

A vibrant sunset scene over the ocean. The sun is a large, bright yellow-orange orb in the upper center, casting a shimmering path of light across the water. The sky is a deep orange, and a dark silhouette of a bird is in flight on the right side. The foreground shows the dark, rippling waves of the sea.

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*Return of the Light*

*(125th Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's return to India)*

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# Return of the Light

(125th Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's return to India)

*Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. — Sri Aurobindo*

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*Editorial: Sri Aurobindo returned to India on the 6th Feb 1893 after a 14 year sojourn in England where he was sent by his father to study. His days in England can be seen as equipping him with the ways of thinking of the West, something that would help him later in one of his works, which is to bridge the gap between the two ways of thinking, commonly known as East and West. His stay in Baroda was a period of 'preparation' for the still greater work that he had come for, — the emancipation of the human race by leaping the mental stage to the next evolutionary step, the Supramental. In this issue we focus mainly on his stay at Baroda, his thoughts and feelings during this period and close it with a quick glance at some of the major spiritual experiences he has had during this period, ending it with the realisation of Nirvana. This is by way of expressing our gratitude and a brief homage to Sri Aurobindo on the 125th anniversary of his return to India. Of course as is well-known Nirvana for Sri Aurobindo was the starting point of a new spiritual adventure going far and beyond into hitherto uncharted and unprecedented territories of the Spirit.*



From the quickened womb of the primal gloom,  
The sun rolled, black and bare,  
Till I wove him a vest for his Ethiop breast,  
Of the threads of my golden hair; ...

I waken the flowers in the dew-spangled bowers,  
The birds in their chambers of green,  
And mountain and plain glow with beauty again,  
As they bask in their matinal sheen.  
O, if such the glad worth of my presence on earth,  
Though fitful and fleeting the while,  
What glories must rest on the home of the blessed,  
Ever bright with the Deity's smile.

CWSA 2: 6

**Sri Aurobindo**

*This is the first and the last stanza of the poem "Light" published in 1883 at the age of 10. Ed.-*

## Birth and Early Years

### Departure to England

[Sri] Aurobindo was born on August 15th, 1872, in Calcutta. His father, a man of great ability and strong personality, had been among the first to go to England for his education. He returned entirely Anglicised in habits, ideas and ideal, — so strongly that [Sri] Aurobindo as a child spoke English and Hindustani only and learned his mother tongue only after his return from England. He was determined that his children should receive an entirely European upbringing. While in India they were sent for the beginning of their education to an Irish nuns' school in Darjeeling and in 1879 he took his three sons to England and placed them with an English clergyman and his wife with strict instructions that they should not be allowed to make the acquaintance of any Indian or undergo any Indian influence. These instructions were carried out to the letter and [Sri] Aurobindo grew up in entire ignorance of India, her people, her religion and her culture.

CWSA 36: 15

### School course and self-studies

[Sri] Aurobindo gave his attention to the classics at Manchester and at Saint Paul's; but even at St Paul's in the last three years he simply went through his school course and spent most of his spare time in general reading, especially English poetry, literature and fiction, French literature and the history of ancient, mediaeval and modern Europe. He spent some time also over learning Italian, some German and a little Spanish. He spent much time too in writing poetry. The school studies during this period engaged very little of his time; he was already at ease in them and did

not think it necessary to labour over them any longer. All the same he was able to win all the prizes in King's College in one year for Greek and Latin verse etc. He had mastered Greek and Latin, English and French, and he had also acquired some familiarity with continental languages like German and Italian.

CWSA 36: 28

### **Political Interests and Activities**

His father began sending the newspaper. The Bengalee with passages marked relating cases of maltreatment of Indians by Englishmen and he wrote in his letters denouncing the British Government in India as a heartless Government. At the age of eleven Sri Aurobindo had already received strongly the impression that a period of general upheaval and great revolutionary changes was coming in the world and he himself was destined to play a part in it. His attention was now drawn to India and this feeling was soon canalised into the idea of the liberation of his own country. But the "firm decision" took full shape only towards the end of another four years. It had already been made when he went to Cambridge and as a member and for some time secretary of the Indian Majlis at Cambridge he delivered many revolutionary speeches which, as he afterwards learnt, had their part in determining the authorities to exclude him from the Indian Civil Service; the failure in the riding test was only the occasion, for in some other cases an opportunity was given for remedying this defect in India itself.

\*

The Indian students in London did once meet to form a secret society called romantically the Lotus and Dagger in which each member vowed to work for the liberation of India generally and to take some special work in furtherance

of that end. [Sri] Aurobindo did not form the society but he became a member along with his brothers. But the society was still-born. This happened immediately before the return to India and when he had finally left Cambridge. Indian politics at that time was timid and moderate and this was the first attempt of the kind by Indian students in England.

CWSA 36: 32-33

### Departure from England

There was no such regret in leaving England, no attachment to the past or misgivings for the future. Few friendships were made in England and none very intimate; the mental atmosphere was not found congenial. There was therefore no need for any such escape.

\*

There was an attachment to English and European thought and literature, but not to England as a country; he had no ties there and did not make England his adopted country, as Manmohan did for a time. If there was attachment to a European land as a second country, it was intellectually and emotionally to one not seen or lived in in this life, not England, but France.

CWSA 36: 35

Mine is not Byron's lightning spear,  
Nor Wordsworth's lucid strain  
Nor Shelley's lyric pain,  
Nor Keats', the poet without peer.

I by the Indian waters vast  
Did glimpse the magic of the past,  
And on the oaten pipe I play  
Warped echoes of an earlier day.

CWSA 2: 41

**Sri Aurobindo**

Sri Aurobindo passed thirteen years, from 1893 to 1906, in the Baroda Service, first in the Revenue Department and in secretariat work for the Maharaja, afterwards as Professor of English and, finally, Vice-Principal in the Baroda College. These were years of self-culture, of literary activity — for much of the poetry afterwards published from Pondicherry was written at this time — and of preparation for his future work. In England he had received, according to his father's express instructions, an entirely occidental education without any contact with the culture of India and the East.<sup>1</sup> At Baroda he made up the deficiency, learned Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages, assimilated the spirit of Indian civilisation and its forms past and present. A great part of the last years of this period was spent on leave in silent political activity, for he was debarred from public action by his position at Baroda. The outbreak of the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 gave him the opportunity to give up the Baroda Service and join openly in the political movement. He left Baroda in 1906 and went to Calcutta as Principal of the newly-founded Bengal National College.

*1. It may be observed that Sri Aurobindo's education in England gave him a wide introduction to the culture of ancient, of mediaeval and of modern Europe. He was a brilliant scholar in Greek and Latin. He had learned French from his childhood in Manchester and studied for himself German and Italian sufficiently to read Goethe and Dante in the original tongues. (He passed the Tripos in Cambridge in the first division and obtained record marks in Greek and Latin in the examination for the Indian Civil Service.)*

CWSA 36: 5-6

**Sri Aurobindo**





Me from her lotus heaven Saraswati  
Has called to regions of eternal snow  
And Ganges pacing to the southern sea,  
Ganges upon whose shores the flowers of Eden blow.

CWSA 2: 37

**Sri Aurobindo**

## Early Poems (*Baroda period*)

### **The Just Man**

Where is the man whom hope nor fear can move?  
Him the wise Gods approve.  
The man divine of motive pure and steadfast will  
Unbent to ill,  
Whose way is plain nor swerves for power or gold  
The high, straight path to hold:—  
Him only wise the wise Gods deem, him pure of lust;  
Him only just....

