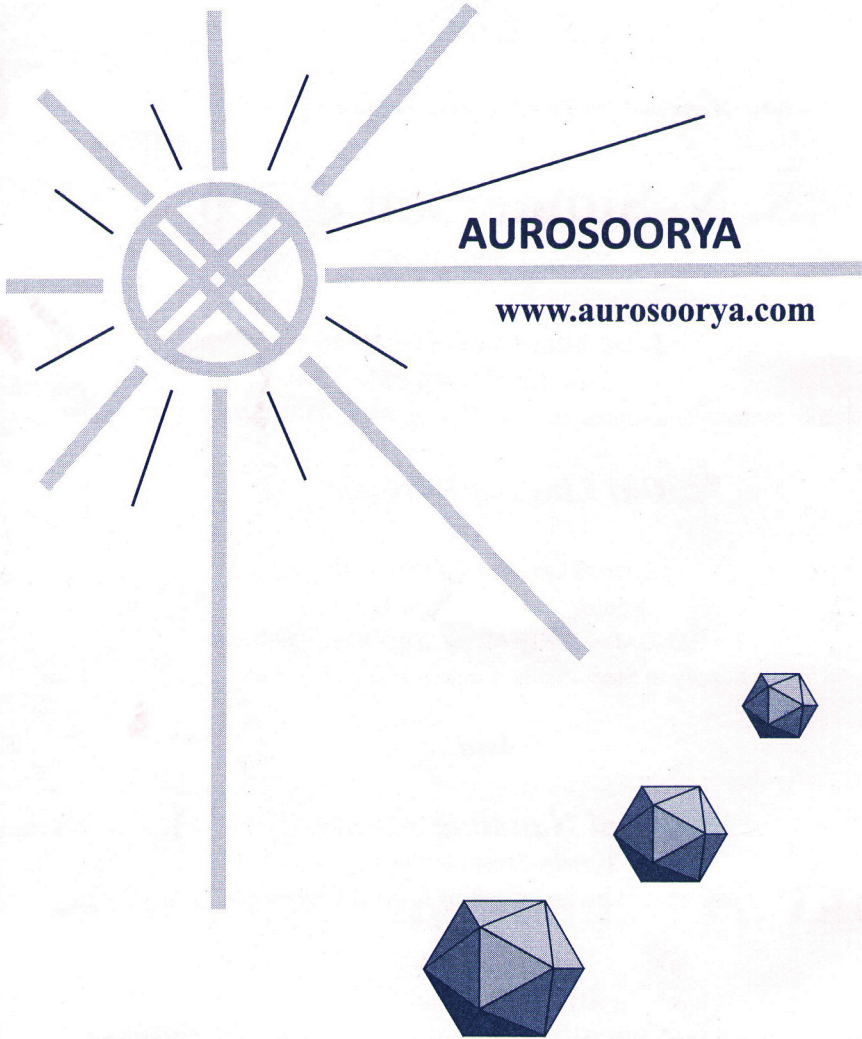
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