\*

### **Radha's Appeal**

O love, what more shall I, shall Radha speak,  
Since mortal words are weak?  
In life, in death,  
In being and in breath  
No other lord but thee can Radha seek.  
About thy feet the mighty net is wound  
Wherein my soul they bound;  
Myself resigned  
To servitude my mind;  
My heart than thine no sweeter slavery found ....  
I, Radha, thought; without my life's sweet lord,  
—Strike now thy mightiest chord—  
I had no power  
To live one simple hour;  
His absence slew my soul as with a sword.  
If one brief moment steal thee from mine eyes,  
My heart within me dies.  
As girls who keep  
The treasures of the deep,  
I string thee round my neck and on my bosom prize.

\*

## **To weep because a glorious sun**

To weep because a glorious sun has set  
Which the next morn shall gild the east again,  
To mourn that mighty strengths must yield to fate  
Which by that fall a double force attain,  
To shrink from pain without whose friendly strife  
Joy could not be, to make a terror of death  
Who smiling beckons us to farther life  
And is a bridge for the persistent breath;  
Despair and anguish and the tragic grief  
Of dry set eyes or such disastrous tears  
As rend the heart though meant for its relief  
And all man's ghastly company of fears  
Are born of folly that believes this span  
Of brittle life can limit immortal man.

\*

## **What is this talk**

What is this talk of slayer and of slain?  
Swords are not sharp to slay nor floods assuage  
This flaming soul. Mortality and pain  
Are mere conventions of a mightier stage.  
As when a hero by his doom pursued  
Falls like a pillar of the huge world uptorn  
Shaking the hearts of men and awe-imbued,  
Silent the audience sits or weeps forlorn,  
Meanwhile behind the stage the actor sighs  
Deep-lunged relief, puts off what he has been  
And talks with friends that waited or from the flies  
Watches the quiet of the closing scene,  
Even so the unwounded spirits of the slain  
Beyond our vision passing live again.

CWSA 2: 43, 32-34, 182

**Sri Aurobindo**

## Early Prose Writings

### India of Vikramaditya

Look at the India of Vikramaditya. How gorgeous was her beauty! how Olympian the voices of her poets! how sensuous the pencil of her painters! how languidly voluptuous the outlines of her sculpture! In those days every man was marvellous to himself and many were marvellous to their fellows; but the mightiest marvel of all were the philosophers. What a Philosophy was that! For she scaled the empyrean on the wingèd sandals of meditation, soared above the wide fires of the sun and above the whirling stars, up where the flaming walls of the universe are guiltless of wind or cloud, and there in the burning core of existence saw the face of the most high God. She saw God and did not perish; rather fell back to earth, not blasted with excess of light, but with a mystic burden on her murmuring lips too large for human speech to utter or for the human brain to understand. Such was she then. Yet five rolling centuries had not passed when sleepless, all-beholding Surya saw the sons of Mahomet pour like locusts over the green fields of her glory and the wrecks of that mighty fabric whirling down the rapids of barbarism into the shores of night.

CWSA 1: 21

### The rhythmic harmony in the universe

Look at the stars, the brain of heaven, as Meredith calls them. How they march tossing on high their golden censers to perfume night with the frankincense of beauty! They are a host of wingèd insects crawling on the blue papyrus of heaven, a swarm of golden gnats, a cloud of burning dust, a wonderful effect of sparkling atoms caught and perpetuated by the instantaneous pencil of Nature. And yet they are

none of all these, but a vast and interdependent economy of worlds. Those burning globes as they roll in silent orbits through the infinite inane, are separated by an eternity of space. They are individual and alone, but from each to each thrill influences unfathomed and unconscious, marvellous magnetisms, curious repulsions that check like adverse gales or propel like wind in bellying canvas, and bind these solitary splendours into one supernal harmony of worlds. The solar harmony we know. How gloriously perfect it is, how united in isolation, how individual in unity! How star answers to star and the seven wandering dynasts of destiny as they roll millions of leagues apart, drag with them the invisible magnetic cord which binds them for ever to the sun. We believe that those lights we call fixed are each a sun with a rhythmic harmony of planets dancing in immeasurable gyrations around one immovable, immortal star. More, is it extravagant to guess that what to us is fixed, is a planet to God? Perhaps to the inhabitants of the moon this tumbling earth of ours is a fixed and constant light, and perhaps the glorious ball of fire we worship as the Lord of Light, is the satrap of some majesty more luminous and more large. Thus we may conceive of the universe as a series of subordinate harmonies, each perfect in itself and helping to consummate the harmony which is one and universal.

CWSA 1: 28 - 29

### **The vastness of God everywhere**

God burns in the star, God blossoms in the rose: the cloud is the rushing dust of his chariot, the sea is the spuming mirror of his moods. His breath whistles in the wind, his passion reddens in the sunset, his anguish drops in the rain. The darkness is the soft fall of his eyelashes over the purple magnificence of his eyes: the sanguine dawn is his flushed

and happy face as he leaves the flowery pillow of sleep; the moonlight is nothing but the slumberous glint of his burning tresses when thro' them glimmer the heaving breasts of Eternity. What to him are the petty imaginings of human aspiration; our puny frets, our pitiable furies, our melodramatic passions? If he deigns to think of us, it is as incompetent actors who have wholly misunderstood the bent of our powers. The comedian rants in the vein of Bombastes; the tragic artist plays the buffoon in the pauses of a pantomime, and the genius that might have limned the passion of a Romeo, moulds the lumpish ineptitude of a Cloten. God lifting his happy curls from the white bosom of Beauty, shoots the lightning of his glance upon our antics and we hear his mockery hooting at us in the thunder. Why should he squander a serious thought on a farce so absurd and extravagant?...

*CWSA 1: 31-32*

### **Of beauty and love in man and the animal**

You talked of the lower animal nature and the higher spiritual nature and in so talking assumed that the qualities peculiar to the human being are higher than the qualities he shares with some or all of the animals. Is dissimulation higher than love? You reject the idea with contempt: yet dissimulation is peculiar to the human being but love, and love of the most spiritual kind, he shares with the turtle-dove and with the wild duck of the Indian marshes, who cannot sleep the live-long night because Nature has severed him from his mate but ever wails across the cold and lapping water with passionate entreaty that she may solace his anguish with even a word, and travellers straying in the forest hear his forlorn cry "Love, speak to me!"

No, we can only say of varying qualities that one is

beautiful and another less beautiful, or not beautiful at all; and beauty does not reside in being animal or being more than animal but in something very different.

CWSA 1: 63

### **Evolution does not eliminate but perfect**

Evolution does not eliminate, but perfects. The cruelty that blossoms out in the tiger, has its seeds deep down in the nature of man and if it is minimised in one generation will expand in another, nor is it possible for man to eradicate cruelty without pulling up in the same moment the bleeding roots of his own being. Yet the brute ferocity that in the tiger is graceful and just and artistic, is in the man savage and crude and inharmonious and must be cultured and refined, until it becomes a virtue and fits as gracefully and harmlessly into the perfect character, as its twin-brother physical courage and physical love, its remote relative.

CWSA 1: 64 – 65

### **The harmony of virtues**

I suppose you will agree with me that for a virtue to be beautiful, there must be a perfect harmony in the elements of beauty, and the colour not too subdued as in the clover nor too glaring as in the sunflower, and the perfume not too slight to be noticeable as in the pansy nor too intense for endurance as in the meadow-sweet, and the form not too monotonous as in a canal or too irregular as in the leafless tree, but all perfectly harmonious in themselves and in fit proportion to each other?....

We have expanded our description of virtue as the evolution of the inborn qualities native to our personality, by throwing in the epithet "perfect", and have interpreted the full flavour of the epithet in words to the effect that

qualities in their evolved perfection must be harmonious one with another and have a beautiful form or expression, and a beautiful colour or revelation of the soul, and a beautiful perfume or justly-at tempered manner and must subdue all three into a just and appropriate harmony.

With this conviction in our souls we will journey on, despising the censure and alarm of the reputable, and evolve our inborn qualities and powers into a beautiful and harmonious perfection, until we walk delicately like living poems through a radiant air, and will not stunt the growth of any branch or blossom, but will prefer to the perishable laurels of this world a living crown of glory, and hear through the chaotic murmur of the ages the solemn question of Christ "What profiteth it a man if he own the whole world and lose his own soul?" and will answer according to the melodious doctrines of philosophy and acquire by a life of perfect beauty the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

CWSA 1: 74 – 77

**Sri Aurobindo**

*The pieces above are part of a play titled "The Harmony of Virtue" which Sri Aurobindo wrote in England between 1890 and 1892. Ed.-*

O ignorant fond lover, not with tears  
Shalt thou persuade immitigable Death.  
He will not pity all thy pangs: nor know  
His stony eyes with music to grow kind,  
Nor lovely words accepts. And how wilt thou  
Wrestle with that grim shadow, who canst not save  
One bloom from fading? A sole thing the Gods  
Demand from all men living, sacrifice:  
Nor without this shall any crown be grasped.

CWSA2:126 (From Love and Death)

**Sri Aurobindo**



## On Myths and Legends of India

### Indian and the Greek tradition

The impression that Hindu Myth has made on you, is its inevitable aspect to a taste nourished on the pure dew and honey of Hellenic tradition; for the strong Greek sense of symmetry and finite beauty is in conflict with the very spirit of Hinduism, which is a vast attempt of the human intellect to surround the universe with itself, an immense measuring of itself with the infinite and amorphous. Hellenism must necessarily see in the greater part of Hindu imaginations and thoughts a mass of crude fancies equally removed from the ideal and the real. But when it condemns all Hindu legend without distinction, I believe it is acting from an instinct which is its defect, — the necessary defect of its fine quality. For in order to preserve a pure, sensitive and severe standard of taste and critical judgment, it is compelled to be intolerant; to insist, that is, on its own limits and rule out all that exceeds them, as monstrous and unbeautiful. It rejects that flexible sympathy based on curiosity of temperament, which attempts to project itself into differing types as it meets them and so pass on through ever-widening artistic experiences to its destined perfection. And it rejects it because such catholicity would break the fine mould into which its own temperament is cast. This is well; yet is there room in art and criticism for that other, less fine but more many-sided, which makes possible new elements and strong departures.

CWSA 36: 125-26

## The religious-philosophical allegory

I would carefully distinguish between two types of myth, the religious-philosophical allegory and the genuine secular legend. The former is beyond the pale of profitable argument. Created by the allegorical and symbolising spirit of mediaeval Hinduism, the religious myths are a type of poetry addressed to a peculiar mental constitution, and the sudden shock of the bizarre which repels occidental imagination the moment it comes in contact with Puranic literature, reveals to us where the line lies that must eternally divide East from West. The difference is one of root temperament and therefore unbridgeable. There is the mental composition which has no facet towards imaginative religion, and if it accepts religion at all, requires it to be plain, precise and dogmatic; to such these allegories must always seem false in art and barren in significance. And there is the mental composition in which a strong metaphysical bent towards religion combines with an imaginative tendency seeking symbol both as an atmosphere around religion, which would otherwise dwell on too breathless mountaintops, and as a safeguard against the spirit of dogma. These find in Hindu allegory a perpetual delight and refreshment; they believe it to be powerful and penetrating, sometimes with an epical daring of idea and an inspiration of searching appropriateness which not unoften dissolves into a strange and curious beauty. The strangeness permeating these legends is a vital part of themselves, and to eliminate the bizarre in them — bizarre to European notion, for to us they seem striking and natural — would be to emasculate them of the most characteristic part of their strength.

CWSA 36: 126-27

## **The secular legends**

There remain the secular legends; and it is true that a great number of them are intolerably puerile and grotesque. My point is that the puerility is no essential part of them but lies in their presentment, and that presentment again is characteristic of the Hindu spirit not in its best and most self-realising epochs. They were written in an age of decline, and their present form is the result of a literary accident. The Mahabharata of Vyasa, originally an epic of 24,000 verses, afterwards enlarged by a redacting poet, was finally submerged in a vast mass of inferior accretions, the work often of a tasteless age and unskilful hands. It is in this surface mass that the majority of the Hindu legends have floated down to our century. So preserved, it is not surprising that the old simple beauty of the ancient tales should have come to us marred and disfigured, as well as debased by association with later inventions which have no kernel of sweetness. And yet very simple and beautiful, in their peculiar Hindu type, were these old legends with infinite possibilities of sweetness and feeling, and in the hands of great artists have blossomed into dramas and epics of the most delicate tenderness or the most noble sublimity. One who glances at the dead and clumsy narrative of the Shacountala legend in the Mahabharata and reads after it Kalidasa's masterpiece in which delicate dramatic art and gracious tenderness of feeling reach their climax, at once perceives how they vary with the hands which touch them.

CWSA 36: 127

## **The Hindu mind**

The Hindu myth has not the warm passionate life of the Greek. The Hindu mind was too austere and idealistic to be sufficiently sensitive to the rich poetical colouring inherent

in crime and sin and overpowering passion; an Oedipus or an Agamemnon stands therefore outside the line of its creative faculty. Yet it had in revenge a power which you will perhaps think no compensation at all, but which to a certain class of minds, of whom I confess myself one, seems of a very real and distinct value. Inferior in warmth and colour and quick life and the savour of earth to the Greek, they had a superior spiritual loveliness and exaltation; not clothing the surface of the earth with imperishable beauty, they search deeper into the white-hot core of things and in their cyclic orbit of thought curve downward round the most hidden fountains of existence and upward over the highest, almost invisible arches of ideal possibility. Let me touch the subject a little more precisely. The difference between the Greek and Hindu temperaments was that one was vital, the other supra-vital; the one physical, the other metaphysical; the one sentient of sunlight as its natural atmosphere and the bound of its joyous activity, the other regarding it as a golden veil which hid from it beautiful and wonderful things for which it panted. The Greek aimed at limit and finite perfection, because he felt vividly all our bounded existence; the Hindu mind, ranging into the infinite tended to the enormous and moved habitually in the sublime. This is poetically a dangerous tendency; finite beauty, symmetry and form are always lovely, and Greek legend, even when touched by inferior poets, must always keep something of its light and bloom and human grace or of its tragic human force. But the infinite is not for all hands to meddle with; it submits only to the compulsion of the mighty, and at the touch of an inferior mind recoils over the boundary of the sublime into the grotesque. Hence the enormous difference of level between different legends or the same legend in different hands,—the sublimity or tenderness of the best, the

banality of the worst, with little that is mediocre and intermediate shading the contrast away. To take with a reverent hand the old myths and cleanse them of soiling accretions, till they shine with some of the antique strength, simplicity and solemn depth of beautiful meaning, is an ambition which Hindu poets of today may and do worthily cherish. To accomplish a similar duty in a foreign tongue is a more perilous endeavour. ...

CWSA 36: 128-29

### **The story of Ruaru (Ruru)**

The story of Ruaru is told in the very latest accretion-layer of the Mahabharata, in a bald and puerile narrative without force, beauty or insight. Yet it is among the most significant and powerful in idea of our legends; for it is rather an idea than a tale. Bhrigou, the grandfather of Ruaru, is almost the most august and venerable name in Vedic literature. Set there at the very threshold of Aryan history, he looms dim but large out of the mists of an incalculable antiquity, while around him move great shadows of unborn peoples and a tradition of huge half-discernible movements and vague but colossal revolutions. In later story his issue form one of the most sacred clans of Rishies, and Purshurama, the destroyer of princes, was of his offspring. By the Titaness Puloma this mighty seer and patriarch, himself one of the mind-children of Brahma had a son Chyavan—who inherited even from the womb his father's personality, greatness and ascetic energy. Chyavan too became an instructor and former of historic minds and a father of civilization; Ayus was among his pupils, the child of Pururavas by Urvashie and founder of the Lunar or Ilian dynasty whose princes after the great civil wars of the Mahabharata became Emperors of India. Chya-

van's son Pramati, by an Apsara or nymph of paradise, begot a son named Ruaru, of whom this story is told. This Ruaru, later, became a great Rishi like his fathers, but in his youth he was engrossed with his love for a beautiful girl whom he had made his wife, the daughter of the Gundhurva King, Chitroruth, by the sky-nymph Menaca; an earlier sister therefore of Shacountala. Their joy of union was not yet old when Priyumvada perished, like Eurydice, by the fangs of a snake. Ruaru inconsolable for her loss, wandered miserable among the forests that had been the shelter and witnesses of their loves, consuming the universe with his grief, until the Gods took pity on him and promised him his wife back, if he sacrificed for her half his life. To this Ruaru gladly assented and, the price paid, was reunited with his love.

Such is the story, divested of the subsequent puerile developments by which it is linked on to the Mahabharata. If we compare it with the kindred tale of Eurydice, the distinction I have sought to draw between the Hindu and Greek mythopoetic faculty, justifies itself with great force and clearness. The incidents of Orpheus' descent into Hades, his conquering Death and Hell by his music and harping his love back to the sunlight, and the tragic loss of her at the moment of success through a too natural and beautiful human weakness, has infinite fancy, pathos, trembling human emotion. The Hindu tale, barren of this subtlety and variety is bare of incident and wanting in tragedy. It is merely a bare idea for a tale. Yet what an idea it supplies! How deep and searching is that thought of half the living man's life demanded as the inexorable price for the restoration of his dead! How it seems to knock at the very doors of human destiny, and give us a gust of air from worlds beyond our own suggesting illimitable and unfathomable thoughts of our potentialities and limitations. CWSA 36: 129-130

## **The true subject of Hindu epic**

The true subject of Hindu epic is always a struggle between two ideal forces universal and opposing, while the human and divine actors, the Supreme Triad excepted, are pawns moved to and fro by immense world-impulses which they express but cannot consciously guide. It is perhaps the Olympian ideal in life struggling with the Titanic ideal, and then we have a Ramaian [Ramayana]. Or it may be the imperial ideal in government and society marshalling the forces of order, self-subjection, self-effacement, justice, equality, against the aristocratic ideal, with self-will, violence, independence, self-assertion, feudal loyalty, the sway of the sword and the right of the stronger at its back; this is the key of the Mahabharata. Or it is again, as in the tale of Savitrie, the passion of a single woman in its dreadful silence and strength pitted against Death, the divorcer of souls. Even in a purely domestic tale like the Romance of Nul, the central idea is that of the Spirit of Degeneracy, the genius of the Iron age, overpowered by a steadfast conjugal love. Similarly, in this story of Ruaru and Priyumvada the great Spirits who preside over Love and Death, Cama and Yama, are the real actors and give its name to the poem.

CWSA 36: 131

## **The characters of Hindu legends**

The greater figures of our epics are ideals, but ideals of wickedness as well as virtue and also of mixed characters which are not precisely either vicious or virtuous. They are, that is to say, ideal presentments of character-types. This also arises from the tendency of the Hindu creative mind to look behind the actors at tendencies, inspirations, ideals. Yet are these great figures, are Rama, Sita, Savitrie, merely

patterns of moral excellence? I who have read their tale in the swift and mighty language of Valmekie and Vyasa and thrilled with their joys and their sorrows, cannot persuade myself that it is so. Surely Savitrie that strong silent heart, with her powerful and subtly-indicated personality, has both life and charm; surely Rama puts too much divine fire into all he does to be a dead thing, — Sita is too gracious and sweet, too full of human lovingness and loveliness, of womanly weakness and womanly strength! Ruaru and Priyumvada are also types and ideals; love in them, such is the idea, finds not only its crowning exaltation but that perfect idea of itself of which every existing love is a partial and not quite successful manifestation. Ideal love is a triune energy, neither a mere sensual impulse, nor mere emotional nor mere spiritual. These may exist, but they are not love. By itself the sensual is only an animal need, the emotional a passing mood, the spiritual a religious aspiration which has lost its way. Yet all these are necessary elements of the highest passion. Sense impulse is as necessary to it as the warm earth-matter at its root to the tree, emotion as the air which consents with its life, spiritual aspiration as the light and the rain from heaven which prevent it from withering. My conception being an ideal struggle between love and death, two things are needed to give it poetical form, an adequate picture of love and adequate image of Death. The love pictured must be on the ideal plane, and touch therefore the farthest limit of strength in each of its three directions. The sensual must be emphasised to give it firm root and basis, the emotional to impart to it life, the spiritual to prolong it into infinite permanence. And if at their limits of extension the three meet and harmonise, if they are not triple but triune, then is that love a perfect love and the picture of it a perfect picture.

CWSA 36: 131-32



## The Rishis of yore

The Rishies won their knowledge by meditation working through inspiration to intuition. Austere concentration of the faculties stilled the waywardness of the reason and set free for its work the inner, unerring vision which is above reason, as reason is itself above sight; this again worked by intuitive flashes, one inspired stroke of insight quivering out close upon the other, till the whole formed a logical chain; yet a logic not coldly thought out nor the logic of argument but the logic of continuous and consistent inspiration. Those who sought the Eternal through physical austerities, such as the dwelling between five fires (one fire on each side and the noonday sun overhead) or lying for days on a bed of swordpoints, or Yoga processes based on an advanced physical science, belonged to a later day. The Rishies were inspired thinkers, not working through deductive reason or any physical process of sense-subdual. The energy of their personalities was colossal; wrestling in fierce meditation with God, they had become masters of incalculable spiritual energies, so that their anger could blast peoples and even the world was in danger when they opened their lips to utter a curse. This energy was by the principle of heredity transmitted, at least in the form of a latent and educable force, to their offspring. Afterwards as the vigour of the race exhausted itself, the inner fire dwindled and waned. But at first even the unborn child was divine. When Chyavan was in the womb, a Titan to whom his mother Puloma had been betrothed before she was given to Bhrigou, attempted to carry off his lost love in the absence of the Rishi. It is told that the child in the womb felt the affront and issued from his mother burning with such a fire of inherited divinity that the Titan ravisher fell blasted by the wrath of an infant. For the Rishies were not

passionless. They were prone to anger and swift to love. In their pride of life and genius they indulged their yearnings for beauty, wedding the daughters of Titans or mingling with nymphs of Paradise in the august solitudes of hills and forests. From these were born those ancient and sacred clans of a prehistoric antiquity, Barghoves, Barhaspaths, Gautamas, Kasyapas, into which the descendants of the Aryan are to this day divided. Thus has India deified the great men who gave her civilisation.

On earth the Rishies, in heaven the Gods. ...

CWSA 36: 134-35

**Sri Aurobindo**

I was myself of the sattwic type you describe in my youth, but when the peace from above came down, that was quite different. *Sattvaguna* disappeared into *nirguna* and negative *nirguna* into positive *traigunyatita*.

CWSA 35: 45

**Sri Aurobindo**

## Some Aspects of Sri Aurobindo

### Domestic virtues

I am afraid I shall never be good for much in the way of domestic virtues. I have tried, very ineffectively, to do some part of my duty as a son, a brother and a husband, but there is something too strong in me which forces me to subordinate everything else to it. Of course that is no excuse for my culpability in not writing letters,—a fault I am afraid I shall always be quicker to admit than to reform. I can easily understand that to others it may seem to spring from a lack of the most ordinary affection. It was not so in the case of my father from whom I seem to inherit the defect. In all my fourteen years in England I hardly got a dozen letters from him, and yet I cannot doubt his affection for me, since it was the false report of my death which killed him. I fear you must take me as I am with all my imperfections on my head.

CWSA 36: 147

### Attitude towards life and events

Seeking happiness in the world inevitably leads one to find suffering in the midst of that happiness, for suffering is always intertwined with happiness. This law holds good not only in regard to the desire for children, but it embraces all sorts of worldly desires....

*Writings in Bengali, p. 349*

### Attitude towards Work

It is not a question of liking but of capacity — though usually (not always) liking goes with the capacity. But capacity can be developed and liking can be developed or rather the *rasa* you speak of. One cannot be said to be in the full Yogic condition — for the purposes of this Yoga — if

one cannot take up with willingness any work given to one as an offering to the Divine. At one time I was absolutely unfit for any physical work and cared only for the mental, but I trained myself in doing physical things with care and perfection so as to overcome this glaring defect in my being and make the bodily instrument apt and conscious.

CWSA 35: 53

### **Calm spiritual strength**

I speak from my own experience. I have solid strength, but I have not much of the fire that blazes out against anybody who does not give me lawful rights. Yet I do not find myself weak or a dead man. I have always made it a rule not to be restless in any way, to throw away restlessness — yet I have been able to use my solid strength whenever necessary. You speak as if rajasic force and vehemence were the only strength and all else is deadness and weakness. It is not so—the calm spiritual strength is a hundred times stronger; it does not blaze up and sink again— but is steady and unshakable and perpetually dynamic.

CWSA 35: 47

### **Asceticism and the absence of desires**

It depends on what is meant by asceticism. I have no desires but I don't lead outwardly an ascetic life, only a secluded one. According to the Gita, *tyāga*, the inner freedom from desire and attachment, is the true asceticism.

CWSA 35: 48

**Sri Aurobindo**

We are but sparks of that most perfect fire,  
     Waves of that sea:  
 From Him we come, to Him we go, desire Eternally,  
     And so long as He wills, our separate birth  
 Is and shall be.  
     Shrink not from life, O Aryan, but with mirth  
 And joy receive  
     His good and evil, sin and virtue, till  
 He bids thee leave.  
     But while thou livest, perfectly fulfil  
 Thy part, conceive  
     Earth as thy stage, thyself the actor strong,  
 The drama His.  
     Work, but the fruits to God alone belong,  
 Who only is.  
     Work, love and know,—so shall thy spirit win  
 Immortal bliss.  
     Love men, love God. Fear not to love, O King,  
 Fear not to enjoy;  
     For Death's a passage, grief a fancied thing  
 Fools to annoy.  
     From self escape and find in love alone  
 A higher joy.

Seek Him upon the earth. For thee He set  
     In the huge press  
 Of many worlds to build a mighty state  
     For man's success,  
 Who seeks his goal. Perfect thy human might,  
     Perfect the race.  
 For thou art He, O King. Only the night  
     Is on thy soul  
 By thy own will. Remove it and recover  
     The serene whole  
 Thou art indeed, then raise up man the lover  
     To God the goal.

CWSA 2: 236-37 (From the poem *The Rishi*, 1900-08) **SriAurobindo**

## Early Spiritual Experiences

### First Turn towards Spiritual Seeking

Sri Aurobindo's first turn towards spiritual seeking came in England in the last year of his stay there. He had lived in the family of a Non-conformist clergyman, minister of a chapel belonging to the "Congregational" denomination; though he never became a Christian, this was the only religion and the Bible the only scripture with which he was acquainted in his childhood; but in the form in which it presented itself to him, it repelled rather than attracted him and the hideous story of persecution staining mediaeval Christianity and the narrowness and intolerance even of its later developments disgusted him so strongly that he drew back from religion altogether. After a short period of complete atheism, he accepted the Agnostic attitude. In his studies for the I.C.S, however, he came across a brief and very scanty and bare statement of the "Six philosophies" of India and he was especially struck by the concept of the Atman in the Adwaita. It was borne in upon his mind that here might be [a] true clue to the reality behind life and the world. He made a strong and very crude mental attempt to realise what this Self or Atman might be, to convert the abstract idea into a concrete and living reality in his own consciousness, but conceiving it as something beyond or behind this material world, — not having understood it as something immanent in himself and all and also universal.

*CWSA 36: 106*

## **This-worldliness and other-worldliness**

One thing I feel I must say in connection with your remark about the soul of India and X's observation about "this stress on this-worldliness to the exclusion of other-worldliness". I do not quite understand in what connection his remark was made or what he meant by this-worldliness, but I feel it necessary to state my own position in the matter. My own life and my Yoga have always been, since my coming to India, both this-worldly and other-worldly without any exclusiveness on either side. All human interests are, I suppose, this-worldly and most of them have entered into my mental field and some, like politics, into my life, but at the same time, since I set foot on Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not divorced from this world but had an inner and intimate bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with influences and an effect from them upon the material plane, so I could make no sharp divorce or irreconcilable opposition between what I have called the two ends of existence and all that lies between them. For me all is the Brahman and I find the Divine everywhere. Everyone has the right to throw away this-worldliness and choose other-worldliness only and if he finds peace by that choice he is greatly blessed. I, personally, have not found it necessary to do this in order to have peace. In my Yoga also I found myself moved to include both worlds in my purview, the spiritual and the material, and to try to establish the divine Consciousness and the divine Power in men's hearts and in earthly life, not for personal salvation only but for a life divine here. This seems to me as spiritual an aim as any and the fact of this life

taking up earthly pursuits and earthly things into its scope cannot, I believe, tarnish its spirituality or alter its Indian character. This at least has always been my view and experience of the reality and nature of the world and things and the Divine: it seemed to me as nearly as possible the integral truth about them and I have therefore spoken of the pursuit of it as the integral Yoga. Everyone is, of course, free to reject and disbelieve in this kind of integrality or to believe in the spiritual necessity of an entire other-worldliness excluding any kind of this-worldliness altogether, but that would make the exercise of my Yoga impossible. My Yoga can include indeed a full experience of the other worlds, the plane of the supreme Spirit and the other planes in between and their possible effects upon our life and material world; but it will be quite possible to insist only on the realisation of the supreme Being or Ishwara even in one aspect, Shiva, Krishna as Lord of the world and Master of ourselves and our works or else the universal Sachchidananda, and attain to the essential results of this Yoga and afterwards to proceed from them to the integral results if one accepted the ideal of the divine life and this material world conquered by the Spirit.

CWSA 35: 233-34

### **Practice of Pranayama**

When I was practising Pranayama at Baroda, I used to do it for about five hours in the day, — three hours in the morning and two in the evening. I found that the mind began to work with great illumination and power. I used to write poetry in those days. Before the Pranayama practice, usually I wrote five to eight lines per day; and about two hundred lines in a month. After the practice I could write 200 lines within half an hour. That was not the only result.



Formerly my memory was dull. But after this practice I found that when the inspiration came I could remember all the lines in their order and write them down correctly at any time. Along with these enhanced functionings I could see an electrical activity all round the brain, and I could feel that it was made up of a subtle substance. I could feel everything as the working of that substance.

*Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo, p. 204*

### **Experiences before meeting Yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele**

What Lele asked him was whether he could surrender himself entirely to the Inner Guide within him and move as it moved him; if so he needed no instructions from Lele or anybody else. This Sri Aurobindo accepted and made that his rule of sadhana and of life. Before he met Lele, Sri Aurobindo had some spiritual experiences, but that [was] before he knew anything about Yoga or even what Yoga was, — e.g. a vast calm which descended upon him at the moment when he stepped first on Indian soil after his long absence, in fact with his first step on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay; (this calm surrounded him and remained for long months afterwards,) the realisation of the vacant Infinite while walking on the ridge of the Takht-i-[Sulaiman] in Kashmir, the living presence of Kali in a shrine in Chandod on the banks of the Narmada, the vision of the Godhead surging up from within when in danger of a carriage accident in Baroda in the first year of his stay etc.. But these were inner experiences coming of themselves and with a sudden unexpectedness, not part of a sadhana. He started Yoga by himself without a Guru, getting the rule from a friend, a disciple of Brahmananda of [Ganganath]; it was confined at first to the assiduous practice of Pranayama (at one time for 6 hours or more a day). There was no conflict or wavering between Yoga and politics; when he started

Yoga, he carried on both without any idea of opposition between them. He wanted however to find a Guru. He met the Naga Sannyasi in the course of his search, but did not accept him as Guru, though he was confirmed by him in a belief in Yoga-power when he saw him cure Barin in almost a moment of a violent and clinging hill fever by merely cutting through a glassful of water cross-wise with a knife while he repeated a silent mantra. Barin drank and was cured. He also met Brahmananda and was greatly impressed by him; but he had no helper or Guru in Yoga till he met Lele and that was only for a short time.

CWSA 36:109-10

### **Meeting with Yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele**

When I came to Baroda from the Surat Congress, Barin had written to me that he knew a certain yogi to whom he would introduce me at Baroda. Barin sent a wire to Lele from Baroda and he came. At that time I was staying at Khasirao Jadhava's house. We went to Sardar Majumdar's place. On the top floor in a room we were shut up for three days. He asked me to do nothing but throw away all thoughts that came to my mind. In three days I did it. We sat in meditation together, I realised the Silent Brahman Consciousness. I began to think from above the brain and have done so ever since. Sometimes at night the Power would come and I would receive it and also the thoughts it brought and in the morning I would put down the whole thing word by word on paper.

In that very silence, in that thought-free condition, we went to Bombay. There I had to give a lecture at the National Union. So, I asked him what I should do. He asked me to pray. But I was absorbed in the silent Brahman and so I told him I was not in a mood to pray. Then he said he

and some others would pray and I should simply go to the meeting and make namaskār — a bow — to the audience as Narayana, the all-pervading Divine, and then a voice would speak through me. I did exactly as he told me. On my way to the meeting somebody gave me a paper to read. There was some headline there which caught my eye and left an impression. When I rose to address the meeting the idea flashed across my mind and then all of a sudden something spoke out. That was my second experience from Lele. It also shows that he had the power to give yogic experience to others.

*Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo, pp.72-73*

### **A shadowy, unreal world**

When I was in Bombay, from the balcony of a friend's house, I saw the whole busy movements of Bombay city as a picture in a cinema show — all unreal, shadowy. That was a Vedantic experience. Ever since I have maintained that peace of mind, never losing it even in the midst of difficulties. All the speeches that I delivered on my way to Calcutta from Bombay were of the same nature — with some mixture of mental work in some parts. Before parting I told Lele: "Now that we shall not be together I should like you to give me instructions about Sadhana." In the meantime I told him of a Mantra that had arisen in my heart. He was giving me instructions when he suddenly stopped and asked me if I could rely absolutely on Him who had given me the Mantra. I said I could always do it. Then Lele said there was no need of instructions. We had then no talk till we reached our destination. Some months later, he came to Calcutta. He asked me if I meditated in the morning and in the evening. I said, "No." Then he thought that some devil had taken possession of me and he began to give me instructions. I did

not insult him but I did not act upon his advice. I had received the command from within that a human Guru was not necessary for me. As to *dhyāna* — meditation — I was not prepared to tell him that I was practically meditating the whole day.

All that I wrote in the *Bande Mataram* and in the *Karmayogin* was from that state. I have since trusted the inner guidance even when I thought it was leading me astray. The *Arya* and the subsequent writings did not come from the brain. It was, of course, the same Power working. Now I do not use that method. I developed it to perfection and then abandoned it.

*Evening talks with Sri Aurobindo, p. 73-74*

### Nirvana

All is abolished but the mute Alone.  
The mind from thought released, the heart from grief  
Grow inexistent now beyond belief;  
There is no I, no Nature, known-unknown.

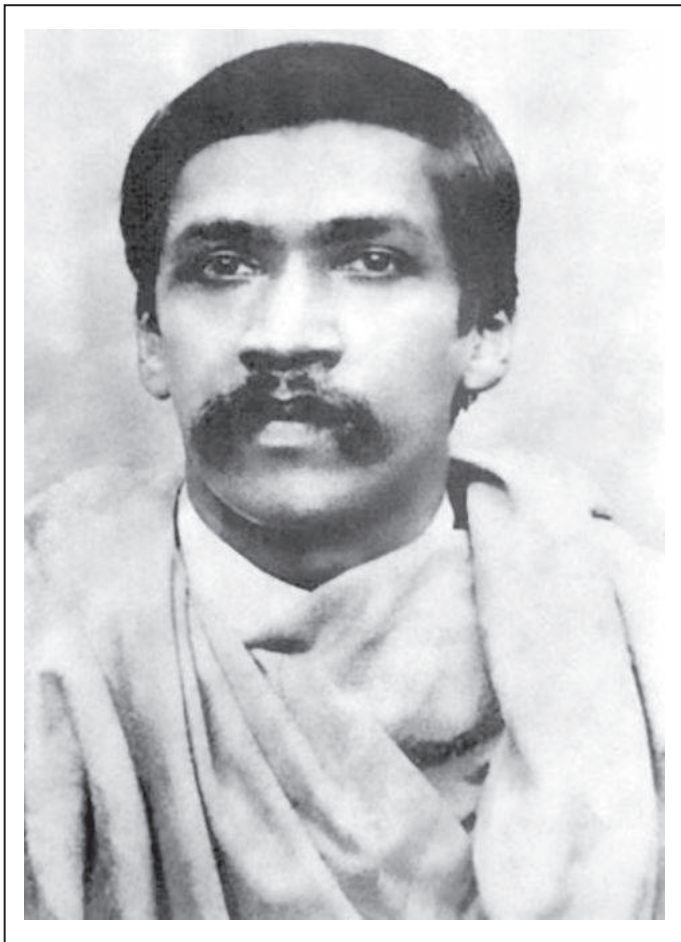
The city, a shadow picture without tone,  
Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief  
Flow, a cinema's vacant shapes; like a reef  
Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done.

Only the illimitable Permanent  
Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still,  
Replaces all,—what once was I, in It  
A silent unnamed emptiness content

Either to fade in the Unknowable  
Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.

CWSA 2: 561

**Sri Aurobindo**



To reach Nirvana was the first radical result of my own Yoga.... I lived in that Nirvana day and night before it began to admit other things into itself at all...

Nirvana in my liberated consciousness turned out to be the beginning of my realisation, a first step towards the complete thing, not the sole, true attainment possible, or even a culminating finale.

CWSA 35: 249-50

**Sri Aurobindo**

## Some Reminiscences and Anecdotes

(Before coming to Pondicherry)

### The Power of Prayer

As for prayer, no hard and fast rule can be laid down. Some prayers are answered, all are not. An example? The eldest daughter of my Mesho, K. K. Mitra, editor of *Sanjibani*, not by any means a romantic, occult, supraphysical or even imaginative person, was abandoned by the doctors after using every resource, all medicines stopped as useless. The father said "There is only God now, let us pray." He did, and from that moment the girl began to recover, typhoid fever and all its symptoms fled, death also. I know any number of cases like that. Well? You may ask why should not then all prayers be answered? But why should they be? It is not a machinery — put a prayer in the slot and get your asking. Besides, considering all the contradictory things mankind is praying for at the same moment, God would be in a rather awkward hole, if he had to grant all of them — it wouldn't do.

\*

### The Charm of Kashmir

Quite agree with your estimate of Kashmir. The charm of its mountains and rivers and the ideal life dawdling along in the midst of a supreme beauty in the slowly moving leisure of a houseboat — that was a kind of earthly Paradise — also writing poetry on the banks of the Jhelum where it rushes down Kashmir towards the plains. Unfortunately there was the over-industrious Gaekwar to cut short the Paradise! His idea of Paradise was going through administrative papers and making myself and others write speeches for which he got all the credit. But after all, according to the nature, to each one his Eden.

CWSA 35: 14-15

## Yogic cure

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

\*

## Students at Baroda

The students at Baroda, besides taking my notes, used to get notes of other professors from Bombay, specially if he was an examiner...

Once I was giving a lecture on Southey's *Life of Nelson*, and my lecture was not in agreement with the notes. So the students remarked that it was not at all like what was found in them. I, replied that I had not read notes; in any case they were all rubbish. I could never go into minute details. I read and left my mind to do what it could. That is why I could never become a scholar. Up to the age of fifteen I was known as a very promising scholar at St. Paul's. After fifteen I lost that reputation.

*Disciple : How was that?*

Sri Aurobindo : Because I was reading novels and poetry. Only at the time of the examination I used to prepare a little. When, now and then, I used to write Greek and Latin verse my teachers used to lament that I was not utilising my remarkable gifts because of my laziness.

When I went for scholarship at King's College, Cambridge, Oscar Browning remarked that he had not seen such remarkable papers before. So, you see, in spite of all laziness I was not deteriorating.

*Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo, pp.131-32, 245*

## **Brahmachari**

Sri Aurobindo was very simple in his mode of living. He was not at all fastidious in his tastes. He did not care much for food or dress, because he never attached any importance to them. He never visited the market for his clothes. At home, he dressed in plain white chaddar and dhoti, and outside invariably in white drill suits. He never slept on a soft cotton bed, as most of us do, but on a bed of coir-coconut fibres — on which was spread a Malabar grass mat which served as a bed sheet.

"Once I asked him why he used such a coarse and hard bed, to which he replied with his characteristic smile: 'Don't you know, my boy, that I am a Brahmachari? Our shastras enjoin that a Brahmachari should not use a soft bed.'

\*

## **Absence of love for money**

Another thing I observed about him was the total absence of love of money. He used to get the lump sum of three months' pay in a bag which he emptied in a tray lying on his table. He never bothered to keep money in a safe box under lock and key. He did not keep an account of what he spent. One day I casually asked him why he was keeping his money like that. He laughed and then replied: 'Well, it is a proof that we are living in the midst of honest and good people.' 'But you never keep an account which may testify to the honesty of the people around you?', I asked him. Then with a serene face he said: 'It is God who keeps account for me. He gives me as much as I want and keeps the rest to Himself. At any rate, He does not keep me in want, then why should I worry?'

\*



## **His method of teaching**

I had the good fortune to be his student in the Intermediate class. His method of teaching was a novel one. In the beginning, he used to give a series of introductory lectures in order to initiate the students into the subject matter of the text. After that he used to read the text, stopping where necessary to explain the meaning of difficult words and sentences. He ended by giving general lectures bearing on the various aspects of the subject matter of the text.

But more than his college lectures, it was a treat to hear him on the platform. He used to preside occasionally over the meetings of the College Debating Society. The large central hall of the College used to be full when he was to speak. He was not an orator but was a speaker of a very high order, and was listened to with rapt attention. Without any gesture or movements of the limbs he stood, and language flowed like a stream from his lips with natural ease and melody that kept the audience spell-bound.... Though it is more than fifty years since I heard him, I still remember his figure and the metallic ring of his melodious voice.

\*

## **Aniketah (without a separate dwelling place)**

Dinendra Kumar Roy records in his Bengali book, [Sri] *Aurobindo Prasanga*, it made no difference to Sri Aurobindo whether he lived in a palace or a hovel. Where he really dwelt, no tiles ever burned, nor did rain water leak. He was, to use an expression of the Gita, *aniketah*, one who had no separate dwelling of his own in the whole world.

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## **Not a trace of worldly ambition or human selfishness**

I had hardly known him for a couple of days when I realised that there was nothing of the meanness and dross of the earth in [Sri] Aurobindo's heart. His laughter was

simple as a child's, and as liquid and soft. Though an inflexible will showed at the comers of his lips, there was not the slightest trace in his heart of any worldly ambition or the common human selfishness; there was only the longing, rare even among the gods, of sacrificing himself for the relief of human suffering. [Sri] Aurobindo could not yet speak in Bengali, but how very eager he was to speak in his mother tongue! I lived with him day and night, and the more I came to be acquainted with his heart, the more I realised that he was not of this earth — he was a god fallen by some curse O from his heavenly abode. God alone can say why he had exiled him as a Bengali to this accursed land of India. He had gone to England as a mere boy, almost on the lap of his mother, and it was much after the first flush of his youth that he had returned to his motherland. But what struck me as most amazing was that his noble heart had suffered not the least contamination from the luxury and dissipation, the glitter and glamour, the diverse impressions and influences, and the strange spell of Western society.

\*

### **Equanimity**

[Sri] Aurobindo was always indifferent to pleasure and pain, prosperity and adversity, praise and blame.... He bore all hardships with an unruffled mind, always remembering the great gospel: 'As Thou, O Lord, seated in my heart, appointest me, so do I act', and absorbed in the contemplation of his adored Deity. The fire that would have consumed any other man to ashes has served only to burn out his Inness and render him brighter than ever.

"[Sri] Aurobindo would sit at his table and read in the light of an oil lamp till one in the morning, unmindful of the intolerable bite of mosquitoes. I saw him seated there in the same posture for hours on end, his eyes fixed on the

book he read, like a Yogi plunged in divine contemplation and lost to all sense of what was going on outside. Even if the house had caught fire, it could not have broken his concentration. Daily he would thus burn the midnight oil, poring over books in different languages of Europe — books of poetry, fiction, history, philosophy, etc., whose number one could hardly tell. In his study, there were heaps of books on various subjects in different languages — French, German, Russian, English, Greek, Latin etc., about which I knew nothing. The poetical works of all English poets from Chaucer to Swinburne were also there. Countless English novels were stacked in his book-cases, littered in the corners of his rooms, and stuffed in his steel trunks. The Iliad of Homer, the Divine Comedy of Dante, our Ramayana, Mahabharata, Kalidasa were also among those books. He was very fond of Russian literature...

*Sri Aurobindo: His Life Unique* by Rishab Chand,  
pp. 24,25,25,26, 59-60

### **Silent Brahmic consciousness and Shunyam**

The general idea is that for the experience of the Brahmic consciousness one must be always in-drawn. But that is not quite true. I first had the silent Brahmic consciousness at Baroda as soon as I quieted my mind. It came, of course, to the mental being and I kept it for about a month. But I was not unconscious, I saw people and things as Maya — all things only small and the One, the Reality, behind them.

The experience of Shunyam — the void — is still more striking because you get into it by a sort of negation even of the Atman — Self.

*Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo, p. 96*

## **Letter to the Maharani of Baroda written in 1930**

It is true that I have by the practice of Yoga attained to the higher spiritual consciousness which comes by Yoga, and this carries with it a certain power. Especially there is the power to communicate to those who are ready or to help them towards that spiritual state which, in its perfection is a condition of unalterable inner calm, strength and felicity. But this spiritual peace and joy is something quite different from mental peace and happiness. And it cannot be reached without a spiritual discipline.

I do not know whether this has been rightly explained to Your Highness. I may say briefly that there are two states of consciousness in either of which one can live. One is a higher consciousness which stands above the play of life and governs it; this is variously called the Self, the Spirit or the Divine. The other is the normal consciousness in which men live; it is something quite superficial, an instrument of the Spirit for the play of life. Those who live and act in the normal consciousness are governed entirely by the common movements of the mind and are naturally subject to grief and joy and anxiety and desire or to everything else that makes up the ordinary stuff of life. Mental quiet and happiness they can get, but it can never be permanent or secure. But the spiritual consciousness is all light, peace, power and bliss. If one can live entirely in it, there is no question; these things become naturally and securely his. But even if he can live partly in it or keep himself constantly open to it, he receives enough of this spiritual light and peace and strength and happiness to carry him securely through all the shocks of life. What one gains by opening to this spiritual consciousness, depends on what one seeks from it; if it is peace, one gets peace; if it is light or knowledge, one lives in a great light and receives a knowledge deeper and truer than any

the normal mind of man can acquire; if it [is] strength or power, one gets a spiritual strength for the inner life or Yogic power to govern the outer work and action; if it is happiness, one enters into a beatitude far greater than any joy or happiness that the ordinary human life can give.

There are many ways of opening to this Divine consciousness or entering into it. My way which I show to others is by a constant practice to go inward into oneself, to open by aspiration to the Divine and once one is conscious of it and its action to give oneself to It entirely. This self-giving means not to ask for anything but the constant contact or union with the Divine Consciousness, to aspire for its peace, power, light and felicity, but to ask nothing else and in life and action to be its instrument only for whatever work it gives one to do in the world. If one can once open and feel the Divine Force, the Power of the Spirit working in the mind and heart and body, the rest is a matter of remaining faithful to It, calling for it always, allowing it to do its work when it comes and rejecting every other and inferior Force that belongs to the lower consciousness and the lower nature. ...

My aim is to create a centre of spiritual life which shall serve as a means of bringing down the higher consciousness and making it a power not merely for "salvation" but for a divine life upon earth. It is with this object that I have withdrawn from public life and founded this Asram in Pondicherry (so-called for want of a better word, for it is not an Asram of Sannyasins, but of those who want to leave all else and prepare for this work). But at the same time I have a small number of disciples all over India who live in their families and receive spiritual help from me even at a distance.

CWSA 36: 440-42

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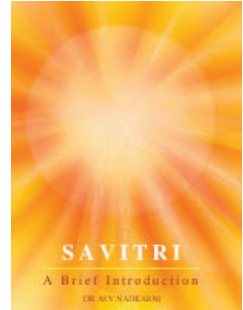
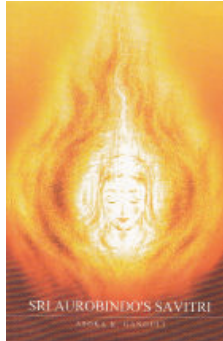
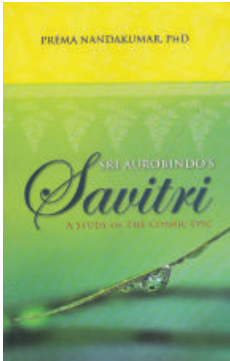
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## On Savitri



*Savitri is the record of a seeing, an experience which is not of the common kind and is often very far from what the general human mind sees and experiences... there must be a new extension of consciousness and aesthesis to appreciate a new kind of mystic poetry.*

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District 605104. Tamil Nadu, India.

SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY  
**Notice for the Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting of the members of Sri Aurobindo Society will be held on Saturday, the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2018, at 4.00 p.m. at its registered office, Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, 8, Shakespeare Sarani, Kolkata – 700 071, to transact the following business:

1. To confirm the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2017.
2. To consider and approve the audited Balance Sheet and Income & Expenditure Account of the Society for the year ended 31.03.2018.
3. To consider and adopt the Executive Committee's Annual Report of Activities for the year 2017–2018.
4. To appoint an auditor for the Society for the year 2018-2019.
5. To consider any other matter with the permission of the chair.

08.06.2018  
Puducherry

Sd/-  
(Pradeep Narang)  
Chairman

*Note: The members are entitled to appoint proxy. Proxies must be deposited at the Registered Office of the Society, No.8, Shakespeare Sarani, Kolkata – 700 071, during office hours, in advance but not less than 48 hours before the time of the meeting. The proxy should be a member of the Society. Proxy form is printed below.*



**PROXY**

SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY,

Regd. Office: 8, Shakespeare Sarani, Kolkata – 700 071.

I, ..... being a member of Sri Aurobindo Society, having membership No. .... valid upto ..... do hereby appoint ..... having Society's membership No. .... valid upto ..... as my proxy in my absence to attend and vote for me and on my behalf at the Annual General Meeting of the Society, to be held on Saturday, the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2018, at 4.00 p.m. and at any adjournment thereof.

In witness whereof, I have set my hand this  
..... day of ..... 2018.

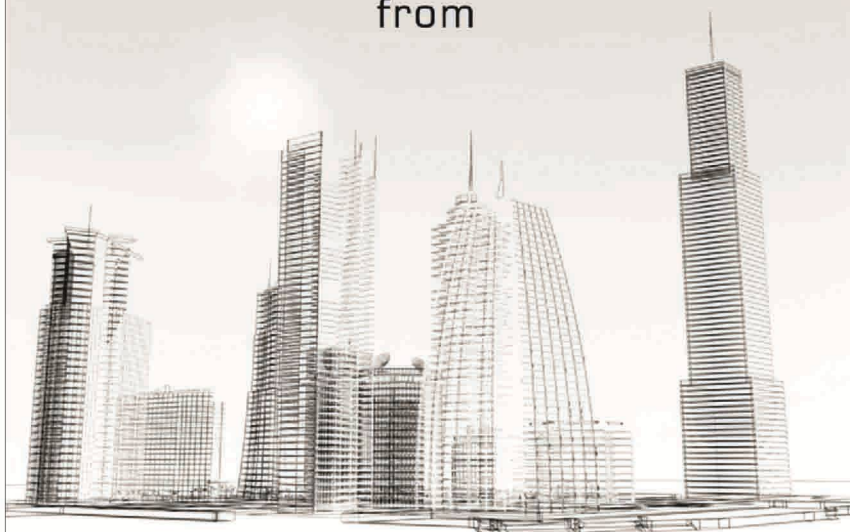
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